



# Public Culture and Cultural Citizenship at the Thessaloniki International Film Festival

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Citation	Lee, Toby Kim. 2013. Public Culture and Cultural Citizenship at the Thessaloniki International Film Festival. Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University.
Citable link	<a href="http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:11181137">http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:11181137</a>
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Public Culture and Cultural Citizenship  
at the Thessaloniki International Film Festival

A dissertation presented  
by  
Toby Kim Lee  
to  
The Department of Anthropology

in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
in the subject of  
Anthropology

Harvard University  
Cambridge, Massachusetts

April 30, 2013

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the relationship between state, citizen and public culture through an ethnographic and historical examination of the Thessaloniki International Film Festival in northern Greece. In the two-year period leading up to and following its fiftieth anniversary in 2009, the festival was caught up in the larger economic, political and social crises that have overtaken Greece in the last five years - a painful period of rapid transformation and neoliberalization for one of Europe's staunchest social-welfare states. As the Greek state faces bankruptcy - both economic and political - it is being forced to revisit the terms of its social contract with its citizens. In a country where "culture" was once touted as a national "heavy industry," the relationship between the state and cultural production is also being restructured. Public culture is one of the areas of social life in which people are now struggling with these changes and attempting to redefine what it means to be a citizen of the Greek state - utilizing and revising local, national and transnational identities in the process.

In this larger context, I consider how the Thessaloniki Film Festival functions as an institution of public culture. Specifically, this dissertation investigates how different film publics come together within the space of the festival and how, on the occasion of the institution's fiftieth anniversary, different social histories of cinema were being constructed in response to the

present crises. I also take an in-depth look at a Greek filmmakers' movement that boycotted the festival's fiftieth-anniversary edition as a way of protesting the state and demanding a new national film policy. Through these investigations, I analyze how different forms of publicness, collectivity and citizenship are negotiated and enacted, both by the institution and by members of its publics and counterpublics. I argue that practices of cultural citizenship - forms of citizenship that arise where fields of cultural production meet the practices and discourses of the state - can constitute important forms of resistance, attempts at recuperating a critical public sphere and reclaiming a citizenship based on the experience of a critical collectivity.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

One of the paradoxes - and pleasures - of writing a dissertation is that what often feels like a solitary journey is actually quite the opposite. The past nine years have brought many friends, mentors and helpful souls, without whose generosity and kindness this dissertation could not have been completed. I come away from this process with many lessons learned, but above all else, with a deep sense of gratitude:

To my supervisor Michael Herzfeld, and to the members of my dissertation committee: Lucien Castaing-Taylor, Mary Steedly and David Rodowick. To Karen Van Dyck, for her mentorship and friendship, then and now. To Vassiliki Yiakoumaki, Vangelis Calotychos, Vanessa Schwartz and Anne Higonnet.

To the many people I met in the field who graciously accepted my inquiring presence and allowed me to become a part of their lives: Kostas Aivaliotis, Eleni Alexandrakis, Giannis Bakogiannopoulos, Giannis Chatzigogas, Elena Christopoulou, Michel Demopoulos, Dimitris Eipides, Notis Forsos, Marcos Holevas, Athina Kartalou, Dimitris Kerkinos, Valerie Kontakos, Marineta Kritikou, Lia Lazaridou, Thomas Linaras, Vardis Marinakis, Lina Milonaki, Anna Milossi, Despina Mouzaki, Afroditi Nikolaidou, Nasia Pantazopoulou, Lilly Papagianni, Nikos Perakis, Angeliki Petrou, Maria Polyviou, Lucia Rikaki, Tasia Sempsi, Dimitris Sofianopoulos, Thanos Stavropoulos, Nella Tampouri, Ifigenia Taxopoulou, Themis Veleni, Angeliki Vergou.

To the organizations that provided crucial support at various stages of research and writing: Artemis Zenetou and the Fulbright Foundation in Greece, the Dan David Foundation, the Social Science Research Council, the Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies at Harvard

University, and the Harvard Film Study Center.

To friends and fellow travelers: Elena Mamoulaki, Tracey Rosen, Felicity Aulino, Jeremy LaBuff, Fotini Lazaridou-Hatzigoga, JP Sniadecki, Diana Allan, Ernst Karel, Stelios Kazadzis, Vassilis Amoiridis, Aimee Placas, Katerina Rozakou. To John Bruce, for the invaluable gift of time and quiet. To Steve Holmgren, J.D.

To my family: to my mother Kihan Lee, and to Suzy, Johnny, George and the little ones. My foundation, my compass, my invisible net.

To Paweł Wojtasik, for his endless patience, wisdom, silliness and love.

All of this - the work, the years - is dedicated to my father, Kun S. Lee.



## **NOTE ON TRANSLATION AND TRANSLITERATION**

Foreign quotations - whether from written or oral sources - are translated into English by the author, unless the reference itself is already taken from an English translation and cited accordingly. I also provide my own translation of foreign titles in the bibliography.

In the transliteration of Greek words, I have generally followed the phonetic system used by the US Board on Geographic Names, with some slight modifications, primarily for visual purposes. In the transliteration of names and place-names, I defer to most common usage as well as to the way that individuals or organizations normally choose to render their names in Latin script.

## INTRODUCTION

On a sunny October afternoon in 2009, I met a filmmaker friend, Nicoletta, for a quick coffee. She had come up from Athens to Thessaloniki for just a few days, for a public presentation of a documentary workshop that she had led earlier that semester with local high school students. Nicoletta was a perpetually active, lively figure who always seemed to be bustling from one project to another - leading film workshops at schools and festivals, teaching in the state film school in Thessaloniki, working for hire as a filmmaker while also trying to get a half dozen of her own film projects off the ground. As she told me about the latest obstacles to getting her new documentary in production - she had applied to the Greek Film Center and to ERT, the national television channel, for funding but had been turned down by both - she lamented the state of public funding for the arts in Greece more generally. On the one hand, she complained about institutions like the Film Center and ERT, which she described as both inefficient bureaucracies & exclusive clubs, in either case impossible to penetrate. On the other hand, she said that the amount of public funding available to go around was meager to begin with, and the economic crisis, the full magnitude of which was only beginning to become apparent in 2009, would only make the situation worse. Half-jokingly, she threw up her hands in a show of mock-surrender and quipped that soon, she would have to leave Greece and seek work elsewhere, as a “cultural immigrant” (*politismiki metanastis*).

It was a light-hearted remark, shared between friends in a small moment over coffee, but I was immediately struck by her use of the term “cultural immigrant.” We had both laughed at her clever play on the more commonly heard, and more “serious,” categories of economic and political immigration, which have figured prominently in different periods of modern Greek history and have recently gained new currency.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, part of the comic valence of her statement came from the sense of frivolity in the idea of cultural immigration, compared to the often very dire circumstances that lead people to become economic and political immigrants.

However, despite its levity, her joke lingered in my mind for days after our meeting, as I started to unpack its deeper meaning. In using the term “cultural immigration,” Nicoletta was referencing her relationship as a filmmaker to the Greek state, as well as what she saw as the state’s largely unfulfilled responsibilities to the country’s cultural producers; underlying her comment was the assumption that, as a cultural producer, her relationship to the state is fundamental to her livelihood. Because the Greek state was not providing the conditions necessary for her cultural work, she would have to find another state that would; in this sense, the term “cultural immigrant” points to its flip side, “cultural citizen.” In referencing the

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<sup>1</sup> Most notably, beginning in the mid-twentieth century, Greece was a country of emigrants, with Greeks leaving for destinations around the world - the United States, Australia, the Middle East, Africa and throughout Europe - first for economic reasons, and then also for political reasons, in the aftermath of the Greek civil war and in the tense political climate of the military dictatorship (1967-1974). But with the fall of the Iron Curtain and the rapid growth of the Greek economy in the late 1980s and 1990s, Greece suddenly became a country of immigration, with growing waves of economic and political immigrants, both legal and illegal, from the former Soviet Union, Albania, Southeast Asia, and most recently from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Iran and western Africa. Traditionally a country of emigration, Greece has been transformed over the last few decades by overwhelming numbers of economic and political immigrants, many illegal and undocumented, who come seeking asylum or a gateway to the rest of Europe. However, because the country lacks the infrastructure, resources and legal frameworks to deal with such an influx, immigration has become one of the most pressing social issues in Greece today. Ironically, in the last few years, more and more Greeks have themselves begun to move, in search of work and opportunities abroad, owing to the country’s current economic and political woes. For further reading on immigration in Greece, see Cabot 2008, 2012; Dodos et al. 1996; Fakiolas 1999, 2000; Green 1997, 1998; Hart 1999; Hart and Budina 1995; Lazaridis 1999; Lazaridis and Psimmenos 2000; Lazaridis and Wickens 1999; Lazaridis and Poyago-Theotoky 1999; Marabou-Alipranti 1993; Nitsiakos 1996; Panourgíá 1992; Papailias 2003; Papataxiarchis 2006; Psimmenos 1995; Rozakou 2008; Seremetakis 1996; Triandafyllidou 2000.

relationship between citizenship, the state and cultural production, Nicoletta's remark reflected and refracted much of what I was observing around me in the field at that time. With the widespread civil unrest starting in December of 2008, and the growing crises - not only economic, but also political and social - affecting all aspects of life in Greece, it seemed that the field of public culture and cultural production was increasingly becoming a battlefield in which the relationship between state, citizen and cultural institution was a key point of struggle.

### ***The Thessaloniki International Film Festival - First Encounters***

Citizenship and the state were topics far from my mind when I first began my dissertation research on the Thessaloniki International Film Festival (TIFF). Initially, my interest in the festival had been sparked by questions of mobility, diasporic publics, and the transnational movement of cultural forms. My first encounter with the Thessaloniki festival took place in 2000, in a dark theater in New York City's East Village; that year, an abridged version of the festival's Greek and Balkan programs was traveling around the world, and one of its US stops was at the Anthology Film Archives. I attended a screening of Nikos Nikolaidis' *See You in Hell, My Darling* (1999) and was surprised to see this rather obscure film by a cult Greek director playing to a full house, in a theater far from traditionally Greek neighborhoods in Queens, Brooklyn, Long Island and New Jersey. Looking around me at the packed audience, I began to wonder what kind of public was being constituted in that moment: how were linguistic and cultural identity, shared history, notions of ethnicity and nationality coming together in that screening space, and what was the particular sense of social belonging that was being created in the process? In addition, the traveling festival program's itinerary - London, New York, Chicago,

Los Angeles - mapped the Greek diaspora itself; everywhere it went, the festival was creating a social space where members of the Greek diasporic community, as well as others, were able to engage with elements of Greek public culture. In this way, the festival as a cultural institution was shaping a public and participating in the construction of a transnational collectivity.

In the years following that initial encounter at Anthology, I began to research the Thessaloniki festival in earnest. Since its first edition in 1960 - not yet international, the first festival was a small week-long showcase of Greek films - the TIFF has grown into one of the largest and most active international film festivals in Europe. One of only fifty-one festivals accredited by the International Federation of Film Producers Associations (FIAPF), it annually showcases over two hundred films from Greece and around the world, including a handful of premieres in its international competition section.<sup>2</sup> In addition to a packed schedule of screenings, masterclasses, panel discussions, exhibits and performances, the festival also has a robust Industry Center, which houses a film market, a co-production forum, a student film development workshop, and until recently a script-development competition. While the festival has always been the cultural centerpiece of Thessaloniki and one of the most visible public cultural events in the country, its Industry Center, started in 2006, has raised the international profile of the festival and transformed it into a destination for film industry professionals, an important stop on the fast-paced international film festival circuit. Filmmakers, producers, sales agents, distributors, and film programmers from around the world now come to the Thessaloniki

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<sup>2</sup> As pertains to its work regulating international film festivals, the FIAPF ensures certain standards of organization, quality of programming, and resources and services for film industry professionals. In order for a film festival to be accredited by the FIAPF, the festival must go through an application process, demonstrating “good year-round organizational resources; genuinely international selections of films and competition juries; good facilities for servicing international press correspondents; stringent measures to prevent theft or illegal copying of films; evidence of support from the local film industry; insurance of all film copies against loss, theft or damage; high standards for official publications and information management” (<http://www.fiapf.org/intfilmfestivals.asp>).

festival to watch, buy and sell films, particularly from the Balkans, eastern Europe and the Mediterranean.

As a cultural institution, the Thessaloniki Film Festival operates on a number of different scales - local, national, regional and global - equally and simultaneously. Originally a local initiative, it has always been identified with the city of Thessaloniki and historically has deep ties to other local institutions and histories. However, the identity of the festival as a local institution has been complicated by the fact that its main offices have been located in Athens for the past two decades, where all major programming and organizational decisions are made, aggravating an underlying rivalry between Athens and the country's "co-capital," as Thessaloniki is often called (*symprotevousa*). On another level, the history of the festival is inextricably entwined with the social and political history of the nation; it plays an important role in the national film industry and in the construction of a "national cinema," and, as the country's most important film festival, until recently funded in large part by the Ministry of Culture, the festival has a close relationship to the state. On yet another level, the Festival is an active presence in the Balkans, promoting and funding film production and distribution in the region. Finally, it is an inherently transnational institution, caught up in networks of global circulation and closely resembling the major western European international film festivals on which it was modeled. It is the transnational networks of festivals and film industries that sustain the festival's activities; it not only participates in these networks, but in fact relies on them for its continued existence. In that it traffics in the latest products, forms, and rhetoric of the international film festival network, the

festival demarcates a translocal cultural space characterized by mobility and cosmopolitanism, in this sense resembling Marc Augé's "non-places" of supermodernity.<sup>3</sup>

It seems appropriate, then, that my first encounter with the festival was "elsewhere," in a place and context very distant from the festival's namesake city. That first screening encapsulated the festival's complicated locality, which my later familiarization with the institution only confirmed. In preparing for the primary period of my fieldwork (July 2008- July 2010), I returned to the questions of diaspora, global mobility and transnational publics that the festival's traveling program had raised for me, transposing them back onto the festival itself. This time, my focus was on the festival as a crossroads of diverse global currents - of media, people, goods, capital, ideas - that was at the same time firmly rooted in its specific locality. Looking at how the festival functions on multiple scales at once - local, national, Balkan, European - I aimed to examine the sense of place and the kinds of publics that emerge in the process, and how people use the cultural space of the festival in order to articulate local and national social identities in the context of transnational mobility. In retrospect, it is possible to see emerging in these early research interests the idea of cultural citizenship that Nicoletta would later articulate. But as I prepared to enter the field, the question of the relationship between citizen and state vis-a-vis and via public culture was not yet of primary concern.

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<sup>3</sup> According to Augé, "non-places" are marked by a particular spatio-temporality that arises in the late twentieth century: "If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place. The hypothesis advanced here is that supermodernity produces non-places [...] A world where people are born in the clinic and die in hospital, where transit points and temporary abodes are proliferating under luxurious or inhuman conditions [...] where a dense network of means of transport which are also inhabited spaces is developing" (Augé 1995:77-78). Although Augé is careful to note that non-places do not exist in a pure form, he nevertheless maintains that "non-places are the real measure of our time; one that could be quantified [...] by totaling all the air, rail and motorway routes, the mobile cabins called 'means of transport' (aircraft, trains and road vehicles), the airports and railway stations, hotel chains, leisure parks, large retail outlets, and finally the complex skein of cable and wireless networks that mobilize extraterrestrial space for the purposes of a communication so peculiar that it often puts the individual in contact only with another image of himself" (Augé 1995:79).

### *Film Festival Studies*

By the time I left for Greece to begin my dissertation fieldwork, the small field of film festival studies had already been established, as a response to the rapid growth of film festivals around the world and their increasingly important role in all aspects of the global film industry and film culture - from distribution, exhibition and practices of spectatorship and cinephilia, to the development, financing and production of films themselves. Most of the scholars writing about film festivals were coming from film and media studies, and their research reflected a growing awareness of the social, political and economic complexity of festivals. The dominant concerns in this body of work reflected my own at the time - festivals as local nodes in a global network; the circulation of cultural goods, producers and capital within that network; and the forging of cultural identity in the process.

One of the first publications to address the film festival in this light, Thomas Elsaesser's "Film Festival Networks: The New Topographies of Cinema in Europe" articulates many of the terms and concepts that have dominated this new field of study. Elsaesser's essay considers the international film festival in the context of a larger discussion of what he refers to as the "post-national" in contemporary European cinema - in other words, the nation as understood neither in essentialist nor in constructivist terms, but rather as a set of ideas and practices "reintroduced for external use, so to speak, while suspended within the European Union" (Elsaesser 2005:70). In discussing the post-national, Elsaesser argues that the nation has become a "second-order concept" (Elsaesser 2005:82) - both in the production, exhibition and distribution of film in Europe, all of which are now mediated to some extent by the legislative and economic regulation of the European Union, and in the films themselves, which on the one hand either avoid explicit



references to the national, or on the other hand foreground national or local specificity self-consciously, either satirically or as a way to gain access to international and global markets. For Elsaesser, the international film festival functions as yet another site of the post-national. Although he acknowledges that film festivals began in the first half of the twentieth century as nationalist vehicles, he states that they have since developed into an international network that provides “another way of transcending the national for European films” (Elsaesser 2005:83). Taking up the vocabulary of the modern system theories of Niklas Luhmann, Manuel Castells and Bruno Latour, Elsaesser considers the festival in its role as a node in a network or circuit, emphasizing the “network effects that international film festivals now realize for the global media markets” (Elsaesser 2005:86), in the functioning of film and tourism industries, but also in the formation of audiences and aesthetic expectations and evaluations. This emphasis on “transcending the national” does not imply that Elsaesser wishes to disregard the concept of the nation altogether; rather, he asserts that the international film festival accommodates the return of the nation, by “reinstating it as a second-order category” (Elsaesser 2005:83). He writes that one of the main functions of the international festival is to “categorize, classify, sort, and sift the world’s annual film-production” (Elsaesser 2005:96); what emerges from this sorting and sifting is a particular spatial organization, an “architecture...articulated by the programming of the films” (Elsaesser 2005:96) in which the category of the nation still has considerable purchase.

The vocabulary of architecture, geography, space and emplacement plays a structuring role in Elsaesser’s discussion of festivals and goes hand in hand with the language of network and systems mentioned above. On one level, Elsaesser deals with the spatial imaginary of a festival, the particular spatial relations – local, regional, global – that are constructed through a festival’s

programming. On another level, he is also concerned with the relationship between the festival and its specific location; drawing attention to the complex interactions between festival, city image and urban space, he states that “the locations themselves have to be read symptomatically in relation to their history, politics and ideology, that is, in their typically European contexts of temporal layers and geographical sedimentation” (Elsaesser 2005:84). On the broadest level, he asserts the need to map out the “geographical-spatial extensions (the sites and cities hosting such film festivals) and particular temporal extensions (the sequential programming of the world’s major festivals to cover the calendar year)” (Elsaesser 2005:83-84) of the global festival network. It is this larger macro-level of the global network that is of primary concern to Elsaesser, who tends to focus on aspects or qualities of the film festival that can be considered “systemic,” characteristics shared by all festivals within the network or even necessary to the functioning of the network as such, e.g. each festival’s efforts to optimize the advantages of its particular location while at the same time conforming to a globally recognized festival format (Elsaesser 2005:86-87). Even when writing about a specific festival – about its historical development, current organization, relationship to the city in which it is located, etc. – he usually does so in order to illustrate an observation concerning all festivals in the network, or to highlight the connections between festivals (Elsaesser 2005:84-85, 89).

This focus on the festival circuit as global network does in many ways accurately reflect the realities, and the mobility, of the international film festival experience, and it lends itself to the larger “post-national” analysis of concern to Elsaesser. However, the danger in thus privileging the notion of network is that it leads to an understanding of festivals as constituting a smoothly running system, foregrounding connections, flows, and exchanges. Two other early contributors

to the field of film festival studies, Julian Stringer and Marijke de Valck, also use the vocabulary of network, space and system while addressing this concern. In his 2003 doctoral dissertation, “Regarding Film Festivals,” Stringer aims to piece together “a vast, sprawling map of transcultural film exhibition and consumption” (Stringer 2003:16-17). His cartographic reference is not incidental, but rather points to his larger, underlying concern with the “spatial logics” (Stringer 2003:109) of both the festival itself and the festival circuit. Drawing on Howard Becker’s notion of “art worlds” (Becker 1982) in order to elaborate on the institutional nature of the film festival, Stringer argues that all festival space, whether physical or virtual, constitutes an institutional space, characterized by a closely knit network of organizers, audience, and activities (Stringer 2003:18). He considers this festival space in relation to the larger space in which it is situated; regarding “the exhibition site itself as representative of a new kind of cultural geography,” he states that “the rise of film festivals on a global scale in the modern era cannot be separated from the widespread restructuring of an alternative social entity, namely the modern city” (Stringer 2003:104-05). Like Elsaesser, Stringer sees the film festival as playing an increasingly important role in the competition for capital and global financing among cities in the “global space economy” (Stringer 2003:112), particularly because of the connection between film festivals, international media presence and tourism. However, Stringer’s model of a global network of cities and festivals begins to depart from Elsaesser’s in that the former emphasizes the uneven power dynamics that characterize this network, envisioning it not as a system of smooth flows and exchanges, but rather as a field in which prestige, relative value and access to capital are continuously being contested. In the constant fluctuations of inter-city and inter-festival cooperation and competition, Stringer sees an inherent inequality at work; for him, the

international film festival circuit is “a metaphor for the geographically uneven development that characterizes the world of international film culture [...] a socially-produced space [...] that acts as a contact zone for the working through of unevenly differentiated power relationships” (Stringer 2003:108-09).

Like Stringer and Elsaesser, de Valck is primarily interested in the international film festival circuit as a network, and her research can be situated in the space between media studies, globalization studies and network theory. The aim of her 2007 book *Film Festivals: From European Geopolitics to Global Cinephilia* is to analyze how film festivals function as a global cultural-economic system, with each festival in its particular location constituting a node in a larger network. Echoing Springer, de Valck finds this network to be marked by inequality and tension. Although de Valck finds Bruno Latour’s actor-network theory useful in conceptualizing the film festival circuit as a network, she is also interested in the kinds of “power relations [...] that are difficult to discern with Latourian thinking alone” (de Valck 2007:40), and she turns to Manuel Castells’ work on the role of elites, political strategizing, and domination in spaces of social exchange. Most interestingly, she turns to Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s *Empire* and their theorization of a new political order on a global scale as a way to frame her own analysis of what she sees as the new *cultural* order evident in the international film festival circuit (de Valck 2007:68-69). For Hardt and Negri, the postmodern reconfiguration of power represents a new, heterogenous spatial order - characterized by deterritorialization, a lack of rigid boundaries, and no fixed center - that nevertheless continues to be determined by the exercise and contestation of power and dominance, which now operate in less explicit forms:

[T]he differences that appear after tearing down the binary boundaries of the nation-state do not move freely across global space, but, instead, are controlled in global networks of

power with highly differentiated and mobile structures. [...]olonialism was replaced by new forms of domination that, instead, operated globally and under the guise of open (fair) competition. (de Valck 2007:84-85)

For de Valck, Hardt and Negri's formulation of this new spatial order is an apt model for understanding how mobility and power operate in the film festival circuit, seen as a field of "unequal geopolitical power relations" (de Valck 2007:84) in which individuals, films, ideas and festivals themselves jockey for prestige, positioning and capital, both cultural and economic.

In this model of the festival network as contested field, both Stringer and de Valck see the city – and not the nation – emerging as the nodal point. Like Elsaesser, they are both primarily interested in a "second-order" manifestation of the nation, "the *idea* of national cinema as a form of cultural currency" (Stringer 2003:60, italics added), just one of many different factors at play in the power dynamics between festivals and festival sites. Their work takes part in "a spatial move away from geopolitics and 'the nation' towards the global economy and 'the city' [...] toward concerns with the interconnections between the multiplicity of technologies, institutions and markets in the contemporary global media culture" (de Valck 2007:30). This focus on the larger transnational network of festivals-cities has generally dominated film festival studies since it first began to emerge as a field about a decade ago - a tendency evidenced by a quick look at the *Film Festival Yearbook*, an annual collection of the most recent scholarly work produced on film festivals. The inaugural edition of the *Yearbook* (2009) takes as its overarching theme "The Festival Circuit," and its editors explicitly state that their goal is to move "above and beyond specific socio-geographical dimensions" and to focus "primarily on the international dynamics of festivals, on defining the place of festivals in international film distribution, exhibition and production, and on identifying the underlying forces that drive the growth of the festival

phenomenon within the system of global culture” (Iordanova 2009:3). The second edition of the *Yearbook* (2010), with the theme “Film Festivals and Imagined Communities,” similarly emphasizes the “global view” in its focus on diasporic communities and “a wider range of transnational formations related to the economics and the politics of those film festivals engaged in promoting a cause or a concept that transcends state borders through assisting the circulation of moving images in supranational spheres” (Iordanova 2010:1). In this dominant approach to the study of film festivals, the cultural politics and cultural economy of the nation-state are subsumed in a larger spatial logic in which “global cities” (Sassen 1991) act as the major points of articulation and orientation.<sup>4</sup>

### ***Greece and Thessaloniki***

As I began my fieldwork in the early fall of 2008, my research questions were more or less in line with this dominant approach. Broadly, I was concerned with how the Thessaloniki Film Festival functioned as a space in which local publics engage with transnational networks, creating a distinctly local sense of the global, and vice versa. While the editors of the *Film Festival Yearbook* called for researchers to move beyond the model of the case study - they argued that case study research, while useful, was limited in scope and did not provide a view onto “larger, structural models of the film festival circuit as a whole in a way that adequately takes into account their multiple institutional formations and identities” (Iordanova 2009:1) - I felt that it was only through an in-depth study of a particular festival and its specific location that it would be possible to truly understand the complex ways in which such institutions participate

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<sup>4</sup> For further reading in the field of film festival studies, see Czach 2004, Dayan 2000, Nichols 1994, Porton 2009, Ruoff 2012, Turan 2003, Wong 2011. Also see Loist and de Valck 2010.

in larger circuits, shaping and in turn being shaped by them. A more systemic approach is certainly valuable, and there is a need for research on transnational cultural economies and the international circulation of cultural forms, especially when case studies of individual film festivals can comprise little more than descriptions of programs, guest lists, mission statements or institutional histories. However, just as important as the larger “global view” is the insight and depth of understanding afforded by the socio-historically informed “close look,” particularly when that look is ethnographic, focusing on social practices and lived experience, with all their tensions, contradictions and nuance. If, as Stringer and de Valck argue, the larger festival network is characterized by uneven power relations, where each node in the network is not a site of smooth flow and exchange but rather a site of contestation and struggle over power, prestige and positioning - if the ideas, people, capital and cultural forms circulating in this network are not simply conducted from one node to another, but rather encounter each node as a site of resistance, where they are slowed down, taken up, contested or put to use - then as researchers we can only understand the negotiations that take place in these sites of resistance by ourselves stopping to take a close look at what is happening on the ground, in a particular place. I began my fieldwork focusing on the Thessaloniki festival and how it functions as a particular node - a site of conduction, of resistance - in a larger network, and how, as Stringer writes, it

must operate in two directions at once. As local differences are being erased through globalization, festivals need to be similar to one another, but as novelty is also at a premium, the local and the particular also becomes very valuable. Film festivals market both conceptual similarity and cultural difference. (Stringer 2001:140)

Greece is a particularly well-suited place to consider this coming together of the global and the local, transnational similarity and cultural difference. Since the late eighteenth century, the very idea of Modern Greece as an independent national entity was largely determined by ideas,

interests and forces that were bred and set in motion far from Greece, in the intellectual centers of western and central Europe and Russia. The struggle to establish a sovereign Greek state was driven by “an imported ideology” (Herzfeld 1986:21), a combination of Romantic nationalism and a fervor for a Classical Greek ideal, elaborated and promoted by Greek scholars and writers such as Rigas Velestinlis and Adamantios Korais who, while living and studying abroad, were exposed to Enlightenment ideas and inspired by the French Revolution. Their vision for a Greek nation-state, liberated from Ottoman rule, was centered on an assumed (or actively constructed) continuity between present-day Greeks, on the one hand, and the glorious cultural and political heritage of Ancient Greece, on the other.<sup>5</sup> Supported by European philhellenes and intellectuals of the Greek diaspora in organizations and secret societies such as the *Philiki Eteria* (Friendly Society) in Odessa and the *Ellinoglosson Xenodokhion* (Greek Hostel) in Paris (Clogg 1980:47), this vision served as the ideological basis for the Greek War of Independence (1821-1832). The notion of cultural continuity between modern and ancient Greeks was offered not only as a justification for Greece’s independent statehood; Greek intellectuals and the political elite also hoped that, through the attainment of sovereignty based on this ideology, Greece could claim for herself a position in the Europe - as both a political entity and a cultural ideal - that was taking shape in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As Herzfeld notes, “The partially western origins of their vision hardly dismayed the Greek intellectuals, for whom all European wisdom was Greek by definition and derivation” (Herzfeld 1986:15), and he quotes Korais as declaring, “The Greeks, proud of their origin, far from closing their eyes to the lights of Europe, considered the Europeans as mere debtors who would repay with very great interest a capital sum received

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<sup>5</sup> For more on the ideological and cultural constructions underlying early Greek nationalism, see Gourgouris 1996, Herzfeld 1986.



by them from the Greeks' ancestors" (Herzfeld 1986:16). By thus arguing their way into the origin myths of Europe, the intellectual leaders of the Greek revolution were positioning the fledgling nation, both temporally and spatially, in two places at once: on the cusp of modernity and at the heart of an ancient origin, at the margins of Europe and at its very center. In this double vision, Greece is presented both as a culturally specific national entity and as the source of a transnational, even universal, cultural legacy; indeed, it is precisely this universal legacy that is offered up as the culturally specific justification for Greek sovereignty. Ultimately, it was only with the diplomatic intervention and active military and financial support of foreign powers - primarily France, the United Kingdom and Russia - that the Ottomans were defeated and a tenuous political stability established, following the appointment, again by foreign powers, of a Bavarian prince as the first king of Greece. Both on an ideological and on a quite practical level, the emergence of Greece as a modern nation-state was predicated on the coupling of the here and the elsewhere: on the one hand, local cultural and historical specificity, and on the other, ideologies and aspirations, interests and interventions that were foreign in origin, and transnational in scope.

The tension between the local and the global, between the native and the foreign, has continued to characterize Greek political, social and cultural life in the last two centuries. The country's strategic position between Europe and Asia, on the doorstep of the Middle East and North Africa, and as a front in the Cold War guaranteed continuous foreign interventions in domestic political affairs. In the cultural arena, the ideal of Greek nationality, as forged by intellectuals and elites abroad, came into conflict early on with native, "Romeic" understandings of Greek identity - a nationalist ideology that centers on the importance of Orthodox Christianity,

as well as linguistic and cultural forms that developed over four centuries of Ottoman rule, as opposed to romantic evocations of an idealized Classical Greece.<sup>6</sup> This tension was manifested in a number of ways, most notably in the nineteenth-century debate over the national language, which pitted advocates of *katharevousa*, an archaized form of modern Greek supposedly – and ironically – “cleansed” of foreign borrowings, against advocates of *dimotiki*, or vernacular Greek; *katharevousa* was eventually adopted for use in government, educational institutions, and news media up until the 1970s.<sup>7</sup> In this early struggle over language, we can see at work the push and pull of the native and the foreign, the here and the elsewhere, a dynamic that has shaped all aspects of life in Greece, in complex and even contradictory ways. In Greece, narratives of national history and identity have usually been constructed as much for foreign as for domestic consumption.<sup>8</sup>

The global forces of migration and diaspora have also played integral roles in the construction of Greek identity. Just as the borders of the country have shifted a number of times over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – Greece is now about twice the size it was originally when the borders were first drawn up in 1832, with the last expansion being the acquisition of the Dodecanese islands from Italy in 1947 (Clogg 1980:159) – so the Greek social landscape has undergone seismic upheavals in the twentieth century. Following the disastrous end of the Greek irredentist campaign in Asia Minor in 1922, a massive population exchange between Greece and Turkey resulted in over a million ethnic-Greeks from millenia-old Greek communities in Asia Minor flooding into Greece; as an indication of the magnitude of what is

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<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of the Hellenic-Romeic distinction, see Herzfeld 1986:18-21.

<sup>7</sup> For further reading on the tension between *katharevousa* and *demotiki* - often referred to as the Greek “language question” - see Alexiou 1982, Beaton 1994, Gourgouris 1996.

<sup>8</sup> See Herzfeld 1997, 2002.

referred to in Greece as the “Asia Minor Catastrophe,” the city of Athens nearly doubled in population as a result of the exchange. Apart from the economic and logistical problems arising from such a large and sudden influx of refugees, serious questions arose concerning the possibility of a coherent Greek identity. As the Asia Minor refugees – some of whom did not even speak Greek – began settling into Greek towns and cities, both refugees and native Greeks found themselves face to face with both self and other, experiencing a disquieting combination of foreignness and familiarity in the inability to clearly distinguish between the two.<sup>9</sup> The Asia Minor Catastrophe, and the questions it raises concerning modern Greek identity, are just one part of a long and complex history of migrations in Greece that begins as far back as the Hellenic diasporas of Ancient, Byzantine and Ottoman times, and continues into the present. Throughout the nineteenth century and most of the twentieth century, Greece was primarily a country of emigration, with large numbers of Greeks settling abroad for economic reasons. After the second world war, these economic reasons were joined by political ones, particularly the Greek civil war (1945-49), which resulted in many adherents of the political Left leaving the country after the defeat of the Communists in 1949, and the rise of the military dictatorship (1967-74), which also resulted in many Greeks leaving the country as political exiles. It is estimated that, between 1945 and 1973, “the net emigration of Greeks totaled nearly one million persons” (Fakiolas 1999:193) well over 10 percent of the country’s population at the time. Because of this long legacy of migration and diaspora, being Greek often involves an awareness or an experience of being something - or somewhere - else as well.

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<sup>9</sup> See Hirschon 1989.

In the 1970s and 1980s, due to Greece's increasing political and economic stability and the fall of the military dictatorship in 1974, the number of Greeks emigrating to other countries dropped significantly, while the number of immigrants began to rise for the same reasons. Many Greek emigrants and political exiles were repatriated, while "ethnic Greeks" made their way back to their ancestral home.<sup>10</sup> The end of the Cold War and the opening of Greece's borders with the former Yugoslavia and Albania brought an influx of immigrants, both legal and illegal, from neighboring countries. Over the past decade, immigration has continued to swell, with ever-rising numbers of economic and political migrants; many of these more recent immigrants are seeking refuge from war-torn, politically unstable or economically depressed home countries in the Middle East, South Asia, North and West Africa, and Greece has become a gateway to the more prosperous but less accessible countries of western Europe. The last few years have also seen a rapid growth in the Chinese communities in Greece, particularly in urban centers, where they have quickly established large Chinatowns. It is now estimated that the number of foreigners residing in Greece is over one million, about 10 percent of the country's total population. These large numbers of immigrants have overwhelmed the administrative capacities of the Greek state, which has been unable to control illegal immigration or to adequately process and provide for legal immigrants and asylum seekers. Meanwhile, public discourse on immigration has been dominated by the figure of the immigrant as marking a rupture in the social fabric; in both the media and in everyday talk, illegal immigrants are commonly associated

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<sup>10</sup> Of the nearly one million emigrants who left Greece in the time period between 1945 and 1973 alone, over six hundred thousand returned between 1971 and 1985, and "by the mid-1980s, almost half of the economic migrants to Northern Europe and about three-quarters of the political refugees had returned home" (Fakiolas 1999:193). "Ethnic Greeks" is the term often used to refer to those who do not live in Greece and who may not even have been born within its borders, but who can claim Greek descent through either of their parents. Since the end of World War II, "over three hundred thousand ethnic Greeks who had lived for decades in Turkey, Egypt, Zaire, Northern Cyprus, Albania, Rumania, and the former Soviet Union have resettled in Greece" (Fakiolas 1999:193-4).

with criminality and poverty, or in the case of the Chinese, with unchecked and even predatory economic practices to the detriment of Greek businesses (Rosen 2011). These representations only exacerbate the problems that actually do exist on the ground: the absence of clear pathways to legalization; entrenched and widespread discrimination; the lack of sufficient housing, health care, jobs and schooling for immigrants and asylum seekers. In already overcrowded urban centers, communities and individuals strain to negotiate disparate ethnic, religious and cultural identities in close quarters, and with the current economic crisis, which among some has resulted in an atmosphere of heightened xenophobia and the rise of an extreme fascist right, violence against immigrants has risen sharply.

Underlying the formidable practical challenges posed by the “immigration issue” (*metanastefitiko zitima*) in Greece over the last two decades - how to provide for immigrants legally, materially and socially - are deeper questions of what the immigrants’ presence means for Greek social and cultural identity. If the immigrant is seen as a rupture in the social fabric, then is the solution simply to patch up the holes and try to prevent new ones, or should that fabric itself change to accommodate new threads, new patterns, new structures? In and of itself a difficult question, it is complicated further by being framed, on one end, by the dominant twentieth-century public and state discourses of Greek national homogeneity and, on the other end, by the pull of Europeanization, modernization and the multiculturalism that they demand. The issue of immigration is yet another illustration of the complexity of the native-foreign, local-global dynamic in Greece. On one level, immigration represents yet another way in which the elsewhere impinges on the here; political and economic conditions in other parts of the world, and the resulting transnational movement of people, are determining factors in the

reconsideration of what it means to live in Greece, and what it means to be Greek, in a changing world. On another level, Greeks' reactions to and handling of immigration must also be oriented to an international audience; the desire to identify with a modern and progressive Europe requires a public commitment to tolerance, integration, and multiculturalism, while EU immigration policy puts pressure on the Greek state to better process and provide for immigrants and asylum seekers (Kasimis 2012).<sup>11</sup> In this sense, the immigration issue is another, recent example of how global forces and foreign concerns condition the practices and discourses of social life in Greece on a fundamental level.

Similarly, Thessaloniki is a city whose identity has shifted over the course of its history between the poles of provincialism and cosmopolitanism, homogeneity and diversity, the here and the elsewhere. The country's second largest city and the economic, cultural and political capital of northern Greece, Thessaloniki was historically one of the most important commercial centers in the Balkans, for many centuries a crossroads of diverse social currents. While Athens was no more than a modestly sized town when named capital of Greece in 1834, at that time Thessaloniki could already claim over two thousand years as a bona fide metropolis, port, trade and military hub. The urban history of Thessaloniki is a complex layering of Ancient, Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman, Jewish, Muslim, and Christian cultures; indeed, this layering is still evident today, in the dense patchwork of archaeological sites from various historical periods dug out from the cityscape - a materialization of the cultural stratification that characterized life in Thessaloniki for many centuries. As historian Mark Mazower illustrates in his book on Thessaloniki's cosmopolitan history, it is a city whose very locality, or sense of place, was built

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<sup>11</sup> The EU Dublin II Regulation leaves Greece facing the nearly impossible task of dealing with over 80 percent of illegal immigration into Europe.

on the waves of movement – of people, goods, capital, armies, ideas – that have passed through it (Mazower 2005). Its strategic location ensured its status as an important center of trade and transit, with the Roman Via Egnatia, the road connecting Constantinople overland to the Adriatic Sea and eventually to Rome, passing right through its center.

However, despite this history of transcontinental movement and cultural heterogeneity, Thessaloniki has not escaped the narratives of ethnic, linguistic and religious homogeneity that have dominated Greek national identity in the twentieth century. After the defeat of the Ottomans in the First Balkan War and the integration of Thessaloniki into the Greek state in 1912, there began a steady process of Hellenization and the gradual erasure of the city's diverse history - in its architecture, its place-names, its bureaucratic structures, its language, and its population. Neither has the city been able to fend off a growing provincialization in the shadow of Athens. As the capital has grown over the last century into the definitive political, economic and cultural center of the country, with nearly half of the entire country's population living within the limits of its greater metropolitan area, Thessaloniki has increasingly become characterized as a relatively provincial second-city. Despite its proximity to neighboring Turkey, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Albania, Thessaloniki is seen as lacking the more desirable cosmopolitan offerings and international connections of Athens, and perhaps it even suffers from its close historical, geographical and cultural association with the Ottoman empire, the Balkans and Turkey, which have largely been shunned by twentieth century Greek narratives of modernization and Europeanization, in favor of Classical and Hellenistic reference points. The same "Eastern" qualities of life in Thessaloniki that, for some, give the city a cosmopolitan sense of cultural diversity - what Mazower calls "the presence of a different Greece, less in thrall to an

ancient past, more intimately linked to neighboring peoples, languages and cultures” (Mazower 2005:1) - are precisely those qualities that do not fit conveniently into the version of Greece constructed to integrate into the European Union - culturally, politically and economically.

In Greece, the cultural specificity of Thessaloniki is noticeably marked. A word commonly used to describe the northern city is *khalara*, meaning “loose,” “at ease,” or “easily,” with connotations of slowness and leisure. Both Thessalonicians and non-Thessalonicians alike use the word to describe life in the city - everyday rhythms, one’s approach to work and relationships, patterns of eating, even ways of speaking; Thessalonicians are famous, and even mock themselves, for their lazily rolled *l*’s, their elongated vowels and grammatical shortcuts. Compared to Athens, where the pace of life is generally faster and the size of the city results in a heightened sense of urban anonymity, in Thessaloniki one feels more strongly the pull of social relationships, of biological and spiritual kinship ties and the networks of *parea*, one’s (usually extensive) circle of friends. Days are often punctuated by long, leisurely lunches with friends and family, or hours spent lingering over coffee and chatting with one’s *parea* in an outdoor cafe overlooking a square or the harbor. Related to this deep investment in close social relationships is a passionate localism; Thessalonicians are known for strongly identifying with and being fiercely proud of their city.

The flip side of being *khalara* - at ease, laid back, or leisurely - is laziness. Again, Thessalonicians are often described as - and, among friends, jokingly describe themselves as - lazy, the position they occupy in the larger set of regional stereotypes in Greece, which includes the industrious but snobby Athenian, the brave but violent Cretan, the stubborn and cunning



Peloponnesian, and so on.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, the flip-side of localism is provincialism, of which Thessalonians are often accused. Early in my fieldwork, in a conversation with a new friend, I referred to an article I had recently come across in the *New York Times* that described the city as a cosmopolitan alternative to Athens; the article pointed to the city's "intriguing multiethnic history and an arty counterculture" to make the argument that it was "something of a Seattle of the Balkans" (Kakissis 2007). My friend, an architect and anthropologist who had gone to university in Thessaloniki, immediately balked at the characterization. She said that she herself had made the same mistake, deciding to attend the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki because she thought that the city would be cosmopolitan and progressive, a welcome change from her hometown on the island of Crete; upon arriving, however, she quickly discovered a socially conservative, racist and even xenophobic streak among locals - something that became especially apparent in the turmoil in the mid-1990s over the naming of the newly independent republic of Macedonia, during which Thessaloniki emerged as a center of extreme nationalist sentiment.<sup>13</sup> "Whatever past the city might have had," she asserted, Thessaloniki today was certainly not cosmopolitan.

In recent years, this provincialization and ethnic, religious and linguistic homogeneity have served as a backdrop for new forms of cosmopolitanism and diversity, emerging with the major socio-political and cultural shifts of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. In the 1990s, as Greece was undergoing major changes in its international orientation - preparing to enter the Eurozone, while also adjusting to the dissolution of the Soviet Union and negotiating

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<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, the stereotypes of Greeks in general that have been circulating since the start of the Greek economic crisis and the subsequent Eurozone crisis - that Greeks are lazy and work-shy - are precisely the stereotypes often used to characterize Thessalonians within Greece. In that sense, they could be considered the Greeks of Greece!

<sup>13</sup> See Cowan 2000, Danforth 1995, Sutton 1997.

new relationships with its post-Yugoslav neighbors - a number of developments, particularly in the cultural sector, began to redefine Thessaloniki as a more worldly, cosmopolitan city. In 1992, the long-running Thessaloniki Film Festival was completely overhauled to more closely resemble high-profile international film festivals such as those in Cannes, Berlin and Venice. The newly appointed director, Michel Demopoulos, had lived in Paris during the years of the Greek junta, studying film and beginning his career as a film critic; to the Thessaloniki festival, which in the 1980s had seen a period of decline and insularity, he brought his international experience, contacts and a broad vision for an institution much more open and connected to what was happening in world cinema. Under Demopoulos, the festival was transformed from a small, national showcase with limited reach beyond the Greek public to a sprawling annual event that drew worldwide attention for its international programming. A few years later, Thessaloniki raised its international profile even further when it was chosen to be the 1997 European Capital of Culture, by the EU program which selects one or two smaller European cities every year and aims to "make the culture of the cities accessible to a European audience, and, secondly, to create a picture of European culture as a whole" (Deffner and Labrianidis 2005:242). The designation brought to the city a flush of EU funding to support a year of extensive cultural programming, both Greek and foreign; the creation of new cultural institutions, and the growth of existing ones; and the expansion of the city's cultural infrastructure in the form of buildings, public spaces and other facilities. The scope of the year-long, city-wide project was immense (Deffner and Labrianidis 2005:248-249), and while many have criticized its overall effectiveness and long-term impact, Thessaloniki's tenure as the "cultural capital" of Europe was undeniably instrumental in recasting the city as a modern urban center participating in a wider European and

even global cultural economy. Since then, the city has continued to enjoy this new brand of cosmopolitanism, bringing an array of international performers, musicians, artists and filmmakers to its concert halls, theaters, museums and festivals, and staging its own contemporary art biennial. This particular form of foreignness is welcomed, taken as a point of pride. For example, on numerous occasions both festival staff and festival-goers publicly referred to my research - the fact that an Asian-American from Harvard University would spend such a great deal of time and effort studying the festival - as a confirmation of the festival's international reach and reputation.

At the same time that the city fosters this kind of diversity, welcomed as signs of modernization and cultural capital, it is also struggling with less desirable forms of foreignness, namely the last two decades of immigration into Greece discussed above. While the problems associated with the "immigration issue" are most evident in Athens, because of its size and population density, most urban centers across Greece have been affected by these recent waves of immigration, and Thessaloniki, as the second largest city in the country, is no different; indeed, because of its proximity to the overland crossing between Greece and Turkey, Thessaloniki is often a first stop for many illegal immigrants. This influx of immigrants has created a new "diversity" that can be seen as an echo of the social diversity of Ottoman Thessaloniki, which was itself characterized by conflict among the city's various ethnic and religious groups. However, against the backdrop of the twentieth century's social homogenization and Hellenization of Thessaloniki, this twenty-first century version of diversity becomes not a sign of a desirable cosmopolitanism, but rather an unwanted foreignness invading and disrupting social life.

### *An unexpected state of crisis*

In an essay on the ethnographic process, Ruth Behar characterizes fieldwork as an exercise in the unexpected. Recounting how she first came to ethnography, she writes:

I was seduced by the notion of fieldwork, the idea of going some place to find a story I wasn't looking for. Of course, ethnographic journeys are always taken with the knowledge that the "field" has already been theorized by precursors of various sorts. But the beauty and mystery of the ethnographer's quest is to find the unexpected stories, the stories that challenge our theories [...] We go to find the stories we didn't know we were looking for in the first place. (Behar 2003:16)

Behar's description of the ethnographic journey, as encounters with the unexpected in a theorized terrain, is an apt description for my own experience in the field. When I began the main portion of my fieldwork in the early fall of 2008, I had already established a certain familiarity with the terrain, and I brought with me a set of questions and concerns that I assumed would serve as a background narrative for my research - a story, as outlined above, of cosmopolitanism and provincialism, diversity and homogeneity, modern and ancient, foreign and native. In Thessaloniki, as in the rest of Greece, these traditional binaries are constantly in flux, with the two elements in each binary continually shifting in their social meaning and value in relation to each other, and it is precisely this state of flux that has defined the modern Greek experience. With this in mind, I entered the field expecting to investigate how the film festival, as a cultural institution, contributes to and is shaped by this shifting, push-and-pull dynamic between the here and the elsewhere, between the local and the global. However, not long after I began the main portion of my fieldwork, the unexpected erupted, as it inevitably does, drastically changing the ground of my research and causing me to shift the terms of my ethnographic inquiry.

On the evening of 6 December 2008, a few months after I had arrived in Greece, fifteen-year old Alexis Grigoropoulos was shot and killed by police gunfire in the Exarchia neighborhood of

Athens. What ensued was an unprecedented explosion of protest and collective rage, led by urban youth, that ripped across the country. For weeks following the shooting, the streets of Athens and other cities - both big and small, on the mainland as well as on the usually sleepier islands, both close to the capital and out in the nation's *periferies* - were filled with thousands of protesters marching against the shooting. Students occupied middle schools, high schools and universities nation-wide, while teachers' unions and other labor groups called strikes in solidarity. While some of the protests were peaceful, albeit tense, many ended in rioting and violence, with vandalism of both public and private property, hundreds of arrests, and bloody clashes between small armies of riot police and the infamous *koukoulofori* - a term that literally means "those who wear hoods," used to describe groups of protesters, hidden behind masks or wearing hooded sweatshirts pulled over their heads, who are often portrayed, particularly in mainstream media, as hoodlums responsible for instigating violence during protests. Police responded to protests and rioting with harsh measures, using tear gas and other chemicals and beating protesters, photographers and journalists, all of which aggravated public anger and led to further protests and violence. In the first few days after the shooting, over five hundred shops in the centers of Athens and Thessaloniki were damaged or looted, resulting in an estimated €50 million in damages.<sup>14</sup> Hundreds of protesters and police were injured, government buildings and police stations were firebombed, cars and dumpsters burned in the streets, and even the towering Christmas tree erected every year in Athens' central Syntagma Square, directly opposite the Parliament building, was set ablaze - a potent and very public symbol of the destructive outrage triggered by the teenager's death.

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<sup>14</sup> <http://news.in.gr/economy/article/?aid=966466>

Out of the swirl of rumors, news reports and counter-reports that circulated in the days following the shooting, the details of what happened that night quickly began to emerge: Grigoropoulos, a hard-working student from an affluent northern suburb, was visiting a friend who lives in the Exarchia neighborhood when they got caught up in an altercation between two policemen and another, larger group of youth. What was at first a verbal exchange of insults became violent when one of the boys in the larger group threw a glass bottle in the policemen's direction; one of the cops snapped, drew his gun and shot into the crowd, hitting and killing Grigoropoulos, who happened to have been standing between the police and the larger group. Other versions of the events also circulated - in an early report, Grigoropoulos was cast as a *koukouloforos*, anarchist and trouble-maker, the implication being that he was at fault for provoking the policemen; according to another version, the teenager had been killed by ricochet bullets from warning shots that were not aimed to kill - but these were quickly dispelled, and the two policemen involved were eventually found guilty and convicted of murder.

While the police shooting of an innocent teenage boy is tragic and unjust, clearly it was not in and of itself the sole reason behind such civil unrest and destruction. As the protests continued and grew in intensity, it soon became clear that the shooting had a larger social significance, beyond the problem of police brutality. To begin with, the circumstances of Grigoropoulos' death resonated with larger histories of state violence in Greece. Exarchia, where the shooting took place, is a central neighborhood known for being highly politicized, an area popular with students, leftist activists and intellectuals, punks and anarchists, and for this reason an area that is also often patrolled by police, generally resulting in a heightened sense of tension and occasionally in physical clashes. It is where protesters running from riot police often go to take

shelter, and where the legacy of resistance to the 1967-1974 military dictatorship can still be keenly felt. Located in this neighborhood are both the University of Athens Law School and the *Polytekhnio*, or the National Technical University of Athens, where in 1973 students staged bloody occupations, leading to direct military attacks on the schools, the massacre of dozens of students and, eventually, the downfall of the dictatorship the following year. A few decades before that, Exarchia was one of the key battlefields during the *Dekemvriana*, a month-long period at the end of 1944 and beginning of 1945 when leftist and communist groups faced off with the post-World War II government and their British political and military supporters, in a series of armed conflicts in the streets of Athens that was a dark precursor to the Greek Civil War (1946-1949). The neighborhood of Exarchia is inscribed with these - and other, older - histories of popular and student resistance to the state, and these histories served as part of the larger narrative within which Grigoropoulos' death was understood. The early dispute over his characterization as a *koukouloforos* makes this fact clear - for those on one end of the political spectrum, he was an anarchist asking for trouble, while for those on the other end, he was yet another student-citizen victimized by state violence.

In addition to activating these neighborhood-specific histories of resistance to the state, the incident also unleashed larger, underlying social frustrations and grievances that had been building up over years. When I began my fieldwork, there were a series of government scandals that dominated headlines; the two largest involved bribery of government officials by the German communications company Siemens and sweetheart land-swap deals between the state and the Greek Orthodox Vatopedi monastery, both of which implicated figures from across the political spectrum and are estimated collectively to have cost the public billions of euros.

Everyday conversations with friends and informants revealed a general sentiment, that such high-level state scandals were just part of a much larger culture of corruption and lack of transparency that characterized the public sector in Greece. It was widely acknowledged that nepotism, clientelism and outright bribery were the *modi operandi* not just in the halls of government, but in universities, hospitals, courts and any other public agencies or institutions. The circulation of *fakelakia*, literally “little envelopes” full of cash given in exchange for services or favors, and the reliance on a *meson*, a family connection or personal intermediary, to ensure a favorable outcome are common practices when people are applying for permits, vying for a job as a civil servant, or even trying to get medical procedures at public hospitals. One friend, after handing in her application for a university lectureship, admitted that she already knew she would not get it, since she knew the other candidate whose *meson* would guarantee the position. A young man, soon to begin his military service, told me that his own *meson*, a family friend who was a highly-ranked officer, would most likely get him assigned to an easy post in Athens. An architect explained to me that it is a common practice among many of her colleagues, when estimating budgets for potential clients, to include an amount specifically for the *fakelakia* needed to expedite the application process for a building permit, as well as to hire a kind of professional *meson*, a person whose job is to show up at the local Building Permits office everyday to ply bureaucrats with gifts and payments and to push persistently for permits. And yet another friend, an American who had recently moved to Greece on a more permanent basis, explained to me that she preferred to live in Greece, where at least the corruption was blatant, so that she could see it with her own eyes, as opposed to in the US, where corporate and political interests colluded behind closed doors, far from public view. Alongside this acknowledgement of



wide-spread corruption, there was also a simmering frustration, particularly among those in their twenties and thirties, with their lack of earning power and the sense of limited professional horizons. When I was in the field, "The 700 Generation" was a phrase commonly used to describe a whole generation of highly educated professionals who were only able to find work for which they were overqualified and underpaid, the average salary hovering around €700 a month. The scarcity of suitable jobs for this "700 Generation" was an early indication of the economic crisis that was already in motion; well before George Papandreou's revelation of the crippling levels of Greek sovereign debt in late 2009, people were already feeling the effects of recession in their everyday lives, as the economic bubble of the early 2000s in Greece was quickly deflating. This financial and professional uncertainty, together with the governmental scandals and entrenched corruption in the public sector, led to a underlying sense of frustration with and distrust of the state, which was seen as having abused the country's finances for the benefit of the elite few, and in the process having failed to provide for its citizens' economic and social welfare. The shooting of Grigoropoulos was a lit match in this larger tinderbox of social discontent, which exploded in public expressions of collective fury.

Of course, Greece is no stranger to protest. In a country where political graffiti is ubiquitous, and where national holidays mark historical dates of uprising and resistance - e.g. October 28, or *OKHI* ("No") day, when student and military parades celebrate the day Greece famously refused to surrender to Italian invasion in 1940; or November 17, when thousands march in the streets to commemorate the day in 1973 when the *Polytekhnio* and its students fell to the military dictatorship - public protest can be so common as to sometimes seem *commonplace*. During my fieldwork, when strikes and protests grew more frequent with the worsening economic crisis and

political instability, on more than a few occasions friends would suggest that we "meet at the protest" rather than for a coffee, and on protest days local pharmacists in my neighborhood would have on hand extra supplies of surgical masks and Maalox, which protesters heading to the march, encouraged by the pharmacists, would rub on their faces to counteract the effects of tear gas. In Greece, protest can feel fairly run-of-the-mill.

But the sustained unrest in December 2008 and January 2009 was different. It felt unusual in its ferocity, but more importantly, in the kinds of public discourse that grew around and from it. The marches, occupations and riots were accompanied by an ever-growing cloud of "talk" and the written word that aimed at collective action and fundamental change in the political and social *status quo*. In the December 2008 issue of *Synkhrona Themata*, a scholarly and political journal published in Athens, an entire section of the journal is dedicated to an initial accounting of some of this discursive output, including slogans on protest banners, graffiti, and public statements made by activist groups and professional organizations, as well as individual comments and discussions on blogs, Twitter feeds, Facebook pages, alternative media sites and both Greek and international websites. In an introduction to this collection of material, the authors argue that this public discourse went "beyond the narrow temporal and geographical boundaries of the event" (Ananiadis et al. 2008:6) by harnessing the speed and wide reach of new media and electronic communication for the purposes of resisting state actions and narratives, countering reports made by state-sanctioned mainstream media, and getting people out into the street in organized and coordinated movements. While the authors find that, as a whole, this discourse was polyphonic, heterogeneous and even disorderly, expressing a wide range of ideological positions, it was nevertheless coherent in its expression of "the deep feeling

of dysphoria in the face of a seemingly 'dead-end' situation, the demand for real sociality, the criticism of commercial and consumer society and a strong anti-establishment attitude” (Ananiadis et al. 2008:8). Indeed, Penelope Papailias, in writing about the current Greek economic crisis and how participating in digital public discourse has now been defined as a "profound act of engaged citizenship," points back to December 2008 as the period in which this new civic discourse first emerged: "Turning to the current debt crisis, one finds that many people active in blogging or digital news-gathering collectives point to the formative days of December 2008, or even self-identify as members of the 'Generation of December', when they speak of their practice" (Papailias 2011).

In the months following the shooting, as this discourse of civic rights and responsibilities was emerging online, I noticed that the same themes and language were dominating my everyday conversations with friends, fieldwork subjects and even passing acquaintances. Nearly everyone I knew or spoke to was affected, either directly or indirectly, by the political, social and economic instability that cast an ever-present shadow on all aspects of life - either out of work or waiting for paychecks; juggling salary or pension cuts with austerity-induced increases in bills and taxes; struggling through an ill-equipped public education system badly in need of reform; fighting clientelism and nepotism; unable to find adequate medical care. Conversations and interviews would inevitably turn to a discussion of the “uprising” (*ekseghersi*), the ongoing strikes and protests, party politics and the shortcomings of the state. Some would talk about the lack of transparency (*dhiafania*) and accountability (*ypofthinotita*) in government and the public sector; others lamented what they saw as the lack of civic participation and a sense of responsibility for collective welfare. For many, the two went hand-in-hand. One long-time

festival employee gave me his take on the situation in Greece, addressing the economic crisis in terms that wove together the economy, the state and the individual:

The problem is that Greece doesn't produce anything. And the fact that it doesn't produce anything has to do with the fact that education in Greece is a mess. All of this is connected to the "kickback", with this mindset of the "*meson*". Ultimately it's all political - you do things to ensure state support, state money or a public-sector position. In the past, let's say in the 1970s, Greeks had honor, which had to do with trustworthiness, not cheating other people. Now, Greeks have changed. We've lost this sense of honor, and Greek society has been taken over by this "lifestyle" mentality, consumer culture. [...] While the crisis is economic, it's more of an ethical crisis, that has to do with how you set your priorities, your values.<sup>15</sup>

What is interesting to note in his observations is the way in which the state is seamlessly woven into the larger narrative of the Greek "problem." In his account, the loss of *filotimo* or honor - of an honorable way of dealing with others, of living collectively - is part of a larger way of life in which consumerism rules and the relationship between citizen and state has been perverted into one of cynical opportunism and the selfish pursuit of economic advantage. The unethical citizen and the irresponsible state are ultimately to blame for the crisis, an opinion shared by many of the people I encountered during my fieldwork.

This formulation of "the problem" in terms of citizens' rights, state responsibility and civic consciousness became so prevalent in Greece that even the mainstream media picked up on it. Almost a year after the shooting of Grigoropoulos, the weekly magazine of *Kathimerini* - one of the country's most widely circulating daily newspapers, in general highly regarded for its reporting and thought to be center-right in its politics - ran a cover story called "Citizens Sound Off: On political parties, politicians and the issues that matter to them most" (*Polites zitoun to*

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<sup>15</sup> The term "lifestyle," used as an adjective, was one that many people I spoke to in the field used to describe what they saw as the consumer society that became dominant in Greece in the late 1990s and 2000s. It is taken from the "lifestyle" magazines that also became popular at the time, which promoted conspicuous consumption and luxury goods (women's magazines, decor, shopping, tourism, etc.).

*logho: Ghia ta kommata, tous politikous, kai ta themata pou tous "kene"*) (Periodiko K 2009). In the article, a wide range of ordinary Greeks were asked to respond to questions such as "What do you think is the most serious problem in Greece today, and what would you expect the next government to do about it?", "With what criteria do you vote?", "Do you trust either of the two parties in power?" and "Maybe we're also to blame? Have you ever asked a politician for a favor?" Even the political parties themselves strategically adopted the terms of this civic discourse, particularly in the run-up to the emergency national elections of October 2009 which were held, two years before the next regularly scheduled elections, in large part because of the sustained unrest following the shooting of Grigoropoulos and overwhelming public disapproval of the center-right New Democracy party in office at the time. The center-left opposition party, PASOK (Panhellenic Socialist Movement), rode the wave of public sentiment and built its election campaign on a rhetoric of transparency and accountability towards citizens, with the main party slogan, "The Citizen Comes First" (*Prota o Politis*), splashed across posters, billboards and in television commercials. One PASOK campaign commercial during this period emphatically declared, "We imposed absolute transparency in our income and expenses [...] No tolerance for 'dirty' money. We spoke cleanly and clearly, and that which we said we put into practice. That's how we want to govern." Promising to right the relationship gone wrong between state and citizen, PASOK roundly defeated New Democracy in the emergency elections.

As is now well known, the PASOK takeover of government in October 2009 did not solve the country's problems, nor did it quell the public unrest. If anything, the situation only grew worse, as the economy unraveled further, governments both elected and appointed came and went, and the "troika" of foreign lenders - the European Union, the European Central Bank, and the

International Monetary Fund - began to intervene in 2010, to much public protest. Through all of this, the nation-state and its relationship to its citizens remained one of the central terms by which developments were understood and evaluated. The 2010 *mnimonio* or memorandum, the agreement spelling out the terms of the EU-ECB-IMF bailout of the Greek government, was widely seen as the state's betrayal of its citizens, who suffered the brunt of the austerity measures stipulated in the agreement in order for the government to continue paying its debts, primarily to foreign creditors; the second bailout agreement passed in 2012 was received similarly. Among the reforms required by the bailout was a sharp reduction in the size of the Greek public sector, commonly referred to as the *dhimosio*. For decades, a position as a civil servant has been considered highly desirable, guaranteeing a decent salary, job security, possible political connections and potentially even positions for one's children, but with the pressure of the economic crisis, the public sector began to be characterized as bloated, filled with complacent and unnecessary bureaucrats occupying life-long positions, inefficient, corrupt and draining the state budget. As the Papandreou government began to overhaul the public sector in 2010, people's opinions on the matter once again centered on the relationship between the state and its citizens; among my friends and fieldwork subjects, some expressed dismay at the swift cuts to paychecks and sudden threat to job security, others were skeptical that the state would actually dismantle such an important part of its patronage system, while yet others confided half-jokingly that they knew they had lived for too long on the largesse of the state. Another bailout mandate met with consternation was the privatization of national industries and the selling off of state assets; as reports and rumors spread about the sale of the national lottery, the water utility, ports and even entire islands, protesters decried what they saw as the fire sale of public assets with

little oversight, accountability and concern for the short- and long-term effects on Greek citizens. And those who opposed the bail-out agreements more generally accused the “troika”, as well as the governments of western European countries involved in the negotiations, of infringing on Greece’s national sovereignty. At the center of all of these debates was the question of the proper role, function and reach of the (nation-)state, both in relation to its citizens and in a larger transnational sphere, as well as the authority or right of citizens to make claims on or demands of the state and its assets.<sup>16</sup>

### ***Festival, Film & the State of Public Culture***

While I may have entered the field looking to investigate the festival as a “post-national” site - where the local and global co-articulate and where the nation only reappears as Elsaesser’s “second-order concept” - the political and economic upheavals, civil unrest and emerging civic discourse made it clear that the nation-state was certainly not just a second-order concept. Friends and fieldwork subjects struggled with ballooning taxes, smaller pension payments, or delayed state paychecks; mainstream media reported constant updates on government scandals, new austerity measures or bailout negotiations; frustrated Greek citizens, both on- and off-line, discussed, criticized, debated and denounced state decisions and policies; and Athens was regularly crippled by massive protest marches that always ended up facing off with the neoclassical Parliament building in the center of the city, the ultimate symbol of the state. While

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<sup>16</sup> These questions would eventually carry over into the *Aghanaktismeni* movement, starting in the summer of 2011 with a group of protesters occupying Parliament Square in the center of Athens. The *Aghanaktismeni* were connected to *Los Indignados*, the protest movement begun in Madrid, as well as to local and global anarchist movements and to the Occupy movements in the US.

on the surface the crisis was economic, on a deeper level, the crux of the crisis was the state of the Greek nation, in more than one sense, and its strained relationship to its citizens.

This was true not just in economic and political matters, but also in the field of public culture and, more specifically, in the Greek film world. As the crisis worsened and the civil unrest continued to heat up, I could feel the effects of this turbulence in my research on the Thessaloniki Film Festival. In a very practical sense, the festival as an organization was affected by these political and economic upheavals because of its close relationship to the state; although technically it is a legally independent private entity, it did receive the majority of its annual funding from the Greek Ministry of Culture, and the position of festival director is largely considered to be a kind of political appointment, with each change of government bringing with it a new director and new key staff.<sup>17</sup> With the unfolding economic catastrophe and the shrinking of state budgets, festival staff began to worry that they would be cut or their contracts not renewed, and those who continued to work for the festival had to wait months for paychecks. However, at the same time that this atmosphere of fiscal restraint was taking over more generally, the festival was also preparing for its fiftieth-anniversary edition in November 2009, with a full slate of lavish celebrations, VIP guests, commemorative publications, and special programs and exhibitions. Although under mounting economic pressure, it was almost as if the jubilee juggernaut could not be stopped, as more and more special guests, activities and parties were added to the line-up; the festival, annually presented as a celebration of cinema, could not be caught skimping on the most important occasion for celebration in its own institutional history. The incongruity between the severity of the national economic crisis and the

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<sup>17</sup> In the last two years, with the near-bankruptcy of the Greek state, the festival has stopped receiving funding from the Ministry of Culture. Instead, it now survives primarily on EU grants and private sponsorships, and its annual budget is a fraction of what it was in 2009.



extravagance of the festival's celebrations provoked public criticism. Complaints about the festival's budgets and spending were not uncommon before this period, especially after the organization and programming expanded noticeably and took a more commercial turn under the directorship of film producer Despina Mouzaki beginning in 2005. However, in the context of the crisis, these complaints became more pointed and insistent. In a conversation just a few days before the 2009 festival, a film programmer working in Athens complained to me about the Thessaloniki festival's budget of about €11 million, and even went so far as to suggest that some of it must be "going into someone's pocket," implying that only corruption could explain the need for such a large budget. The accusations of corruption and extravagance were all the more serious precisely because of the state funding that made up over two thirds of the organization's annual income: it was public money that was potentially being wasted. Against the backdrop of crisis and the newly current discourse of civic responsibility, these criticisms of the festival took on the much larger set of meanings, tensions and grievances that were dominating public discourse at the time.

In addition, the preparations for the fiftieth-anniversary edition were also disrupted by a boycott of the festival by Greek filmmakers, who were withholding their films from the festival as a protest against the state. In March 2009, a small group of directors, producers and screenwriters came together to protest the annual State Film Awards, which were administered by the Ministry of Culture in conjunction with the Greek Film Center; decided by a committee comprising state officials and members of film professional guilds; and, since 1998, given at a special ceremony as part of the Thessaloniki Film Festival. Objecting to what they saw as corruption, nepotism, and lack of transparency in the distribution of the awards and prize money,

the filmmakers vowed not to participate in the 2009 State Awards unless new regulations were put in place. As time passed, the group grew to a membership of over two hundred, including the most established directors in Greece today, such as Theo Angelopoulos and Pantelis Voulgaris, as well as the most promising of a new generation of Greek filmmakers, such as Giorgos Lanthimos, Panos Koutras, Constantine Giannaris, and Filippos Tsitos. By the summer of 2009, they had organized themselves into a loose organization, calling themselves “*I Kinimatoghrafistes stin Omikhli*” (Filmmakers in the Mist) and, in English, “Filmmakers of Greece” (FOG). As the group grew, so did their demands. No longer limiting their criticisms to the State Film Awards, the FOG filmmakers demanded an overhaul of the existing film legislation and state funding structures, increased government support for domestic film distribution, a re-evaluation and scaling back of the Thessaloniki Film Festival, and improvements in film education. Most importantly, they vowed not only to boycott the State Awards, but to withhold their films entirely from the 2009 Thessaloniki Festival until their demands were met and new film legislation was passed and implemented. To publicize their protest, they created a website, published a manifesto, held press conferences and other public events such as open discussions and debates, and circulated video clips from their events online.

For the festival, such a boycott was potentially disastrous. With over two hundred of the most active Greek film professionals participating in the boycott, the festival faced the possibility of a fiftieth anniversary celebration without Greek films, a prospect especially troubling in a year distinguished by Greek filmmakers’ success at important international festivals abroad.<sup>18</sup> A series

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<sup>18</sup> The most notable are *Kynodhontas* (Dogtooth, Giorgos Lanthimos, Greece, 2009), *Strella* (A Woman’s Way, Panos Koutras, Greece, 2009) and *Akadhimia Platonos* (Plato’s Academy, Filippos Tsitos, Germany/Greece, 2009). *Kynodhontas* premiered at the 2009 Cannes Film Festival, where it was awarded the Un Certain Regard prize; most recently, it received an Oscar nomination for Best Foreign Language Film. *Strella* premiered at the 2009 Berlin Film Festival, while *Akadhimia Platonos* had its premier at the Locarno Film Festival, where it won an award for Best Actor.

of negotiations took place between the festival and the FOG filmmakers; as the Festival administration endeavored to placate the filmmakers and convince them that they were “on the same side,” the filmmakers accused the festival of being too moderate in its concessions, demanding instead a wholesale re-organization of the fiftieth edition so that it resembled more of a protest than a celebration. In the end, the two sides were unable to come to an agreement. With the emergency elections and subsequent change of government just one month before the November festival, the demands of the FOG filmmakers could not be met in time, and the 2009 Thessaloniki Film Festival took place with a significant number of Greek filmmakers, and Greek films, abstaining. Their boycott of all state-sponsored events continued until October 2010, when the Ministry of Culture announced that the long-awaited new film legislation, which addressed many of FOG’s concerns, had been proposed in parliament.

Together with the critical public discourse concerning the festival at the time, the actions of the protesting filmmakers transformed the festival into the staging ground for a very public re-negotiation of the relationship between state, citizen and public culture. In articulating their positions, the filmmakers relied heavily on a rhetoric of citizenship, workers’ rights and state responsibility, closely resembling the larger protesting public of Greece post-December 2008 as they tried to engage with government and demand a state accountable to its electorate. Their boycott brought to the surface questions concerning the proper role of the state in cultural production and the right of citizens to demand state support for public culture. According to FOG, it was the responsibility of good government to ensure the health of independent Greek film production, distribution and exhibition through a combination of direct financing, subsidies, legal provisions and institutional support. The boycott also turned a spotlight on the connection

between the state and the film festival as an institution of public culture. By choosing the festival as the primary site of their protest against state policies, the FOG filmmakers cast the festival as a space of the state and attempted to redefine their own relationship - as cultural producers and as Greek citizens - both to the state and to the cultural institution.

This turbulence in the Greek film world was part of a larger public conversation happening at the time concerning the relationship between the state and public culture and, more specifically, the perceived failures of the government in cultural matters. Indicative of this climate were numerous articles in the press in the weeks around the emergency elections in October 2009, highlighting the major problems within the Ministry of Culture and the severe challenges faced by dysfunctional cultural institutions and initiatives. In a late-September 2009 edition of the newspaper *Kathimerini*, a series of articles collectively titled “The open battlefronts of culture” (*Ta anikhta metopa tou politismou*) examines the state of affairs in various cultural fields, and the titles of the individual articles are telling: “A ministry in despair” (*Ena ypourghio se apoghnosi*), “The theater suffers, money is nowhere to be found” (*To teatro stenazi, to khrima apousiazi*), “The National Opera on a tightrope” (*Ethniki Lyriki se tentomeno skhini*), “A divided climate in cinema” (*Klima dhikhasmou ston kinimatografo*). Describing the dire state of the country’s museums, archaeological sites, theaters, opera and film productions - many of which are either closed, in danger of closing, or facing debt and deep cutbacks - one of the authors remarks, “Clearly the economic factor plays a big role, and in these lean times, governments have other priorities. But maybe, apart from money, a little interest is also needed?” (Thermou 2009). Each article in the series points not only to the lack of adequate state funding, but also to the overgrown, convoluted and often redundant bureaucratic structures of the

Ministry of Culture and the cultural institutions it supports; the apathy of cultural administrators in tenured civil-servant posts; and the static introduced by personal ambition and party politics.

This general sentiment continued after the October 2009 elections and the victory of PASOK. A week after the elections, an article in the newspaper *To Vima* called on the newly appointed Minister of Culture and Tourism Pavlos Geroulanos to turn around the “established, backward mindsets” (*paghiomenes, opisthodorhromikes nootropies*) and the “civil-servant mentality” (*dhimosio-ypalliliki nootropia*) that have held back the work of the Ministry of Culture, and to “clean house”, i.e. overhaul the ministry’s internal structure through cuts and mergers of various departments and agencies, clarification of jurisdictions and responsibilities, and the hiring and firing of personnel according to transparent and equitable criteria (Loverdou et al. 2009).

Another article in the newspaper *Eleftherotypia* asked, “What can we expect from the new Minister of Culture?” (*Ti na perimenoume apo ton neo ypourgho politismou;*), followed by a list of items that the author felt the incoming government needed to provide, including “transparency and fairness” (*dhiafania kai aksiokratia*) in funding decisions, a full appraisal and administrative restructuring of the country’s archaeological sites, the resources to keep museums open, more cultural programming in mass media, and support for regional cultural activities away from the nation’s dominant capital (Kontrarou-Rassia 2009). Another article in the *Epta* insert of *Eleftherotypia* details seven of the dozens of major projects, such as museums and monuments, in various states of suspension, postponement or neglect, that the new Ministry of Culture and Tourism would be taking on - including the expansion of the existing National Archaeological Museum, renovations for the Museum of Contemporary Art in Athens, the restoration of an historic 1920s Art Deco building in the city center, and the building of an Archaeological

Museum in Iraklion on the island of Crete, projects that have been delayed or on hold for decades (Spinou 2009).

Underlying these articles is their shared assumption that the state is, or at least should be, responsible for all of these varied aspects of public culture in Greece. Theater, opera, dance, cinema, orchestras, archaeological heritage, architecture, art museums, arts education - all of these cultural fields are assumed to fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture, and the state is represented as the entity primarily responsible for the health of these various fields, financially, legally and administratively. This responsibility cuts two ways: the state is held responsible, both in the sense of being blamed for any dysfunction, as well as in the sense of being expected to fix it. The state is seen as both the problem and the solution - whether because of the structures of public funding, without which the majority of cultural organizations and institutions in Greece could not survive, or because of administrative intervention or direct policies and legislation, which often determine the parameters within which cultural producers and institutions can function. In this way, cultural production in Greece today is dependent on and inseparable from practices and discourses of the state. The debate over the film festival in the months leading up to and following its fiftieth anniversary edition was ultimately a debate about the relationship between the state and public culture.

### ***Public Culture and Cultural Citizenship***

It was against the background of this debate that Nicoletta made her light-hearted but half-serious comment about leaving Greece and moving somewhere else as a “cultural immigrant.” Her joke was referencing the public discourse circulating at the time, and in particular

foregrounding the position of the citizen vis-a-vis this contested relationship between the state and public culture. Although Nicoletta did not align herself explicitly with the protesting FOG filmmakers and in fact was quite critical of their decision to boycott the Thessaloniki Festival, she did share with them the assumption that, as a Greek citizen and filmmaker, she was entitled to state support for her cultural work. Positioning herself in this way, she was articulating a particular relationship between state, citizen and public culture - which I understand to be a form of *cultural citizenship*. In this dissertation, I will unpack the practices, discourses, underlying assumptions and consequences of this cultural citizenship, through an examination of the film festival as an institution of public culture, the varying investments of individuals and the state in this institution, and its role in the FOG protest.

Cultural citizenship is a topic that has been explored in a variety of ways, in both anthropology and media studies. Broadly speaking, anthropologists have taken two different approaches to cultural citizenship. In one approach, represented by the work of Renato Rosaldo and the Latino Cultural Studies Working Group (Flores and Benmayor 1996; Rosaldo 1994a, 1994b; Torruellas et al. 1991), cultural citizenship is understood in terms of the rights of individuals to cultural difference as protected by the state; for these anthropologists, cultural citizenship means full enfranchisement of cultural minorities, the sense of fully belonging as a member of a polity without fear of cultural oppression. In the second approach, represented most clearly in the work of Aihwa Ong (1996, 2003), cultural citizenship is understood less in such empowering terms and more in terms of governmentality; in this formulation, cultural citizenship denotes the ways in which individuals learn or are trained to be total subjects of the state, not only legally or politically, but socially and culturally, and how they take on or resist such

training. The primary difference between these two approaches has to do with the power dynamics between the citizen and the governing cultural-political system:

While the Latino Cultural Studies Working Group treats cultural citizenship as a process by which subordinate groups assert cultural rights and political claims in society, Ong uses it to describe a process of subject formation. Whereas the working group focuses on how Latinos transform the cultural-political system by expanding notions of national belonging and political participation, Ong emphasizes the process of negotiation. (Siu 2001:13)

Despite their differences, what is common to both of these approaches is a very broad definition of culture. For example, Ong's definition of culture includes notions of morality, taste, economic and consumer practices, while Rosaldo's understanding of culture is described as "how specific subjects conceive of full enfranchisement" (Rosaldo 1994b:58), referring to larger belief and value systems of affect, respect, and dignity.<sup>19</sup>

In this dissertation, I will trace the operation of a different kind of cultural citizenship. Rather than working from a broad definition of culture as "morality," beliefs, or value systems, I start from Bourdieu's more narrowly defined "fields of cultural production," or the "set of social conditions of the production, circulation and consumption of symbolic goods" (Bourdieu 1993:9). Although limited in scope, each field - literature, visual arts, music, dance, theater, cinema - constitutes a deeply complex system of interests, motivations, forces, conflicts, currencies, values, goods and "the structural relations [...] between social positions that are both occupied and manipulated by social agents which may be isolated individuals, groups or institutions" (Bourdieu 1993:29). I use the term *cultural citizenship* to denote the forms of citizenship - how one engages with and understands oneself in relation to the state and to a

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<sup>19</sup> For more on cultural citizenship, particularly in the field of media studies, see Apter, Kaes, and Roderick (2002); Lowe (1996); Miller (1993, 1998, 2001, 2006); Stevenson (2001, 2003). On cultural citizenship specifically in relationship to Europe and EU cultural policy, see Balibar (1996), Craith (2004), Delgado-Moreira (1997, 2000), Habermas (1992, 1998), Holmes and Murray (1999), Shore (1993, 2000), Shore and Black (1994).



political collectivity - that arise where fields of cultural production meet the practices and discourses of the state. In the case of the Thessaloniki Film Festival, I look at the forms of collectivity, the civic discourses and the acts of citizenship that take place in the social space of the festival, as well as in the larger field of cultural production - the film world in Greece, as well as internationally - in which the festival functions as an institutional player.

This overlapping of state, citizen and culture is something that is present in the Greek language itself, particularly in the overlapping meanings of the Greek words *politis*, *politia* and *politismos*, roughly translated as “citizen,” “polity,” and “culture” respectively. All three derive from the archaic Greek term *polis* which, while often translated as “city-state” today, in its original usage had much more of the sense of a political entity ruled by its members or citizens, and even the body of citizens itself, rather than the city proper in the sense of the urban built environment. In Modern Greek, *politis* is defined as “a citizen of a state with all the rights and obligations thereof,” but layered onto that definition are also the alternate meanings of “inhabitant of a city,” “private citizen, as opposed to figures of state/authority,” and “non-military civilian.” *Politia* also has multiple, overlapping meanings of “state,” “body politic,” and “government,” with the connotation of “city” or “place.” Similarly, the definitions of *politismos* are numerous. It can be used to mean “civilization,” both in the sense of a society, culture, or entire way of life in a particular area - e.g. the ancient Greek or Egyptian civilizations - and in the more value-laden sense of development, sophistication, refinement, or modernity. It is also commonly used to mean “culture” in the more narrowly defined sense of Bourdieu’s fields of cultural production, e.g. as it is used in the designation “Ministry of Culture” (*Ypourghio Politismou*), and as the title for the “Arts & Culture” section of most Greek newspapers.

Sometimes it is used interchangeably with the work *koultoura*, a Latin borrowing, but *politismos*, unlike *koultoura*, is colored by its etymological association with *polis*, *politia*, and *politis* and thus carries within it the sense of the political, as Hannah Arendt would understand it - as something public, experienced in common and collectively held. In *The Human Condition*, Arendt quotes Werner Jaeger to describe the *bios politikos* in the ancient Greek *polis*: “The rise of the city-state meant that man received ‘besides his private life a sort of second life, his *bios politikos*. Now every citizen belongs to two orders of existence; and there is a sharp distinction in his life between what is his own (*idion*) and what is communal (*koinon*)” (Arendt 1958:24). It is in this sense that I approach *politismos*: as *public* culture, fields of cultural production that serve as sites for the articulation of citizenship and collectivity, through the investments of individuals and the state.

My decision to work within these more narrowly defined parameters was not an arbitrary conceptual framework, but rather emerged from what I was seeing and hearing around me in the field. Media coverage blaming the state for the lamentable condition of Greek cultural fields and institutions; friends and fieldwork subjects exasperated with state cultural policies and anxious about cuts in public funding for the arts; the FOG movement - what I was experiencing in the field kept bringing my attention to fields of cultural production as contested sites of cultural citizenship. And this continues to be the case; as the economic situation only becomes more dire, not just in Greece but across Europe, among the first victims of shrinking states are public art and cultural programs, which raises the question of the value of such programs and why, if at all, the state should be concerned with them. As articulated in an op-ed piece in *Kathimerini* from October 2009, which was concerned with the Thessaloniki film festival, the new film law, and

the challenges facing the National Film Archive, the National Opera and the new Acropolis Museum:

In the brief pre-election campaign, which justifiably turned to economic issues, even references to culture were considered a luxury. But is culture a luxury? In the context of an economy that is struggling for survival, that might be the case. However, this luxury is supposedly one of our strongest weapons and a tool for the development of education. (Panagopoulos 2009).

With the Ministry of Culture scrambling to decide which programs to support, shrink or cut altogether, a central point of public debate has become the value of public culture, or rather, the criteria by which its value is to be determined. With public hospitals lacking adequate staff, equipment and resources; with schools closing or going without books, supplies and even heat; and with the social security system on the brink of collapse, many ask why the state should continue to fund the “luxury” of public culture. Some, speaking specifically about Greek antiquities, argue that public funding of culture can only be justified if it yields economic benefits via tourism - “some practical purpose that we can all understand” (*kation praktiko skopo pou na ton katalavenoume oli*) (Karkagiannis 2009a). Others decry “this mentality that, when it comes to cultural issues, only the monuments count, because they draw tourists,” as author Petros Markaris states in his response to the government’s decision earlier this year to close the National Book Center, continuing, “In a period of crisis, no one closes a cultural organization; on the contrary, it’s the moment when we need it the most.” At the heart of this debate is the question of *why* we need public culture - whether or not, for what reasons, and in what ways public culture should be supported by the state.

This dissertation attempts to arrive at an answer to these questions through an in-depth exploration of one institution of public culture, the discourse surrounding it, and the various

investments of individuals, groups and the state in it. The first chapter is an exploration of the festival as an event and as an institution, looking at the physical spaces of the festival, the activities it houses, some of the people who constitute the festival, and the audiences and publics that activate and are activated by it. In this chapter, I am concerned with the festival as a form of public culture, investigating how different publics and different forms of publicness - of being public - come together within the space of the festival. While the festival is a space for a multiplicity of publics, I ultimately argue that there is a particular and singular form of publicness that dominates interactions within that space. Overall, the festival as an institution is concerned with staging and “picturing” itself as the ideal of the bourgeois public sphere, where informed spectators come together to watch and discuss films, but in this public sphere there is little room for oppositional practices, overt conflict, or unruliness. In the fiftieth anniversary edition, many of the crises that the festival faced that year, including the Greek filmmakers’ boycott, were largely swept under the rug, and this avoidance of conflict was particularly conspicuous in the larger context of protests, unrest, and uprisings taking over the rest of the country. This chapter considers what is at stake in the negotiation of particular forms of publicness.

The festival had not always been that kind of polite public sphere. While it has always been an institution concerned with building a critical cinema public, at different points in the festival’s history, that public was highly politicized and oppositional, particularly in relation to the state. In the second chapter of my dissertation, I look at some of these past moments through the lens of how the history of the festival was being remembered by different individuals, groups and the institution itself on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary. In this chapter, I show that the festival

organizers were concerned with presenting a smooth, coherent history of the festival, narrating a continuous institutional history that largely glosses over periods of conflict or rupture, while on the other hand, members of the festival public were actively remembering periods of the festival's history, particular in the 1970s and 1980s, when the festival was a space of political opposition and resistance to the military dictatorship, and a space for a growing counter-culture. Drawing out the differences between these various practices of historiography and collective memory, this chapter considers how the remembering of past forms of "counter-publicness" functions as a reflection and commentary on the present moment of counter-publicness, in the general civil unrest that was overtaking the country, and more specifically in the FOG filmmakers' boycott of the festival's fiftieth anniversary edition.

In the third chapter of my dissertation, I take a close look at this boycott and the filmmakers' larger protest movement. Analyzing the group's activities, their public events as well as their rhetoric, I discuss the FOG movement as a counterpublic practice: part of the greater civil unrest, and civic discourses of collective action and resistance, that have taken root in Greece since the beginning of the economic crisis. In the context of the film festival, the FOG protest had the effect of reviving that historical sense of the festival as a space of counter-publicness, a space of conflict, opposition, resistance and protest. Their actions re-politicized the festival and re-inscribed it as a space for a critical public life, for the practice of a critical collectivity. In this chapter, I try to understand what kinds of citizen-state relationship were being posited and enacted in the process.

Ultimately, my research concerns have not strayed too far from the questions with which I began fieldwork. Despite the eruption of the unexpected early on in my research and subsequent

developments - the events of December 2008, the emergence of a strong civic discourse, the economic crisis and its destabilizing effects - the lines of inquiry that emerged during my time in the field represented not a break from my original questions, but rather a shift in terms. If initially I had been concerned with the festival's public and the formation of social identities, then over the course of my research I had to expand my understanding of "public" to encompass other, relevant dimensions of this term: "public" in the sense of that which is owned or experienced collectively, "public" in the sense of that which belongs to the state, "public" in the sense of that which is visible and open to public access or scrutiny, as well as publicity. Similarly, shifting my focus to questions of public culture and cultural citizenship did not mean turning away from my initial concerns with the shaping of place and collective identity through movement between geopolitical scales, but rather understanding how this strategic navigation of the local, the national, the European and the global is an important element in the country's larger social crises, and a condition of Greek cultural citizenship. Throughout this dissertation, the negotiation of scale appears repeatedly as a means by which individuals and institutions attempt to define the terms of citizenship, belonging and collectivity in the field of public culture. And what comes dramatically to the surface in the process is the nation-state - not simply a "second-order concept" in a transnational field, but rather the very real site and focal point of engagement and contestation.

### ***Research and Methodology***

Since I began traveling to Greece in 1999 as a student of Modern Greek, I have witnessed the country undergoing a series of rapid and dramatic transformations - from the sudden economic

and social changes following Greece's entry into the eurozone in 2001, to the economic bubble of the first half of the 2000s, the post-2004 Olympics euphoria, and the economic, social and political instability that came violently to the surface in 2008 and continues today. Specifically, this dissertation is based on twenty-two months of fieldwork that took place in Thessaloniki and Athens between 2005 and 2010, with the bulk of the research taking place in 2008-2010.

In researching the festival, as both an annual event and as a cultural institution functioning year-round, my primary methodology was sustained participant observation, and for this I occupied a number of different roles: as a volunteer assisting in various departments during the ten days of the festival each November, a volunteer researcher or coordinator for various festival programs and publications, an audience-member and festival-goer, a filmmaker and dilettante programmer, and sometimes as simply an anthropologist-observer, gratefully tagging along or sitting in on meetings and trying my best not to appear too out of place. Occupying these various roles gave me the opportunity not only to observe the festival from within, but also to experience first-hand some of the many different publics addressed by the festival, by being a part of them. Most studies of film festivals tend to be based on analysis of discourse produced by or around the festival, or on larger analyses of festival structures, programming or the festival circuit; while revealing and useful in their own way, they run the risk of relying too heavily on the declarations of festival directors, programmers and critics, or being too schematic. The methodology of year-round participant observation allowed me a closer look at the complex and meaningful micro-interactions that take place within the wider social space of the festival, and it also helped to create a sense of social familiarity that facilitated more intimate conversations with fieldwork subjects, which I supplemented with formal interviews.

Part of my research on the festival was historiographical, and for this I worked in a number of archives, including the municipal archives and the archives of the festival itself, the Thessaloniki Historical Center, and the Thessaloniki International Trade Fair which was the festival's parent organization for nearly three decades. However, owing to the poor condition of historical archives in Greece generally, a large part of this research consisted of interviews with individuals who had either worked for or been associated with the festival in the past, and their personal collections, as well as published memoirs, and radio/television broadcasts concerning the festival's history.<sup>20</sup> Much of this research coincided with work I was doing as a volunteer member of the research team for the festival's fiftieth-anniversary commemorative publication, which was a detailed look back at the organization's institutional history and a catalogue of each of the festival editions from 1960 to 2008.

The main portion of my fieldwork (2008-2010) was greatly shaped by a decision I made early on concerning the direction of my research. Having started by spending time in the festival's main offices in Athens, I quickly realized that I was less interested in what would usually be considered the "center" of the institution - the offices, the core staff, the work of the festival director, programming decisions - and more interested in what might be considered its "periphery," where the festival interacts with other institutions, businesses and individuals, and with its public. In the festival headquarters in Athens, much of the day-to-day routine resembled that of any other film festival - watching screeners of films, reviewing other festival programs, contacting filmmakers or sales agents, writing press releases - and in the context of the larger crisis unfolding in Greece at the time, this seemed of less relevance than how the festival was

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<sup>20</sup> On the problematics of archives and archival practices in Greece, see Papailias 2005.



functioning in a broader cultural and social field. Thus a large part of my research focused on the relationship between the festival and other players in this field, such as the Greek Film Center, other film festivals in Greece, filmmakers, distribution companies, local businesses in Thessaloniki, the Thessaloniki Cine Club, the Film Department at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, and local cultural initiatives and programs in Thessaloniki, both public and private.

As I developed close relationships over time with people in the field, learning about their deeply personal ties to the festival, the dynamic between individual and institution also became an important part of my research. People's personal histories of involvement with the festival, their loyalties, and their professional, political and emotional investments all put flesh on the bones of institutional structures, constituting the institution as lived experience. This is tricky terrain, where the personal and the political are mapped onto each other, and in learning to navigate this it, I not only became acutely aware of the intensely political nature of social life in Greece - both in the sense of party politics and in the sense of micro-politics - but also had to become a political being myself, carefully considering my alignments, how they might be perceived, and what doors would open or close accordingly. This political awareness proved especially useful when I began to research the FOG movement - talking to the filmmakers, attending meetings and events, following their correspondence and spending time with them socially. Although my position as a foreign academic afforded me some neutrality, there were still moments when my inquiries were met with silence or politely declined; in some cases, these silences were telling in and of themselves, and I learned to listen for them and to incorporate them, when possible, in my analyses. As an academic, I also shared a connection with the considerable number of scholars who work in or around the festival, and an important part of my

fieldwork comprised long conversations with these fieldwork subjects, colleagues and friends. Together, we discussed and debated the topics and questions considered in this dissertation, which owes a great deal to their insights and generosity, as do I.

## CHAPTER 1

### *PUBLICS*

In the inaugural issue of the journal *Public Culture*, Arjun Appadurai and Carol A. Breckenridge sketch the outlines of the journal's namesake concept, positing their working definition of the term "public culture." Referring specifically to contemporary India, they cite "films, packaged tours, specialized restaurants, video-cassettes and sports spectacles" as examples of cultural forms that paradoxically "seem to be drawing the world into a disturbing commercial sameness" and yet simultaneously serve as deeply local and idiosyncratic "vehicles for cultural significance and the creation of group identities" (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1988:5). For Appadurai and Breckenridge, these diverse cultural forms collectively point to a larger sense of "public culture":

[W]e would like to propose that these cosmopolitan forms raise a larger set of terminological as well as interpretive problems about the way in which public life in the contemporary world is being culturally articulated. This larger problem can fruitfully be engaged by hypothesizing an arena - which we call *public culture* - in which the emergent cosmopolitan cultural forms of today's India shape each other. (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1988:5, italics in original)

Thus understood, public culture does not simply comprise various types of cultural phenomenon, but more importantly functions as "a *zone* of cultural debate" where different forms of culture - popular, mass, folk, consumer, national, elite, classical, high, low - "are encountering, interrogating and contesting each other in new and unexpected ways" (Appadurai and

Breckenridge 1988:6, italics in original). In this sense, Appadurai and Breckenridge see public culture as a “contested terrain”:

The actors in the contest are a variety of producers of culture and their audiences; the materials in the contest are the many cultural modalities we have discussed; and the methods, increasingly shared by *all* parties, involve the mass media, as well as mechanical modes of reproduction. What is at stake in the contest is [...] the consciousness of the emergent Indian public. (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1988:7, italics in original)

Although twenty-five years have passed since the publication of their article - and with those years, revolutions in media, communication and information technology, as well as new discourses and counter-discourses, practices and counter-practices of cosmopolitanism, globalization, regionalism, nationalism and localism - there is still something enduringly useful about Appadurai and Breckenridge’s articulation of public culture. Perhaps this is because they envision public culture as a form or process, rather than any particular content, which makes it easy to apply their formulation to different contexts across space and time. Or perhaps it is because, despite their claim that this form or process marks a new “emergent” domain (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1988:5), the negotiation of cultural difference has always been, and continues to be, fundamental to social experience. In either case, their conception of public culture remains useful in helping us to understand cultural forms and practices as processes of cultural negotiation and contestation, as well as to understand the larger stakes of such processes.

In this chapter, I take this notion of public culture as a starting point for exploring the Thessaloniki Film Festival as a “zone of cultural debate” - a physical and social space in which different discourses and practices of and around cinema as a cultural form come together, collide, contest and shape each other. My itinerary in this exploration maps the diverse perspectives and experiences of individuals who participate in this “debate,” and the publics of which they are a

part. Hannah Arendt's famous metaphor of the "table" of public life provides a helpful conceptual foundation:

To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it; the world, like every in-between, relates and separates men at the same time. The public realm, as the common world, gathers us together and yet prevents our falling over each other, so to speak. (Arendt 1958:48)

While the table might seem too solid and clearly defined an object to adequately symbolize the complexity of an international film festival, it is nevertheless effective in evoking the sense of people gathering in this particular "arena" or "zone" of public culture - what Marguerite S. Shaffer describes as "the ways in which diverse groups and individuals have come together to discuss, debate, negotiate, create, claim and control shared public meaning and discourse" (Shaffer 2008:xiv). During my fieldwork, I occupied different positions around this "table" - general spectator/festival-goer, volunteer worker, Thessaloniki resident, industry professional - and the structure of the first half of this chapter reflects my movement from one position, or public, to another. Moving around this "table," I examine how the groups or publics gathered there experience the film festival; how, through those experiences, they engage with other publics or even move between publics; and what kinds of social and cultural meanings get constructed, negotiated or contested in the process.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Unlike much of the work being produced in the field of film festival studies, this dissertation is not primarily concerned with films themselves. Rather, I look at the practices and discourses that constitute the festival as a grounded social space. Most importantly, I wish to avoid banalities such as the "joyful celebration of cinema" or "festival magic" - used by festival organizers, goers and scholars alike - that gloss over what a complex, political and potentially awkward or difficult experience a film festival can be.

## *Opening Night*

The coming together of multiple publics characterizes the very heart, and the very beginning, of the festival - the opening night ceremony, which takes place every year in the Olympion, the festival's main building on the city's central Aristotelous Square. A grand old building overlooking the square and the waterfront beyond - one of the most prestigious addresses in the city and part of the system of the early twentieth-century Haussmannian buildings and arcades lining the square - the Olympion houses the festival's Thessaloniki offices, which are in operation throughout the year and primarily handle the logistics of festival production, as well as the year-round screenings that take place in the two screening spaces also housed in the building. The main screening space, which goes by the same name as the building itself, is a stately, old-fashioned cinema with soaring ceilings, two levels of balconies, seats in red velvet, a large stage with heavy drapes, crystal chandeliers. On the fifth floor of the building is a smaller screening space, named after the festival's founder, Pavlos Zannas. Throughout the year, the Olympion tends to see a steady stream of people, owing to the almost nightly screenings in the two screening halls, which the festival runs as a year-round cinema, apart from the summer months; the various educational programs, conferences, meetings and workshops that take place there, either organized by the festival or by other organizations renting space from the festival; and the constant flow of Thessaloniki residents who frequent the building's two fashionable cafes, with impressive views of the waterfront. But during the ten days of the festival, the Olympion is busier than ever, transformed into one of the festival's central hubs. The production, logistics and accounting teams are located here, and the most important events of the festival - opening and closing ceremonies, the awards ceremony, ceremonies honoring important festival guests,

screenings of films with top billing - all take place in the Olympion cinema, the most coveted of all the festival's spaces for screenings and presentations. On numerous occasions during each festival, the lobby becomes packed with standing-room only crowds awaiting a film or hoping to slip into a particular ceremony. On other occasions, it fills with photographers and television crews, waiting for stars and special guests - directors, producers, local and national politicians, the heads of major local businesses and organizations, university professors, socialites.

The first time I attended the opening ceremony was in 2007, when I worked as a volunteer in the International Competition and Foreign Press office. Arriving at the Olympion, I saw a large crowd amassed at the entrance to the building, straining to get in and spilling out onto the square. As people pushed their way forward, a group of burly guards and young women from the festival's public relations department tried desperately to keep the crowd under control - checking invitations and tickets, letting some in, firmly asking others to step aside. Beyond this initial checkpoint, those entering made their way through a gauntlet that had formed in the lobby - on the one side, a swarm of photographers, and on the other side, festival director Despina Mouzaki, festival president George Corraface, and their assistants. Guests, politicians and celebrities stopped to be photographed, clutching hands with Mouzaki and Corraface against a backdrop printed with sponsors' logos - a flash of camera lights, as greetings and warm wishes were exchanged before moving on to the next guest in line.

The lobby was a swirl of bodies and movement - ordinary festival-goers who somehow managed to find tickets to the opening ceremony; invited guests such as local politicians, businessmen, journalists and film professionals milling around greeting each other and posing for pictures; photographers angling to get the best shot; staff members frantically trying to usher

people into the main screening hall and into their designated seats; and the ever-present army of festival volunteers, standing by and awaiting instruction. Inside the main screening hall, a similar chaos was unfolding. The aisles were packed as people attempted to find their seats, with the help of young volunteers, many of whom looked lost themselves in all the commotion. Seats were taken, disputed, given up, and retaken, while staff members checked and re-checked tickets and seat numbers. Those who managed to make it to their seats soon abandoned them to go greet a friend or familiar face. Special guests such as celebrities, politicians and festival sponsors were quickly ushered to the rows in the front of the hall, where a group of photographers and videographers was waiting. The ceremony was scheduled to start at eight thirty, but it was already well past nine and no one was near ready. As volunteers, we had been prepared in advance by our department heads, who informed us that every year sees the the same chaos and delay before the opening and closing ceremonies.

With the theater nearly full and the hour approaching ten, the photographers at the front of the hall suddenly rushed towards the the center aisle, snapping away, as festival director Mouzaki, festival president Corraface, and a small entourage started to walk down from the main theater entrance to the front rows. Faced with this spectacle, I was reminded of what Vanessa Schwartz refers to as “‘pseudo-events’ of mass media culture” (Schwartz 2007:72). Writing about the Cannes film festival during the 1950s and 1960s - the period when the festival first developed its symbiotic relationship with photojournalism and thereafter cemented its status as one of the world’s premier media events - Schwartz describes how the festival’s organizers actively fostered a large press corps, to produce a steady stream of “lively and brilliant images” that served as the “primary vehicle of publicity” for the festival, both in France and around the



world (Schwartz 2007:73).<sup>22</sup> Images of gaiety, lavish parties, and glamorous stars against the backdrop of the sunny French Riviera played a crucial role in the construction of the festival's identity and reputation. More importantly, the press did not simply document the festival; rather, "its presence also helped to create the Festival's ceremonies" (Schwartz 2007:73), such as celebrities' mounting of the red-carpeted staircase before they enter the Palace - the perfect photo-op (Schwartz 2007:74).

This could very well describe the scene at the opening ceremony, as the procession arrived at the front of the hall and ceremoniously began to greet the special guests already seated: photographers surrounded the front row and worked themselves into a frenzy, maneuvering and snapping furiously while their subjects performed a show of warmth and mutual recognition for the cameras. In this moment before the opening ceremony was to officially begin, another kind of ceremony was already taking place - a carefully choreographed staging of celebrity, spontaneity, and media activity. There was a surreal quality to the scene, with those in the front of the hall shaking hands, kissing cheeks, chatting amicably; on the one hand, they seemed to ignore the frantic activity of the photographers and cameramen around them, continuing their casual conversations even with blinding camera lights in their faces, but on the other hand, it was clear that it was precisely for those cameras that these seemingly casual moments were being staged, with the protagonists occasionally stopping and turning to smile for the cameras. As the media ritual in the front of the theater stretched on, the rest of the audience in the hall responded in various ways. Some strained forward in their seats or craned their necks to get a better view of the scene in front, while others rolled their eyes in disdain or glanced impatiently at the time. Yet

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<sup>22</sup> For further reading on "media events," see Dayan and Katz 1992; Couldry, Hepp and Krotz 2010.

others were just as oblivious to the commotion - flipping through the festival catalogue, checking their cellphones - as were the Festival staff. With most of the audience seated, I stood along the theater wall, together with the rest of the staff and volunteers.

The opening ceremony primarily consisted of short speeches by expected public figures: the festival director, the festival president, local politicians and cultural leaders. A moment at the end of the opening ceremony brought into sharp relief the multiplicity of publics present in the audience. After the last speech, the MC returned to the stage to thank all the speakers and to announce the start of the opening night's film, the much-anticipated new feature of director Wong Kar-Wai, *My Blueberry Nights*. With the theater completely full, I had resigned myself to standing through the film, and as the lights started to dim, I leaned against the wall, trying to get comfortable. To my surprise, however, the audience, rather than quieting down in anticipation of the film, started to shift noisily, as people got up to leave before the film started. While I had imagined that some of the festival staff and special guests would quietly slip out of the Olympion once the official part of the evening was over, I had not expected such a mass exodus. Audience members throughout the theater hurriedly pushed their way to the aisles and exits, leaving nearly a third of the seats in the previously packed theater empty. It was impossible that so many people were leaving because they had already seen the film, which, like all opening and closing films at the festival, was being shown as a Greek premiere. One of the more experienced volunteers who had stayed behind for the film nudged me to one of the empty seats in a nearby row; when I asked her if it was alright for us to sit down, she whispered in reply that this is what happened every year, and that I should move in as far as possible, as there would be others coming. Indeed,

as the audience hushed and the film began, the back doors of the theater opened and a stream of new audience members quietly slipped in, taking the seats that had been left empty.

I was glad to be able to take a seat and watch the film comfortably, but still I found my mind going back to the madness of the Olympion front door earlier that evening. I realized that many of the people who had been trying frantically to get past the guards and into the theater had been motivated not by a desire to see the opening film, but rather by a desire to be a part of the opening night spectacle. For those who had left early, the significance of the event was not cinematic, but rather theatrical - to witness and even to participate in the institutional staging of celebrity and celebration. If the festival was concerned with creating an image of itself as not only a celebration of film but as an institution that is itself celebrated by politicians, business leaders and celebrities, then this particular public was concerned with being a part of that creation, a part of that image. And as this public exited the theater, another public entered, one whose priorities were decidedly more cinematic, but no less social: not only to see the film - which was likely to find a Greek distributor and have a theatrical run in the country soon - but to enjoy the privilege of watching it at its premiere, in the Olympion.

That first night, I was taken by surprise at the mass exit before the opening film, but in subsequent years I became accustomed to it. I even started to look for that second-wave audience when entering the Olympion for an opening or closing ceremony; unlike the rest of the crowd trying to push its way inside, this group stood calmly to the side, waiting a short distance outside the main doors. One year, I watched as a young man in this group was accidentally caught up in the crowd and roughly asked by one of the festival staff to step aside, he rolled his eyes and shot back that he could not care less about the ceremony. Every year, there were many people like

him, waiting patiently outside the Olympion for the official ceremonies to finish, when they would be allowed in to take the seats of those audience members who had left before the film could begin.<sup>23</sup> This second-wave audience had little interest in the spectacle of ceremonies, celebrities, and photographers - in fact, they were often very open about their disdain for this aspect of the festival. Their disdain was part of a more general criticism of what many referred to as the festival's penchant for *glamouria* - an English borrowing that disparagingly refers not so much to glamour itself, but rather to attempts at creating or projecting glamour - under Mouzaki's five-year directorship: red carpets and velvet ropes, the ubiquitous photographers and videographers, lavish dinners at expensive restaurants, parties and concerts growing in both number and size. When, in 2009, the festival began to come under criticism for its budget, this *glamouria* became a major focal point in those debates. In an interview for the newspaper *Ta Nea*, the new festival director Dimitris Eipides attributed the festival's considerable debt to what he described as his predecessor's extravagant spending on everything from hair stylists to high-profile guests like Oliver Stone and Takeshi Kitano, and he explained that the next festival would be significantly scaled down: "We have a photography exhibit [...] we'll have a concert, we'll have two or three parties. What more could you want? It's a good festival. And it's independent cinema. [...] What's important is that the festival survive" (Theodorakis 2011:39). Quite clear in his comments is the tension between two different ideas of what a film festival can be - a spectacular media event vs. a gathering primarily for cinephiles - and Eipides, a programmer long-respected internationally for his support of independent world cinema and previously a

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<sup>23</sup> At the 2009 closing ceremony, this audience changeover was so pronounced that French actress Anne Consigny - on the stage to introduce the closing film, Alain Resnais' *Les Herbes Folles*, in which she starred - was taken aback by the number of audience members racing to the exits even as she was about to speak, and she joked that perhaps she should perform a strip-tease on stage to keep audience members in their seats!

programmer for the Thessaloniki festival who left upon Mouzaki's arrival, makes it clear where he stands.

This tension has characterized film festivals from very early on in their development as a cultural phenomenon. As the Cannes festival already in its first decade became known as much for its "paracinematic events" (Schwartz 2007:72) as for the films it showcased, some critics were quick to disparage the black-tie parties, receptions, celebrity appearances and media rituals, complaining that they had nothing to do with cinema. Some enjoyed the frivolity as much as the films, while others understood the festival itself to be the sum of all of its rituals, film-related or not.<sup>24</sup> As Vanessa Schwartz argues, regardless of one's position in the matter, it was undeniable that the extra-cinematic activities and media coverage, together with the films themselves, were fundamental to establishing the festival's international reputation and appeal, not just as a cinema showcase, but "as a worldwide stage for international film culture" (Schwartz 2007:72) - a fact of which the festival organizers were well aware.<sup>25</sup>

Similarly, the two publics passing each other in the space of the Olympion - the paracinematic public and the cinephile public - are both equally publics of the festival, one no less "valid" than the other, regardless of the various hierarchies of value which members of each public apply in evaluating their respective positions. In the post-December 2008 climate of austerity and frugality, the same high-profile guests and events that were praised just a few years ago for bringing cultural prestige and international recognition to the festival and to the city were

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<sup>24</sup> For an early discussion of the paracinematic, see Bazin 2009.

<sup>25</sup> Schwartz quotes Robert Favre Le Bret, the director of the Cannes festival until 1968, writing in 1966 about the importance of the paracinematic: "If the Festival is recognized worldwide, it is much less due to film reviews... than to all the extra-cinematic events. Whether we like it or not, this is what gives the Cannes meeting its appealing shape and provides an alluring atmosphere that pleases all the foreign guests and provides their memories with lively and brilliant images" (quoted in Schwartz 2007:72-73).

now cast in a very different light, and the paracinematic public derided for buying into the *glamouria* that was now being blamed for bringing the festival to the brink of financial ruin. But, as a journalist writing for the regional Northern Greek newspaper *Angelioforos* pointedly remarked not long after Mouzaki's tenure as festival director was over, "All of us, even those who today criticize [Mouzaki's *glamouria*], had happily gone along with it, if we're being completely honest" (Retzios 2011). Just as the Olympion theater on opening night accommodates both publics, so the festival addresses multiple, even radically different publics.

### ***Shades of Cinephilia***

Within the cinephile public itself, there are a variety of possible positions to occupy. In an essay on new forms of cinephilia, Marijke de Valck offers up a "preliminary taxonomy of cinephiles" at the International Film Festival Rotterdam. Among these she lists "The Lone List-Maker," the avid and well-informed film-buff who carefully plans her screening schedule well in advance and watches multiple films a day, emerging only for quick snacks or passing conversations with friends; "The Highlight Seeker," who more selectively seeks out the films that have already been deemed the best of the line-up, either by critics or "lone list-maker" friends; "The Leisure Visitor," who takes a more casual approach to choosing which films to watch and often attends whichever screening is available when they get out of work or have a free afternoon; and "The Social Tourist," who thinks of the festival less as a film-viewing experience than as an opportunity to meet friends for an outing (de Valck 2005:103-4). While all of these festival-goers could be seen as part of the festival's general audience, each represents a different public, with its own set of priorities, desires and investments. One person can occupy any of these positions at

different times, and all of these publics can be represented within one social group, such as the Greek *parea*, or circle of friends.

It was with just such a diverse *parea* that I first attended the Thessaloniki Film Festival, in November 2005. While I had been to screenings in NY organized by the festival, and had spent time in Thessaloniki before, this was the first time that I had traveled to Greece for the festival itself - indeed, the first time I had ever attended an international film festival - and I found myself quite disoriented. The Thessaloniki Festival is hardly one of the largest international film festivals, especially compared to top-tier festivals like the Berlinale or Cannes, but even a festival the size of Thessaloniki's can be overwhelming.<sup>26</sup> At any given moment over the ten days of the festival, one has a choice between ten films; a few museum and gallery exhibitions; press conferences, masterclasses, book presentations, honorary ceremonies, public performances - all happening concurrently as part of the film festival. The first days, I spent just as much time poring over the catalog and screening schedule, trying to make sense of what was happening where and when, as I did watching films. Fortunately, this was also when I befriended Dimitris, an avid and experienced festival-fan who introduced me to his *parea*, guided me through the spaces and structures of the festival, and helped to orient me in this unfamiliar landscape. Dimitris, in his early thirties, was born and raised in Thessaloniki, had attended college at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, and had then taken on a job there as a researcher in the department of atmospheric physics. Although his academic and professional interests were far from cinema, he had been a passionate cinephile since he was a teenager and had not missed a

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<sup>26</sup> These other, larger festivals can sometimes feel like three or more festivals wrapped into one. The Cannes festival, for example, actually comprises three, fairly separate programs that, in their size, independence and reputations, can be seen as festivals of their own - the Official Competition, the Directors' Fortnight, and the Critics' Week. In Berlin, visitors often complain about the festival's unnavigability, with the Panorama, the Forum and the Forum Expanded, just some of the many alternative programs to the main Official Competition, spreading over 400 films throughout the city.

single edition of the Thessaloniki film festival for fifteen years. He even went so far as to save up his holidays at work so that he could take time off each November and attend the festival without distractions. Dimitris took me under his wing, showing me how to navigate the screening schedule, introducing me to festival staff, and taking me to places around the city that, whether or not officially a part of the festival, were closely tied to what the festival meant for him - the bar Flou where he and his friends would meet at the end of the day to talk about the films they had seen; a quiet cafe close to the theaters where one could take a break and recharge between films; the best places to get a bite to eat after the last midnight screenings.

In a sense, Dimitris re-mapped the city for me, re-orienting my sense of the urban topography according to the festival. Through him, I learned that, during the ten days of the festival each November, the center of the city shifted slightly to encompass no longer just the area around the main Aristotelous Square, but also the old port, or *palio limani*, about half a kilometer away west of the Olympion, along the waterfront. On a long strip of land reaching out into the Thermaic Gulf, former warehouses - now renovated, with some outfitted as stylish screening halls - are administered by the municipality and the Thessaloniki Port Authority, and rented to the festival organization each November. These warehouses remain empty for most of the year; foot traffic in the old port is limited to the occasional visitor to the Cinema Museum, Photography Museum and the small Center for Contemporary Art, which are housed in some of the renovated warehouses. But every year, for the duration of the festival, the *limani* becomes one of the city's busiest areas, with audiences streaming in and out throughout the day, news crews roaming the cobblestone walkways, and industry professionals making their way from one meeting to another. Vendors set up stands selling roasted chestnuts and *salepi*, a hot spiced drink made of



salep flour; teenagers pass out flyers advertising concerts, parties and local businesses; and festival-goers run into friends and familiar faces at screenings, or while walking from one theater to another.

One of the central gathering spots in the *limani* is in Warehouse C, a large airy space used for a variety of purposes during the festival, including large parties, concerts and press conferences. The entire second floor of the warehouse, which looks down on the main ground floor through a central atrium, is taken over by a temporary cafe and bar, which serves as a social hub for festival-goers, filmmakers, journalists and festival guests throughout the day. At the far end of the warehouse, the temporary offices of some of the festival departments are housed - including the major programming departments, the press offices and the director's office - and it is common to see festival staff and volunteers among the cafe's constantly shifting crowd. Before a strict new national anti-smoking law was passed in 2010, which banned smoking in public indoor spaces, the air in the cafe was always thick with cigarette smoke and the smell of Greek coffee. It was here that I would stop for breaks between screenings and events, and I would inevitably meet someone from my new *parea*: Dimitris with his heavily annotated festival catalogue and a handful of tickets; his sister Evgenia and their friend Myrto, both graduate students at Aristotle University, studying English literature; Myrto's boyfriend Apostolos, a teacher at a high-school in the nearby town of Drama, usually in Thessaloniki just on the weekends; Stefanos, a close friend of Dimitris' from the university. In de Valck's taxonomy of festival cinephiles, Dimitris would be a "Lone List-Maker," Evgenia and Myrto would be considered "Highlight Seekers," while Apostolos would be a "Leisure Visitor," and Stefanos a decidedly "Social Tourist." Gathered around a table one afternoon in the Warehouse C cafe,

during one of the first days of the 2005 festival, we flipped through Dimitris' catalogue, comparing our programs and trying to decide which films to see together as a group.

Dimitris already had a full week of screenings planned, with four or five films scheduled for each day. His choices reflected his wide-ranging tastes and his breadth of knowledge concerning world cinema: multiple films from the special tribute programs to Turkish filmmaker Kutlug Ataman, Korean director Kim Jee-Woon, Taiwanese director Hou Hsiao-hsien, British director Michael Winterbottom; the most recent film by Danish director Christoffer Boe; crowd-pleasers like Park Chan-wook's *Old Boy* and *Sympathy for Lady Vengeance*; plus a handful of films from the International Competition and Balkan Survey. Dimitris was someone who had grown up on the festival, who saved the catalogues of each festival edition he attended and collected past issues of *Proto Plano*, the daily festival newspaper including reviews and interviews with filmmakers and other guests. He followed cinema-related blogs and publications, both in Greek and English, and was one of a dwindling group of regulars at the city's few remaining independent and arthouse cinemas. Raised in a family of academics, his tastes in music, cinema, theater and literature skewed to the international and the alternative; he tended to shun Greek popular culture, and he often talked to me about how he felt culturally limited, living in Thessaloniki, which he felt was culturally conservative, provincial and nationalistic. For him, attending the festival each year was more than simply watching films; it was an opening of what he saw as the city's usually narrow horizons, and as such it constituted an important part of his cultural identity, something he took quite seriously.

Evgenia and Myrto were less personally invested in the festival. A few years younger than Dimitris, they had become good friends while studying in the same masters program in the UK.

Their attendance at the festival was more casual, catching one or two films a day, and their choices were largely determined by their Anglophone and Anglophile interests. They asked Dimitris what he thought were the films not to be missed, but in the end they settled mostly on British and American films, and Myrto, who was writing her doctoral dissertation on Irish literature, was thrilled to see that this year's festival had a special section for new Irish films. They were both eager to see Michael Winterbottom's latest feature, *Tristram Shandy: A Cock and Bull Story*; as graduate students, they had studied the 18<sup>th</sup>-century novel on which the film was based, and they wondered how it would be adapted for film.

When I suggested that we all go see *Omiros*, a new film by Greek director Constantine Giannaris, based on a true story about an Albanian immigrant in Greece, the others shrugged indifferently, a sentiment that was common among Greeks at the festival. While some of the films in the Greek program are well attended, in general the most sought-after tickets are for the international films, and particularly those that have played well in other festivals. In the end, Dimitris, Evgenia, Myrto and I decided to watch a few films together: Winterbottom's *Tristram Shandy*; Fatih Akin's *Crossing the Bridge*, a documentary about music in Istanbul; and later that evening, Miranda July's *Me and You and Everyone We Know*, that year's American indie favorite and a sure crowd-pleaser. Apostolos didn't give much input into the conversation, but said that he would see whichever film the rest of the group chose, before heading back to Drama early the next morning. Stefanos, with a wink and an affectionately mocking tone, said that he would not be joining us "*koultouriaridhes*" - a slang term that roughly translates to the English phrase "culture vultures," referencing "highbrow" culture - for the film that night, but we could meet

him afterwards at Flou, where he'd be having a drink with some friends who were in town for the festival.

Not that Stefanos wasn't interested in cinema - I knew that at home, he had an extensive and wide-ranging DVD collection including films by Fellini, Kubrick, Kieślowski and Coppola, some of his favorite filmmakers, and in the end, he did join us for a few screenings that year. But he never attended screenings on his own, because for him, the film festival was more of a social event than a cinematic one - a distinction that his remark about "*koultouriaridhes*" served to highlight. What he primarily enjoyed about the festival was that it marked a period of heightened sociality, with old friends returning to the city, and the *parea* getting together multiple times a day. Similarly for Apostolos, what was most important was not which film he would see, but rather that he would see it with his girlfriend and the rest of the *parea*; the festival provided an opportunity for him to gather with all of his friends on one of the few days that he was back in Thessaloniki. By contrast, Evgenia, Myrto and Dimitris were more concerned with the films themselves, and Dimitris was at the far end of the spectrum, spending entire days in screenings or shuttling between theaters, with friends whenever possible but just as often by himself. The fact that he experienced the festival as less of a social event than did Stefanos or Stefanos does not mean that he was any less part of a public. If we follow Michael Warner in defining a public as "the space of discursive circulation among strangers as a social entity" (Warner 2002:121), constituted through acts of "indefinite address" and "mere attention" (Warner 2002:86-7), then Dimitris belongs to several different publics in the space of the festival, including the publics of individual films he watches during the Thessaloniki Festival, which is just one stop on the films' international itineraries; the festival's cinephile public, addressed through programming notes,

catalogue texts, *Proto Plano* articles and publications on auteurs or national cinemas; and the larger public of independent world cinema - all of which come together in his experience of the festival. In this sense, this experience that, for him, is such an important part of his personal identity is at the same time an experience of being multiply public.

### **Industry Center - Balkan Fund**

Another, very different public at the Thessaloniki festival can be found not far from Warehouse C, at the Industry Center, an umbrella department of the festival inaugurated in 2005 that contains and oversees the various industry-oriented activities and services. The main purpose of the Industry Center is to support and foster the business of filmmaking, which it does through its four main sections: the Film Market, the Balkan Fund Script Development competition, the Crossroads Co-production Forum, and the Salonica Studios/Four Corners development workshop and pitching session for student projects.<sup>27</sup> At the Film Market, or Agora, the films being screened at the festival as well as films selected only to be part of the Market are available for those accredited by the Festival as “Industry Professionals,” to watch on individual monitors; the goal of the Agora is to facilitate sales of both Greek and international films to domestic and international markets. The Balkan Fund is a script development competition open to film projects whose directors or producers are from Balkan countries; based on the merits of their scripts, the participating filmmakers compete for a number of cash prizes, as well as meetings with potential funders, co-producers, sales agents and distributors. The Crossroads Co-production Forum, started in 2005 as a way to support film projects from the Mediterranean and Balkan regions that

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<sup>27</sup> The Balkan Fund Script Development program was closed after the 2010 festival, due to budget cuts. One of the main organizers of the program, explained to me that it was not possible for them to justify continued spending on such programs during such economically difficult times.

were in more advanced stages of production, gives the directors and producers of selected projects the opportunity to meet with and pitch their projects to a variety of industry professionals; in the end, one project is chosen to receive a cash award, as well as other prizes such as free accreditation in the Producer's Network program at Cannes. In the Salonica Studio program, which is part of the EU MEDIA Program's Four Corners training scheme, students from the School of Film Studies at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, together with students from three other participating European film schools, take part in an intensive workshop to develop their proposed projects, after which they have the opportunity to pitch them to industry professionals and attempt to secure funding. The Agora, with its viewing stations and digital library, is open for the entire duration of the festival, while the rest of the Industry Center's programs are staggered, with the Balkan Fund in the first few days of the festival, followed by the Crossroads Co-production Forum, and then the Salonica Studio sessions.

As with most of the festival's main departments, including the major programming departments, the director's office and the press office, the Industry Center staff are based in Athens for most of the year, traveling to Thessaloniki just one or two days before the start of the festival. Every year, the Industry Center is erected - usually at the last minute, with crews building walls, painting, and setting up equipment and furniture the same day that the staff arrive - in another one of the rented facilities on the *limani*, at some distance from the rest of the festival warehouses. This physical distance serves to heighten the sense that this part of the festival is separate from the rest, and indeed it is - in its rhythms, in the activities it houses, the participants it gathers, and the publics that it addresses. The Center's facilities, events and resources are only available to those who have been accredited as Industry Professionals; at the

2009 festival, this included over three hundred and fifty directors, producers, sales agents, distributors, programmers, and representatives of film institutes, organizations and funding bodies, all coming from across Greece, the Mediterranean, Europe and the US. The non-descript interiors of the Center's facilities make it feel like a conference or convention running in parallel with the festival, but one that could be anywhere; the fact that all business is conducted in English, variously accented, contributes to the feeling of placelessness. In this sense, the Industry Center is one of the festival spaces that feels most like Augé's "non-place." The particular temporality inside the Center also sets it apart. Most festival-goers experience the festival as a liminal, celebratory event, a period of time set aside from workaday rhythms, and therefore more relaxed, even leisurely. The opposite applies in the Center, where participants are constantly in meetings, pitch sessions, presentations, workshops; even lunches and dinners are structured by the staff as networking sessions. The average festival-goer does not have the opportunity to venture into this world, and similarly those who attend the festival for the Industry Center usually do not have the time to experience the rest of the festival, or much of the city. Most of these Industry Professionals - especially those from other countries and those who come to participate in a particular program such as the Balkan Fund or the Co-production Forum - fly in to Thessaloniki for just a few days, and their days are filled either with work-related activities, with social events organized by the Center itself, or viewing as many films as possible at the Film Market's individual viewing stations.

Claire G., a buyer and festivals manager for a French sales company who attended the Thessaloniki festival in 2009 as an Industry Professional, later told me that she had little memory of the festival or the city outside of the Industry Center and her hotel room. As both a sales agent

for a film showing that year in the Balkan Survey and a representative of a sales company looking for new titles for potential acquisition, she was working double-time, meeting with prospective distributors as well as hopeful directors and producers trying to sell her their films. She was only there for four days, and the pace was furious; when she was not in one-on-one meetings or watching films in the Market, she was communicating with the office back in Paris, or trying to catch up on sleep. Although she left with positive impressions of the Industry Center and the staff - she found it to be a well-organized, professional work environment - she said that she did not have time to see much of the city, and the only screening she was able to attend was of the film that she was representing. But, she added, this was not unusual; almost all the festivals she had ever attended in an official work capacity were like this, one blending into another. Claire was part of a global public of film professionals, as mobile as the cultural products they make, buy and sell. It is this public that the Thessaloniki festival addresses through its Industry Center, one that, within the space of the same festival, occupies a very different position than the publics represented by festival-goers like Dimitris and his *parea*.

While the Industry Center may seem like a self-enclosed world relative to the rest of the festival, it certainly is not internally homogenous. On the contrary, the Industry Center itself functions as a “zone of cultural debate,” particularly in regards to different regimes of storytelling and constructing cultural meaning and value. The Balkan Fund is one area within the Industry Center in which this cultural debate is especially noticeable, as a variety of film projects from different countries and cultural contexts in the Balkans are publicly discussed, debated and evaluated within the same space. From a pool of fifty to sixty applicants, ten to twelve projects are chosen as finalists, and their creative teams are invited to participate in a three-day workshop



at the beginning of the November festival, which includes meetings with potential co-producers and funders, project presentations followed by discussion sessions in which the four-member jury offers its critiques of each project, and a final award ceremony during which three winners are announced, each of whom receives a €10,000 award. The competition is open to feature-length fiction film projects in the treatment or script development phase, originating from and produced in any of the Balkan countries, listed as Greece, Cyprus, Turkey, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Slovenia. The call for applications explicitly states that each project must be “directly connected to the history and culture of its country of origin” and will be evaluated on its “artistic and storytelling” merits, making it clear that the goal of the competition is to improve the quality of “Balkan cinema,” by providing financial support for the development of film projects from the region at an early stage.<sup>28</sup>

The program also had another purpose, according to filmmaker Lucia Rikaki, who was the head coordinator of the Balkan Fund program until it was discontinued after the 2010 festival edition. Rikaki had initially worked with then-festival director Michel Demopoulos to develop the Balkan Fund program in 2003. In a conversation one day outside of the Balkan Fund office during the 2008 festival, she explained to me that the idea for the Balkan Fund had originally come from the Minister of Culture at the time, Eleftherios Venizelos, who was from Thessaloniki and wanted to put the city, and Greece more generally, in a higher-profile leadership position in the Balkans. In developing the new program, Rikaki and Demopoulos turned to their international connections, consulting with Thierry Lenouvel, the founder of the Script

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<sup>28</sup> <http://www.filmfestival.gr/2006/index.php?page=balkan&ln=en&box=industry>

Development Fund of the International Film Festival of Amiens, and enlisting the help of Marco Mueller, at the time director of the prestigious Locarno Film Festival, to bring in distinguished participants from abroad and establish the reputation of the new program early on. Through the script competition, the Thessaloniki festival has played an important role in shaping the new international face of Balkan cinema, providing key early support and feedback to projects that would go on to become some of the most celebrated films to come out of the region in recent years, including the Romanian *California Dreamin' (endless)* (2007, dir. Cristian Nemescu; Un Certain Regard Award, Cannes 2007), and the Bosnian films *Snow* (2008, dir. Aida Begić; Critic's Week Grand Prize, Cannes 2008) and *Grbavica* (2006, dir. Jasmila Žbanić; Golden Bear, Berlin 2006).

Thus we see that the Balkan Fund program is characterized by a tension between the emphasis on “Balkan cinema,” with its implied social and cultural specificity, and the primarily western European hierarchies of value that dominate the global film festival network, which shaped the program from the beginning and also determined the evaluation of the end products’ success - a tension that has to do with differences in scale and publics. As a volunteer working with the Balkan Fund staff in 2008, and again as an observer in 2009, I saw this tension come to the surface repeatedly, as it was built into the structure of the program and the way it was run. One of the main criteria for the selection of finalists was the cultural specificity of each project, its “direct connection” to the history and culture of its country of origin, and this was reflected in the projects selected as finalists in both 2008 and 2009: most told stories strongly situated in the social, political and historical realities of specific Balkan countries over the last few decades - stories of war, displacement, loss, economic hardship, immigration, rapid social transformations.

However, this historical and cultural specificity tended to get lost during the Balkan Fund workshop, when the projects would be discussed in the decontextualized space of the Industry Center, by an international jury whose members were chosen as experts precisely for their extensive experience and strong record of achievements in the western European and British film industries. In front of a silent audience of the other finalists, each project's creative team would present their proposal, and these jury members would then evaluate the project primarily in terms of narrative structure, clarity of plot and character development. Running through these discussions was a concern for "good storytelling," as well as dominant assumptions about what makes a good story, and the best way to tell it - assumptions that, while cast as "universal," were often culturally specific themselves.

At the 2008 Balkan Fund workshop, this tension became explicit during the presentation and discussion of *The Last Flirtation of Miss Djukic*, a project proposed by Serbian filmmaker Mladen Kovačević. The film tells the story of two seniors living in a small city in present-day Serbia who go in search of their missing friend, Miss Djukic, only to uncover her secret life as a con artist, the small fortune she had amassed through her schemes, and her conflicted involvement as a young woman with the Communist Youth League. In presenting his project, Mladen described it as "a bittersweet and occasionally phantasmagoric chronicle of Serbian civil society in the past fifty years," a tragicomic film that shows "what happens when senior citizens, frustrated with the prospect of barely financing and enduring the rest of their lives, decide to enjoy a little before they depart." Stylistically, he explained that the film would be a mix of genres, including crime thriller, drama, comedy, romance and fantasy, and he showed a short clip of roughly shot sample scenes, which seemed to combine elements of horror, physical comedy

and black humor. After his presentation, the jurists began their mostly critical discussion of the film; in their opinion, the greatest weakness of the project was its confusing tone and its mixing of genres, and they had trouble understanding how the humorous elements of the film would fit together with the tragic, as well as with the film's larger social concerns. They were also concerned with the wider appeal of the story, doubtful that a complicated story about senior citizens in Serbia would attract an audience outside of Serbia itself. Throughout the discussion, Mladen responded to the questions and comments of the jury members, attempting to clarify his vision for the film and explain the wider significance and appeal of the story, all the while becoming visibly more and more frustrated. At the end of the discussion, when it was clear that he had failed to convince the jury, his frustration erupted and he broke from the usual etiquette of the proceedings, in which criticism only moved in one direction from jury to finalists, exclaiming, "Only a few of us here come from these countries, and we understand. We that come from ex-communist countries - with us, it's really obvious!" While the jurists' criticisms of the project were expressed primarily in the culturally unmarked language of film form and filmmaking as a craft - narrative coherence, clarity of tone and genre - Mladen's closing comments had the effect of casting the exchange between himself and the jurists as a case of cultural specificity and misunderstanding, implying that the jurists were not able to appreciate his film because of an inability to understand the culturally specific context and resonances of the story he was trying to tell.

In the end, *Last Flirtation* did not receive an award. When I caught up with Mladen at the Balkan Fund closing party, I asked him what he thought about the whole process, and he replied that he was disappointed, but not surprised, explaining, "This is what happens at these sorts of

things. People have an idea of what ‘Balkan’ is, of what a ‘Balkan film’ should be, and if your film doesn’t fit that idea, then they don’t like it.” He continued that, from his experiences, festivals and the film industry outside of the Balkans are not used to seeing comedies coming out of Balkan countries and tend to shun anything that is not a political or social drama, usually dealing with the challenges and tragedies of post-socialism. Mladen’s interpretation of the jury’s reaction to his film highlights the Balkan Fund as a “zone of cultural debate.” On one level, there is a conflict between the cultural specificity of proposed projects and the Balkan Fund’s attempts to be a more international program, aiming at films that have “universal” appeal. On another level, Mladen is implying that the “universal” assumptions of the jurists are in fact culturally specific themselves. Ultimately, both the jurists and Mladen are talking about the film’s relationship to different publics; references to the project’s “wider appeal,” or to its intelligibility to those who “understand,” are essentially references to how the film might be received among publics of varying scale, histories and cultural background.

The projects that do well in the Balkan Fund competition are those that are adept at speaking the language of universality. In 2009, one of the projects that was chosen to receive a prize was a film called *Romanian Spring*, presented by the Romanian writer-director Anca Miruna Lazarescu. The film is based on actual historical events: In August 1968, fifty-one Romanian families vacationing in East Germany found themselves unable to return to their homes after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. After staying for a period in a detention camp, the families were offered 48-hour transit visas through West Germany and free passage across the borders in order to return to Romania. Remarkably, not one of the families chose to use this as an opportunity to defect to the West; all fifty-one families traveled through West Germany and back

home. Anca was aware of the story because her own family was involved in this history; her father was one of the young men who chose to return with his family to Romania. The film loosely tells the story of her father and his parents, as they are forced to make a decision that will dramatically change the course of their lives. The greatest impact of the story lies in the decision to return to communist Romania rather than escape to the West, especially the fact that every single member of all fifty-one families decided to return, and the story has a sense of historical weight and richness because of the way it eloquently crystallizes particular historical and political histories through very specific, personal stories.

In Anca's presentation, however, this specific historical and political grounding was continually relegated to the background, and even at times erased. Anca began her presentation by describing the film as "a tragical comedy that deals with how horrible it can be when finally your biggest dreams are coming true" - a statement that manages to cast the film as simultaneously personal and universal, while sidestepping the historical and political import of the film altogether. Early on in the discussion, one of the jurists, Richard Kwietniowski, a British director, screenwriter and educator, pressed Anca on the historical issue:

*Richard:* Would you agree that the subject of the project is the fact that all 51 families decide to return to Romania? Is that what the film is about?

*Anca:* The film is about how fate throws in your way an opportunity you might have dreamt of, and suddenly you get the chance that you always wanted, to change your life. Yes of course, it is a story of people having to decide if they should change completely their lives or not, but most of all it is dealing with the fact of how, in life, you have a certain perspective, that you really badly want to have something, and suddenly you get it, and you have to realize that it was not really what you were dreaming of, it was an illusion.

*Richard:* So, in other words, yes?

This exchange was followed by general laughter in the room, in recognition of the fact that clearly, the answer to Richard's question was "no." This foregrounding of the personal-universal story of the main character and his family over the historical-political specificity of the story continued throughout the discussion. While Richard followed his initial question by stating that he thinks the "historical quirk" of the fifty-one families returning is wonderful, he also expressed concern for how the film would manage to cover so many characters and so much ground, to which Anca replied, "The story I want is a kind of family story, to try to tell what I want to tell through them." The rest of the discussion centered on the individual characters, their personal struggles and desires, and how to best structure the narrative around them; even Romanian jurist and internationally celebrated screenwriter Razvan Radulescu, who more than any of the other jurors would have understood the historical and political resonances of the film, focused his questions and comments on the main character and the young man's relationship with his girlfriend, wondering about the necessity of the young woman's character in the first place. Ultimately, Anca concludes that the character of the girlfriend might not in fact be necessary, because she feels that the strength of the story lies within the family itself:

It should be more about the family, and the relationship between each other, what kind of dreams they have and why they don't fulfill them. So I think in the end, if we are able to make those characters stronger, then we will find that we probably don't need the girlfriend, and we can start at the beginning with just the family. I think it needs to be more about the family traveling, so we then we don't need so much the girlfriend, and we don't need so much the other fifty families anymore, because it's a story about this family, how their dreams are fulfilled or not fulfilled, and why these decisions were made.

Astonishingly, the result of the discussion is that the film's writer-director does away with the "historical quirk" of the fifty-one families altogether, one of the most important and compelling elements of the film's specific historical context. The film is transformed into the story of a

family's personal journey and its larger "universal" - rather than historically or politically specific - resonances, and it is this personal-universal story that the jurists chose to award. In this particular "zone of cultural debate," cultural specificity ends up taking a back seat to the rhetoric of "universality" that dominates the global film festival circuit.

The story, however, does not end there. There is a moment in the festival when this rhetoric of universality and wider international appeal comes face to face with a public that insists on its cultural specificity. This happens at the Balkan Fund awards ceremony, when the jurors announce the winners of the competition, followed by a screening of a new film that was previously a Balkan Fund recipient. As the film is officially a part of the festival program and the screening is open to the public, this is one of the few moments when the world of the Industry Center comes into direct contact with the general festival-going public, resulting in tension between the two publics, expressed primarily as a conflict over language. In 2009, when Anca went up to the stage to receive her award, she turned to the interpreter on stage, who had been translating all of the introductions and speeches from English into Greek, and asked if translation was necessary, since perhaps everyone in the theater spoke English; the interpreter immediately became noticeably upset and indignantly replied that it was not right to expect or to even ask Greeks to speak perfect English. This small moment of friction over language was just an echo of a much more pronounced conflict during the 2008 Balkan Fund awards ceremony. That year, the ceremony began with the artistic director of the Balkan Fund, Christina Kallas, welcoming the audience in English, with no Greek translation. A portion of the audience responded angrily and vocally; a man sitting in the row behind me yelled that not only should her speech be translated into Greek, but that she should *begin* in Greek, rather than in English. When the festival



president, George Corraface - a French actor of Greek descent - started to address the audience in his somewhat stilted Greek, the audience began to heckle him, with some yelling out, “You should be ashamed!” At that point, Lucia Rikaki took the stage and attempted to reason with the audience, shouting over them in Greek, “The whole theater is filled with foreigners! It’s completely international!” (*Ine oli kseni edo! Ine entelos dhiethnes!*), but the audience was only placated when Kallas agreed to translate all the English, line by line, into Greek. As the winners were called up one by one to receive their awards, the question of language continued to be foregrounded: Serbian director Javor Gardev made a point of saying “Thank you” in his belabored Greek; Greek producer Zoe Lisgara gave her long-winded acceptance speech entirely in English, explicitly refusing to speak in Greek and asserting, “I can’t stand that kind of thing”; and Turkish director Sirri Süreyya Önder addressed the issue by delivering his speech in almost comically loud, deliberate Turkish, which remained entirely untranslated. Upon seeing this older, heavily mustachioed Turkish man turn their demand for cultural specificity on its head, the audience burst into laughter and applause.

In this moment of conflict over which language to use, we can see a larger conflict between different festival publics. Through the Balkan Fund program, and the Industry Center more generally, the Thessaloniki festival addresses itself to an international public with a particular rhetoric and particular values - no less particular for their assumed “universality.” In doing so, the festival operates in a hierarchy of value in which the international is privileged over the national, and the local and the national are re-branded as themselves international. Vanessa Schwartz demonstrates how this hierarchy of value played an important role in the development of the Cannes festival:

Cosmopolitanism was the Festival's driving cultural value [...] France established its centrality in international film culture by playing host to the world's most important Festival and market. If French national products did not dominate the box office in most parts of the globe, Cannes promoted internationalism and eventually auteurism instead. The Festival contributed to the internationalization of the film industry [...] The Festival cultivated the idea that such an international film culture existed in the first place and that France could serve as the perfect staging grounds because of the long-term French investment in cultural cosmopolitanism. (Schwartz 2007:57-8)

Just as the Cannes festival functioned to re-cast France as a nation inherently international and cosmopolitan, so the Balkan Fund and Industry Center were created, as Rikaki explained, to promote Thessaloniki, and Greece by extension, as an international, cosmopolitan center.

However, in the larger space of the festival, this particular hierarchy of value comes into conflict with the values and rhetoric of other publics - in the case of the Balkan Fund, with a public that insists on its local and national cultural specificity, and refuses to comply with the assumed hierarchy of values. These debates and conflicts over films and language are ultimately negotiations between different publics and different forms of publicness.

### ***Street Cinema***

If the festival is a cultural space in which various forms of publicness are enacted, debated or contested, then it was even more so in the lead-up to the festival's fiftieth-anniversary edition in 2009, when the economic crisis, civil unrest and growing civic discourse of responsibility and transparency turned a public spotlight on the very notion of "public" itself, understood in a variety of ways. In his breakdown of the relationship between "public" and "private," between publicness and privacy, Michael Warner outlines the wide range of meanings that "public" can have, including "open to everyone," "state-related; now often called public sector," "political," "official," "national or popular," "international or universal," "in physical view of others,"

“circulated in print or electronic media,” “known widely,” “acknowledged and explicit” (Warner 2007:29). He also lists different definitions of “public” as a noun (“the public,” “a public,” “the public sphere”), as well as the notion of “publicity [...] not merely publicness or openness but the use of media, an instrumental publicness associated most with advertising and public relations” (Warner 2007:30). In the socially and politically turbulent period after the events of December 2008, as more and more people began to think critically about the negative affects of private interests and consumption on the quality of public life - state corruption, clientelism, economic inequality - the festival increasingly came under fire for some of the ways in which it was or was not public. It was criticized for its large budgets built on public funding, for lack of transparency in its finances, for its political connections to the party in power, for being either too international or not international enough, for its penchant for *glamouria*. In Thessaloniki, the festival was also criticized for being disconnected to the local public, a criticism that sprang from and played on the larger tension between Thessaloniki and Athens; some local festival-goers complained that the festival, with its main offices in Athens, was run by Athenians who knew and even cared little about the needs of the Thessaloniki public.

Beginning in the summer of 2009, the festival staff in Athens and Thessaloniki began work on a special program for the fiftieth anniversary edition, called “Street Cinema” (*O kinimatografos stous dhromous tis polis*), which in many ways addressed some of these criticisms. The Street Cinema program was made up of twenty-seven different public art works - including public performances/interventions, installations, projections, music and dance performances, workshops, graffiti/murals, and social practice projects - that were installed or took place in various public spaces throughout the city during the 2009 festival. All of the works

were by Thessaloniki-based artists, arts groups and cultural organizations, supported financially, administratively and logistically by the Thessaloniki festival, and all of the projects had a low-budget-, DIY-sensibility. In a publication that accompanied the program, the artistic director of *Street Cinema* Angelos Frantzis expressly states,

This year we wanted to rethink the relationship between the festival and the city, between the cinema and reality and the world of the dream, so we made it our goal to promote the festival in ways that would be original and would transform the city itself into a cinema. Thus, our aim was to take cinema out into the street [...] even in spots where the festival has difficulty reaching. (Thessaloniki International Film Festival 2009a:5)

In more strategic language, from the festival's annual report to its board of directors, the aim of the program was "the further strengthening of the relationship of [the festival] with the city of Thessaloniki" (Thessaloniki International Film Festival 2010:5). The *Street Cinema* program seemed designed as a response to some of the public criticisms the festival was facing at the time, by supporting local artists and organizations and helping them to stage low-budget, public art work that in its sensibility stood in marked contrast to many of the other lavish celebrations being planned for the fiftieth edition. The aim was to make cinema and the festival as visible and ubiquitous in the city as possible, in this way re-activating the city's public spaces as culturally vibrant spaces of cinema, with the festival at the helm.

While the explicit purpose of the program was "to take cinema out into the street," from early on in the planning stages, it became clear that "cinema" was not quite as important as "the street." Sitting in on an early *Street Cinema* organizational meeting, I was struck by the emphasis put by the program's organizers on the publicness of projects, rather than on their connection to cinema. At the festival's Thessaloniki office, the small organizational committee had met to work through the initial responses to the call for proposals, which numbered fifty-five, to select

roughly twenty projects for callback interviews. The organizational committee included the artistic director Angelos and festival consultant Athina Kartalou, both of whom had flown up from Athens for a few days of meetings with the Thessaloniki staff, and a few members of the festival production, IT and public relations staff, all based in Thessaloniki. As we read through and discussed the proposed projects one by one, it became clear that many of them were not particularly related to cinema. Although the call for proposals had asked Thessaloniki-based artists and groups to respond creatively to the larger theme of the fiftieth edition, “Why Cinema Now?”, some of the proposals described projects that did not refer to cinema at all, while some had only a tenuous connection that existed more in the description than in the project itself, and some seemed to be projects that had already been conceptualized or even executed before, tweaked minimally, if at all, to fit the *Street Cinema* program. To my surprise, the organizational committee responded to some of these non-cinematic proposals with much enthusiasm, particularly those involving a very visible public element or interaction with the general public, while quickly turning down more cinema-oriented proposals that nevertheless had a weaker public component. For example, a proposal by an experimental filmmaker for a moving-image installation in a gallery setting was unanimously cut, but a proposal submitted by a popular local arts collective, Sfina, to stage a mass public performance of Magritte’s painting *The Lovers* - a sort of flash-mob tableau vivant - was immediately put on the shortlist, despite the fact that it had no connection to cinema. In evaluating the projects, Angelos and Athina often used the English term “street cred” to refer to whether a project was or was not public enough. In the callback interviews that took place one week later, a representative of Sfina, arrived to talk with Angelos about the proposal. Although Angelos initially brought up his concern that the project lacked

cinematic references, the Sfina representative responded that the recreation of iconic images was, in a sense, “cinematic,” which was enough to appease Angelos, and they quickly moved on to discuss the logistics of the project, where it would take place, and how it would engage the public.

*The Lovers* performance by Sfina eventually took place on the second day of the festival in Navarinou Square, a busy pedestrian area popular with students, a few hundred meters east of Aristotelous Square and the Olympion. About fifty performers, who had gathered at another square a few blocks away to prepare and synchronize their watches, descended on Navarinou at the same time, breaking up into groups of two, draping white pieces of fabric over their heads, and striking variations on the iconic pose from the eponymous Magritte painting. Everyone held their poses for about ten minutes, a period long enough for them to get the attention of passersby. University students hanging out in the square started to stare and giggle; younger children playing with a soccer ball peered curiously at the couples and even tried to approach them; some people walking by took out cameras and cellphones to snap pictures bemusedly; and one elderly woman, after staring at one of the couples for a few minutes, began to ask them in a loud voice if they had “lost it,” using the end of her cane to try to move the white fabric from their heads. Even shopkeepers from the stores lining the square came out to see what was happening. After the designated amount of time, the couples came out of their poses, removed the white sheets and gathered to talk excitedly about their performance.

I had met the Sfina performers beforehand, walked with them to Navarinou, and found a comfortable spot with a good view onto the square, to take in the whole performance and people’s reactions. On the one hand, *The Lovers* was not successful in fulfilling the festival’s

goal of bringing “cinema into the streets,” or even of promoting the festival, as there were no tangible connections to either. As I stood watching the couples, I started to chat with the people around me and realized that most of the onlookers had no idea that this was a project connected to the festival, and there was no way for them to know: no signage, postage or flyers - no indication of any kind. A young clerk from a shoe store stood in the doorway of her shop, puzzled but clearly delighted, watching the frozen pairs of *Lovers*; when I asked her if she knew what was going on, she simply shrugged and replied with a small laugh that these kinds of strange things happen often in Navarinou and that it was probably some group or other, having a little fun. On the other hand, the performance did succeed in activating a certain publicness. The gradual awareness of passersby and their varied responses were not only delightful to observe, but also created a palpable sense of a viewing public - in this instance, a group of strangers addressed by and responding to a visual, performative act. It was clear that many of the people in this momentary public had not been aware that such a performance would take place; the sense of surprise and delight at the unexpected, whimsical eruption, especially in the everyday urban environment, brought us together as viewers. In this sense, *The Lovers*, like many of the other *Street Cinema* projects like it, was a successful exercise in publicness.

The *Street Cinema* program also successfully contributed to the creation of a public in another, more mediated sense. Watching Sfina’s performance unfold, I couldn’t help but notice the unusually high number of photographers and videographers documenting the event. Apart from the passersby taking snapshots more casually, there were numerous people spread out across the square deliberately taking multiple shots of as many couples as they could see, with professional still cameras, and some with digital video cameras; among them, I recognized two

of the *Street Cinema* coordinators, some of the festival's own photographers and cameramen, and a couple of amateur photographers who were ubiquitous at festival events. There were so many cameras, and they were so active, that one could almost mistake the performance for a photo shoot, as if it had been staged in order to be documented. The next day, these images would appear on the festival's website, in its newspaper and newsletters, and on the new Film Festival Television channel (FFTV) that played around the clock on monitors installed throughout the festival's spaces, as well as in local hotels. The effect of these images was to *picture the festival's publicness*. While *The Lovers* may not have been successful in activating and expanding the festival's public during the performance itself in Navarinou Square, the documentation of the performance - of this public act, and of the responses of the viewing public that it brought into existence - can then be used by the festival to promote an image of itself as public. In this way, the festival *stages* and then *pictures* its public, and its publicness.

### ***Staging/Picturing the Public***

This impulse to stage and visualize publics or publicness is a characteristic of the festival that became clear to me early on in my research, the first year that I worked as a volunteer for the festival in one of the department offices. Occasionally, the steady activity in the office was punctuated by moments of crisis, such as a guest not arriving on time for a scheduled event, a film print being withdrawn by a filmmaker, or a missing interpreter; in these moments, the staff would jump into action, making calls, giving orders to the volunteers, or throwing on their coats to go take care of the problem in situ. A few days into the festival, I assumed that just such a crisis was behind a phone call that threw Rena, one of the main staff members, into a mild panic.



As soon as she answered the phone, her brow wrinkled in concern, and her next move was to call the head of volunteers; when she could not reach her, she cursed aloud anxiously. As I was wondering if something serious had happened - perhaps a volunteer had been hurt, or an important checkpoint had been left abandoned by the volunteers who were assigned to it - Rena turned to the three of us who were volunteering in the office that day and told us to take off our badges, put on our coats and run over to one of the cinemas in another warehouse on the *limani*. As it turned out, the “crisis” was that a masterclass with two well-known American actors - special guests of the festival that year - was scheduled to begin in just a few minutes, but the theater was still more than half empty, and the masterclass staff was frantically asking all the different festival departments to send their volunteers to fill empty seats; of course, we had to take off our badges, so that we would not appear to be festival workers. When we arrived at the masterclass, I noted that the attendance was not that bad; looking more closely at the audience, however, I soon recognized the faces of many young festival volunteers, *sans* badges. A festival staff photographer paced back and forth at the front of the theater, snapping pictures of both the actors and the increasingly large audience as the masterclass began. This was not the only instance in which the festival’s sizable army of volunteers would be called upon to fill seats; in fact, it happened regularly enough that soon we were able to tell whenever Rena would get such a call, and before she had hung up, we’d be ready to head to the next under-attended masterclass, lecture, or panel discussion.

It is not hard to understand why the festival staff would be concerned about the appearance of a large audience, particularly in an event involving stars or other distinguished guests. But the festival’s impulse to picture its public seems to run even deeper than just a concern for

appearances, something that was captured eloquently in a moment towards the end of the opening ceremony of the fiftieth-anniversary edition. After all of the introductions, speeches, greetings and performances, the MC for the evening, a popular Greek actor named Christos Loulis, concluded the opening ceremony with a gimmick - a live-feed video of himself, projected large on the Olympion screen, following him as he leaves the theater. Sitting in the audience, I felt momentarily disoriented, as Loulis the man jumped off the stage and was replaced by the face of Loulis the screen image, who proceeded to walk down the central aisle, cross the lobby, and go out into Aristotelous Square, all the while continuing to address us, the audience, still seated back in the theater. Once outside, the camera turned to show the Olympion building, which was suddenly aglow and shifting, with an animated sequence projected, full-size, onto the building's facade. This large-scale projection had been especially commissioned by the festival to be one of the highlights of the fiftieth-anniversary celebrations, so it was no surprise that the festival would take pains to include it in the opening ceremony somehow. But what came next was surprising: the camera panned over to a large group of onlookers, clearly organized and placed there by the festival production team, staring up at the projection. As the camera lingered over their faces, the public seated inside the Olympion watched the faces of this staged public outside, caught up in a sort of feedback loop of publics, produced by the festival itself. In the final moments of the fiftieth anniversary opening ceremony, the festival chose to represent itself to its public, through yet another image of its public, and its publicness.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Writing about the iconography of Cannes, Schwartz notes the importance of showing not just the stars, but the photographers themselves - another way of "picturing publicness": "Chalais' [Reflets de Cannes] team filmed not only the event being covered, but also the press coverage of an event. There are countless images of the photographers taking pictures in the television broadcasts; thus the television cameras filmed the subject of the photos and the subject being photographed at the same time. The television programs emphasized what could already be found in the still photographs, which often had trouble getting their subjects without photographing photographers as well [...] The television's camera 'eye' reveals the fabrication of the event as an event by showing the photographers at work [...] the coverage of coverage" (Schwartz 2007:86).

If the festival goes to great lengths to stage and picture its public, what kind of public exactly is it looking to conjure? To answer this question, we can look at the festival's "Just Talking" program. A series of structured conversations that take place nearly every day of the festival, the Just Talking program is the prime example of the festival staging a public. At a quiet point in the afternoon before the primetime evening screenings, a group of five to ten filmmakers whose work is being shown in the festival are gathered to have an informal discussion about their films; the discussion is moderated by a staff member and open to the public. In the past few years, these sessions have taken place in a beautiful old building on the *limani*, in a warm, inviting light-filled space with comfortable chairs, wine and snacks, and a breathtaking view of the harbor - in other words, a space designed to attract a public. There are microphones set up for both the filmmakers/speakers as well as for the audience members, and at the front of the room sits a large flat-screen monitor, on which the moderator can call up trailers from the films of each of the participating filmmakers, as well as film clips especially selected for the *Just Talking* program. The entire space has been carefully designed and equipped not just for an audience, but for a public - a coming together of individuals engaged in informed critical discussion and debate. The ideal audience member is someone who has watched the films, read reviews and interviews in the *First Shot* newspaper, has formed questions and opinions about the work, and is ready to pick up the microphone and participate in a lively but polite exchange of opinions. In this sense, Just Talking attempts to stage the Habermasian model of the ideal bourgeois public sphere. If Warner describes a public as somewhat of a ghostly entity - a "space of discursive circulation" (Warner 2002:121) rather than a "concrete manifestation (Warner 2002:89) - then

Just Talking, by staging an instance of “just talking,” attempts to materialize that particular kind of publicness.

If the film festival as an institution of public culture is a “zone of cultural debate,” then what is being debated in that zone is not just cinema, or cultural products, or even cultural meaning, but the public itself - different kinds of publics, varying discourses and practices of publicness. In the context of the larger civic discourse developing in Greece around the time of the festival’s fiftieth edition, there was much at stake in claiming different forms of publicness - transparency, openness, collectivity, accessibility - which can confer onto their claimants social, political and cultural capital. Perhaps, in the case of the festival, publicness could also translate into economic capital, as it would justify continued public funding of an institution that has never turned a profit and does not earn nearly enough in sales to support itself. It might be the case, however, that the festival chose to claim the *wrong* form of publicness at that particular moment, with its particular political and social climate. The form of publicness that the festival attempts to enact - a receptive, discursively conditioned public, one that quietly watches, sits, opines and never seems to resist the festival that has called it into existence - is one that has little agency or political power, as Warner writes:

The attribution of agency to publics works in most cases because of the direct transposition from private reading acts to the sovereignty of opinion. All of the verbs for public agency are verbs for private reading, transposed upward to the aggregate of readers. Readers may scrutinize, ask, reject, opine, decide, judge, and so on. Publics can do exactly these things. And nothing else. Publics - unlike mobs or crowds - are incapable of any activity that cannot be expressed through such a verb. (Warner 2002:123)

At a time in Greece when political action and resistance were quickly taking on renewed social and cultural significance, espousing this particular form of passive publicness seemed not only out of step, but perhaps even dangerously so, especially for an institution of the festival’s

visibility and reach. The FOG filmmakers' boycott of the festival was, in part, a response to this, which I will explore further in Chapter Three. In the next chapter, I look at how discourses and practices of publicness have changed over the course of the festival's history, and in what ways that history is being put to use today.

## CHAPTER 2

### *HISTORIES*

The theme chosen for the fiftieth anniversary edition of the Thessaloniki Film Festival was the open-ended question, “Why Cinema Now?” In explaining the meaning of the motto, festival organizers presented time and again - in promotional materials, newspaper and magazine articles, television interviews and the festival’s own publications - a quote from Jean Renoir as the inspiration for the theme: “Deep down [...] the problem is that everyone, every cinematographer, every worker, every set painter, every carpenter, every production designer, every actor would have to reinvent everything from the beginning in order to keep cinema alive” (Thessaloniki International Film Festival 2009c:4). In the festival’s annual report to its board of directors, this Renoir quote is interpreted as a call “to see cinema all over again from the beginning, as something constantly new” (Thessaloniki International Film Festival 2010:4), and the question “Why Cinema Now?” was similarly meant as a challenge to reconsider the relevance and significance of film today. Referring to the 50th anniversary theme, Festival director Despina Mouzaki gestured to the present economic and political situation: “In an era of a global crisis [...] this becomes an urgent question. Today more than ever we need to rethink everything, starting from the beginning” (Holdsworth 2009:A16).

In a television interview before the festival, Mouzaki described how they had arrived at the motto, repeating the Renoir quote and explaining, “We thought that, for the 50th anniversary, there’s no point in looking to the past, but in order to look towards the future we ourselves have to raise questions concerning the nature and essence of cinema.”<sup>30</sup> What was most odd about her statement was that she was giving an interview for a five-part television series dedicated precisely to the *history* of the Thessaloniki film festival, and in this context, her outright dismissal of the past seemed out of place, or untimely. Similarly, the choice of the theme for the festival, and the insistent institutional call to “rethink everything from the beginning,” lent a strange temporality to the 2009 edition. Given the crisis developing in Greece in 2009, the question “Why Cinema Now?” could have been understood as a timely response to that particular historical moment, echoing questions circulating in public discourse at the time about the value of public culture. However, the “now” referenced in the motto ultimately turned out to be a more timeless “now” rather than a historically specific one; a commemorative publication presenting the answers of past distinguished festival guests to the question “Why Cinema Now?” features a largely ahistorical rhetoric, dominated by references to the timeless “power of cinema” and “need for stories” (Thessaloniki International Film Festival 2009b).

While a landmark anniversary such as the fiftieth would seem to be a natural occasion for the festival to look back and consider its institutional history, or its place in the history of Greek cinema, in actuality there was a noticeable lack of any major exhibitions or screening series that reflected on or referenced this history. The fact that the festival chose not to showcase this history does not mean that it is not significant; on the contrary, conversations with subjects in the

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<sup>30</sup> From the fifth episode of the five-part series “Festival 50 Eton” (Festival of 50 Years), which aired on the national state television channel ET1 (10 November 2009).

field and my own historical research made it clear to me that the history of the festival is significant both on the level of national cultural politics and on the level of people's personal memories and experiences. Against the untimely sense of timelessness that characterized the 2009 festival overall, a few events stood out for their historical or historiographical focus; among these was one of the *Street Cinema* public performances, the public presentation of a retrospective festival publication, and an honorary awards ceremony and screening. In this chapter, I analyze these events, in order to understand not only what kinds of histories were being told, but also how they were being told - negotiated, contested, performed, enacted - and how the past is being put to use in the present.

### ***Tekhni - Reenacting Publicness***

On the third day of the 2009 festival, between sessions of the Balkan Fund at the Industry Center, I took a quick walk along the waterfront to the other side of the city center, where a few different Street Cinema events were under way. Earlier that morning I had combed through the Street Cinema program to see which I could catch that day and had noticed that, among the installations and performances - or "happenings," as the program's organizers liked to describe them - listed for that afternoon was one of the few that referenced the film festival directly. It was a public performance by members of a local arts organization, the Macedonian Art Society "Tekhni" (*Makedhoniki Kallitekhniki Eteria "Tekhni"*), which in 1956 started the Thessaloniki cinema club, led by writer and film critic Pavlos Zannas, that was instrumental in launching the first Thessaloniki film festival in 1960. The site of the performance was a small pedestrian plaza in front of what used to be the old movie theater Alexandros, now the Cultural Center of the



Thessaloniki prefecture, where the Thessaloniki cinema club used to hold its weekly screenings until the club's activities were brought to a halt with the start of the military dictatorship in 1967.

In the Street Cinema publication, the performance is described in explicitly historical terms:

The *Techni* Macedonian Art Society takes us on a trip back in time, to the moments that created the Thessaloniki Film Festival. People dressed in clothing of that period will be providing passers-by with information and will be having discussions with them in the area where the Alexandros cinema is located. [...] *Techni* recreates the atmosphere of the time when the writings of Pavlos Zannas introduced modern cinema to Thessaloniki. (Thessaloniki International Film Festival 2009a:39)

Arriving at the former Alexandros theater, I almost missed the “happening,” at which not much seemed to be happening at all. On that quiet Sunday afternoon, the plaza was nearly empty, but the presence of a videocamera and cameramen with festival badges drew my eye to two middle-aged women standing in front of the closed doors of the Cultural Center. Nothing about them particularly stood out, except that one of them wore outdated elbow-length gloves with a matching scarf, and both wore hats that seemed somewhat old-fashioned. They stood awkwardly, holding in their arms copies of a bright red booklet; one of them kept glancing around uncomfortably, as though waiting for something or someone, while the other seemed absorbed in a film festival catalogue. Approaching them, I asked if they were from *Techni*, upon which they quickly became more at ease, enthusiastically replying that they were indeed from the Macedonian Art Society. One of them handed me the booklet, explaining that it was a collection of articles, film criticism and other cinema-related writings from the monthly journal, *Techni in Thessaloniki (I Tekhni sti Thessaloniki)*, that the Society had published from 1956 to 1967; the special retrospective volume had been a joint publication of the Thessaloniki Film Festival and *Techni* in 2002, and in addition to the reproduced texts, it also contained some of the history of the Society, its cinema club, and its role in the creation of the film festival. As we stood there

talking, others walking through the plaza stopped to listen, and a small group started to form; soon, the *Techni* members were handing out booklets and starting conversations with the others who had gathered. Taking my copy of the booklet, I stood off to the side, observing the dynamics unfolding in the plaza. Among the people passing through - younger couples, older couples, women with strollers, groups of teenagers - most stopped either out of curiosity or after being approached by one of the *Techni* “performers.” Some listened politely, took a copy of the booklet and quickly continued on their way; others stood in the plaza for a few minutes, flipping through the publication; and yet others engaged the *Techni* members in conversation, asking further questions about the organization, their activities and this particular event. Unlike some of the other *Street Cinema* “happenings,” which gathered noticeable crowds, the *Techni* event was less conspicuously public; rather than drawing a crowd, it created a temporary space for a more open, diffuse public engagement, with passersby variably interacting, and always with the collection of texts as both a material and discursive starting point of communication.

It is appropriate that the booklet served as the glue in the creation of this temporary public, as the history told in the booklet - and revisited through the *Techni* performance - is itself a history of the creation of a public, or of publicness. The main character in this history is Pavlos Zannas, who helmed the *Techni* cinema club and “envisioned, inaugurated and developed the institution of the Thessaloniki Film Festival” (Makedhoniki Kallitekhniki Eteria 2002:9), a legacy commemorated in 1999 when one of the festival’s main screening spaces in the Olympion building was named after him. Zannas, whose family was originally from Thessaloniki, returned to his hometown in 1954, after living and studying in Geneva for seven years, and almost immediately joined the *Techni* Art Society. The Society had been formed in Thessaloniki in 1951

by a small group of local academics, writers, artists and intellectuals who wanted to revive the arts and public culture in their city after the ravages of World War II and the Greek Civil War (1946-1949). The two wars in quick succession had not only damaged the country economically, politically, and infrastructurally; they had also weakened public life and frayed the social fabric, with the particularly brutal civil war ripping apart previously close-knit towns, villages and even families. In an interview for a 1988 documentary, the year before his death, Zannas described the early motivations of *Techni*'s founding members:

[I]t started with the idea that within its ranks would gather the art-loving public of Thessaloniki, and that this public must fight for Thessaloniki to achieve an artistic and intellectual life, which it did not have. At the same time, it must demand that the State develop intellectual activity in this city which always has the large and grandiose title *co-capital*, but which was and unfortunately still is a province in relation to Athens [...]. (Xanthopoulos 1999:17)

Zannas' description makes clear that the main concern of the Society was not just the arts; by fostering arts and culture in the city, ultimately it wanted to help create a stronger and more active local public, one that could eventually also exercise political agency.

Just as the goal of the Society was “the organization of regular cultural events, in order to create a sensitized public” (Xanthopoulos 1999:5), similarly Zannas' primary motivation in starting a cinema club within the Society was “the formation of an informed and cultivated cinema public” (Xanthopoulos 1999:5). In the same 1988 interview, Zannas describes the cinema club, or *leskhi*, at length:

I remember well how the Cinema Club started. A second-run theater offered us the opportunity to hold screenings in the evening. Thus we were able to invite people to come watch films at 10 in the evening. And because it was of course a good time for the socialites but also for the students, on opening night the cinema was packed. Socialites were all mixed up with non-socialites, and there were the ladies who thought that finally they would see the important films with Hollywood stars. But they found themselves in front of a black and white movie that startled them: *Los Olvidados* by L. Buñuel. Maybe

it was too strong and hard a dose for the first contact. One lady fainted and had to be taken outside. Nevertheless the public that filled the theater ensured the success of the events. And the screenings continued.

The Club went through many hard times. Sometimes the theater was full, and then suddenly it would empty. You had the feeling that the public wasn't following. You would present great classic works of silent cinema and the public would sulk. They didn't understand why they had to put up with with three hours of a film by Griffith or a masterpiece by Eisenstein. They didn't yet have the education/knowledge. They hadn't yet understood what these works meant for the history of cinema. At one point, I held a screening and only two spectators came. I insisted and the screening continued. Of course, at the end, the three of us in the theater discussed the film.

Gradually, the changing public - because each year we had 200-300 new member registrations and primarily many students - became familiar with cinema. The introductions [to the films] were written with greater attention and care. The public, which at first was "stuck," started to participate in the discussions and become more of an important presence [...] Sometimes the Club had very few members, sometimes it had many. The last few years, the following that attended the screenings exceeded 200 or 300, even 400 members. And I admit that it made an impression on me when, after many years, I heard experienced directors telling me that they learned many things about cinema attending those screenings. (Xanthopoulos 1999:17-19)

What is most striking about the way Zannas describes the cinema club is the extent to which he narrates its history and significance in terms of its public. His memory of the opening night is dominated by his impressions of the audience and their reactions, and he measures the Club's success and the various stages in its development by the size of the public and the level of engagement of its members, both with the films but also with each other, in post-screening discussions. On occasion, he would even run the Club like a classroom, showing a film twice and, between the first and second screenings, presenting an analysis of the film illustrated with slides, or giving lectures on film form or production (Xanthopoulos 1999:6), and he himself stated that the goal of the Cinema Club was to make possible "a 'cinematic edification' of the public, which will learn to distinguish (and to support) good cinema" (Makedhoniki

Kallitekhniki Eteria 2002:20). Zannas also understood the role of film criticism, particularly as published in the monthly *Techni* journal, to be similarly pedagogical. The inaugural issue of the journal states that criticism, in addition to completing the work of art through social dialogue, has “another, higher goal: to educate. To guide the public in the difficult realm of art, to orient it and to sharpen its artistic sense” (Xanthopoulos 1999:7). In the same issue, Zannas writes, “We hope that the film criticism which will happen in this column [...] will help the friends of Cinema to watch the films that are shown in our city with a more critical eye and with more artistic criteria” (Makedhoniki Kallitekhniki Eteria 2002:20). While Zannas was in many ways a classic cinephile for whom a critical cinema and the language of film were of utmost importance, it is also clear that, for him, creating a knowledgeable, critical public around and through the films was just as, if not more important.

When the Thessaloniki International Trade Fair organization (*Dhiethnis Ekthesi Thessalonikis*, or HELEXPO), in celebration of its twenty-fifth anniversary in 1960, solicited proposals from the *Techni* Art Society for cultural events, Pavlos Zannas put together a proposal for a film festival, based on his experience running the Cinema Club, which was immediately accepted. In the proposal - which was reproduced in its entirety in the *Techni* booklet distributed during the Street Cinema event - Zannas connects the festival administratively and financially to the state, pointing out that a new national film law about to be introduced in Parliament for debate already contained legal and financial provisions for such a film event and organization. Zannas suggests that the festival should begin primarily as a national showcase of Greek films, with the intention of eventually building it into an international festival of the size and scope that would merit accreditation by the International Federation of Film Producers (FIAPF). He argues

that the festival will have a two-fold benefit: first, it would bring foreign interest to Thessaloniki and to HELEXPO, since countries would want to show their films in Greece and potentially expand the market for their national film production, and second, it would be the best way to promote Greek cinema internationally, showcasing it among the best films from around the world, to an audience of international guests and industry professionals. Of course, these lofty goals were far beyond the scope of what was possible in the first year, or even in the first decade. With the short period of time between the submission of the proposal in March 1960 and the start of the first “Week of Greek Cinema” in September of the same year, and with many organizational missteps and resistance from within the Greek film industry, the first edition of the festival nearly did not take place. In the first year, a modest selection of Greek films were shown: four feature-length film, ten short films, and a special out-of-competition program of nine Greek films that had been produced from 1955 to 1960 (Aktsoğlu 1989:7). It would take over three decades for the festival to become the international gathering and marketplace that Zannas had originally envisioned in his proposal. But in its very first year, what emerged clearly and undeniably from the festival was the strength and engagement of its public. Even short films played to full houses, audiences did not hesitate to drown out films with applause or jeers, and Marios Ploritis, a film critic and member of the jury that year, declared that “the big discovery and the real winner of the festival was the public” (Xanthopoulos 1999:9).

Given the importance of the public and of publicness in the *Techni* cinema club and in the early development of the festival, it seems fitting that the Society’s Street Cinema performance centered on the creation of, and engagement with, a public. In their initial proposal, the Society had put forward the idea of dressing in clothing from the 1950s and passing out flyers or leaflets

announcing a past cinema club screening, re-enacting not the screening itself but the announcement of the screening. During the callback interviews with the Street Cinema applicants selected for the shortlist, the program's artistic director Angelos Frantzis suggested to the *Techni* representative present that, rather than simply re-enact the publicizing of a past screening, they could re-enact the screening itself; the Society could choose a film that had some historic value in relation to its cinema club, and the festival could easily arrange for a screening space, perhaps in the historically relevant theater of the Macedonian Studies Association, where for many years the festival held its screenings. In the end, however, the *Techni* members decided to forego the screening and to hand out the *Techni* booklets rather than flyers or leaflets announcing a screening. In doing so, they made clear that the real focus of their historical re-enactment was not the cinema club's screenings or the films that were shown, but rather engagement and discursive interaction with the public which, for Zannas and for *Techni*, was constitutive of cinema itself; in this sense, their performance highlighted a particular history of publicness.

Ultimately, what was most striking about the performance was the fact that it was not striking at all; in its execution, it was quite unremarkable, and had it not been for the presence of the festival camera crew, I would have missed it myself. Not only was the *Techni* event less spectacular than other *Street Cinema* "happenings" - parades, concerts in public spaces, flash-mobs - it also failed to draw attention to itself as an historical re-enactment. The two women's costumes were not dated enough to mark them as belonging to a particular historical period; even the more dated elements of their costumes - the gloves and hats - would simply be seen by most as conservative, formal or slightly old-fashioned, and apart from this there was nothing else to

bracket the performance temporally. But if they fell short in their attempt to re-enact a particular history of publicness, I would argue that they did succeed in perhaps a more important way, by *enacting a present public*. The texts reproduced in the *Techni* booklet were not only historical remnants, but were being re-circulated, functioning to create a new public. Rather than staging a spectacle of history, their failed re-enactment actually served to create a real, present publicness, however temporary and diffuse. Here, we see a history of publicness becoming publicness itself.

### ***Commemorating History***

If the *Techni* performance is an example of a small historiographical moment in the 2009 festival, less staged for a public than constituted through one, then on the opposite end of the spectrum would be the special ceremony, called “From 1 to 50: The Fiftieth Thessaloniki Film Festival meets the First Week of Greek Cinema,” that was held in the main screening hall of the Olympion where the first festival edition took place in 1960. The event began with a ceremony in which important figures from each period of the festival’s history were given honorary awards, followed by the screening of a restored print of the film *The River*, by celebrated Greek director Nikos Koundouros, which originally played in the inaugural festival in 1960 where it won the top prize for best director.

As a major public event staged by the festival to commemorate its institutional history, the event constituted what Pierre Nora refers to as the quintessential *lieu de mémoire*: a site of memory, not only where the past is remembered, commemorated or celebrated, but where memory itself is thematized, the act of remembering is rehearsed, and one’s relationship to the past is temporarily recovered. For Nora, *lieux de mémoire* - sites of memory such as archives,



museums and monuments, but also less concretely defined experiences or concepts such as anniversaries, reunions, a historical generation or even commemorative moments of silence - are symptomatic of a society that is losing its memory, its capacity to experience the past as a lived part of the present. In such a society, one's relation to the past is mediated through history, understood as "the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer" (Nora 1989:8); this history, rather than memory, "is how our hopelessly forgetful modern societies, propelled by change, organize the past" (Nora 1989:8). According to Nora, the severance of the past from the lived experience of the present is characteristic of all modern societies:

Modern societies have separated memory off from the customs, rituals and traditions which it quietly inhabited in the premodern world, and by insisting that memory declare its presence through external signs, they have weakened memory's endogenous grip on collective life. Nora's "*lieux de mémoire*" are themselves the impoverished substitutes of the "*milieux de mémoire*," "environments of memory," which have all but disappeared. By treating memory primarily as an arena of cultural display, modern societies have ensured its compartmentalization as an experience. (Wood 1994:127)

With "true memory" (Nora 1989:13) no longer accessible, we "deliberately create archives, maintain anniversaries, organize celebrations, pronounce eulogies, and notarize bills" as practices of "commemorative vigilance" (Nora 1989:12), experiencing the past through the enshrinement of its reconstructions.

Nora broadly attributes the rise of *lieux de mémoire* to the changing temporality and increased mediation of life in modern societies (Nora 1989:7-8), which he argued causes us to lose touch with our past. In the case of the festival's fiftieth anniversary, however, there was a more specific sense in which the past had been severed from the present. The festival, which started in 1960 as the "Week of Greek Cinema," has been closely identified with Greek cinema

all throughout its history. It has served as the premier venue for new films produced in the country each year - sometimes the only major venue, in the case of the many films that do not get picked up for distribution or have short theatrical runs - and as such, it has functioned as a sort of backbone to Greek cinema as the latter has gone through different phases in the past five decades. This was made most clear to me during a talk I attended at the Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art in Thessaloniki, by film historian and scholar Eliza-Anna Delveroudi, about modernism in Greek cinema.<sup>31</sup> Her talk was primarily concerned with the formal qualities of the work of major Greek directors such as Michael Cacoyiannis, Nikos Koundouros, Theo Angelopoulos, Pantelis Voulgaris, Takis Kanellopoulos, Alexis Damianos - figures who pioneered the New Greek Cinema in the late 1960s through the early 1980s.<sup>32</sup> But what was most interesting was that most of her talk was structured on the Thessaloniki festival. In discussing how these filmmakers were experimenting formally, one of the first things she mentioned was how important the festival was in providing a space for this to happen, supporting these mostly non-commercial films. For each of the filmmakers discussed in her talk, she narrated the development of their work in terms of their relationship to the festival: in which festival editions they showed which films, how they were received by the critics and festival public. With the festival serving as the underlying structure of her talk, it was clear that the history of the festival and the history of Greek cinema were closely intertwined. In addition, not only was the festival the main showcase for these films, but for many years it was also a major source of funding for filmmakers, with festival prizes in many different categories reaching over a million drachmas at

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<sup>31</sup> May 13, 2009

<sup>32</sup> For further discussion of these filmmakers and their position in Greek film history, see Karalis 2012, Mitropoulou 2006[1980].

times. It has always functioned as one the few annual events that gathered diverse members of the Greek filmmaking community together with the film-viewing public, thereby drawing together and giving coherence to this otherwise scattered and somewhat incoherent world.

Starting in 1992, with the full internationalization of the festival under the directorship of Michel Demopoulos, Greek films constituted a smaller section within a much larger program of films from around the world. At the time, many Greek directors and producers protested the change, worried that their films would take a back seat, and there was much debate about whether or not the festival was losing its national significance; nevertheless, with the continuation of the Greek Panorama program, the special retrospective and thematic programs of Greek films, and the introduction of the State Film Awards in 1998, the festival continued to function as the major annual showcase for Greek films. But in 2009, this historical connection between the festival and national cinema was threatened by the boycott of the festival by the protesting Filmmakers of Greece (FOG), a group of Greek directors, producers and screenwriters, including some of the country's most distinguished and promising filmmakers. Inspired by the civil unrest that had exploded in Greece since December 2008, the FOG filmmakers boycotted the festival as a way to protest corruption and lack of transparency in the distribution of the annual State Film Awards. As part of their protest, the filmmakers vowed not to participate in the 2009 State Awards and to withhold their films from the festival until new regulations were passed. By threatening to keep Greek films from the jubilee edition of the country's main film festival, the FOG members hoped to spur the government to action; in time, their demands grew to include an overhaul of film legislation and state funding structures, and a re-structuring of the Thessaloniki festival. Specifically, they argued that the state funds poured

into the festival each year should instead be used to support film production; calling for an end to the State Awards system and even the festival's annual Greek program, they demanded a smaller festival, primarily international in character, and the creation of a Greek film academy that would give its own annual awards, in Athens. In the end, the filmmakers' demands were not met in time, and many of the most important Greek filmmakers were absent, together with their films, from the 2009 festival. Thus, a festival that had begun as the "Week of Greek Cinema" was celebrating its fiftieth anniversary with hardly any Greek films, especially troubling in a year widely considered to be a break-out year for young, new Greek filmmakers, almost all of whom were members of FOG, whose films found success at major international festivals abroad. In this sense, the 2009 Thessaloniki festival marked a break from its past identification as a national showcase and a nationally significant cultural event.

It is not surprising, then, that the commemorative awards ceremony and screening shone a light directly onto that past, very deliberately highlighting and celebrating it. Sitting in a packed audience of local cinephiles, film scholars, historians, critics, students and professionals, I watched as the evening began with the MC, festival programmer Konstantinos Kontovrakis, welcoming us to what would be, in his words, "a journey (*poria*) through the fifty years of the festival's history." He then narrated a brief history of the festival from its first edition, highlighting important events and people at each stage, beginning with March 1960, when Pavlos Zannas and the *Techne* arts society first proposed the idea of the film festival; in September 1960, four films were shown in the competitive section of the First Week of Greek Cinema, in the Olympion, the very same hall in which we were seated. Kontovrakis' narrative then abruptly jumped twenty-six years to 1986, the next stop on this "journey through history,"

when director Manos Zacharias and Melina Mercouri, then the Minister of Culture, introduced a new legal framework for the festival which brought the institution from under the supervision of the Ministry of Industry to the Ministry of Culture. The MC then jumped another six years to 1992, when the festival changed radically in structure and character, becoming a full-fledged international film festival resembling the major international film festivals of western Europe, a definitive break from the festival's identity up to that point. After another jump of five years to 1997, when film critic and historian Yannis Bakoyannopoulos, then working in the Ministry of Culture, introduced yet another new legal framework for the festival, Kontovrakis fast-forwarded to the present, to the hall in the Olympion, where, he declared, a number of "protagonists" from this fifty-year story would be given honorary awards. In the next portion of the ceremony, he called up these "protagonists," one by one, to give speeches and receive their awards: Mina Zannas, widow of Pavlos Zannas; the current president of *Techni*, Athanasia Tsatsakou, receiving an award on behalf of the Society; Zacharias; Bakoyannopoulos, together with two other film critics who had written about the festival from its very first edition; cast and crew members from films that had participated in the 1960 festival; and finally, Nikos Koundouros himself, whose recently-restored film *The River* was then shown to close the evening.

Victor Turner, in his work in the anthropology of performance and celebration, states that one of the main functions of a social celebration or ceremony is the celebration of the social entity. He writes that "when a social group [...] celebrates a particular event or occasion, it also celebrates itself. In other words, it attempts to manifest, in symbolic form, what it conceives to be its essential life, at once the distillation and typification of its corporate existence" (Turner 1982:16). However, Turner also maintains that there is another side to the celebration, arguing

that “celebrations have their perilous side, for they expose the chaos and indeterminacy” in social life (Turner 1982:29). Similarly, anthropologist Ronald Grimes describes the public celebration as “a rope bridge of knotted symbols strung across an abyss” (Grimes 1982:282). In this view, social celebrations are public performances of collective identity or cohesion that attempt to keep crisis at bay - to contain disorder, to deal with indeterminacy, or to suture a schism. When faced with an abyss, or a crisis, the public celebration is a way to make sure that we get across to the other side. The honorary awards ceremony and screening was clearly an attempt at just such a celebration, trying to bridge the break between the past and the present that had been opened up by the FOG filmmakers’ boycott. Not only was the ceremony explicitly presented as a “journey” back into the past, revisiting significant moments in the festival’s history as a national institution; it also tried to draw a direct connection to the present by calling forth important figures from that national history and awarding them in person. In this way, the ceremony was functioning as a *lieu de mémoire*, a site on and through which history might be recuperated, by bringing together the past and present in the same time and space.

What became clear during the ceremony, however, was that this history itself was discontinuous; the sense of historical break or rupture during the 2009 edition was not unusual or exceptional, but rather had characterised the development of the festival throughout its history. Returning to the MC’s narrative “journey,” we see that it is no smooth ride; rather than gliding through a continuous timeline from 1960 to 2009, we are instead taken on a lurching tour of the festival’s history that jumps from one moment of profound institutional change to another, moments that represent rupture rather than continuity in the festival’s history and identity. Despite having gone through periods of relative institutional stability, the festival has repeatedly

experienced moments of sudden transformation, usually accompanying changes in directorship, government, or cultural politics - three things that are themselves closely linked to each other. As I listened to the MC, I was reminded of a conversation I had had earlier with a local Thessaloniki filmmaker who insisted, “We can’t talk about *one* festival. There is no *one* festival. Over the past fifty years, it’s been many different festivals.” The ceremony clearly illustrated his point - the festival’s institutional history is fragmented, and its institutional identity has never been fluid or continuous over time, with frequent changes in character, staff, structure and overall direction.

Given that this history is marked by rupture and discontinuity, then attempting to bridge the rupture between past and present by revisiting that history would seem to be a self-defeating exercise. If the very history that we are trying to recuperate and reclaim is itself fragmented and incoherent, then how can the *lieu de mémoire* function to reconcile us to that past? To answer this question, perhaps it is helpful to shift our focus from *mémoire* to *lieu* - to focus not on the act of remembrance, but rather on the site. In the quiet moment between the end of the awards ceremony and the start of the screening, I looked around me at the Olympion’s stately interior, located right in Aristotelous Square, and realized that, while the commemorative event was explicitly about the festival’s *history*, implicitly and more importantly, it was about the festival’s *place*. The honorary award ceremony took place not just in the same city, but in the same space, the same hall in the Olympion, where the first festival took place in 1960, where *The River* was first screened, and where Koundouros first received his award. Tying together all the “jumps” and all the “stops” in the discontinuous “journey” through the festival’s history was not the MC’s narration; rather, what stitched together these disparate periods was the radical specificity of

location - the city of Thessaloniki, and even the Olympion itself - and the continuity of place, over time.

In the space of the Olympion, the ceremony was addressing a crisis of history, but it was also addressing a public, in a very real sense, one that had a particular investment in place. For the FOG filmmakers' boycott presented a crisis not only in regards to the festival's institutional history, but also for the local festival public. In Thessaloniki, people's reactions to the FOG boycott were colored by the suspicion that the protesting filmmakers wanted to undermine the city and its institutions. The filmmakers argued that Athens, as the capital of Greece, was the rightful home of a national cinema, its showcases and its awards, while locals accused the filmmakers of trying to take away the spotlight from Thessaloniki as a nationally significant place for Greek cinema. A heated article on the front page of *Eksostis*, a weekly Thessaloniki publication focusing on local arts and culture, in January 2010 was indicative of how many locals felt. The author of the article claimed that the FOG filmmakers "decided to sabotage the 50th-anniversary Film Festival by abstaining from it," and that their focus on Athens as the center of Greek cinema would eventually lead to the dismantling of the Thessaloniki festival, as more and more state funds would be directed to the capital (Xifilinos 2010:1). For the local festival public, what was at stake in the FOG filmmakers' boycott was how Thessaloniki as a city was to be defined. The festival, one of the country's largest and most high-profile cultural events, annually transforms the city into a place with national significance - a space that is no longer "merely" local, but rather one that is understood as a national one. The possibility of that national significance being taken away was seen as a threat to the city's cultural position and capital. In



this instance, even the prestige and glamour of the international festival was not enough; it is clear that there was a certain investment in being identified as a nationally significant place.

This concern was made palpable early on in the ceremony, when Mina Zanna was called on stage to receive an award on behalf of her late husband. In her acceptance speech, Zanna recounted some of her memories of the festival, and in particular from 1986, when her husband had reacted furiously to a proposal by Mercouri and Zacharias to move the festival to Athens. At first, I took little notice of this story as it is one I had heard before, but I was struck later in the ceremony when Manos Zacharias, on stage to receive his own award, picked up this storyline. Stepping up to the microphone with his award in his hand, he declared emphatically that he and Mercouri had never wanted to take the festival to Athens, and it had never been a real proposal but rather just a passing idea of no importance. With no preamble and none of the usual acknowledgements or expressions of gratitude, Zacharias instead used all of his time onstage to address Zanna's story, saying little else and quickly walking offstage afterwards. I was surprised by his abrupt speech; it seemed odd that someone of Zacharias' stature and historical importance would choose to focus, so insistently and so exclusively, on what appeared to be a matter of little historical significance. Clearly, there was something at stake in the story of the festival's possible, and ultimately unrealized, move to another city. Zacharias' small outburst, an odd moment in the otherwise carefully choreographed ceremony, pointed to the sensitivity of the local public concerning place, triggered by the "threat" of the FOG boycott.

The awards ceremony can be seen as an attempt to address and contain this "threat." In the very form of the event (the giving of awards) the festival enacts the very thing that locals were afraid was going to be taken away from them (the State Awards, and the national prestige that

comes with them). Furthermore, the awards were given to individuals, such as Zacharias, Koundouros and Bakoyannopoulos, who bring together the local and the national, in the sense that they are important to the history of the festival as an institution but are also figures of national significance, culturally and even politically. In this way, the award ceremony manages to inscribe the local as national, restoring the position of Thessaloniki in the larger national cultural narrative and thus smoothing over the threat raised by the FOG filmmakers' demands. And in this context, Zacharias' abrupt acceptance speech makes sense: Zanna, in telling the story of a previous threat to the relationship between the festival and its host city, herself threatens the "rope bridge" that the award ceremony represents, and Zacharias is quick to respond, defusing Zanna's story.

The honorary ceremony and screening constituted the festival's attempt to address two interrelated crises: the crisis of the festival's relationship to its history, and the crisis of the public's sense of place. By staging this return to history, which was also a (re)enactment of place, in the space of the Olympion, the festival was using space to hold together history, while also using history to reinforce a sense of place.

### ***Publishing the Past***

In addition to the honorary awards ceremony, there was one other *lieu de mémoire* during the 2009 edition that dealt specifically with the history of the festival. This particular site of memory consisted of two parts: first, the publication of a retrospective volume, *1960-2009: 50 Years of the Thessaloniki Film Festival (1960-2009: 50 Khronia Festival Kinimatoghrafou Thessalonikis)*, and second, the public presentation of the book that took place in the closing

days of the fiftieth anniversary festival. The commemorative publication represents the festival's main attempt at writing and monumentalizing its institutional history, and is itself a *lieu de mémoire*, characterized by “a will to remember [...] to stop time, to block the work of forgetting, to establish a state of things” (Nora 1989:19). When work on the publication began in January 2009, I was invited by Athina, head of festival publications, to be a part of the research team. Attending editorial meetings and working together with the small group of researchers and editors over the following months, I observed how the festival was constructing its own history, while during the book presentation, I was able to see how this history was then taken up by the public and used to reflect on the present.

Some of the main issues that emerged in the process of working on the publication were the questions of the authorship, as well as the publics, of history - by whom, and for whom, history is produced. When Athina first described to me the idea for the publication, she referred to the book using the word *lefkoma*, which translates in English to “scrapbook” or “album” in the sense of an album of clippings, and from the first organizational meeting, this was the word used among the group to refer to the publication. The model of a scrapbook complicates the idea of authorship because, unlike a written history or memoir, it functions more as a collection of traces of the past than as an overarching historical narrative, and each of those traces might have its own complicated history of authorship. At the same time that the scrapbook represents a highly subjective, curatorial act, it also allows its creator or compiler to claim a certain objectivity, deferring the responsibility of authorship to the multiple authors, cited or not, of the scrapbook's constituent elements.

As the research and editorial team - or, it could be argued, as the authors of this particular history - we occupied a number of different positions. There was Anna, one of the key staff members in the festival's production department; as the person in charge of the small festival archive housed in the Thessaloniki office, and as someone who had worked for the festival for over a decade, Anna was a logical choice for the team. Lina - an adjunct lecturer in film history at the Aristotle University film department and, by day, a journalist working in a municipal press office - was considered the group's resident expert in Greek film history, in which she had a PhD, and as a colleague of Athina's at the University, where the latter also taught occasionally as an adjunct lecturer, Lina was considered a natural fit. Another member of the group was Thomas, a local high-school teacher, erstwhile film critic and long-time employee of the festival, involved in programming and festival publications. In addition to his experience working for the festival, Thomas was himself a sort of historical figure within the institution - a member of the older generation who had attended the festival as a teenager in the 1970s and had written about the festival as a journalist and film critic in the 1980s, before being hired by the festival in the early 1990s; he had seen the festival through most of its development first-hand, and in addition to his experience as a writer and editor, he could also bring to the project his own memories and knowledge of the institution. The head editor on the project was Ifigenia, who had a professional background in arts administration and at that point was working as head of public relations for the National Theater of Northern Greece, the state theater in Thessaloniki. While Ifigenia had less of a direct relationship to the film festival, her extensive experience in arts administration and policy made her inclusion in the group a politically strategic choice as well as a practical one; not only could she deftly take on the duties of editor and general coordinator, but as

someone well connected in the arts in Thessaloniki and well-versed in its micro- and macro-politics, she could also help to navigate some of the potential pitfalls of writing the history of such a politically embedded cultural institution. Overseeing the whole project was Athina, whom I had gotten to know well in my first few months in the field; herself an aspiring academic, with a recent PhD in film studies, Athina had taken an interest in my work, and she asked me to join the project team as a researcher.<sup>33</sup>

In a conference room at the festival's Thessaloniki offices, our first meeting began with a general discussion concerning the publication, its larger shape and function, during which everyone quickly agreed that the *lefkoma* would have to be as thorough and objective as possible. For Athina and Lina, both film scholars, it was a question of scholarship - they emphasized the fact that they wanted the publication to be not only a commemorative book, good for gifts and the coffee-table, but also a volume that could serve as a resource and reference for other scholars who might be interested in the festival and its history - while Ifigenia felt that anything perceived as subjective or editorializing would have political implications. The concern for objectivity was illustrated most clearly in the debate over the publication's introductory text. Ifigenia had brought with her examples of commemorative, retrospective publications from other festivals and cultural organizations; flipping through them, we noticed that they all contained a long opening text, either synthesizing the history of the organization or offering an analysis or interpretation of that history, and followed by timelines, data points, photographs and other forms

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<sup>33</sup> It is important to note that everyone on the team was local - except for me, everyone was born and raised either in Thessaloniki or in cities close by in northern Greece, and they all had spent their adult lives as Thessalonians. This is a project that could have easily been carried out in Athens, and that might have even been more convenient, since the main offices are there and Athina would have been able to meet with the research/editorial team more often. I would argue that the deliberate decision to keep the group locally based in Thessaloniki reflected the fact that the history of the festival is grounded in Thessaloniki, its spaces and its institutions, but also had the effect of producing a book that is aimed at a local public.

of documentation. We tried to think who would be the best person to write such an introductory text for the *lefkoma*; Athina suggested Mouzaki, the current director of the festival, as a logical choice, while Thomas suggested Michel Demopoulos, the previous director, since he had led the festival for nearly fifteen years and had been responsible for transforming it into the institution as it exists today. But Ifigenia deemed both inappropriate - they were too polarizing, she argued, referring to the acrimonious changeover in directorship and the party politics behind it, namely the victory of New Democracy over PASOK in the 2004 national elections. Lina suggested Yannis Bakoyannopoulos, an established film critic of the older generation who had attended the festival from its early years, or Giannis Soldatos, a respected film historian specializing in Greek cinema. But Ifigenia replied that even they would not be “neutral” enough; she argued that anyone with enough authority and experience to qualify to write such an introductory text would either have a particular point of view or would at least be accused of having one, and she did not want anyone to accuse the festival or the editorial team of pursuing a larger agenda or ulterior motive with the book. In the end, it was decided that there would be no such text at all; apart from the formalities (*typika*) of opening remarks by the director and a short text describing methodology, structure and abbreviations, there would only be photographs and information about each festival edition in the form of data points. In the quest for absolute objectivity, or at least the appearance of it, the group went so far as to erase authorship completely, or at least attempt to.

However, despite this concern for “objectivity,” it was also clear from our first meetings that the very nature of the group’s work was interpretive. Even in simply deciding what information to present, in what form, the group would be determining how the history of the festival would

be structured, and how, through that particular version of its history, the institution would be perceived and understood. Meeting periodically over a period of a few weeks, the group discussed for hours: how the different editions of the festival should be presented; if the festival's chronology should be divided into "eras," by decade, by director, or at all; if anecdotes and "unofficial" stories should be included, or only the bare facts about each year's programming, and which facts; if equal attention should be given to the side-bar events, exhibitions, masterclasses and Industry Center activities; which members of the festival programming and organizational staff from each edition should be included. There was also a great deal of deliberation over how to deal with various elements of the festival structure beyond the annual event itself. Since the early 1990s, the festival has grown into a large organization that includes year-round film screenings and educational programs at the Olympion; an annual documentary festival in Thessaloniki; other smaller thematic festivals and screening series such as the VideoDance festival and the Panorama of Gay and Lesbian Films; and a number of programs focusing on national or regional cinemas and the work of individual filmmakers. Should all of these be mentioned year by year, in a separate section, or not at all? And there was the tricky question of how to deal with the State Film Awards, a point of contention among the festival public and particularly that year, with the filmmakers' protest of the awards system.<sup>34</sup> In debating which elements to include in the book, and how, the editorial team was actually debating how to define the festival itself, and how to author its history. For example, their decision to relegate the

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<sup>34</sup> The State Film Awards (*Kratika Kinimatoghrafika Vravias Pliotitas*) were inaugurated in 1998 by the Ministry of Culture, which administered the awards and oversaw the selection of prize winners. Until 2008, when the State Film Awards system was dismantled under pressure from the FOG boycott, the awards were distributed in a special ceremony that took place at the end of the Thessaloniki festival each November. The state awards system was controversial from its inception, with some accusing the system of being fixed or corrupted, while others felt that there was no reason for the festival to be affiliated with the state awards, which were seen as an imposition by the Ministry of Culture on a festival that already had its own award system. For further discussion of the State Film Awards, see Chapter Three.

history of the State Film Awards to a short appendix at the very end of the publication reflects a particular point of view about the relationship between the festival and the Awards, and has the effect of putting a distance between the festival and the Ministry of Culture at a time when Greek filmmakers were boycotting the festival for its state affiliations.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, even in these early stages of conceptualization, there was a clear tension between the ideal of objectivity and the necessary subjectivity of the editorial process - a tension that centered on the question of authorship, the particular positions from which this history was being authored, and how these positionalities determined the shape of that history. These questions were also foregrounded in the process of research for the publication, and how the material that we gathered was ultimately presented. The materials for this “scrapbook” were taken from a few different sources: the small archive of old catalogues, programs, publications and photographs at the festival offices in Thessaloniki; archives of old newspapers in the Thessaloniki public library; the somewhat meager collection of festival-related materials at the HELEXPO archives. Much of the *lefkoma*, at least concerning the first three decades of the festival, draws heavily from an earlier retrospective publication, commemorating the thirtieth anniversary of the festival in 1989; in an early organizational meeting, all the members of the research team were given a copy of this earlier publication to use as one of the primary sources for our research. Year by year, this earlier publication details the films screened, the prizes given, and the members of the

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<sup>35</sup> In the end, the publication was structured in three sections: an opening section with captioned photographs and reproductions of the posters from each edition; the main section with entries for each year; and three appendices - one with information about the State Awards, one briefly describing the history of the Olympion building and detailing the year-round activities of the festival organization beginning in 1992, and one listing the festival administrations (Board of Directors and General Assembly) beginning in 1998. The entry for each festival edition details the films shown in all the various programs; the side-bar events (exhibitions, panels and round-table discussions, masterclasses, concerts, honorary ceremonies, book presentations, parties); publications; facilities and screening rooms; juries; prizes; the names of the festival president, festival director, and Minister of Culture; and in later years, the Industry Center activities. Each entry also includes a section, called “At a Glance (*Me mia matia*)”, which presents supplemental information and anecdotes. All of this information is presented in the form of lists and bullet points.



organizational committee and various juries; each entry also includes a narrative text, often extensive, with anecdotes, gossip and descriptions of some of the major events, controversies and reactions of the press and public. As a research team, much of our work comprised cross-checking the information from this thirtieth-anniversary publication with materials we found in various archives and information online. The more anecdotal “At a Glance” (*Me mia matia*) sections in the *lefkoma* were often taken, sometimes nearly word for word, from the narrative sections of the thirtieth anniversary publication, which were also supplemented by stories from old newspaper articles or from personal recollections, both of the research/editorial team and of individuals - such as Soldatos, Bakoyannopoulos and others with extensive experience with the festival - who were contacted for this purpose. In general, research on the earlier years of the festival was made difficult by the often fragmentary and sometimes chaotic condition of the archives in which we worked, as well as the unresponsiveness of some of the individuals contacted for input and commentary. The last twenty years of the festival were easier to research than the first thirty for a number of reasons, including the festival’s increasing discursive output after Michel Demopoulos became director in 1991; improving archival practices in the last two decades, especially with the introduction of digital technologies; and the first-hand experiences and personal memories of the research and editorial team. The idea of authorship was complicated by the variety of sources from which all of this material was drawn, the many people who “authored” this diverse material, and in some cases the difficulty of uncovering who these authors even were, particularly in regards to the more anecdotal information.

A further complication is the problematic authorship of the thirtieth-anniversary publication on which much of the fiftieth-anniversary *lefkoma* is drawn. The earlier publication is usually

attributed to film critic Babis Aktsoylou, who is listed in a small introductory note as the editor, but the book contains no citations or bibliographical information; while the factual information that he gives - lists of films, jury members, prizes given - can be cross-checked with old festival catalogues and the press, his narrative passages and the anecdotal information they contain are harder to verify. Although this publication is clearly as much of a “scrap-book” as the fiftieth-anniversary *lefkoma*, presenting a patch-work of stories and historical information, its multi-vocality is left unmarked. The lack of citations, the third-person narration, and the near-erasure of the authoring team’s hand - apart from the small introductory listing, there are no other references to Aktsoylou and the editorial team - all combine to present the history constructed in the publication as both authoritative and authorless. Not surprisingly, this sense of authorless authority is repeated in the fiftieth-anniversary publication which, like the earlier publication, includes no citations or bibliography. While it differs from its predecessor in that it contains more information about its sources and the editorial process, this information is still limited to two introductory pages in a volume of three hundred and seventy: a brief listing of the editors and researchers; the names of a handful of individuals who contributed stories and materials; and a general description of some of the archives and publications accessed (Thessaloniki International Film Festival 2009d:2,6). Despite the exhaustive detail of the information it contains, the *lefkoma* largely erases its own genealogy, doing away with intertextual references and bibliographical information, so that the messy multi-vocality of the “scrap-book” - the fragmentary, chaotic yields of the research process - is streamlined, through the editorial process, into uniform lists and carefully designed layouts. In this sense, it reflects what Pierre Nora

describes as the authorlessness of history which, unlike memory, “belongs to everyone and to no one, whence its claim to universal authority” (Nora 1989:9).

While authorship is effaced in the volume, its intended readership is easier to detect. One of the ways in which the editorial team clearly delineated the volume’s intended public was through its treatment of the language question: whether or not the publication should be bilingual, in both Greek and English. Ever since 2005, when the decision was made to publish all catalogues, monographs and other printed material in both languages, the festival’s bilingual editions have been a point of pride for the institution, a symbol of its increased internationalization and integration into the global film festival circuit. With the *lefkoma*, however, the group decided early on, and without much deliberation, that the book should only be in Greek. The main reason given for this decision had to do with size: everyone agreed that the book would already be quite large as a single-language publication, and that a bilingual volume would be unwieldy. But the implications of their decision went far beyond the book’s materiality, effectively eliminating its international public. The fact that the decision was taken rather quickly, without the need for much debate, seems to indicate a shared understanding among the members of the group that the book’s main public would be Greek. This was illustrated even more clearly at a later meeting, when the question of language came up again in a slightly different form, this time concerning how to translate or transliterate the titles of foreign films and names of foreign filmmakers and festival guests. Various options were discussed: listing all foreign titles and names in their English versions, or retaining foreign titles and names in their original languages but providing English or Greek transliterations. Finally, Ifigenia suggested the model to which everyone would eventually agree: the titles of foreign films would be listed only in their Greek translations,

foreign names that existed originally in Latin letters would remain unchanged, and any names not originally in Latin letters - e.g. Arabic, Russian, Mandarin, Japanese, etc. - would be listed in their Greek transliterations. Again, the effect of this decision is to make the book largely inaccessible to anyone who is not familiar with Greek and the Greek alphabet. This approach is in sharp contrast to that taken in the other commemorative volume published by the festival the same year, “Why Cinema Now?”, in which the responses of past festival guests, both Greek and foreign, to the fiftieth anniversary motto/question are presented in both Greek and English, divided into two columns on the same page.

In their decisions concerning language, translation and transliteration, the editorial team clearly had a primarily Greek public in mind. But there was yet another sense in which a particular public was being envisioned in this process, related to Ifigenia’s original concerns about the book’s perceived politics. In October 2009, after all the research and most of the editorial work had been completed, I caught up with Athina on the status of the project. She said that the book was almost ready to print; the only task remaining was a final, detailed examination, particularly of the photographs and the anecdotal information, to make sure that everything was in order politically. When I asked her what exactly they would be looking for in the material, she specified: names that should not be mentioned and some that should, people who should not appear next to each other in photograph arrangements, stories that should be left out. For this, she would be flying up to Thessaloniki especially and spending a few days working on this with Ifigenia. Both Ifigenia and Athina were known for having an acute sense of political dynamics and were highly attuned to both micro-politics, on the one hand, and larger party and cultural politics, on the other. Combing through the *lefkoma* material in this way, they were

adjusting it to a very particular public - one familiar with and sensitive to different moments of controversy or conflict in the festival's history - with an eye to how this version of the festival's past would navigate the political dynamics of the present. In this respect, the editorial approaches to authorship and to the public converged; in both cases, the goal was to revisit history while avoiding offense and conflict.

### ***Memories of Conflict and Collectivity***

At the public presentation of the book, one *lieu de mémoire* - the retrospective publication - served as the starting point for another. For the official book launch, on the penultimate day of the 2009 festival, a group of "experts" was gathered in front of an audience to present and discuss the volume. Among the packed audience was the usual army of journalists, photographers and videographers, while on the panel sat notable public figures and intellectuals such as Manos Zacharias, Yannis Bakoyannopoulos, journalist and co-founder of the Athens Review of Books Ilias Kanellis, and Antonis Liakos, one of the most well-known historians in Greece; filling out the panel of speakers were Athina, festival director Despina Mouzaki, and festival president George Corraface. While at first glance, the event seemed to be like any book launch - a staging of public endorsement by distinguished figures and designed for optimum publicity - the conversation around the retrospective publication constituted a site of memory in its own right, a space in which history was actively being revisited and reconsidered, and memory itself foregrounded.

The tone was set from the beginning by Mouzaki's opening remarks, which were read directly from her short prologue at the beginning of the volume:

The research for this volume and its execution were carried out according to methodological and scientific criteria which correspond to the need to create a useful tool for whomever is interested in the history and the evolution of the festival. In addition, however, to the recording of the institution's history, this volume constitutes a basis for the development of future histories of the festival, providing the elements which will allow other scholars to synthesize their own readings of events. And besides all of this, we hope that this publication will be for its reader, who is also a spectator of the festival, not only another archive, but an impetus to awaken memories, to bring to mind once again images and sounds from films and people, from personal moments, from all that each of us has lived all these years in Thessaloniki [...] This publication is a duty and responsibility to the important history of the festival. But also something beyond this: a way for us to live once again the wonderful moments that the Thessaloniki film festival has given us, to live once again the experience, which constitutes the heart of the institution, in the present tense, without the weight of nostalgia, but as if everything is happening again and again, in the exact same moment that we're reading about it.

Mouzaki's speech describes precisely how a *lieu de mémoire* functions: not only a place or site where history is represented, but where that history is taken up and pulled into the present, in an attempt to revive memory, to reconnect past and present. Her emphasis on the importance of historiography, using proper "methodological and scientific criteria," is outweighed only by her insistence on the "memories" and "personal moments" that such histories can awaken, the past experienced "in the present tense." Following Mouzaki, the speakers on the panel took turns discussing different aspects of the publication and of the festival's history. Most of them addressed the historiographical merits of the volume, praising its "objectivity" and thoroughness, and underlining the need for such historical work. For example, Bakoyannopoulos, bemoaning what he sees as the generally sad state of historiography and of archives in Greece, especially concerning film history, praised the publication as a step in the right direction; in particular, he pointed to the At a Glance sections for each year and, reading one aloud, explicitly commended the "lack of subjectivity of an editor or critic" in the writing. In his closing comments, he called

for the collection of oral histories, before people of the older generation begin to pass away.

Kanellis' began his discussion of the book by similarly praising it as

the one and only record of facts and events having to do with the festival, in a country where professional historians and researchers have trouble gaining access to archives. The fact that the festival, by its own initiative, decided to make its archive public in this way, is very important for historical research.

Liakos, like Bakoyannopoulos, described the volume as a good start, but one that needed to be supplemented with the oral testimonies of those who were involved with the festival as well as members of the public. He then went even further, arguing that all of these testimonies, together with any remaining posters and print materials, needed to be entered into a special archive, and turning to address Mouzaki directly, he proposed that the festival soon host a conference on the history of cinema in Greece, yet another *lieu de mémoire*.

Considering the professional interests of these panel speakers, as well as the context in which they were making their comments - a book launch for a historical publication - it is not surprising that they chose to reflect on historiography, and in these terms, highlighting the importance of "proper" historical work. But another common thread that emerged in their comments was less expected: namely, a focus on conflict as an important part - perhaps even *the* most important part - of the festival's history. For example, after Kanellis discussed the historiographical significance of the commemorative publication, he went on to praise its At a Glance sections, stating that what interested him most was not the descriptions of major cinematic events, or their larger social and political contexts, but rather "the secondary events, apart from cinema - the heckling, the protests, the complaints." He then went on to read entries from the At a Glance section of a few different festival editions, most of which had to do with moments of conflict: the public's disapproval of and vocal negative reactions to particular films or jury decisions, filmmakers

refusing to accept prizes for political reasons, complaints about the festival's lack of organization, rumors of the festival perhaps being moved to Athens, and even the establishment of the first "anti-festival" in 1961, when two directors whose films were not chosen by the pre-selection committee organized screenings of their films in Thessaloniki at the same time as the festival. Kanellis was careful to point out that he considered these moments of conflict as "important not just for the study of film history, but for the study of the social history of our country over the last fifty years."

Zacharias also chose to focus on conflict in his comments, describing the "bad state, the state of decay" in which he found the festival when he first started working with Melina Mercouri, in the early 1980s, on the national film policy and film institutions in Greece. He explained that "it was with the new filmmakers of that period, after the regime change (*metapolitefsi*), who showed up and started demanding a better situation, that things started to change. And that's how the need for a new legal framework arose." Zacharias was referring to the fall of the military dictatorship in 1974 and the period of transition immediately following; the social and political resistance that had been building for several years under the junta exploded upon its fall, followed by a period marked by great civil unrest, political activism and an intense politicization of many aspects of everyday life. The festival, at the time still under the control of the Ministry of Industry, was also affected by this general climate of unrest; in 1977, many filmmakers resisted the Ministry of Industry's attempts at re-organizing the festival's administrative structure, which they felt shut them out of important organizational committees and juries, by refusing to participate in the official festival and organizing their own "Anti-festival" (Rentzis 1977). This was the start of a series of negotiations that eventually led to the new legal



framework mentioned by Zacharias, which addressed the filmmakers' demands by moving the festival under the administration of the Ministry of Culture and overhauling the institutional structure not only of the festival, but also of the Greek Film Center. After describing how he worked with Mercouri, Pavlos Zannas, and others to build and implement this new legal framework, he concluded his comments by referring to the FOG filmmakers' boycott:

Why am I saying this? Because thirty years have passed, and obviously there have been important changes, there are urgent needs, and again a new movement has emerged, from new filmmakers, who again are demanding the strengthening of opportunities for their creative work, with a new legal framework. And here I want to emphasize two things that, in my opinion, are most important. With all these disputes, which are signs of life and vitality, we need to protect our two basic institutions: the Greek Film Center and the film festival. In the midst of all these controversies, fights, debates, oppositions, objections - we need to leave our two institutions untouched.

What was most striking about Zacharias' reflections was his focus on a period of the festival's history marked by conflict, and his representation of that conflict as having been instrumental to the renewal of the institution and to the improvement of the infrastructure of filmmaking in Greece at the time. Moreover, he brought that historical perspective to bear on the crisis of the present moment, insisting again on the "disputes [...] controversies, fights, debates, oppositions, objections" as positive things, as signs of vitality.

Similarly, Liakos' discussion of the festival's history also centered on notions of conflict, collectivity and resistance. He began by talking about the festival as part of a larger "education" that his generation received through cinema: "The film festival, the films, the cinema clubs, the journals - it was all a learning context, which shaped a whole generation, beyond the stereotypes of school, the bureaucratic way of transferring knowledge at that time." For Liakos, the history of the festival was intertwined with the larger social history of Greece:

One could say that the festival follows and is a counterpart to the history of Modern Greek society. First of all, starting from the '60s, it's been a field of communication, of mutual recognition, of socialization, a field which connects the '60s, the sudden opening of that period, with later the period of the dictatorship, the rise of the public, its autonomous role, the role of the "second mezzanine" - all of these elements that bring together the festival-as-institution with the festival-as-public. And it's also a point of resistance; it prepared the way for the climate that would develop later, the climate of resistance. The relationship between the festival and the resistance during the years of the dictatorship is a very important part of the history of this festival. At the same time, the relationship between filmmakers and the festival is also very important. In a way, the festival resembles a kind of Roman democracy, in which the public (*demos*) engages in discussion with the patricians, the plebeians with the patricians, the filmmakers with the Ministry of Industry, the juries with the film critics. And to tell you the truth, I'm glad that this dynamism manifested itself this year as well, with this separate festival of the FOG filmmakers in Athens. I'm glad in the sense that these moments of opposition show that the festival is still alive.

Like Zacharias, Liakos presented the history of the festival as a history of collective action, of public conflict, debate, and resistance. With the "second mezzanine" (*dhefteros eksostis*), he was referring to the practice of festival-goers in the second balcony of the cinema who vocally, and sometimes violently, let their opinions be known. The practice of the "second mezzanine" first arose in the early 1970s, under the junta, at a time when the ticket prices for festival screenings varied according to the category of the seating; thus the second balcony was usually full of youth and students, who could only afford the cheapest tickets. The "second mezzanine" was famous for interrupting screenings, and sometimes even stopping them altogether, with their jeers, heckles or ironic applause. Particularly in the 1970s, during and immediately following the dictatorship, many of the second mezzanine's reactions were politically motivated - thunderous applause and, in later years, audience awards for films that were considered politically, socially or formally progressive; and loud disapproval for films that were thought to be supported by the state or too commercial, sometimes even leading to physical violence and police intervention. In the 1980s, the "second mezzanine" reached a fever pitch - according to some, it devolved into a

kind of hooliganism - and by the early 1990s, the practice had died down. But for many people of Liakos' generation, and even of younger generations who were too young to have experienced it directly but are familiar with the lore, the "second mezzanine" is a well-known and fondly remembered part of the festival experience, representing a level of audience engagement and critical interaction that many feel no longer exists among the festival public. By referring to the "second mezzanine," Liakos was evoking this particular history of the festival, which he then extended and elaborated through references to resistance under the junta, the "Roman democracy," and the actions of the filmmakers protesting the Ministry of Industry in the 1970s. This was a history of the festival centered on conflict, collective action and a critical public, and he extended it to the present moment, to encompass the actions of the FOG filmmakers, who organized a special week of screenings to show their films in Athens, just a few days before the start of the Thessaloniki festival that they were boycotting. For Liakos, as for Zacharias, this conflict was not something to be avoided, but rather a positive sign of "dynamism" and vitality, an indication that the festival was still a space for social and political action.

These memories of the "second mezzanine" and of the festival as a space of critical public engagement and political resistance were shared by many people I met in the field who had attended the festival during the 1970s and 1980s. In a series of later interviews, Thomas from the *lefkoma* editorial team described to me the atmosphere of the festival when he first started attending as a teenager in the 1970s:

I had a group of friends, there in the second mezzanine. We used to come here early in the morning to get tickets. At the theater of the Society for Macedonian Studies, where the festival used to be then, we would come at four thirty in the morning to get in line for tickets. We stayed out at bars very late, in 1974 or 1975, and afterwards we would come here at four thirty in the morning to wait for the box office to open. For some movies,

there were lines beginning the night before - students, youth, etc. It was part of this climate, kind of revolutionary.

When I asked him in what sense the climate was revolutionary, he explained:

At the festival, they played some films that would not have played in the cinemas, and there was a politicized environment. In other words, to stand in line to go and watch *The Traveling Players* [1975, Theo Angelopoulos] was important, because it was the first film that talked openly about the civil war, about issues that were taboo already before the dictatorship. [...] Some films which had an intense political character, just to go and to applaud was revolutionary. This was apart from the fact that cinema was still a form of ideological opposition, resistance. [...] So going to the cinema, which had not yet entered that "lifestyle" stage, was an act of resistance, opposition, struggle.

For Thomas, this aspect of cinema-going, as a collective political act, was connected to a larger radical shift in public life after the fall of the junta:

The city was very lovely then [...] because everyone was out in the streets, everyone was talking and discussing and fighting, what to do and what not to do, after the dictatorship. On a social level, personal, in relationships - it was an unbelievable climate, which was a kind of euphoria of the spirit, to go out and to talk about things, to meet up with others, and to fight with each other, and to love each other. It was a really wonderful climate, in which of course the university and the students played a big role. You can imagine that, because cultural things were still not so many or so well organized, like concerts etc, cinema was at the top of the cultural world, and it was crazy. Discussions in the bars, staying up all night after being at the festival, at Dore [a local restaurant popular with filmmakers and festival-goers], until the morning, looking for directors.

For Thomas, the festival in the period of the '70s and '80s represented a particular way of being and acting collectively, something which he felt has now been lost, not only in regards to the festival, but in social life more generally:

There was the climate of the *parea*, we went out together even though each person was different, did different things - it was something that we don't have anymore now, not just in cinema, but anywhere. [...] Because the period of collectivity has passed, in other words to do things together, to get together, to be a *parea*. [...] I'm not nostalgic, I don't like to be nostalgic. Nostalgia is a very bad thing, in my opinion. But it's something, inside me. I miss it, I miss this feeling of *pareas*, of fighting, of provocations, differences - but there was a communication, which unfortunately is lost, and that's what we're paying for now, in my opinion.

What is important to note in Thomas' reflections is his characterization of the *parea*, not as a homogenous unit in which everyone shares the same opinion and identity, but rather as a space of "provocations, differences" and even fighting. While attending a screening and being part of the public for a particular film was a collective political act, that collectivity also entailed disagreements, tensions and conflicts. For Thomas, these conflicts and disputes were an integral part of how this kind of collectivity functioned.

In the fiftieth-anniversary retrospective publication, moments of conflict from the festival's history were not avoided; in fact, it was clear from Kanellis' reading of excerpts from the book that it did include many such moments, and there are references to the "second mezzanine," the various anti-festivals, and tensions between filmmakers and the state. But in the book, these moments of conflict - described "objectively" and listed in the volume's uniform bullet-point lists - are neutralized, subsumed in a larger flow of facts and data. In contrast, Kanellis, Zacharias and Liakos were highlighting this sense of conflict, presenting it as the defining characteristic of the festival's history. While the volume's editorial team was actively trying to avoid potential conflicts, stressing "objectivity" and even authorlessness and attempting to weed out anything that might be too contentious, these panelists saw contention as not just necessary, but even desirable. They were not idealizing conflict simply for the sake of conflict itself; rather, they saw that conflict as indicative of a lively, dynamic and vital public sphere. For them, the debates, fights, oppositions and controversies were an integral part of the festival's social, political and cultural significance. Throughout its history, the film festival provided the occasion for this kind of gathering, this critical collectivity, and the book launch served as a site for remembering that history, reclaiming it and connecting it to the present moment.

In this sense, the book launch sheds an unexpected light on the very notion of the *lieu de mémoire*. For Nora, the function of the site of memory is ultimately to reinforce notions of identity and patrimony through the recuperation of an ever distant history. He writes that *lieux de mémoire* are a response to the disappearance of *milieux de mémoire*, or “real environments of memory” (Nora 1989:7), which have come to be replaced by an obsession with history: “This conquest and eradication of memory by history has had the effect of a revelation, as if an ancient bond of identity had been broken and something had ended that we had experienced as self-evident - the equation of memory and history” (Nora 1989:8). According to Nora, the breaking of this “bond of identity” is experienced as a loss, and it “has required every social group to redefine its identity through the revitalization of its own history” (Nora 1989:15), in and through the *lieu de mémoire*:

In ‘identity,’ the singularity and permanence of the self (or group) are asserted and repeatedly rehearsed; in ‘memory,’ the repertoire of representations of an individual or collective past is embraced as the distinctive repository and resource of a present consciousness; in the patrimonial, a specific heritage is claimed as a precious possession which constitutes the founding proof of one’s singular identity. (Wood 1994:146).

In Greece, these three elements - memory, identity, patrimony - are usually believed to come together in the classic *lieux de mémoire* of archaeological sites, particularly in symbolically laden ones such as the Acropolis (Yalouri 2001:73), which are often used to tie national identity with particular versions of cultural heritage. But in the book launch, we see a site of memory functioning in a different way. In this site, memory practices are aimed at constructing and reinforcing not a particular collective identity, but rather collectivity itself: a critical public, social engagement and the dynamism of an active community. This collectivity is not marked as such by a singular identity or uniform interests, but rather by multivocality, contestation, and

critical interaction - a particular way of being together, of being public. With the honorary awards ceremony and the fiftieth-anniversary *lefkoma*, we see the festival attempting to construct its institutional history, one that absorbs past moments of rupture and conflict into a larger, coherent narrative. In contrast, the *Techni* public performance enacts a history of the festival as a history of publicness, while the book launch presents a history of the festival as a space of collectivity, where the members of a critical and diverse public gather to engage and interact with each other. This emphasis on publicness, and more specifically on a critical publicness or collectivity, can be understood in relation to the larger civic discourse that was growing at the time in Greece. In this sense, during the fiftieth-anniversary festival, history was being used to reflect on what was happening in the present moment. In the next chapter, I examine the FOG filmmakers' boycott and larger movement, which in many ways re-activated this particular history of the festival.

### CHAPTER 3

#### *COUNTERPUBLICS*

In 2009, the boycott of the Thessaloniki Film Festival by the Filmmakers of Greece (FOG) had varying effects on the fiftieth-anniversary edition. While the impact of the boycott was minimal in the international film festival circuit and among the festival's foreign public, for members of the festival's Greek public, its effects were much more pronounced.<sup>36</sup> During the festival, friends often complained about both the quantity and quality of the Greek films that were shown as part of the festival that year; with most of the country's active filmmakers abstaining as part of the boycott, there were only a handful of Greek films submitted to the festival by a few filmmakers who disagreed with FOG. Someone like Lina, who annually looks forward to the festival as an opportunity to see new Greek films that otherwise do not find distribution or are hard to catch in theaters, was in general disappointed by the small Greek program, made up of eight films which she considered to be of middling quality, at best. In the days following the end of the 2009 edition, I met with a few students from the Aristotle University film department who had attended the festival, and they also expressed disappointment with the festival's Greek component. One student in her final year at the film school complained that, even with all of the parties and celebrations that had been organized

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<sup>36</sup> Speaking with international guests and participants at the Industry Center, I found that many were not aware of the boycott. Those who were aware knew only general information or vague details about the protest, and in general their experience of the festival was not greatly altered by the absence of the filmmakers and their work.



especially for the 50th anniversary, the general atmosphere of the festival seemed drab and lackluster to her; in particular, she pointed to the second-floor cafe in Warehouse C, in previous years packed and buzzing throughout the festival, but this year noticeably empty and quiet. She explained that this was because the cafe was the usual hangout for Greek directors, their entourages, and other members of the Greek filmmaking community; without their presence, she felt that the festival lacked its characteristic energy, its usual feeling of a festive gathering. Another student complained that there had been none of the usual retrospectives or special screening programs dedicated to Greek directors; she thought this was a particularly egregious omission, considering that it was the fiftieth anniversary of an institution so closely tied to the history of Greek cinema, and she attributed it to Greek filmmakers' refusal to participate in the festival. She followed this complaint by saying how irked she was to see that the number of parties and special dinners sponsored by the festival had remained the same as in previous years, if not increased, which she thought was unacceptable considering the festival's precarious financial situation and the spotlight that the FOG boycott had shined on the issue of how public funds were spent.

As this student's last comment makes clear, the FOG filmmakers' absence cast a shadow on the festival not only in regards to the films that were shown, the general atmosphere or sense of energy, but specifically in regards to how the festival was being understood in the larger context of the social, political and economic crises overwhelming the country and dominating public discourse at that time. In the public presentation of the fiftieth-anniversary commemorative volume, both Antonis Liakos and Manos Zacharias made explicit references to the FOG protest and the tensions that it had brought up within the space of the festival, tensions that both

speakers connected back to previous, intensely politicized periods of the festival's history. Many of the people I met who had attended the festival during those years shared the opinion that, with the increasing dysfunctionality of the festival in the late 1980s and then the internationalization of the festival in the early 1990s, the festival lost this political dimension, as well as its politicized public. Some, like Liakos and Thomas Linaras, believed that this was a good thing, because they felt that the politicized nature of the festival had started to become extreme and even esoteric in the 1980s, and that the festival's internationalization, while lessening the public's intense political investment, had the positive effect of broadening this public's cinematic horizons and exposing it to new global trends - something that Liakos argued was part of a more general opening up "in the development of Greek society [...] in the years of globalization" (*stin poria tis ellinikis kinonias [...] ta khronia tis pangosmiopiisis*). Others would disagree with Liakos and Linaras; a number of people from this generation in Thessaloniki told me that they stopped attending the festival when it became international, precisely because they felt that, while it was more cosmopolitan and glamorous, it had lost this feeling of political relevance and shared collective investment. The criticisms faced by the festival in the year leading up to its fiftieth anniversary - criticisms concerning its budget, the tendency for *glamouria* - were in part a reflection of these changes that the festival had undergone in the 1990s and 2000s. In this climate, the boycott by the FOG filmmakers had the effect of re-politicizing the space of the festival, by highlighting the institution's relationship to the state and thus bringing the festival back into a political discourse, and specifically into the larger civic discourse that was taking hold in Greece at the time. In this chapter, I take a close look at the development of the FOG

protest movement, its collective rhetoric and actions, to see what kind of relationship is being negotiated between the citizen and the state in the field of public culture.

### *Publics and Counterpublics*

From its beginnings as a small gathering of filmmaker-friends, the FOG movement was steeped in the intensely politicized atmosphere and civil unrest that spread quickly across the country after the violence of December 2008. Over coffee one day almost a year later, Vardis Marinakis, one of the founding members of the group, described to me how the movement started with a conversation between him and two other Greek directors, in which they first considered the idea of boycotting the State Film Awards. He explained that the idea arose out of the feeling that they needed to respond, both to what they saw as a perennially broken institution and to the larger wave of protests that marked the period following the police shooting of Alexis Grigoropoulos:

This came about as a consequence of December 2008. In December, different things happened as a result of the murder - people went out into the streets, people destroyed and burned things, these things always happen. But the same time, many people got together, as if some walls were broken down, and some people looked at each other and said, we have to stand together, to do things together. Our lives changed that December. The people we met, all sorts of things. It all started from then.

Specifically, Marinakis described an episode that took place on 16 December 2008 as especially inspiring, when a group of young protesters broke into the newsroom of the national television network New Hellenic Television (NET) - a branch of the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation (ERT), the public broadcaster in Greece - and interrupted a newscast, forcing the television crew to fade away from video of then-prime minister Kostas Karamanlis delivering a fiery speech to his New Democracy parliament members, to an image of the protesters, numbering around fifteen, standing in the newsroom holding up banners declaring “STOP WATCHING.

EVERYONE OUT INTO THE STREETS” (*STAMATISTE NA KITATE. VGITE OLI STOUS DHROMOUS*), “IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF ALL THOSE ARRESTED” (*AMESI APOFYLAKISI OLON TON SYLLIFTHENTON*) and “FREEDOM FOR US ALL” (*ELEFThERIA SE OLOUS MAS*).<sup>37</sup> Marinakis was part of this protesting group, and talking about the episode a year later, it was clear that it still affected him; pausing to take a deep breath, he acknowledged, “Now that I’m thinking about it, I’m getting moved all over again, because it was a real attempt to do something.”

People watching the NET mid-day news broadcast on 16 December 2008 certainly must have been startled by what they saw. A familiar image of Karamanlis, holding forth at the speaker’s podium in the parliamentary assembly, was replaced, after a few seconds of superimposition, with the live studio feed of the protesters holding up their banners. For nearly thirty seconds, their image overlapped with the voice of Karamanlis and the announcer summarizing the prime minister’s address; then the sound also faded, leaving only the silent image of the protesters, for over 40 seconds - practically an eternity in live broadcasting, especially for one of the country’s major channels. What was most striking about this act of protest was that it managed to undermine, and eventually even silence, the discourse of the state - literally, in interrupting the broadcast of the prime minister’s speech, but also more figuratively, in the sense that NET and the major media networks in general, including the privately owned companies, are widely believed to be in collusion with the state.<sup>38</sup> Coincidentally, the speech that the protesters happened to interrupt was Karamanlis’ address concerning the government scandal involving illegal land-swap deals with the Greek Orthodox Vatopedi monastery, one of the major scandals

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<sup>37</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PK9lpMk7fiY&noredirect=1>

<sup>38</sup> See Hallin and Papathanassopoulos 2002, Papatheodorou and Machin 2003.

that, together with the shooting of Grigoropoulos, sparked the mass “uprisings” in the first place. As first image and then sound faded out, the customary political rhetoric, expertly performed by Karamanlis - “We will not allow truth to be distorted! We will not be caught up in petty machinations that aim at the criminalization of the political life of this land!” - was silently undermined by the image of the protesters. It wasn’t the image itself that constituted the thrust of the protest, nor the protesters’ own rhetoric painted across their banners; as primarily a news channel, NET often broadcast such images in its coverage of street marches, sit-ins, occupations. But on a channel that, like most television channels, fills every available second with sound and image - and especially sound - what was most powerful was the dead silence lasting over 40 seconds, without even room tone or ambient noise. The protesters’ breaking into the newsroom to deliver that willful silence can in a way be understood as a pointed act of refusal: entering into an arena of (supposedly) public discourse, precisely in order to refuse to participate in it, and through that act of refusal, undermining the discourse itself, as well as that particular public sphere. While the protesters did not lack their own discursive output - in addition to the banners, they also brought with them copies of a text that they distributed afterwards, which denounced the mainstream media for their “criminalizing,” “simplifying,” and “distorted” coverage of the mass protests, and calling on the public to gather and organize in public spaces - the power of their action lay in their initial act of “refusal.”

Similarly, the small group of filmmakers that met to discuss the next steps of their own protest based their actions on this logic of refusal. This group included Marinakis (*Black Field*), Angelos Frantzis (*In the Woods*), Margarita Manta (*Gold Dust*), Stella Theodoraki (*Ricordi Mi*), Antonis Kafetzopoulos (*Plato’s Academy*), Filippos Tsitos (*Plato’s Academy*), Panos Koutras

*(Strella)* and Giorgos Lanthimos (*Dogtooth*) - all filmmakers who, either as directors or producers, had films premiering that year and therefore were eligible for the State Film Awards. The state awards system had been established in 1998 through a law that outlined the process by which the winners of the awards, and the monetary prizes that accompany them, would be decided annually by a committee of fifty, comprising representatives from various film organizations and unions, the Thessaloniki film festival, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Macedonia-Thrace. In order for a film to be considered for these awards, it had to be submitted to the Ministry of Culture, and as long as it fulfilled basic requirements concerning length, language, country of origin and format, it would be accepted and shown as part of the official Greek program during the Thessaloniki festival in November; award winners were announced during a special ceremony that took place every year the day after the end of the festival. The gathered filmmakers all shared the opinion that the voting process, which was supposed to be anonymous, was corrupted by alliances, bribery and vote-fixing among a group largely made up of entrenched members of the Greek film industry's old guard; as evidence, they pointed to the 2008 State Awards, in which two films produced by the same person won nearly all of the available awards. To Marinakis and his colleagues, the State Awards were just one symptom of much larger problems: a failed national film policy badly in need of an overhaul; a Ministry of Culture staffed with indifferent career politicians who for years had promised but failed to deliver a new film law; and more broadly, a state crippled by corruption and unable to enforce its own laws. The filmmakers decided that, as an act of protest, they would not submit their films for awards consideration, essentially refusing to participate in the entire process. Marinakis explained their decision: "We thought that, simply, if the filmmakers don't take their

films to the state awards, the state awards won't ever happen. A show that happens based on us - if we don't go, then this thing won't take place." Like the protest that interrupted the NET news broadcast, the filmmakers' boycott was a refusal to engage with the state on the terms given.

What started as a group of around twenty filmmakers abstaining from the state awards process quickly grew into a larger movement. According to Antonis Kafetzopoulos - one of the group's original members, a well-known actor, producer and director who co-produced and starred in Filippos Tsitos' *Plato's Academy*, for which Kafetzopoulos won a Best Actor award at the 2009 Locarno International Film Festival - in the first two weeks, the group grew to nearly seventy members, and in the month following, to over a hundred. Chatting with me before a special FOG screening in Thessaloniki in early 2010, Kafetzopoulos explained that, at first, new members came to the group primarily through word-of-mouth and personal connections. It was during this heady time that he came up with their name - in Greek, *Kinimatografistes stin Omikhli*, which translates literally to "Filmmakers in the Mist." Kafetzopoulos said the name was a reference to the film *Gorillas in the Mist*, because he felt that independent Greek filmmakers were, in their own way, a kind of endangered species; with private funding very difficult to come by and an increasingly dysfunctional state support structure, independent filmmakers were finding it harder and harder to work. The gorilla was chosen as the group's mascot, and the English name "Filmmakers of Greece" was chosen in part for its acronym (FOG), which conveniently referred back to the "mist" of the original Greek name. Over the summer and into the early fall, as the group continued to grow and began to build a public image for itself, the title and mascot easily lent themselves to clever branding. The group built a website, with its gorilla-mascot featured prominently in the banner, where they published texts in both Greek and English

detailing their opinions and demands; held press conferences where they publicized their positions; organized screenings, which were advertised with carefully designed posters and magazine advertisements, again featuring the gorilla-mascot; and even made a short trailer, a kind of video calling card that was disseminated widely online, with the gorilla-mascot appearing out of a foggy background.

As the group and its activities grew, so did its demands. What was at first a protest of the State Film Awards quickly became a movement whose goals were much larger in scope, reflecting the varied interests and professions of the group's rapidly increasing membership. According to Marinakis, the influx of new members - particularly of more established independent producers who, for a few years already, had been pushing for a change to the film law - shaped the focus of the group's demands, shifting it more onto the need for legislative and financial reform. In addition, the presence of members who also worked as teachers, both in private film schools and in the Aristotle University film department, contributed to FOG taking more of an interest in issues of film education. By the time the group launched its website in October 2009, it had an official position, with five basic demands, which it publicized in all of its activities and print materials:

All of us - directors, screenwriters and producers of Greek cinema - who constitute the movement "Filmmakers in the Mist" abstain from the State Film Awards and the Thessaloniki Festival, as a protest against the indifference of the state in regards to issues concerning our field. We seek the passage of a modern and practicable law based on the following principles:

1. An increase in the total amount of public funding set aside for film production. Apart from how this could happen (direct state funding, tax incentives for private investors, the return to producers of the special tax levied on movie tickets, implementation of the law that requires television channels to put 1.5 percent of their profits towards film production, cutting bureaucratic expenses, restructuring of funds including a decrease in the cost of the Festival and other activities, the taxing of new media, etc.),



what interests us most is that the total amount available for film production be increased, so that it may approach the level appropriate for a dignified national cinema, as in other European countries.

2. The distribution of funds in such a way as to ensure support for all types of domestic cinema, in the most objective way possible. In order for this to happen, it is imperative that all advisory and funding bodies be staffed with widely approved individuals of recognized authority. The balance between commercial and artistic cinema must be ensured through the equal support of, on the one hand, film entrepreneurs, and on the one hand, the Greek Film Center or other agencies that will support creative, auteur-driven and polyphonic cinema.
3. Assured distribution and exhibition of Greek films. Distributors and theater owners should be rewarded, through state support measures, to the degree that they comply. The more Greek films they show in the period between October and April, the more they will be rewarded. However, there will have to be a measure put in place to ensure that all types of films are shown, so as to avoid an oligopolistic situation.
4. Re-organization and optimization of the Thessaloniki Festival and the State Film Awards. We consider of utmost importance the presence of Greek films in the Thessaloniki International Film Festival, which we call upon to contribute to the promotion of Greek films abroad. We seek the separation of the so-called State Awards from the Festival, and the renaming of the awards to the “Annual Film Awards,” which will be given out every March in Athens. The organization and administration of these awards can be handled by creative professionals within the Greek film world, who by way of a Film Academy will deal with all relevant matters.
5. Systematization and upgrading of film education, in the form of a comprehensive film school, which will be based on a curriculum according to select international models and will aim at the promotion of film theory and practice.<sup>39</sup>

The FOG filmmakers refused to participate in any state-sponsored events or activities, including the festival’s Industry Center programs (the Market, the Balkan Funds Script Development Fund competition and the Crossroads Co-production Forum) and the Thessaloniki Documentary Festival in March, until the government passed a comprehensive new law addressing their five main points and replacing the existing film law, the so-called “Melina’s

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<sup>39</sup> [http://fogfilms.org/?page\\_id=71](http://fogfilms.org/?page_id=71)

Law” passed in 1986, named after its champion and architect Melina Mercouri.<sup>40</sup> At first, the filmmakers took pains to emphasize in their public statements that their boycott was not a protest against the festival itself; FOG members interviewed for an article in a local Thessaloniki newspaper in August 2009 repeatedly maintained, “We don’t have anything against the festival” and “We’re not in opposition to the festival.” Referring to a week of “FOG Films” screenings that they were planning to take place in Athens in early November, director Lagia Giourgou claimed, “It’s not an anti-festival, we’re not giving awards, we’re simply screening our films” (Dartzali 2009). Marinakis explained that they chose the festival as the target of its boycott primarily because “it was the best possible way to protest”; as the most high-profile state-supported film event in the country, it was the most public and most visible site in which to draw attention to their demands. But as time passed, it became increasingly clear their criticisms were also aimed, in part, at the festival itself, particularly because of its budget and the structure of its relationship with the State Film Awards, which had the effect of ghettoizing Greek films into a non-selective program that was always overshadowed by the festival’s international competition program. FOG’s stance towards the festival became especially critical after the publication, by the Film Division of the Ministry of Culture, of figures detailing the amount of support it gave to different agencies and organizations in the period 2005-2009 (Eleftherotypia 2010). According to these figures, the Greek Film Center and the Thessaloniki Festival received about the same amounts over the five-year period; considering that only about half the annual budget of the Greek Film Center goes to funding film production, this meant that the festival was annually receiving nearly twice the amount of public funding that film production was

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<sup>40</sup> Law 1597/1986 “Protection and development of cinema art, support of Greek cinema and other ordinances” (*Prostasia kai anaptyksi tis kinimatografikis tekhnis, eniskhysi tis ellinikis kinimatografias kai alles dhiataksis*).

receiving.<sup>41</sup> With the oncoming specter of the state's potential bankruptcy, and amid growing rumors of the festival's staggering debt - some believed it to be as high as €10 million, nearly as much as its entire budget for 2009 - the FOG filmmakers began to refer to the festival increasingly as part of the larger problem, economically but also politically, as yet another misguided, dysfunctional and even corrupt state activity. Although legally the festival is an autonomous private entity, the filmmakers' criticisms of the institution had the effect of highlighting the relationship between the festival and the state, thus bringing the institution into the larger conversation taking place at the time concerning the failures of the state.

The FOG movement itself faced criticism from a variety of sources, including some among the festival's local public in Thessaloniki, who thought the group was trying to undermine the city and its main cultural institution; the major film industry unions, who felt that the independent movement threatened their authority and political position in the Greek film industry; and members of an older generation of filmmakers, film critics, arts administrators and cultural bureaucrats who were concerned that the FOG filmmakers would dismantle structures of state support that they had fought to build only a few decades ago. Even among filmmakers who agreed with the movement's ultimate goals, there was disagreement concerning their chosen methods. For example, my friend Nicoletta, who joked about leaving Greece as a "cultural immigrant" because of her exasperation with state funding structures, said that she was against the FOG boycott of the festival; although she agreed with their demands, and was just as frustrated with the situation as they were, she thought it was ridiculous to give up the opportunity to meet potential co-producers, talk to possible funders and pitch her projects to members of the

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<sup>41</sup> In 2009, the official numbers were about €6 million for the festival, and about €3.5 million for film production. Many filmmakers complained that even the production funds they were awarded by the Greek Film Center were never actually dispersed.

international film industry. She also argued that it was important for Greek films to be a part of the festival because of its long history of showcasing Greek cinema, and she pointed to the honorary awards ceremony and screening of *The River*, as proof of that history's significance. Other dissenting filmmakers, including the few who ended up showing their films in the 2009 festival, gave similar arguments: Stavros Ioannou asked, "Should we sacrifice our films for this law to happen? [...] I owe €200,000 on this film, and I need €30,000 just to make copies of it. Should I leave them in the can? Let's press for the law, yes, but not with our films ready to be screened," while Kyriakos Katzourakis found it "pointless and unfair, this initiative to not participate in the state awards and in the Thessaloniki Film Festival, the only organization that supports and promotes Greek cinema internationally" (Venardou 2009:9). Underlying these arguments are particular understandings of what the festival is: in one case, a market or place of business, and in the other, a home for a national cinema. In contrast, the FOG filmmakers had a very different understanding of the kind of space constituted by the festival. In their initial choice of the festival as the "site" of their boycott, already it was clear that they saw it as an arena in which they could address and engage with the state. As time passed, and they became more critical of the festival itself, it became less of a neutral arena and more of a space of the state; indeed, through their public criticisms of the festival - during their public screenings and press conferences, in interviews for the press, on their website - they were actively inscribing it as such.

Although FOG members themselves did not explicitly reference any historical precedents for their movement, their actions clearly echoed the "anti-festivals" and public protests of the more politicized period of the festival's history, in the 1970s and early 1980s, as Liakos and Zacharias

pointed out at the commemorative book launch. In addition, there are ways in which their movement recalls the French filmmakers' protest of the Cannes film festival in May 1968. Led by leading directors of the time - including Louis Malle, Jean-Luc Godard and François Truffaut - the 1968 protest arose in solidarity with the students' and workers' movements taking place in Paris at the same time, and it was part of a larger movement, represented by the sprawling new organization "The Estates General of French Cinema," that sought whole-scale, bottom-up reform of French national film policy and cinema institutions. The 1968 protest was successful in first turning the glamorous festival into a political battleground, and then shutting it down completely, a remarkable feat considering the size and international importance of the festival.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, the FOG filmmakers were initially inspired by the larger climate of protest sparked by the events of December 2008, and their actions were meant to pressure the state to produce a new film law and overhaul the institutional structures of film production and film education in Greece. In negotiations with members of the festival organization that took place early in the fall of 2009, the filmmakers attempted to transform the festival into a more politicized event and, more specifically, to position it in opposition to the state. Marinakis, together with a few other FOG members, met with festival director Despina Mouzaki and said that they would end their boycott and participate in the festival only if it would be held not as a celebration, but as itself a protest:

We proposed to them that, if the festival were to change and didn't celebrate its 50th anniversary and instead opened up the issue of Greek cinema as the basic element of the festival, with discussions here and there, and if it were to cut all receptions and such in half - we proposed a lot of things [...] But they didn't do anything. The only thing they said was that they would organize one discussion, on one day, with the theme of Greek cinema, which took place without us anyway. [...] The point was for them to take a

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<sup>42</sup> See Corless and Darke 2007, Cowie 2004, Harvey 1978, Schwartz 2007.

dynamic position, to make clear to us that the festival was taking a position, putting itself out, risking itself a little bit, to say that it was with us. At the moment when they should have taken a political position, a critical position, they didn't. They could have even said, "We're not taking any Greek films for the festival this year." But instead they tried to cover the whole thing up, to hide what was happening under a rug.

In other words, what the filmmakers wanted was to transform the festival from a space of public celebration to one of public protest, with the institution not only changing its programming but, more importantly, the underlying meaning of the event, the discursive context in which it would take place. When it became clear that this would not happen, many of the filmmakers took the festival's reluctance to accommodate their demands as a sign that it was, in fact, allied with the state. Marinakis explained his understanding of what happened:

There wasn't a person in there who had the political will [...] the vision and the grit to say, "Yes, I am an employee of the Ministry of Culture, but I'll protest what's going on." Because the film festival, they're employees. It's an agency which is governed by the Ministry of Culture; thus they're paid by the Ministry, they're defined by the ministry. So there was the argument that I can't raise my head against that to which I belong. Some people say that if the state subsidizes art, then art is enslaved to the state. Here's an example of that, what happened with the festival.

As talks with the festival organization broke down, the filmmakers became resolute in their refusal to participate in the 2009 edition.

In their refusal, the FOG members were acting as what Michael Warner would call a "counterpublic." According to Warner, a counterpublic is a "complex metatopical space for the circulation of discourse [...] a scene for developing oppositional interpretations of its members' identities, interests, and needs" (Warner 2002:119). While Warner, following Nancy Fraser (1992), uses this term to refer to counterpublics based on personal identity - the examples Warner and Fraser give often center on religion, gender, race or sexual identity, such as Christian fundamentalism or queer culture - the FOG filmmakers and their movement could also be

considered a counterpublic, in that they “are structured by different dispositions or protocols from those that obtain elsewhere in the culture, making different assumptions about what can be said or what goes without saying” (Warner 2002:119). Furthermore, Warner distinguishes his understanding of counterpublics from Fraser’s by focusing on the performative, or what he refers to as the “poetic-expressive” (Warner 2002:120), character of counterpublic discourse:

A counterpublic maintains at some level, conscious or not, an awareness of its subordinate status. The cultural horizon against which it marks itself off is not just a general or wider public but a dominant one. And the conflict extends not just to ideas or policy questions but to the speech genres and modes of address that constitute the public or to the hierarchy among media. The discourse that constitutes it is not merely a different or alternative idiom but one that in other contexts would be regarded with hostility or with a sense of indecorousness. (Warner 2002:119)

In other words, what distinguishes a counterpublic as such is not just *what* is being said, but *how* the message is being delivered - not simply the discourse, but the discursive act itself, and its oppositional form in a larger public-discursive context dominated by more conventional, standard forms of public engagement.

Earlier in this dissertation, we saw that the festival aims to enact a particular kind of *publicness*, a particular way of being public; while various publics might come together, and even clash, within the space of the festival, ultimately the dominant form of public interaction is the rational-critical discourse of the bourgeois public sphere, in which participants may “scrutinize, ask, reject, opine, decide, judge, and so on” (Warner 2002:123), but beyond this are limited in their ability to act, contest, disrupt. In their negotiations with the festival organizers, the FOG filmmakers attempted to change the “idiom” of the festival space, from one of celebration to one of protest, and in this they failed. But their refusal to participate in the festival at all was the ultimate counterpublic *act* - a refusal to join that particular public sphere, to engage

in that particular form of publicness. Warner writes that the danger for all counterpublics lies in their eventual attempt to exercise agency within the larger dominant public and in relation to the state; he argues that, in order to do so, they must “enter the temporality of politics and adapt themselves to the performatives of rational-critical discourse. For many counterpublics, to do so is to cede the original hope of transforming not just policy by the space of public life itself” (Warner 2002:124). In the act of refusal, however, the FOG filmmakers exercise a different kind of agency. Rather than attempting to “reason” with the festival, their boycott opens up a rupture in the dominant discursive stream. Interestingly, what resulted from this rupture was precisely the transformation of the “idiom,” if not within the festival space, then around it. While their abstention was not an active and more obviously “successful” intervention like that of the French filmmakers at Cannes in 1968, it nevertheless had the similarly powerful effect of changing the terms in which the festival was being discussed. At a time when the institution was attempting to focus public attention onto its impending anniversary celebrations, the FOG boycott cast it as a space of the state, thus shifting the terms of public discourse around the festival, and around the Greek film world more generally.

### ***Performing Democracy***

The extent to which the FOG movement managed to change the terms of this discourse was evident at a public debate that took place in September 2009, as part of the Opening Nights Athens International Film Festival, the main annual film festival in the capital city. The debate, on the topic of Greek cinema and its future, had been organized specifically to address the turmoil in the Greek film world brought on by the FOG boycott and their demands for a new



national film policy. On the second floor of the flagship Ianos bookstore in the center of Athens, in a large open space often used for book presentations and press conferences, a crowd had gathered - representatives from the major film unions, from the Greek Film Center, and members of FOG, among others. Seated behind a long narrow table on a slightly elevated stage at the front of the room were representatives from the six major political parties that were to be on the ballots in the emergency national elections, which had just been announced at the beginning of September and were to take place on 4 October. The upcoming elections added a sense of political urgency to the debate. In addition to representatives from the center-left socialist party PASOK, the leftist SYRIZA, the communist KKE, the far-right LAOS, and the far-left Green Ecologists, the Secretary General of the Ministry of Culture was present to represent the party in government at the time, the center-right New Democracy. Seated at a table facing them were four journalists known for writing about film, and about arts and culture more generally, for four of the major Greek newspapers (*Kathimerini*, *To Vima*, *Eleftherotypia* and *To Ethnos*). The presence of the political parties contributed to a tense and serious atmosphere. The fact that someone with the stature of PASOK representative Maria Damanaki - who many believed would be the next Minister of Culture following the emergency elections - had agreed to participate in the debate indicated that something was seen to be at stake politically in this event.

The moderator of the debate was Orestis Andreadakis, the director of the Opening Nights festival. As he opened the event by describing the rules of the “debate,” it became clear that it was not so much a debate as it was a kind of public interview to clarify and evaluate the positions of the politicians on the stage. Andreadakis explained that the journalists would pose questions to the politicians, or “candidates” (*ypopsifii*), each of whom would respond in turn. At

the end would be time for audience responses: one from a representative of the Inter-union Committee overseeing the various film industry unions and guilds (*Dhiasomatiaki Epitropi ton Kinimatografikon Foreon*), one from the members of FOG, and then a few more from the general audience. Andreadakis' use of the word "candidates" - presumably for the position of Minister of Culture - to refer to the participants on the stage unmistakably set the tone of the debate, marking it as a kind of interrogation of the politicians. Indeed, as the journalists posed their questions, the debate took on the tone of a vetting session, with the "candidates" being asked to articulate specific policy proposals that they would pursue should they win the upcoming elections. And as each of the politicians answered in turn, it became clear that the debate was also functioning as a campaigning opportunity for the various parties to present their cultural policy platforms in the best light possible. For example, the first question asked, by *To Vima* journalist Giannis Zouboulakis, referred to a statistic at the heart of the FOG filmmakers' complaints, namely that only 5 percent of the annual state budget for cinema actually went to support the production of films, while the rest was used for "peripheral" activities such as film festivals, institutional administration and bureaucrats' salaries. Zouboulakis asked, what would each candidate do to address this situation? Theodoris Dravillas, the representative from the ruling New Democracy party, answered by shifting the responsibility from the Ministry of Culture, which he argued simply distributed funds to the two main institutions, the Greek Film Center and the Thessaloniki Film Festival: "Each of these institutions has its own administration, its own general assembly, its own board of directors, and they alone determine how their money is used. The Ministry of Culture is merely a distributor of the original funds, and we have never intervened or had a say in how that money then gets used by those institutions." In her response,

PASOK's Damanaki took aim specifically at Dravillas' words, asserting that "the Ministry of Culture does in fact have the power to dictate a redistribution of funds" and promising that the PASOK ministry would redirect more funds to production. She also pointed out the provision in the already existing national film policy which dictates that a percentage of the tax revenue from movie theater tickets be returned to film production, stating that one of the main goals of the new Ministry of Culture would be to make sure that this erratically enforced provision be fully implemented. To this, the Communist party's Eva Mela added the need to enforce another provision of the same law which calls for 1.5 percent of profits from television channels to be set aside for supporting film production, as well as the need to democratize the structure by which state funds are distributed. Rigas Axelos, of SYRIZA, agreed with Damanaki and Mela but also stressed the need for the government to put into place economic incentives for private investment in film. He also refuted Dravillas' earlier claim that the country's largest film institutions are autonomous from the state: "Regardless of what has been said earlier, the truth is that these supposedly 'autonomous' institutions are actually very closely tied to the Ministry, since the lists of candidates for the board of directors and general assembly are circulated for months in the offices of the Ministry, so that the Ministry can comb through the candidates and weed out the ones they don't want."

Underlying all of these responses is a larger question about the "proper" role of the state in processes of cultural production and in the shaping of public culture. While Dravillas claims that the government is not responsible for the current distribution of funds, implying that the state should not be meddling in the decision-making processes of funding bodies, Damanaki contends that the state not only has the ability to affect funding decisions, but that it should. On the other

hand, Axelos argues that the state in fact does meddle improperly, interfering in the hiring of personnel for political purposes, while Mela joins Damanaki and Axelos in calling for the state to enforce existing laws that were designed to support film production. Although Dravillas' position seems to be far from those of the other "candidates," they are all actually based on the same set of values, of objectivity, transparency, and accountability. Dravillas' assertion that the Ministry was not involved in the affairs of the various institutions it funds was an attempt to present the state as neutral, to distance the Ministry from what was seen as an improper distribution of funds, and to show that the government had nothing to hide. Axelos' denouncing of the Ministry's political scheming is based on the same privileging of objectivity and transparency. The three non-incumbent candidates promise a government that can be held accountable to enforce laws, whether those laws aim to increase public or private funding.

As discussed in more detail elsewhere in this dissertation, these terms - accountability, transparency, objectivity - were very much in circulation during the period leading up to the emergency parliamentary elections of October 2009. Along with these notions, which represented characteristics of an ideally functioning state, an ideal of the active, engaged citizen was also circulating at the time. This idealized notion of the citizen, and her relationship with the state, is captured in a campaign commercial for PASOK that played heavily in the lead up to the emergency elections, in which PASOK emerged victorious. The commercial opens with a shot of large white letters spelling the word "*KRATOS*" (state), towering over a group of people. The letters, resembling large sculptures, are dirtied and in disarray, some fallen over and others leaning precariously, all surrounded by a high sectioned fence and marked with a red sign barring entrance. The crowd - men and women in plainclothes, teenagers, workers in construction hats,

policemen, men in suits - approaches the letters, removes the fence, and begins to clean and repaint the righted letters. As we watch the group diligently working together to fix the “state,” we hear a man’s voice declaring over music, “We won’t change anything in our country if we don’t change the state. We need a state that’s friendly to the citizen. That functions with transparency.” The narrator then lists a number of proposed measures, including the publication of all laws and governmental decisions online, expansion of the online Center for Citizen Services, cleaning up the electoral system to rid it of bribery, and increased regulation of the hiring of civil servants. In the last shot, the narrator delivers the final lines, “The time has come for us to build a state that functions with transparency and that effectively serves the citizen. The citizen comes first,” while the “citizens” who helped to repair “the state” hang out happily in front of the bright, restored letters as though in a public square - an older couple walking hand in hand, a young man and woman chatting on a park bench, a woman pushing a stroller, two boys playing with a ball. Echoing much of the anti-corruption rhetoric that dominated public discourse in the months before the 2009 elections, this commercial promises a transparent, accountable, and honest state. Beyond this, it also makes the promise of democracy, even direct democracy, but it is only able to do so through an odd slippage. Despite what we see in the commercial - citizens taking direct action, “cleaning up” the state themselves - none of the specific “measures” narrated in the voiceover are measures that can actually be taken by citizens; rather, they are all actions and initiatives that must be carried out by the government. Although what we see (citizens actively fixing the state) is not the same as what we hear (government measures to fix the state), the juxtaposition of the two in this punchy campaign commercial has the effect of conflating citizen with government, and by extension, voting with direct democracy. The visual

argument of the commercial is that voting for PASOK to fix the state is equivalent to fixing it oneself, which results in a happy, healthy public.

This ideal of direct democracy - of citizens participating directly in the affairs of the state - was a talking point that also came up repeatedly among the politicians present at the debate, most notably after a question posed by Robby Eksiel, film writer for *To Ethnos*. In his question, Eksiel referenced the FOG filmmakers' demand for an overhaul of the annual State Film Awards. The protesting filmmakers, who viewed the existing annual awards system as corrupted by both money and political maneuvering, wanted the system to be taken out of state hands completely and to be handed over to a new National Film Academy, comprising active members of the Greek film industry. To the various party representatives, Eksiel asked, "Is there parliamentary will, apart from the new law, for a ministerial decision to change the system which is perceived as corrupt?" New Democracy representative Dravillas began his answer by bringing up the issue of trust: "It's a shame that there's a system that people don't trust, a shame when those who are being evaluated cannot trust those who are evaluating." His specific proposal was to expand the voting body in the awards system to "seventy-five, a hundred, even thousands"; he then continued, jokingly, "Maybe all the people of the country (*olos o laos*) should vote for the awards in a referendum, to make it truly democratic!" In pushing his logic to an admittedly absurd extreme, his answer connects the possibility of trust with the model of direct democracy, and it set the tone for the rest of the politicians, whose answers all reflected some aspect of Dravillas' response. Noting that the question of the state award system "is a good example of the need for dignity and transparency in how the state deals with cinema, and also the need to not have the whole system hijacked by the interests of a few groups," Damanaki states that "the

number of voting members should be larger to avoid the possibility of small interests” and rules should be put in place to limit the power of any particular cultural minister; her answer pits clientelism, nepotism and the interests of the few against more democratic interests and processes. Axelos followed by arguing that the problem is not how many people vote but rather how they vote, in a system that accommodates or even encourages behind-the-scenes conspiring, and he proposed that filmmakers themselves be allowed to come up with a new system, with “no state and no agency from above” dictating to the filmmakers how they are to be evaluated. While Axelos takes a slightly different angle from Dravillas and Damanaki, his response still draws on the power of a democratic ideal - people actively deciding for themselves the structure of the system in which they are to operate. Mylonas of the Green Ecologists took a more blunt approach to the question, declaring unequivocally, “We support democracy, the inclusion of as many citizens and institutions as possible. We want the widening of voting members, as well as the creation of as clear a voting system as possible in order to decrease the possibility of scheming and to create something as objective as possible.”

All this talk of democracy - of transparency, accountability, objectivity, meritocracy - would perhaps be out of place in most other debates centering on a national cinema, but in this case it was an indication of the degree to which the FOG movement had succeeded in politicizing the public discourse on cinema in Greece, so that the structuring terms of that discourse were now the responsibilities of the state and the rights of the citizen. As the PASOK campaign commercial attempts to evoke, the relationship that such a discourse posits between state and citizen is one of trust, service, and direct interaction - a two-way relationship in which citizens have the power to change and shape the state that governs them, and the state responds to the needs and desires of

its citizens. More importantly, not only did the “idiom” or discursive content of the event insist on notions of accountability and direct engagement in the relationship between state and citizen; the whole “debate” itself was an attempt to perform or enact that very relationship, those very values. In its form and organization, it was clearly designed to enact that democratic dialogue, providing a structure in which political candidates were literally brought face-to-face with members of the public (or its intermediaries, in the case of the journalists) and made to engage with them directly in a rational-critical dialogue. This concern with performing or enacting this form of public interaction, was evident in the moderator’s frequent reminders to all of the participants - politicians, journalists and audience members alike - about the proper debate process: when each person is allowed to speak, for how long, the proper way for each person to make their address, etc. Andreadakis’ nearly obsessive insistence on the proper forms of interaction and engagement highlights the performative dimension of the debate, as an enactment of a particular form of publicness, a particular way of being in the public sphere.

As in the context of the festival, the FOG filmmakers’ response was that of a counterpublic. When it was finally their turn to respond to the panel of “candidates,” rather than participating in the prescribed process, they responded with a refusal to participate on the given terms. Instead of asking a question about policy proposals or the new film law, as was expected, they took their turn to speak as an opportunity to comment critically on the debate itself, and to make a number of their own public statements. As a representative of FOG, producer Konstantinos Moriatis began cynically: “We don’t have a question, because we really don’t think that the new law is going to be hammered out here.” Despite Andreadakis’ loud immediate objections to this “breach of process,” Moriatis continued, albeit half-seriously, “So what we’re asking for now, since we’re



practical people, is that we're going to organize a Week of Greek Cinema to show the films we've made this year, which means we need about €10,000. We've asked the leadership of the Thessaloniki festival for it, but they haven't given us an answer yet." With Moriatis' statement, the FOG filmmakers were essentially opting out of the particular form of public interaction that the debate was trying to enact, and in so doing, calling into question its very purpose. Their refusal to participate opened up a rupture in that discursive space, into which they inserted their own discourse. After Moriatis spoke, director Elisabeth Chronopoulou read aloud an official statement, authored collectively by FOG, denouncing what they considered to be an attempt by the Greek Directors' Guild (GDG) and other film industry unions, together with the Thessaloniki Film Festival and Ministry of Culture, to undermine Giorgos Papalios, the president of the Greek Film Center (GFC), by conspiring to orchestrate a vote of no-confidence at the last GFC general assembly; the statement went on to express support for Papalios, describing him as someone who supports new talent and works to help struggling filmmakers, thus threatening "those who are indifferent to the advancement of Greek cinema and care only for their narrow individual or corporate interests." Next spoke Vardis Marinakis, reading a statement addressed to the Directors' Guild, its president and board of directors, accusing them of playing politics and pursuing personal advancement rather than fostering filmmakers and filmmaking in Greece. Lastly, director Konstantina Voulgaris read aloud a list of the names of the 64 filmmakers who had signed the statement so far, some of whom were members of the GDG and were resigning from the guild. The filmmakers' statements set off an explosion of reactions. Some in the audience erupted in applause and vocal approval, some shouted that they wanted to add their names to the list of signatures. Andreadakis yelled into his microphone, declaring that all of this

was out of line and breaking the rules of the debate, while the president of the Greek Directors' Guild, Haris Papadopoulos, visibly upset, shot out of his seat and demanded to be given a chance to respond. What ensued was a shouting match between Papadopoulos and Papalios, also present for the debate, with each aggressively accusing the other of improper conduct. As Papalios yelled that Papadopoulos was, "as the Americans say, a 'loser,'" the entire room devolved into chaos, with the politicians making a quick dash for the door, journalists and audience members standing up and shouting at each other, and Andreadakis imploring everyone to settle down and return to their seats; at that point, however, it was already obvious that the "debate" was over, and the room eventually started to clear.

What was most interesting about the episode was that the content of the FOG declarations ultimately did not depart much from the underlying rhetoric of the rest of the debate. The same references to corruption, clientelistic politics, transparency and objectivity that dominated the politicians' statements also served as the rhetorical underpinnings for the FOG filmmakers' positions; their accusations just happened to be aimed at others. Thus what was striking about their statements was not necessarily *what* they said, but rather *how* they said it: taking a deliberate step away from the format of the debate as performance of democratic dialogue, casting the effectiveness of that very performance into doubt, and instead transforming the debate into a platform or stage from which to make their own positions publicly known. In this sense, they were once again acting as a counterpublic, and this time succeeding in changing not the terms of discourse, but the form of that discourse itself.

### *Scales of Citizenship*

One consequence of this more politicized discursive context, focused on the relationship between public culture and the state, is that it positions the protesting FOG members primarily as citizens, in the sense that the primary purpose of their public statements and actions as a group was to address, and to re-negotiate their relationship with, the state. Although they did identify specifically as a group of filmmakers, artists and cultural producers, this identification was not highlighted through an insistence on any particular aesthetic movement or agenda, and their work collectively represented a wide variety of forms, styles and approaches: documentary, narrative, feature length, short, experimental, commercial.<sup>43</sup> While the “manifesto” outlining their five basic demands does address the need to support “artistic,” “creative/auteur-driven” and “polyphonic” cinema, this language is rather vague, and it is used in the context of calling for a balance between such “artistic” cinema and more commercial films. And while some of the filmmakers told me in private conversations that they were particularly concerned about making sure that the new law contain provisions to support more “experimental” work, this was always understood to be in the larger context of seeking more general reforms, and it was never a talking point in the group’s public events or presentations. Instead, their public rhetoric always emphasized the responsibilities of the state to provide the necessary conditions for a healthy national cinema and film industry.

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<sup>43</sup> This is in contrast to other filmmaker movements that chose to use film festivals as platforms for publicizing their agendas - for example, the Young German Filmmakers and the “Oberhausener Manifest” presented at the Oberhausen Short Film Festival in 1962. Like the FOG filmmakers, the “Oberhausener” sought changes to funding structures and other administrative and policy issues, but they articulated their movement specifically in terms of a “new style of film,” distinguishing this from what was considered the old, conventional “Papa’s Kino” that dominated film production in Germany at the time. Their demands for reform aimed at providing better conditions for this “new film” to flourish. See Hagener 2010.

The degree to which the FOG filmmakers were perceived publicly as citizens addressing the state was made clear to me one evening after an open discussion that took place during a week of “FOG Films” screenings in Thessaloniki in January 2010. The filmmakers had organized the screenings as a way to finally show their work in Thessaloniki, after having kept their films from the 2009 festival; together with the screenings, a series of open discussions were held so that the filmmakers could talk with members of the local public about topics such as the new film law and film education reform. A similar week of screenings and discussions had taken place in Athens in early November 2009, right before the start of the Thessaloniki festival; while the discussions during that earlier week in Athens had been packed, and generally full of FOG members, FOG sympathizers and other like-minded people, in Thessaloniki the discussions were less well-attended, and there was a definite tension between the FOG filmmakers and many of the people in the audience. The open discussion on film education reform was particularly tense. In the main theater in the Olympion - the festival building where, somewhat ironically, FOG had rented the cinema for their week of screenings - an audience of local filmmakers, teachers and students from the Aristotle University film department listened as Antonietta Angelidi and Rea Walden, representatives of the FOG committee on film education, outlined the group’s positions. Their statements tended to be very general, as with most FOG position-statements; rather than giving specific or practical suggestions for what might changed or improved, they outlined broad shifts that they wanted to see: state support for film education to be incorporated into elementary and secondary school curricula, improvement of the ailing Aristotle University film department through administrative re-organization and the allotment of more resources, the creation of a new state film school in Athens that would foster “innovative” work. Their positions were articulated

in terms of citizenship and the state; in the closing remarks of their presentation, they asserted, “For all of this, we need the support of the state, as much political will as economic support, because film belongs to all of us. As art, it expresses and renews our culture. As education, it improves the developmental level of the country and shapes better citizens.”

Among an audience made up of people with enough interest in cinema to attend such a discussion, I did not expect these general, and generally reasonable, positions to face much resistance. However, much of the audience response was antagonistic. While some expressed agreement with the filmmakers’ positions, a number of people - including local filmmakers, students and faculty members from the Aristotle University film department - complained that FOG was downplaying the importance of the film department in Thessaloniki, which in their eyes was an already existing state film school badly in need of more support, and they expressed concern that a new state film school in Athens would divert resources and attention away from their own department. Ioannis Grosdanis, a local journalist and film critic, asked if the FOG film education committee had been in touch at all with other organizations or institutions, pointedly noting that the Thessaloniki film festival had a long history of organizing educational programs. Another group of students stated dismissively that they had already been discussing these same issues for years, as an organized group and on their own dedicated website; complaining that they had never had the help or interest of the professional Greek film world before, they asked where the FOG filmmakers had been all this time. And at one point, a physical fight nearly broke out between FOG members and a small group of students who had started to record the discussion with a video camera, for a documentary they wanted to make on film education in Greece; the FOG filmmakers responded negatively, claiming that as organizers of the event, only

they had a right to record the event, and as the argument heated up, one filmmaker even tried to snatch the camera out of the student's hands. The sense of antagonism was palpable, and it continued after the discussion ended, as I sat down for a coffee with Giannis, Lina and some students from the film department and we started to discuss what had happened. One of the students had been working as an usher during the discussion, and she was a staunch supporter of FOG. She became noticeably upset and tried repeatedly to interject as Giannis spoke disdainfully of the filmmakers, arguing that they should have come to represent themselves during the festival in November, and that it was out of line for them to come now, bringing with them a whole set of ideas and plans that he felt were disconnected from the local public. Lina agreed, and continued her criticisms of the FOG film education committee, complaining that no one had even contacted anyone at the Aristotle film department to notify them of the open discussion, let alone to ask for their opinion or input. At a certain point, however, the student-usher interrupted to defend the FOG filmmakers:

You can't blame them - it's not like the festival was going to pay for them to come up to Thessaloniki and stay in hotels. And besides, we can't keep talking about what's past - we have to think about the present, what to do now and in the future. At least they're doing something! They're not a big organization or an agency. They're just people, just normal people who have a right to work. They're workers (*erghazomeni*)! They're citizens (*polites*)!

At this, everyone at the table grew quiet and nodded in agreement. I was surprised to see that even Lina and Giannis, who just minutes before had been discussing FOG in such critical terms, seemed to agree with the student's statement, and Giannis added pensively, "You're right - it's a citizens' movement (*kinisi politon*)."

It seemed that, regardless of the varying public perceptions of the FOG movement that were in circulation, the filmmakers had succeeded in presenting a public image of themselves as citizens - not simply as a highly specialized group of cultural

producers looking to better their lot, which is one way that their movement could be understood, but rather as a group of cultural workers claiming their rights as subjects of the Greek state. Even among an unsympathetic crowd, this image of them as citizens addressing the state ultimately trumped any other perceptions.

What is foregrounded in this identification of FOG as a “citizen’s movement” is the filmmakers’ position as *national* subjects, and in this sense, their boycott offers a counterpoint to Thomas Elsaesser’s characterisation of film festivals as “post-national” phenomena, i.e. “another way of transcending the national for European films” (Elsaesser 2005:83) as they address foreign publics, circulate in foreign markets and become transnational cultural products. While film festivals may have had their beginnings in the organizational logic of nations, he writes, the nation now exists in film festivals only as a “second-order concept” (Elsaesser 2005:82) - a discursive construct, a strategic rhetoric, or a self-conscious category. In an article on film festival programming, Liz Czach suggests that even this is no longer the case, as the relevance of the very category of national cinema is now being called into question:

Its future in an era dominated by so-called post-nationalism seems uncertain. When co-productions and co-ventures as funding models are gaining popularity, the ability to easily define and delineate a national cinema becomes increasingly more difficult (Czach 2004:86-7).

For Czach, the category of the national in the context of film festivals is becoming less relevant in a world characterized more and more by transnational processes and products. In the case of the FOG boycott, however, we can see how the category of the national is just as relevant as ever. As the filmmakers insisted, they chose the festival as the site of their protest because it was the one public arena in which their actions would be most visible and effective. What is important to note here is that their protest was effective precisely because of their national

identification, as Greek filmmakers. As a small group of professionals working in a subsidized industry, they had neither the political nor economic clout to affect change; however, what they did have was their visibility as Greek filmmakers, an important asset during a year in which the state-sponsored festival was eager to present its fiftieth anniversary edition as a celebration of Greek cinema, new and old. By refusing to participate in the festival, the filmmakers were activating their national identification, putting it to use in negotiating their relationship to the state. In addition, it is important to remember that the ultimate goal of the protest was to affect real change in national film policy; while the filmmakers were using the rhetoric of citizens' rights, they were doing so in order to actually engage the state, to address and make demands of their government, and to change the conditions under which they, as citizens of the Greek state, produce and exhibit films. In this sense, the nation is not simply a "second-order concept" - to be a Greek filmmaker, working in Greece, means to be subject to a very real complex of conditions, laws, and policies that regulate all aspects of filmmaking - from fundraising, permits and production to distribution and exhibition. As Janet Harbord argues, the discourse of the "post-national" elides some of the ways in which cinema and nation are still closely connected, not just discursively or symbolically, but structurally and materially - through the work of national film centers and institutions; through the film industry's contributions to the national economy; through tax exemptions, subsidies, and other government measures and regulations (Harbord 2002:73). For the protesters, it is precisely this complex and their relationship to it that is at stake in their boycott, and it is in this way that we see the nation still very present in the Thessaloniki festival.



But the resistance with which the FOG filmmakers were met during the open discussion in Thessaloniki indicates that this sympathetic perception of their protest as a national “citizens’ movement” was not uncontested. Rather, a number of different scales - local, national, European - were being activated and put to use, both in the boycott and in the reactions it provoked. Interestingly, public reaction in Thessaloniki to the protesting filmmakers focused on the local rather than the national. A dominant opinion in local press and in conversations with festival-goers was that the FOG filmmakers were undermining Thessaloniki and its institutions, and all of their actions were seen in this light; the boycott was seen as an attempt to sabotage one of the city’s most important cultural institutions on the occasion of its jubilee, and the plans for a Film Academy in Athens were seen as an attempt to take from Thessaloniki its traditional (and mostly symbolic) status as the film capital of Greece. In particular, critics of FOG pointed to the filmmakers’ insistence that the Thessaloniki festival and its Greek program no longer serve as the clearinghouse for new Greek films and that the State Film Awards be dismantled entirely and replaced with national Film Academy awards given out in a ceremony in Athens. In the open discussion on film education reform, many of the criticisms of FOG’s positions were based on the perception that the local film department and the festival’s educational initiatives were being overlooked, snubbed or even threatened. While there was some sympathy for the FOG filmmakers, as citizens negotiating with the state, the predominant view of the boycott was that it was the work of a group of Athenian filmmakers who were uninterested in Thessaloniki, its public, and its filmmaking community and whose actions were a threat to the city of Thessaloniki. And while in public, FOG filmmakers never spoke ill of the Thessaloniki public, always choosing to present their movement as nationally relevant, in private conversations, they

expressed frustration with the Thessaloniki filmmakers and public, whom they considered to be provincial and narrow-minded. These tensions came to a head during the FOG screenings in Thessaloniki when, on the fourth day of screenings, an open discussion entitled “Thessaloniki and Greek Cinema” culminated in a row between representatives of FOG and local Thessaloniki filmmakers.

In presenting their case to the public, the FOG filmmakers identified themselves as citizens and cast the stakes of their protest as national, while the Thessaloniki public responded by insisting on the local: on their own local identity as a public, on the specific identity of the protesting filmmakers as Athenians, and on the festival itself as a local institution. However, upon closer inspection, we see that these categories of local and national are mutually implicated. For example, filmmakers and the cinema public in Thessaloniki saw the FOG filmmakers and their boycott as a threat to their locality precisely because they felt that something very important was being taken away from them—namely, national status. When faced with the possibility of the State Film Awards and the official Greek program being taken away from Thessaloniki, they responded furiously; not content with the prestige and glamour of the international festival, they made it clear that there was a great deal at stake in being identified as a nationally significant place. As the site of the Greek film festival and the Greek State Awards, the city of Thessaloniki was a place with national dimensions, with national presence, for at least ten days of the year - it was a place that was defined, understood, and experienced as a national one. The possibility of that being taken away was seen as a definitive threat.

Similarly, the FOG filmmakers’ insistence on the national was itself not unproblematic. Because the group started unofficially, growing primarily through word of mouth between

friends, the majority of its membership did indeed consist of filmmakers based in Athens, and relatively little effort was made to reach out to filmmakers outside of this group or in other parts of the country. Thus, FOG cannot truly be said to be representative of the national filmmaking community. In addition, their goal to bring the national film awards to the capital city of Athens, a seemingly logical move, hides a less obvious but equally powerful insistence on the local: another kind of “provincialism” which lies at the heart of Greece’s perpetual problem of centralization. In this case, it is the particular locality of Athens, always defined as national and central, that we see at play.

Finally, all of the filmmakers’ actions unfolded within a larger European and international context. For example, the group’s claims had more traction precisely because of some of its members’ successes abroad that year; had films like *Dogtooth*, *Strella* and *Plato’s Academy* not garnered international attention and prizes at festivals like Cannes, Locarno and the Berlinale, then the FOG filmmakers would have had much less leverage in threatening to keep their films from the Thessaloniki festival, and their boycott would have received much less attention domestically. The international context was also an important factor for some of the protesting filmmakers in terms of the stakes of the boycott, as Marinakis explained to me:

[The protest] wasn’t just a condemnation. It was an action, with real costs. For some of the others, the stakes weren’t so high; their films had already premiered at other big festivals. But for me, this was my first film, and it hadn’t been chosen for any other festivals. This was going to its premiere at an international film festival, with foreign distributors. So [our boycott] has cost me.

For the many FOG members who were in a similar situation, their decision to boycott the festival as a means of pursuing changes within their country meant that they were sacrificing the opportunity to promote their films outside of it. And most interestingly, in making their claims,

the protesting filmmakers—many of whom had studied and/or worked abroad—justified their demands by pointing to the vast disparity between the conditions of film production in Greece and the resources and state support available to filmmakers in other European countries. Among the many texts that circulated among FOG members, some of the most discussed and most often referenced were documents outlining the amounts and structures of public funding for film production, distribution and exhibition in France, Germany, Denmark, and the UK. In this sense, the protesters attempted to engage the state as European citizens, demanding rights and privileges comparable to those enjoyed by filmmakers elsewhere in Europe. Thus, in the filmmakers' boycott, as well as in local reactions to it, we see the notion of citizenship being re-imagined and utilized on a number of different scales, including the local, the national and the transnational.

### ***The Patron-State***

Although FOG defined itself primarily as a “citizens’ movement,” in opposition to a dysfunctional state, there were many ways in which the distinction between the group and the state, in its various representatives and agencies, was blurred. On the most obvious level, there were numerous FOG members who were themselves employees or representatives of state agencies or state-supported organizations. For example, one of the founding members of the movement, Angelos Frantzis, was also the artistic director of the 2009 Thessaloniki festival’s opening and closing ceremonies, as well as of the *Street Cinema* program. At the same time that he was boycotting the festival by keeping his new film from playing in that year’s Greek program, he was also busy preparing for the festival’s fiftieth-anniversary celebrations, and of

course, as an employee of the festival with a relatively high position, he was in attendance for the 2009 edition. Lucia Rikaki, another active and enthusiastic member of the FOG movement, was also the long-time head co-ordinator of the Balkan Fund program, and as such she also attended the festival. Marcos Holevas, who ended up taking on somewhat of a leadership position among the protesting filmmakers, was also head of the Greek Film Commission, another state agency.

On another level, the group's relationship to the Greek Film Center (GFC) was also a point of ambiguity. The GFC is the main state agency to which Greek directors and producers can apply for public funding. At the end of the Opening Nights debate on Greek cinema, FOG members unequivocally expressed their support for Giorgos Papalios, the president of the GFC; Papalios, who started his career in the early 1970s as a producer for some of Theo Angelopoulos' first films, is a well-respected figure in the Greek film world, and the FOG filmmakers felt that he was their ally because of the increased support that younger directors and producers had received primarily through his work at the Film Center. As Kafetzopoulos explained to me, there had for a long time been a sense that public funding for film production had been granted not according to merit but according to seniority, and many FOG members felt that Papalios was actively fighting that system by making sure that younger filmmakers were granted production funds. In doing so, Papalios was at odds with many of the film industry unions, which placed a high value on seniority; according to FOG, however, these unions had grown over the years into a stagnant holding pen for film professionals who were no longer actively making films, and therefore represented a drain on state funds.<sup>44</sup> In one of their statements at the end of the Opening Nights debate, FOG directors denounced the Greek Directors' Guild, from which they withdrew their

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<sup>44</sup> In the years 2005-2009, over €1.25 million in state funds were given to support film industry unions (Eleftherotypia 2010).

membership, in solidarity with Papalios. However, despite their support for Papalios, many of the FOG filmmakers had complaints about the Greek Film Center itself, primarily because they felt that it did not devote enough of its annual budget to supporting film production, and also because many who had been selected to receive state funds were still waiting to receive the money, some for several years. Their frustration with the Center became evident at one of their meetings, in early March 2010, where those present were asked to say if they were owed money by the Center and, if so, how much. As directors and producers around the room started to detail how much they were owed and how long they had been waiting, one of the filmmakers exclaimed in frustration, “Everyone has been saying over the past few years that these directors are the ‘children’ of the Greek Film Center. Well, maybe the kids don’t have a father anymore!”

At this meeting, it was decided that the group needed to stage another public event, a dramatic intervention to keep the movement in the public eye. The filmmakers decided on a symbolic occupation of a state agency building that would also double as a press conference, where they would reiterate their demands for a new film law. Everyone agreed that the intervention should take place either in the main building of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism or in the Film Center building, for symbolic reasons, as each represented a space of the state. The Ministry was quickly ruled out because it was tucked away in a little-trafficked side street, and the invisibility of the intervention would render it useless, while the Film Center occupied a building along a pedestrian plaza one block down from the new Acropolis museum, a much better location for a public intervention. At this point, however, the filmmakers’ ambiguous relationship to the Greek Film Center proved problematic. Some objected to occupying the Film Center building, since their main target was the Ministry of Culture, not the Center itself. Others

argued that an occupation of the Film Center would be pointless anyway. One producer asserted that it would be ridiculous to stage an occupation of an organization that is not only sympathetic to their movement, but that would look forward to their intervention and even welcome them; another director agreed, saying that because they are already identified with Papalios, and because they would be welcomed by the Film Center staff, their intervention would face no resistance and the very meaning of “occupation” would be negated. Yet others argued that the GFC should in fact be the target of the action, and that the FOG movement should make an effort to distance itself from the Center from now on. These deliberations point to the ambiguous relationship between the FOG filmmakers, who were trying to position themselves publicly in opposition to the state, and the state agency with which they shared a close but conflicted connection. In the end, the group decided to go ahead with the symbolic occupation-cum-press conference of the Film Center two weeks later. As they had guessed, they were welcomed warmly by the GFC staff, who had learned of their action ahead of time and had even cleared space, rearranging furniture and opening up dividers between conference rooms in order to better accommodate the “occupiers.” As GFC staff members met the crowd with greetings of “Come on in!”, “Welcome!” and “Bravo!”, I sensed that the politicized intention of the filmmakers was neutralized, and the rest of the intervention unfolded as though it were a regular FOG press conference, ironically hosted by a state agency.

This conflicted relationship between the protesting filmmakers and the Greek Film Center - simultaneously a representative of the negligent patron-state and an ally or “father” - is a symptom of a deeper ambiguity, in the FOG filmmakers’ relationship to the state, which underlies the movement. In my conversations with people on all sides of the FOG debate - a

word that often came up in describing Greek cinema was *kratikodhietos*, which in its meaning and connotations reveals a great deal about this ambiguous relationship. In its literal translation, the term *kratikodhietos* - a combination of the two words *kratos*, meaning “the state,” and *dhieta*, meaning “diet” - means “fed by the state,” and it is used, often disparagingly, to describe any entity that relies primarily on state funding for its continued existence. In Greece, most areas of public culture can be characterized as *kratikodhietos*, as sales and ticket revenue are often not enough to support sustained activity, not to mention large cultural institutions. The term, when used to describe particular works - plays, films, etc. - often carries with it negative connotations about the quality of the work. For example, during a meeting at the Greek Film Center, then vice-president of the Center Dimitris Sofianopoulos explained to me that, in his opinion, Greek cinema was not state-supported because it was commercially unviable, but rather the opposite - it was commercially unviable because it was *kratikodhietos*:

Basically, filmmakers get money from the state with no strings attached. You don't have to pay it back, and you don't have to answer to anyone, and so you have directors running off with the money and making movies that don't take anyone into account, not the funders and not the audience.

For him, the solution was not to stop giving public funding for film production, but rather to make productions more accountable for the funds that they do receive, and to give the Center more control in determining the quality of films produced. FOG filmmakers had differing opinions on independent Greek cinema's “state-diet.” One basic argument was that cinema *should* be fully supported by the state, rather than relying on private investors or commercial success, because only when cinema is free of all commercial obligations can it achieve artistic freedom of expression. In a strange twist, the state - in Greece, usually associated with



bureaucracy, sluggishness and lack of creativity - comes to be associated with innovation, artistic freedom and experimentation, while the free market is seen as constraining and limiting.

Some FOG filmmakers argued that, despite the usual characterizations, Greek cinema was not in fact *kratikhietos*, precisely because so little public funding was actually available or, when promised, actually received; in other words, according to these filmmakers, the “state-diet” was actually a “starvation diet.” And yet others felt that, if the existing film laws were actually implemented, Greek cinema would not be *kratikhietos* at all, but rather *aftotrofhotoumenos*, “self-fed” or self-supporting. This argument was detailed in an early public statement made by FOG and disseminated primarily online, in which they claim:

Every year, the Greek state receives about €10 million in income from the special tax on movie tickets. Note: this money does not come out of the larger state budget, but rather is a direct tax on those who go to the movies. This tax was created (based on the French law) explicitly and exclusively IN ORDER TO FUND GREEK CINEMA. [...] Last year, Greek films sold 2.5 million tickets, which represents 20 percent of all movie tickets sold in the country, and Greek cinema created jobs for a large number of workers in all areas of film production and distribution. In other words, these films created a work economy that surpasses €25 million. [...] In addition, from these jobs, the state collects at least €5 million a year in income tax.<sup>45</sup>

The statement goes on to claim that only a small percentage of this tax income generated by the film industry actually gets re-invested into film production through the Greek Film Center’s annual budget, while the rest goes to support either peripheral or unrelated activities. The filmmakers maintain that, if the state were to implement its own laws, much more of this tax income would be returned directly to producers to support film production; in the current situation, however, with the film industry generating more money in tax revenue than it receives back through state funding, the industry is “making a profit for the state and contributing to its

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<sup>45</sup> <http://feleki.wordpress.com/2009/06/30/κινηματογραφιστές-στην-ομίληση>

annual budget!” Following this logic, Marcos Holevas once even went so far to as to declare, “The state is robbing us!”

Whether or not the filmmakers were correct in their interpretation of the law, what is most significant about this statement is the way in which it articulates the relationship between filmmakers and the state. By focusing on the film industry itself as the source of public funding, through the tax revenue that it generates, the filmmakers position themselves, rather than the state, at the head of this funding stream. Thus reversing the usual relationship implied by the term *kratikodhietos*, FOG portrays the film industry as patronizing the state. Pushing this interpretation further, I would argue that this portrayal of the relationship between the film industry and the state even blurs the distinction between the two, as the filmmakers seem to be implying that state or public money is, in fact, rightfully “their money.” In the overlapping of two of their basic claims - that the state should support the film industry, and that it should do so through the funds that the film industry itself provides the state - we also see an overlapping of the state and the filmmakers. In the argument that state funding belongs to the public because it comes from the public, two senses of the term “public” converge - “public” as in *the* public, and “public” as in “of the state.” Although the FOG movement defined itself in opposition to the state, underlying the movement is a close relationship, and even identification, with the state.

This contradictory stance vis-à-vis the state was expressed in the the group’s demands for and reactions to the new film law. On the one hand, the FOG filmmakers wanted the state to have a smaller presence, which was made clear in their demand for the dissolution of the State Film Awards, as well as their insistence on a tax incentive for private investors, the only legal provision for the funding of film production that would not involve state money in any way.

Indeed, when the new law was proposed in the fall of 2010, and passed in December of the same year, it was praised by the FOG filmmakers as an exciting new film policy that fostered development in the industry by cutting down on bureaucracy and outdated state structures. The law did away with the state film awards, established an independent Film Academy, instated the tax incentive for private investors, and also drastically reduced bureaucratic bulk: shrinking the size of hiring committees, selection committees and boards of directors for the various state film agencies and organizations, including the Greek Film Center and the Thessaloniki Festival; doing away entirely with the large general assemblies that used to constitute an important part of these organizations' administrative structures; streamlining hiring and selection processes. However, a close look at the new law reveals that the authority of the state is as strong and wide-reaching as ever. Cutting down on bureaucracy actually means that processes which would have normally gone through large general assemblies, committees, or boards are now determined quickly by the Minister of Culture and Tourism, including the appointment of directors and new board members; in this way, power is concentrated in the hands of government officials. In addition, the new private investment tax incentives are legislated in such a way as to route all such investments through the state: the law stipulates that all private funds for a film must first be registered with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, deposited into an account at the Greek Film Center, and then dispersed through the GFC to the producers of the film, which must also be registered with the Ministry. Within a system designed to make the film industry more independent from the state, the state continues to play a central role. On top of all of these contradictions and tensions between public and private, there is the larger irony of the FOG

filmmakers, so critical of the state, turning back to the state and demanding more legislation. As cultural producers, they are unable to think themselves outside of the state.

### *Afterword: Collectivity*

In the summer of 2012, I ran into Vardis Marinakis and Angelos Frantzis, two of the founding members of FOG, at a screening. Happy to see each other after nearly two years, we caught up on what had been happening in our lives in that time. It had been a year and a half since Parliament had passed the new film law, and I asked them if things were any better now. Was it getting easier to fund projects? No, they both responded, with an air of resignation. The new law had come right on the heels of the first EU-ECB-IMF bailout, and since then there had been further bailouts, a government resignation, a caretaker government, and an ever-worsening economy, all of which made the implementation of the new law nearly impossible. Now with the recent announcement that the Ministry of Culture itself would be subsumed within a consolidated Ministry of Education, Religion, Culture and Sports, the filmmakers were sure that all public funding for film production would freeze. But were they still somehow finding a way to make films? To this question, they responded with a bit more optimism. Yes, they were making films. Not that there was any funding available, private or public; rather, they were able to continue making films by working collectively - working on each others' films for free, lending each other equipment.

Listening to Frantzis and Marinakis, I was reminded of something I had heard in the early fall of 2009, not long after I had started spending time with and getting to know some of the FOG filmmakers. One of them, a Greek-American documentary producer and director who was

particularly active in the group, explained to me that there had been little sense of community among Greek independent filmmakers before the FOG movement. She attributed this sense of isolation and individualism to the general lack of funding for film production in Greece, and particularly to the meager amounts of public funding made available by the state, which bred a fierce sense of competition and guardedness among filmmakers all vying for a piece of a rather small pie, especially since private funding was even harder to secure. Coming from New York, where she had enjoyed working collaboratively within a dynamic documentary community, she had been especially struck by this lack of cohesion. Regardless of her reservations about how successful the FOG movement could eventually be, she was at least happy to see the filmmakers coming together over common interests.

Many of the FOG members with whom I spoke expressed similar sentiments. Lucia Rikaki told me that the most exhilarating aspect of the movement was that, for the first time, she felt she was getting to know her colleagues, and through her involvement in the group, she was even starting to rebuild relationships with people from whom she had been estranged for many years. She told me about an email group they had begun in June 2009, which had become integral to the group's internal communication; in the first five months alone, over five thousand email messages had circulated in the group, and she said that, through this constant chatter online - sharing information, opinions, objections; making plans, arranging meeting times and places; intense fighting followed by reconciliations, and more fighting - she felt connected to the other 250+ members of the group all day long. This point was illustrated by her constant checking of her iPhone as we sat over coffee, reading me some of the messages that were coming through in real time, replying to others; it was clear that many of the messages were part of long threads,

with filmmakers responding to each other and engaging in a dynamic discussions that continued over days, and even weeks. The messages covered a wide range of topics: So-and-so has requested to become a member of FOG - should we allow him to join, even though he decided to show his film at the festival? If the new Film Academy gives prizes for documentaries, then how many prizes should be given and in which categories? How should the group respond to the latest public statements made by a few of the political parties in support of the Greek Directors' Guild? FOG is losing some of its momentum in the press - how can the group capitalize on the upcoming Thessaloniki Documentary Festival to regain public attention? Their discussions were never conflict-free - the filmmakers bickered, squabbled, argued and fought, with some discussions ending in members leaving the group, some returning and others not. This mode of interaction also characterized the FOG meetings that I observed in person, which were usually attended by a core group of around fifty members. Taking place in different spaces throughout Athens - offices, theatres, screening rooms, made available by FOG members or sympathisers - these meetings were full of disagreements, misunderstandings and heated debate, inevitable among a group of over two hundred people, coming from a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences. Indeed, a frequent topic of discussion in these meetings, as well as online in email threads, was the question of how to deal with such conflict in order to come to collective decisions on how to act publicly, as a movement. Antonis Kafetzopoulos reflected on the dynamic within the group:

The very positive thing about all this is that, for the first time, people among us who had no contact, no relationship whatsoever, met. And we were very suspicious of each other, because the funding system was always very divisive [...] which we got over through discussion and getting to know each other. I can't say that we're all the same, that we all think the same thing. There are differences and also suspicions between the directors and the producers, and different points of view, but there remains something very interesting -

even over the last few emails, a fight has exploded in the FOG - because they're all at each others' throats, but in the end we end up somewhere without having to vote. At some point, after the fight, the minority understands that the majority wants something else, and we proceed. It's unbelievable. This doesn't happen elsewhere in Greece. It's tremendously rare. And it remains still, after months.

Many of the FOG members with whom I spoke shared Kafetzopoulos' appreciation of this collective dynamic, this sense of community. While the filmmakers initially came together to pursue common interests in the form of a new law, in the process of fighting for that law, they ended up building a collectivity, which eventually became a common interest in and of itself. As the update from Marinakis and Frantzis attests, after their hard-fought new law had been defeated by political and economic instability, what remained was their collectivity.

## CONCLUSION

### *Why Public Culture?*

After the center-left PASOK victory in the 2009 emergency national elections, amid the chaotic shuffling of government positions and speculation over who would be chosen for prime cabinet spots, it was announced that the Ministry for Touristic Development would be merged with the Ministry of Culture, to form the new Ministry of Culture and Tourism. At a time when the dire condition of many state-sponsored cultural institutions and initiatives had led to heightened public criticism concerning the state's handling of cultural matters, this coupling of "culture" (*politismos*) and "tourism" triggered a fresh round of commentary and reflection. In an op-ed piece published in *Kathimerini* immediately following the elections, Antonis Karkagiannis (2009a) wonders, "Really, what is the deeper relationship between Culture and Tourism that would drive prime minister George Papandreou to consolidate the two?" Arguing that "Culture" - which he identifies as "dance, music, sculpture, painting, architecture, theater, poetry [...] and cinema" - serves to "uplift us" and "make us better [people]," and that "Tourism" is a purely commercial endeavor, Karkagiannis contends that the decision to bring the two together under the same Ministry was misguided, a consequence of the fact that "we're always trying to find that [culture] has some 'practical purpose,' some usefulness so that we might be able to understand, finally, what is culture (*politismos*) and what is the job of the Ministry of Culture."



He concludes by posing the question, “What indeed is the work of the Ministry of Culture [...] which is considered (from every point of view but especially the economic) the unwanted stepchild of every government?”

Karkagiannis’ concluding question was a variation on a more general question circulating in public discourse at that time, and that has since continued to be a point of contention: At a time when the state is faced with what is, in effect, bankruptcy, both economic and political, why do we need state support for public culture? When there are so many basic social needs that are not being adequately met - health care, employment, education, social security - why should the state be concerned with public culture? At the Thessaloniki Film Festival, the pressure of this question could be felt as soon as the fiftieth anniversary edition came to a close. As funding from the Ministry of Culture was slashed dramatically, the new festival director and his staff embraced and publicly projected a new attitude of austerity and thrift, as well as a marked sensitivity to the economic crisis and its effects; the opening ceremony of the 2010 festival was pointedly parsimonious, little more than a few short speeches, and the program of screenings, exhibitions, parties and other events was significantly leaner than in previous years. Among those in the film world, there is a general feeling of resignation. Explaining to me why the Balkan Fund program was eliminated after the 2010 edition, one of the program’s former coordinators asked, “How could we justify spending so much money on a script competition, when the situation out there is so bad?”<sup>46</sup> And as I saw with Frantzis and Marinakis when I ran into them in 2012, the worsening economic crisis had caused even the FOG filmmakers, whose movement had started

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<sup>46</sup> In 2009, the total cost of the Balkan Fund program was €120,000 (Thessaloniki International Film Festival 2010).

on the basic premise that the state should fully support cultural production, to simply accept that the state was unable to do so.

There are a number of answers frequently given in response to the question of why the state should be concerned with public culture. In the second in his series of op-ed pieces, entitled “The Absolute Value of Culture,” Karkagiannis offers one common response. Not unproblematically taking the example of “the Antiquities” (*i Arkheotites*) as the cultural field *par excellence* in which the state has been heavily involved, he argues:

[M]any maintain that the Antiquities are in some way the conclusive DNA of our “race”, which traverses and cuts through our over three thousand year old persistent and permanent presence in this corner of Europe. [...] One thing is certain: if, along with the Antiquities, we take into account the Byzantine and more modern relics, then we have a people who, despite invasions and admixtures, remains clinging to the same piece of rock for centuries, next to the sea, speaking basically the same language and opening its soul to the world in the same way. As many doubts have been expressed concerning the organic continuity of those periods of historical presence, the identification of a people in space and time with its Culture suffices as the starting point for self-knowledge and constitutes that people’s particular presence in the modern world. The question is not if we are the blood-heirs [of the past civilization], but rather if, in the modern world, we are its continuers, in a way that is creative. The management of Culture as the management of education is both understandable and worthy of special state concern, and only as such does it find its “useful purpose.” (Karkagiannis 2009b)

Karkagiannis’ understanding of the “Antiquities” and their significance is a prime example of what Eleana Yalouri describes as the experience of archaeological sites as *lieux de mémoire*; as Nora writes, these sites attempt to reconstruct - or fabricate - “an ancient bond of identity [...] experienced as self-evident” (Nora 1989:8). Karkagiannis’ justification for state-supported “Culture” is based on profoundly essentialist and even biological notions of collective cultural identity and historical continuity; in his opinion, this vaunted cultural heritage is what defines the Greek “people” and their place in the world today, and for this reason the state is obligated to support, preserve and protect this “Culture.” His deeply conservative stance is representative of a

nationalist cultural essentialism in Greece that has persisted since before Greek independence and continues today, serving different political interests and social needs at different historical moments. Despite having been extensively deconstructed by anthropologists and cultural historians, this essentialist ideology is still offered up by many people today - sometimes explicitly, sometimes as an underlying assumption - as the justification for state support of public culture.

A related line of reasoning in support of state-sponsored public culture is what I might call “cultural capitalism.”<sup>47</sup> With the term, I am referring to the way in which forms of public culture are used primarily in order to accrue cultural and symbolic capital, which can eventually be translated into economic or political profit in an transnational cultural economy. It is based on Bourdieu’s theory of fields of cultural production, in which these cultural fields are seen as the sites of struggle over symbolic capital. What is most interesting about Bourdieu’s formulation is the way in which even those fields of cultural production that are marked as most “autonomous” - i.e. relatively independent from the values and priorities ruling the economic and political fields, for example the field of poetry - are still articulated in economic, quantitative terms and in terms of accrual. This is evident in the way Bourdieu writes about the field of “pure art.” Although he describes it as a field founded on “the obligatory recognition of the values of disinterestedness and on the denegation of the ‘economy’ (of the ‘commercial’) and of ‘economic’ profit” (Bourdieu 1996:142), he still describes it as an economy - albeit an “anti-‘economic’” one - that “is oriented to the accumulation of symbolic capital, a kind of

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<sup>47</sup> The sense in which I use this term is somewhat different from how it is used by Slavoj Žižek, or how it might be used by Mark Rectanus (2002), both of whom are concerned specifically with the way in which corporations are increasingly involved in philanthropic and cultural activities, ultimately for the usual purposes of economic profit. It is also different from the idea of the culture industry as articulated by members of the Frankfurt School, which centers on the cultural commodity as the product of industrial forms of organization, mechanical reproduction and distribution, again driven by the pure profit motive.

‘economic’ capital denied but recognized, and hence legitimate - a veritable credit, and capable of assuring, under certain conditions and in the long term, ‘economic’ profits” (Bourdieu 1996:142). For Bourdieu, any field of cultural production, regardless of how “autonomous” it might be, “continues to be affected by the laws of the field [of power] which encompasses it, those of economic and political profit” (Bourdieu 1993:39). In this system of “cultural capitalism,” all forms of public culture and cultural activity are seen quantitatively, in terms of how much capital they can generate, and are used strategically to maximize profit, whether this profit be symbolic, economic, or political.

In Greece, the politically and economically expedient use of notions of ancient and classical cultural heritage has long been a strategic practice, utilized by individuals, groups, organizations and the state.<sup>48</sup> In the early 1980s, however, as Greece was shaking off the shadows of the military dictatorship and beginning in earnest its bid for entry into the European Community, the strategic use of public culture by the state started to take on a new tone, exemplified by the slogan embraced by Melina Mercouri as early as her first year as Minister of Culture in 1981: “Culture (*politismos*) is the heavy industry of Greece” (Yalouri 2001:47). While the most famous of Mercouri’s many initiatives as Minister of Culture was her campaign for the return of the Parthenon, or “Elgin,” marbles and the building of a new Acropolis Museum, for the purposes of this dissertation I find more interesting and revealing her work within the European Union to establish the program that is today known as “The European Capital of Culture.” Each year, the EU designates two European cities to serve as “Capitals of Culture,” receiving a significant amount of EU funding to organize a year-long program of cultural events and

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<sup>48</sup> See Herzfeld 1986, 1987, 1991; Lowenthal 1988a, 1988b.

initiatives, as well as to create or support existing cultural institutions and infrastructure within the city. Initially conceived by Mercuri as the “European City of Culture” program in 1983, and inaugurated in 1985 with Athens as the very first City of Culture, the program’s stated primary goals are rather lofty: “to highlight the richness and diversity of European culture, celebrate the cultural ties that link Europeans together, [...] promote mutual understanding, foster a feeling of European citizenship.”<sup>49</sup> But the program’s more practical purposes, widely acknowledged as the real reason for its continued existence and success, are economic: urban regeneration, development and promotion of tourism, raising cities’ international visibility and profile. Over the years, the program has increasingly been seen as an economic boon for cities chosen to participate, resulting in fierce competition between cities to be selected as the next Capital of Culture, with elaborate campaigns started years in advance. The renaming of the program in 1999, from “European City of Culture” to “European Capital of Culture,” can be seen as reflecting this emphasis on the economic.<sup>50</sup>

In this sense, the Capital of Culture program is part of a larger cultural-economic shift, a cultural sector that Regan Rhyne describes as “a new breed of cultural industries that are shaped by global economic shifts in the transnational circulation of cultural products [...] a new economy of public/private subsidies for the arts toward the production of post-Cold War global citizens” (Rhyne 2009:16). In the “cultural capitalism” of this late twentieth and early twenty-first century economy of creative industries, state policies aim at using forms of public culture and cultural production in order to accrue symbolic, political and economic capital, as much

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<sup>49</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/doc413\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/doc413_en.htm)

<sup>50</sup> For more on cultural capitals, see Johnson 2009, Patel 2013.

within the country as internationally.<sup>51</sup> Thessaloniki's tenure as Capital of Culture in 1997 was similarly conceived as an opportunity for the city, and by extension the country, to better its position in this European cultural economy. The international film festival circuit - theorized by Elsaesser, Stringer, de Valck and other festival scholars - plays an increasingly important role in this economy, and the Thessaloniki film festival was a central element in the city's overall cultural program, especially after its strategic transformation in 1992 to resemble more closely the large international film festivals in western Europe. In 1997, funds from the European Capital of Culture program were used to renovate the Olympion building, which was then gifted to the festival organization, and also to construct the screening spaces and other facilities in warehouses on the old port. Since then, the festival has continued to distinguish itself in the international festival circuit, and until 2010, the state steadily increased its support for this institution of public culture that was considered to be such an important link to the larger European and even global cultural economy. In this sense, the question "Why public culture?" can be answered in largely cultural-capitalist terms.

### *Public Culture as Spaces of Publicness*

Although these two interrelated justifications - one essentialist, the other economic - are the most commonly given for state support of public culture in Greece, the case of the Thessaloniki film festival points us to another. In examining the history of the festival, as well as how that history is remembered and put to use today, I have shown how the festival has served in the past as a space of a particular kind of public interaction, or way of being public. Beginning from its

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<sup>51</sup> For more on state cultural policy and its relation to the market, see McGuigan 1996.

inception, but particularly in the 1970s and early 1980s, the festival served as a space for the practice of a public criticality: protest, opposition, resistance, often political in nature. This kind of public sphere is very different from the classic model of the liberal-bourgeois public sphere, organized on the principle of rational critical discourse, with its emphasis on “*politesse* and consistency over unruliness and difference” (Miller 1993:xi). The kind of publicness practiced in the space of the festival during the 1970s and 1980s was more akin to public life as imagined by Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, in their book *The Public Sphere and Experience*. According to Miriam Hansen, the dimensions of public interaction that Negt and Kluge stressed in their reconceptualization of the public were “openness, inclusiveness, multiplicity, heterogeneity, unpredictability, conflict, contradiction, difference” (Hansen 1993:189):

While Habermas’s notion of public life is predicated on formal conditions of communication (free association, equal participation, deliberation, polite argument), Negt and Kluge emphasize questions of constituency, concrete needs, interests, conflicts, protest and power. [...] The issue for Negt and Kluge is [...] whether and to what extent experience is dis/organized from “above” - by the exclusionary standards of high culture or in the interest of property - or from ‘below,’ by the experiencing subjects themselves, on the basis of their context of living. The utopia of such a self-determined public sphere, which is ultimately a radical form of democracy, involves not just the empowerment of constituencies hitherto excluded from the space of public opinion, but also a different principle of organization, a difference concept of public life. As a “counterconcept” to both bourgeois and industrial-commercial variants of publicity Negt and Kluge develop the notion of a ‘proletarian’ public sphere. (Hansen 1993:201-202)

While the usefulness of the label “proletarian,” with its ideological baggage, is questionable, the notion of a “different concept of public life,” one that not only allows for but is constituted through conflict and critical engagement, would have been especially appealing at a time in Greece when people were becoming more and more frustrated with the cultural policies of the state, as well as with the government’s increasing irresponsiveness to public opinion, evidenced

by the parliamentary approval of deeply unpopular austerity measures dictated by the “troika” of Greece’s international lenders (the EU, the European Central Bank, and the IMF). In contrast to the “bourgeois” model of public life, which glosses over the disruptive potential of critical action, and the “industrial-commercial” model, which offers little room for the possibility of political agency, Negt and Kluge’s “proletarian” public sphere allows for practices of opposition and resistance. In 2009, as protest and civil unrest were on the rise in Greece, it was this more contentious form of being public that was being remembered and valued, particularly during the book launch for the festival’s fiftieth-anniversary commemorative publication.

It was also this particular form of publicness that the FOG filmmakers were attempting to enact in their movement, and attempting to revive within the space of the festival through their demands that the fiftieth-anniversary edition be transformed from a celebration into a protest. It was generally felt that the festival, as a space of publicness, had over the years lost the sense of political engagement and criticality it once had. As the historian Antonis Liakos pointed out, with the internationalization of the festival in the early 1990s, it ceased to be a politicized arena and became more of a space in which Greeks could be exposed to global cultural trends. In the first chapter of this dissertation, I examined how the festival today is primarily concerned with staging and picturing publicness, and when the institution does attempt to enact publicness, it is the “civil,” politely critical public that is being evoked, rather than the politicized, “unruly” one. In trying to redefine the festival as once again a space of protest and opposition, the filmmakers’ movement drew attention to the institution’s history of conflict, as well as to the potential for institutions of public culture more generally to foster heterogeneity, contradiction, difference and resistance. In this sense, public culture demands state support not because it is a means of



shoring up, performing or protecting some essentialist notion of collective identity, nor because it is a means of accruing capital of various forms, but because it is an arena for *public life*, a space in which a vital and critical public sphere - characterized by conflict, disagreement, debate, contestation - can be put into practice. It is important to remember that this is not an idealized understanding of critical collectivity that excludes potentially problematic notions of national cultural identity or patrimony, or private economic interests. In the particular space of publicness imagined by this “different concept of public life,” such ideologies and agendas may be included, coming into contact, interacting, engaging, debating, clashing, and struggling with other beliefs, doctrines, interests and pursuits. However, none of these specific interests or agendas determines the space of the public itself; the organizing principle of this public is not economic profit, political expediency, cultural identity or heritage - all of which can be a part of what is debated, contested and pursued within this public space - but rather critical publicness itself.

The FOG movement was also an attempt to articulate and enact a different kind of cultural citizenship. As the festival became increasingly integrated into the European cultural-capitalist economy, in line with the state’s developing cultural policies, its function on local and national levels also changed, so that it constituted a space in which festival-goers could learn how to be citizen-consumers within that larger economy in which the state was so heavily invested - part of what Toby Miller calls “a training in equable citizenship” (Miller 1993:x). In this sense, the more politicized, contentious public sphere was replaced by a more “civil” one that better served the interests of that cultural economy by forging “a loyalty to market economics and parliamentary democracy, as well as a sustainable society through the formation of cultural citizens, docile but efficient participants in that economy-society mix” (Miller 1993:xii). This particular cultural

citizen is “the virtuous political participant who is taught how to scrutinize and improve his or her conduct through the work of cultural policy” (Miller 1993:xxi), and who is defined as much by her relationship to supranational (in this case, European) cultural policies as by her relationship to the nation-state (Miller 2001:4-5). In its re-politicization of this space of public culture, and in its use of the festival as an arena in which to address and engage critically with the state, the FOG filmmakers’ movement can be seen as attempting to enact a different form of citizenship: one based not on notions of shared cultural identity or heritage, nor on economic terms, but rather on the practice of critical collectivity. It is a citizenship formed in relation to the nation-state, but negotiated on a number of different scales - local, national, European. In this reformulation of citizenship, the state is not simply imagined as a patron or framework, providing the space and support for a public life that takes place separate from itself. Instead, the blurred boundaries between citizen and state underlying the FOG movement suggest that, in the form of public life envisioned by this oppositional practice, the state is itself experienced as part of this messy, conflicted, dynamic collectivity.

This recuperation of a critical public sphere, and the reclamation of a citizenship based on this particular form of publicness, takes on added meaning at a time when the Greek state is undergoing a painful and rapid transformation, from one of the staunchest social welfare states in Europe into a form which is still unclear. A process of neoliberalization that began in the 1990s but was never completely carried out is now being kicked into high gear, on terms dictated by Greece’s foreign lenders. In a country where the state - as dysfunctional, inefficient or untrustworthy as it was believed to be - has always provided a social safety net, the relationship between citizen and state is now drastically changing. As the country faces bankruptcy, nearly all

aspects of social life are now seen in economic terms - what the state can and cannot afford to provide, what citizens can and cannot afford to live without. Meanwhile, the gap between citizens and the state is growing, as decisions more responsive to the demands of foreign interests than to the needs of the public are made by unelected caretaker governments, or governments cobbled together through fragile political coalitions between parties, none of which can claim a clear mandate. In such a context, public culture is valuable and necessary because it allows us collectively to imagine, perform and enact other ways of being - of being citizens, of being collective, of being in relation to the state. Drawing on Hannah Arendt, who “sees both freedom and individuality in the world-making public activity of the polis” (Warner 2002:59), Michael Warner argues that practices of citizenship within an oppositional public constitute “active participation in collective world-making” (Warner 2002:57). Public culture, in providing a space for a critical public life - for the practice of a critical collectivity - gives us the opportunity to participate in the making of our own worlds.

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