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Squatting and spatial materialities of resistance in Athens at times of crisis

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Introduction

In March 2016, a demonstration different from any other in recent Greek history took place in the central Athenian neighbourhood of Exarcheia. The protest had about 1,000 participants, and at least a dozen of them were armed with pistols and machine guns. Towards the end of the march, masked demonstrators displayed their weaponry in front of a café that is allegedly the haunt of the local mafia. The demonstration was organized by the anarchist and anti-authoritarian squat K*VOX, which stands literally 20 meters away from the alleged mafia café on Exarcheia Square. The reason behind the protest was a knife attack against three members of the squat assembly by operatives of the organized crime networks in the neighbourhood.

The most recent milestone in the history of squatting in Athens was the December 2008 revolt. The revolt saw the long occupation of many public buildings and led to a proliferation of the practice of self-organization and its establishment in the Greek social imaginary. The social condition produced in the squatted buildings and social centres during that period supplied participants in the revolt with new ideas, the determination to pursue autonomous forms of self-organization, and novel forms of struggle including the occupation and transformation of the urban landscape in everyday life (Dalakoglou and Vradis 2011). Those practices were echoed even in the post-revolt era, during which many neighbourhoods in Athens and other cities of Greece developed assemblies and horizontal decision-making structures to discuss their issues outside of existing municipal institutions (Petropoulou 2010). These processes became much more intensive after the so-called Syntagma Square movement of 2011. The brutal repression of this movement (Leontidou 2012, Dalakoglou 2013b), which occurred within the context of the emergence of new anti-protest police units (Dalakoglou 2012, 2013a), the imposition of curfews and the outlawing of public demonstrations during visits by EU officials (Christopoulos 2013), led to a diffusion of antagonistic political activities in relatively new spheres of social action, creating new axes of political reference in the process.

Nevertheless, the repression of public protests on the central streets of the major Greek cities was not the only area where state authorities flexed their muscles during the crisis period. Since 2010, when Greece entered the ongoing phase of violent austerity and neoliberal reform, the squatting movement proliferated its activities and solidarity structures in a deliberate effort to circulate its antagonistic modes of social existence (Yfanet 2013). However, the state unleashed its own form of antagonism. This started in September 2012, when an operation of special police units evicted the DELTA squat in Thessaloniki and arrested the squatters (DELTA squat 2012). In December 2012, similar operations took place in Athens, where the police raided and evicted one of the oldest squats of the country, Villa Amalias. They also evicted the Skaramanga squat, which was established in 2009 and was politically connected to the revolt of December 2008. The anarchist steki in the Athens School of Economics was also evicted. The governmental discourse reproduced in the mainstream media at that time was dominated by the term ‘anomie’. The Minister of Public Order summarized the idea as follows: ‘we can’t say that we are seriously opposing terrorism, but on the other hand allow phenomena of anomie like the squats. They both originate from the same matrix: the matrix of anomy that grew over all those years . . .’ (Dendias 2013).

Inside a space of ‘anomie’

The ethnographic fieldwork for this chapter took place in what is perhaps the most active and most well-known squat that remained open after the wave of police attacks in 2012: K*Vox (the K stands for Katalipsi, or squat). It is located in the Exarcheia district, the ‘anomic’ neighbourhood in the centre of Athens that has always hosted various nuclei of radical political activity. Originally the K*Vox building was a multi-purpose entertainment space that functioned as a café-bar, a reading place and a space for live concerts. It is the property of the Greek state, to which the owner of that multi-purpose space was paying rent – until he went out of business. The material infrastructures themselves encouraged the squatters to produce more activities than just the café, which was their original plan. The main goal of the café would be to gather money for the defrayal of political trials. The squat’s large basement houses the social clinic run by ADYE,¹ as well as the room in which the assemblies take place. Moreover, because of its acoustics, the underground level usually hosts various talks, events and screenings arranged by the assembly and external groups. The ground floor hosts the *kafeneio*, while steps lead to a more elevated level where the library is located. The *kafeneio* works every day from noon to 11:30pm, except Saturday nights, when it goes on until later. The work in the *kafeneio* is done in shifts, two persons per shift, four people a day (a day is two shifts, one from opening time until 5:30 pm, and the other from 5:30pm until closing time). The people on shift are responsible for making coffees, drinks and pretty much anything

one could find in a commercial café. They are also responsible for cleaning the place and refilling the stock, while everything is done in a cooperative and self-managed way. In order for someone to take a shift, he or she does not have to fully agree with the ideological and political framework of Vox's assembly. People can work there insofar as they respect the principles of self-organization and, of course, are not members of the police or fascists. Except for the assembly of ADYE, the assembly of the library and of course the assembly of Vox, which are organic parts of the squat, the space is open to every political group that needs a space in which to conduct their assemblies. Various groups also use the squat as a space where they can store their brochures, communiques and posters and access them any time they want.

Spatial and political dilation and contraction

Natural scientists refer to 'dilation' as the phenomenon in which the bulk of a material expands, and to contraction as the opposite, namely when a material shrinks. This law of physics, drawn from the natural sciences, can be used metaphorically to describe the symbolic expansion of the space of the squat beyond its material boundaries, something that happens precisely because of its spatial materiality, as we will show. This process can result from the discourses of those involved on what K*Vox really is, as well as from the way the social centre itself interacts with the wider neighbourhood. At the same time, depending on the momentum and on particular conversations and practices, the space can shrink and what the squat is can be equated with the room in the basement and even more so with the table where the assembly of K*Vox takes place – and therefore with the assembly itself.

On Thursday 5 June 2014, the residents and collectivities of Exarcheia (K*Vox among them) called for a demonstration against the mafia and the drug dealers who in recent years have been preying on the neighbourhood in order to take advantage of its 'libertarianism' and anti-police sentiments. Organized drug dealing had been attracted to Exarcheia as a result of the neighbourhood's high concentration of youth from all over Athens – as a place of many non-mainstream bars, clubs and entertainment in general – together with a distorted sense of 'anarchy,' which sections of those youth understand as the advocacy of every form of clandestine activity. The demonstration thus aimed to show that the people in Exarcheia itself had become fed up with what their neighbourhood had become.

Two days before the demonstration, unknown persons had stopped outside Vox and opened fire at least five times with handguns at the front glass-door that constitutes the main entrance to the squat. The glass door was completely shattered. Luckily, nobody was inside the squat at that time, so no one was injured. The bullets were interpreted by the squatters as a 'message' sent by the organized crime networks, conveying that they are a serious and organized force in the neighbourhood, and that whoever opposes them would

be dealt with by the use of firearms. In other words, they wanted to terrorize the neighbourhood two days before the demonstration against them. The choice to shoot at K*Vox demonstrates in a reverse way the role of spatial materialities in the concentration, the congregation and therefore the visualization of ideological, political and social tendencies that claim the radical identity of the neighbourhood. Despite the fact that the demonstration had been called for by various political collectivities and residents, and not only by K*Vox, the mobsters could not have sent their 'message' to the neighbourhood abstractly. Rather, the glass door symbolised Exarcheia more generally, so that the bullets would hit something concrete. Besides, the word 'concrete' in English can mean both the materiality of something and the specific, non-abstract idea. The 'recipient' of the bullets was not solely K*Vox, but rather everyone who is willing to oppose the mafia. However, through this hit the possibility of an antagonistic stance against the mafia had materialized, and therefore became visible through the materialities themselves. The mobsters might have wanted to concentrate everyone's attention on something that is 'hittable', such as a wall or a glass-door, but precisely this led the various social agents of Exarcheia, who might have had abstract ideas about what is at stake there, to connect with K*Vox and therefore with its radical position on the problem. As Mr Manolis, a local resident, told us some days later, 'the hit on Vox was the straw that broke the camel's back. Somehow it made visible and patently clear that either we join those who want a free neighbourhood and fight, or we will have terror on our front steps'.

This became clear on the day of the demonstration. The gathering point was arranged to be at the southern part of the square of Exarcheia, which is the most central and most symbolic space of the neighbourhood. However, spontaneously, the majority of the people started gathering just outside K*Vox. The door that was smashed by the bullets had become the entrance to the neighbourhood. At the threshold that the mafia first crossed those forces that sought to maintain the radical political identity of the neighbourhood now stood over the interests of the drug dealers. K*Vox had thus dilated and had become the entire neighbourhood. This dilation was not merely symbolic and ideological, something that would have undermined the role of its materiality, in actual fact the stand took place precisely because of this materiality. This incident also reminds us of something that Giannis, a resident of Victoria Square, the neighbourhood in which Villa Amalias used to stand, had said. Victoria Square borders on Agios Panteleimonas, a district with a high concentration of immigrants in which members of the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn movement have been pursuing racist pogroms in recent years (see Dalakoglou 2013a, Kavoulakos 2013, Dalakoglou and Vradis 2011). As Giannis put it:

When the fascists started to come down to Victoria, many residents spontaneously gathered in the courtyard of Villa Amalias. This was our first gathering as a neighbourhood and after that we created the residents'

assembly of Victoria, a horizontal structure for us to discuss and solve our problems.

As with Exarcheia and K*Vox, the very solid infrastructures of Villa Amalias helped to concentrate and solidify progressive aspects of part of the residents of Victoria and led to further radical activities.

Back in K*Vox, another incident is indicative of the symbolic dilation of the squat. One Saturday night in the summer of 2014, around midnight, there was a sudden tension in the area. From phone calls, it became clear that a small group of hooded people had attacked the riot police units permanently stationed on the borders of Exarcheia with Molotov cocktails. This force guards the offices of PASOK, a Greek social-democratic political party, that governed the country for over two decades since 1981. Successive PASOK governments were responsible for the so-called modernization of the Greek economy, namely the adoption of the neoliberal model, furthermore they were the party that struck the first memorandum agreement with the Troika in 2010. Their offices stand on Charilaou Trikoupi Street. The street is considered to be one of the boundaries of Exarcheia geographically, but also symbolically in the sense that it is marked by a permanent and powerful police presence. This, in a manner of speaking, ends the 'different' time-space that characterizes Exarcheia. The practice of small hit-and-run attacks, *pesimo* as we say (Greek slang for 'assault'), is quite common and these assaults usually occur on Friday and Saturday nights when the district is full of people (See Astrinaki 2009). Immediately after we found out about the *pesimo*, the members of the squats' assembly who were there at the time stormed out of the squat and sat down on the steps in front of the entrance. The road that passes next to the entrance is the one that ends in Charilaou Trikoupi Street. That night, Nikitas from K*VOX explained:

Usually, after a *pesimo*, the cops use this as an opportunity to come down here. They are not looking for the perpetrators, they are just doing that as retaliation against the neighbourhood; they come here on bikes and terrorize people. Many times they have come here and smashed the tables of the *kafeneio* outside. They do not come for Vox, though, they come for Exarcheia. So if we spot them coming down from up there, we will go inside and close the doors.

As in the case of organized crime, the police in this situation are using the materiality of K*Vox to perform an act of terror aimed at the neighbourhood in general. For the squatters, this police violation of the imaginary boundaries of the time-space of Exarcheia would mean shutting the doors. Once more, the entrance of the squat had dilated and had become equated both by the police and the comrades as the entrance to the neighbourhood.

Nevertheless, depending on specific moments and conversations, the squat's space can easily be retracted. In a debate between a man of radical

left-wing persuasion and Nikos, a member of the K*Vox assembly and an anarchist, Nikos was teased by his communist friend who said that K*Vox, as any anarchist group, has too many different opinions within, something that negatively affects its politics. Nikos replied:

Listen, you can come here to drink your coffee – that does not make you Vox. You can work on the shifts – that also does not make you Vox. Vox’s ideological-political positions are those of its assembly, and there we have a common line.

Similarly, when K*VOX had decided to form ‘self-defence groups’ to ‘patrol’ the neighbourhood in order to make the situation difficult for organized crime activities, especially drug dealing, as sometimes happens, people were targeted by mistake. During such an incident on the street just behind the squat, a group of anarchists were sitting on the staircase of a block of flats. Then a group of K*VOX members and members of the Exarcheia neighbourhood assembly asked them whether they were smoking weed. While the company did not smoke, they challenged the other group’s interference and its ethical and political significance. When it became clear to the ‘patrol’ that this was a mistake, the group from K*VOX referred to the decisions of the squat’s assembly to protect the area from the mafia. Almost an hour after the incident started, the argument was elevated to the ethical and political significance of the decision on the right to decide and act in a de-centralized anti-authoritarian manner. In other words, it became a discussion that touched the very heart of the squat and its internal decision-making processes. This was an unequal battle that the patrol could not win over the better-read group of anarchists, who were deeply involved in squatting and anti-authoritarian decision-making. Thus, when it became apparent that this conversation touched upon the very essence of what VOX is, the ‘patrol’ abandoned the conversation, inviting the others to join the next assembly to discuss the issues at hand.

In such instances, it became visible that when the political persuasions of the squat were confronted with those of others, the space of the squat shrank and included only the members of the assembly and, therefore, only the room in the basement where the assemblies take place. This is perhaps the basic contradiction of K*Vox. On the one hand, there is the opening it seeks to make into the wider society as a social centre, and on the other there is the very specific radical ideological and political stance of the people who run it. However, maybe this is not a contradiction at all. As Maevious once said when he was asked what K*Vox is:

If we can use a metaphor, I would say that we want Vox to be to society what the armed guerilla groups are to a social movement. Something that will refer to the movement, be part of it, but that will also try to push it forward down the revolutionary road.

The success of the demonstration against the mafia (with more than 2,500 people participating) convinced the residents of Exarcheia that it was time to create some structures that would allow them to fight to permanently get rid of anti-social behaviour and the mafia that encouraged such behaviour. Thus, the People's Assembly of Exarcheia was created, a horizontal assembly that would meet every Friday evening in order to discuss and arrange further actions. The assembly consists of individuals, residents of all ages, and political collectivities of Exarcheia (with anarchist and leftist persuasions). K*Vox, which of course participated in the assembly as part of Exarcheia, suggested during the first meeting that the neighbourhood should proceed from mere discussions about the problem to fighting everyday practices. In keeping with this line of thought, it proposed the creation of *omades perifrourisis* ('groups of safekeeping', a kind of unarmed civilian militia) that in a first phase would march throughout the neighbourhood informing people and chasing away the drug dealers, with force if necessary. The first reaction of the assembly to such a radical proposition was circumspect, but after discussion and several arguments the assembly agreed on this line of action.

In addition to the *omades perifrourisis*, the residents decided to have a permanent public appearance in the street of Themistokleous, a street with a high concentration of drug dealing. At night, when the residents came home from their jobs, they transformed the street into a self-organized public festival. They brought food and drink from their homes, and transformed the entrances of housing blocks into makeshift bars, while musicians played music sitting on the steps. As Mr Manolis told us:

We are here every night. While we are here they [referring to the drug dealers] do not come. But we have to come every night. If we are absent for one night they will come again, they will sell and the road will be as before. We do not have any problem if a couple of youths smoke a joint, but the dealing and the organized crime is something else. . . . Besides, the very fact that we can self-organize these meetings here is something that gives us pleasure. And it seem to be working.

Dimitris, a member of the K*Vox assembly, was asked why Vox seems to have gained a hegemonic position in the People's Assembly. He replied:

Comrade, it is not only a matter of us having the better political proposition. Do not forget that apart from our words, we are a squat that visibly stands here. They see us. They see that what we do is possible.

Once again, it seems that the very materiality of the squat helps to concentrate and visualize small-scale radical practices that can set an example and make the principles of self-organization intelligible. In a sense, therefore, the residents' desire for the right to their own city (see Lefebvre 1977 [1968]) is influenced not only by the ideological beliefs of the anarchists (our words), but also from their spatial and material dimension (visibility if nothing else).

The boundaries of everyday life

In order to work and help at the *kafeneio*, one should advocate the principles of self-organization and solidarity, and of course know or learn the job of the bartender. Through the participation in the shifts of the *kafeneio*, however, and through informal talks with members of the squat, it became obvious that another feature is crucial in order for someone to be a reliable 'bartender' – a feature that exemplifies the relationship between the everyday life of the squat and the ever-present state terror.

Several informants confirm that the most important thing for someone who is at *vardia* is not the job *per se*, but to know and be able to deal with a state of emergency, meaning a police raid of the squat: 'He or she who is in *vardia* is responsible for the whole squat, is responsible for activating the protocol', as Jackson said. By the 'protocol' he meant a series of codified actions that the squatters undertake in such cases, actions that have been codified empirically, namely through the repetition of the threat. The 'protocol' involves those on duty informing the people who are in the social centre at that time about any imminent or probable attack, telling them that the doors will shut so that those who want to stay to protect the squat can do so, and that others should leave immediately.

The exigencies of the emergency situation are located within normality itself, insofar as a prerequisite for the execution of 'everyday work' is the ability to respond to the state of emergency. The parallels and the coexistence of 'normality' (looseness, daily social time) and 'emergency' situations are pronounced in the everyday life of the squat. At almost any given time the members of the squat can be heard whispering to one another about some emergency that has just occurred or planning how to respond to an imminent threat. Simultaneously, however, they participate in the 'regular' talks we have together about random things. Likewise, we could be sitting at the tables of the *kafeneio* in the same way that people sit and have their drink in any other café-bar, and suddenly two or three squatters get up to go to the street above to chase away a drug dealer, and then come back for another beer.

Thus, the boundaries between everyday life, leisure time and entertainment on the one hand, and political time and emergency conditions on the other, are not just fluid, but are dovetailed in such a way in the space-time of the squat that the distinction loses its meaning. The space of the squat and the participation in its activities thereby contribute to the politicization of every aspect of daily life. It trains, through the very flow of everyday life, the community in a radical and politicized perception and experience of the everyday, by placing the emergency (which in the final analysis is always a political issue) as a part of normality. This functions as a constant reminder of the ongoing social antagonism, even in the so-called 'relaxed' hours. Being in the social centre therefore gives every action (from drinking a beer to clashing with the police or the drug dealers) a political dimension, not because

this is the ideological framework that the squatters have made, but because of the dialectic of the everyday life of the space itself and the ongoing 'state of emergency' in the wider society.

This pattern of addressing the various different aspects of life from a political perspective can also be found in the discourses and practices of the project of ADYE, which is housed in the basement of K*Vox. This self-organized social clinic consists of volunteer physicians, psychologists, paramedics, pharmacists and residents. Its basic position is that the issue of health is a political issue, and that the project has nothing to do with philanthropy or with the mere provision of free services. As Chloe, a comrade who participates in ADYE stated:

I do not get satisfaction from the fact that I am helping a poor guy. I get satisfaction from promoting the idea that health is part of a more general political practice, of the will for society to be organized differently. The doctors here don't have the central role, and the patients do not just passively accept the doctors' orders, nor are easy solutions provided. The doctor-patient relationships are not those between the professional and their client; rather, there is a relationship of reciprocity. Since we recognize the social and political causes behind various medical problems, we believe that those problems concern all of us and not just the patients. Therefore, providing training in the idea that health is a social good and identical to anti-hierarchical, collective structures is the most important thing we can do.

Arif, an immigrant from Pakistan who has lived in Greece for a decade and who participates in the project, said in reference to people's response to the project:

Yes, they are coming . . . not as many as we wish, but we are still a new project. For now it's mostly immigrants who come here. When they realize the nature of the space and that it is safe they feel free to talk about other problems too – you know, problems at work, racism and such. We talk to them and many of them also show interest in our general political activity.

Thus, the way that ADYE promotes health transforms the space from a mere social clinic into a space where various subjects who articulate political issues and have the potential to be shaped into a political collectivity are concentrated. In the space of the squat, the identities of the doctor, the patient, the local and the immigrant all partake in a broader framework of social relations that is not only alternative to, but also in an antagonistic relationship with the existing neoliberal, bourgeois social order.

Hetero-Utopias

Through the ethnography of one of the few remaining squats in Athens presented in this chapter, we have demonstrated the significance of space and materialities for the creation of potential resistance, and therefore have exposed the spatial aspects of the new repressive strategy of the neoliberal state. During the ‘time of crisis’ in Greece, we find the implementation of a set of neoliberal ‘shock’ policies with severe repercussions in the subalterns’ collective comprehension of their condition. The huge amount of unemployment, especially among the youth, and the precarious forms of labour and the insecure lives people have been experiencing the past few years, have impacted on the realization of concrete collective identities that can envisage antagonistic ways out of the terror of the loan agreements and their anti-social policies. In such a context, we argue that the neoliberal Greek state is aware of the crucial role a disciplined spatial continuum can play in keeping people isolated or individualized and deprived of representations of possibilities for resistance. As the squat illustrates, the material dimension of the ideological formation is answered by the state with the ideological dimension of material repression. Since the squats signify an antagonistic meaning of public space, and since they have been relatively firmly established in the Greek social-political imagination since the December revolt, the state has used their significance not only in order to intercept the practices of resistance that take place inside them, but also to radiate its vision for a dead, anti-social public space in general. A public space that on the one hand will increasingly be privatized and whose non-commercial dimension will be characterized as ‘anomie’, and on the other will turn into a field of control and formation of subjectivities.

The Foucauldian notion of *heterotopias* can provide an interesting perspective on the ethnographic findings of this research in terms of revealing prevalent political strategies and interpreting contemporary socio-spatial phenomena. The concept of *heterotopia* refers to spaces and places in which social relations are articulated differently from the dominant, ‘normal’ arrangements, or alternatively spaces that challenge the rational-functional social organization of space. In contrast to ‘*utopias*’, Foucault developed the idea of ‘*hetero-topias*’, as:

... places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society – which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted.

(Foucault 1984: 3–4)

In a state of *heterotopia*, a lot of different cultural, social, economic and political complexes can be situated. Foucault thus formulated a typology of *heterotopias*, and provided examples for each one. One of the characteristics

that Foucault attributes to certain kinds of *heterotopian* sites is that they can have a function in relation to the space that remains (Foucault 1984: 8); that is to say, in relation to the space that is external to them. With this principle Foucault places *heterotopias* in the wider field of social antagonism and underlines the role of space and materiality in the circulation of power, the construction of subjectivities, and also either the reproduction of or the challenge to the existing system. Foucault then distinguishes between two types of *heterotopias* in relation to the space that remains. The first is the *heterotopia of compensation* (1984: 8). This refers to spaces that are so perfectly organized, pedantic and disciplined that this designates the remaining space as irrational and disorganized, thus being in need of intervention. A good example of such a *heterotopia of compensation* can be found in Foucault's, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1995 [1977]). Although he does not explicitly refer to the '*heterotopia of compensation*' in this work, his analysis of the phenomenon of the modern prison reveals a similar logic. For Foucault, the rise of modern capitalism is accompanied by an emerging anthropological type that places the human at the epicentre of the universe. However, this product of liberal-humanistic ideology does not correspond to a Hegelian-like progress of the human spirit that inclines towards better modes of existence; rather, it simply marks a new, emerging need. Thus, an economy that is based on the exploitation of one human by another human is obliged to produce a deep knowledge for man and his body. As a result, the human is at the 'epicentre' because he forms a new object of scientific knowledge. This scientific knowledge is *located* in what Foucault calls 'laboratories', which have to exist in specific conditions of power, 'truth', and authority. In so far as prison meets those conditions, it can be said that it is not just a place for punishment but also constitutes a 'laboratory' that obtains certain functions in social production and reproduction. Foucault analyses this process by paying attention to the particular architectural schema that characterize total institutions in the post-Enlightenment era. Adopting the term from Jeremy Bentham, he calls these 'Panopticons' ('seeing everything'). Thus, the 'Panopticon' is a certain circular spatial arrangement that allows for the constant surveillance of prisoners in such a way that the latter could not say if they are being watched at any particular moment, and thus have to internalize the possibility that they are being watched and disciplined at all times. For Foucault, this technology, which would not have been possible without the specific space-laboratory that is the prison, inaugurates the modern modality of power that is based more on self-inspection than on force. Accordingly, Foucault states:

... among all the reasons for the prestige that was accorded in the second half of the eighteenth century, to circular architecture (referring to prisons and clinics), one must no doubt include the fact that it expressed a certain political utopia.

(1995: 174)

However, *utopia* cannot exist in any pure form, and it can justifiably be said that the prison is ‘effectively an enacted utopia’ (Foucault 1984: 3). In contrast, a *heterotopia* is one in which one does not accord to the dominant forms of social relations, but in which one instead accords to a kind of total discipline that produces new knowledge and technologies for the further ‘economic’ utilization of the human body is necessarily a space-experimental site for the configuration of the totality of the social body. In this way, this is a *heterotopia of compensation*. The usefulness of the techniques that are produced in a ‘laboratory’ such as the prison become clearer if one attempts to locate their methods and effects in the way that other fields of social life are organized, such as the school, the factory and even entire cities. The ‘panoptic’ configuration of social subjects cuts across those fields; thus, the Foucauldian argument is concluded: before any kind of ‘mental’ ideology, ‘discipline proceeds with the distribution of the individuals in space’ (Foucault 1995: 141).

The second type are the *heterotopias of illusion*. In this case, Foucault refers to spaces in which, consciously or unconsciously, the naturalization and the validity of the dominant spaces and the dominant articulations of social relations are mocked, challenged and defied, thus appearing as an illusion rather than an unquestioned reality (1984). Foucault gives the example of the brothel, a place in which the norms regarding sexuality and the ‘sanctity’ of the bourgeoisie family are mocked and inverted. Another example of this Foucauldian notion is given by Doron in his work *Those Marvelous Empty Zones on the Edge of Our Cities: Heterotopia and the ‘Dead Zone’* (2008). Doron discusses the abandoned spaces that are usually encountered at the limits of a city which do not have a specific function and therefore have somehow ‘escaped’ the dominant social production of space. These are places that tend to attract unofficial social occurrences, such as sites for illicit sex, makeshift playing fields and so forth. The very fact that those spaces are so ‘outside’ of the official urban planning functions exposes the social construction and the bias of the space that remains, thus de-naturalizing the capitalist concept of urban planning.

Returning to the ethnographic field, it can be said that a careful and ‘customized’ application of the notion of *heterotopia* in relation to the space that remains can produce interesting answers regarding not only the space of K*Vox itself, but also the repressive strategy of the sovereign power in relation to the contestation of public space in general. Firstly, although Foucault clearly distinguishes between *heterotopias of compensation*, which mostly connect with power, and *heterotopias of illusion*, which connect to resistance, the case of K*Vox shows that a *heterotopia of compensation* does not necessarily have to be a state-derived institution that ‘reflects’ reactionary examples to the ‘outside’ world. As the ethnographic findings of this research on the squat and its neighbourhood have shown, the radicalization of the People’s Assembly of Exarcheia and the proliferation of direct actions and practices of self-organization among the residents was partly the outcome

of the material existence of the squat and the implementation of antagonistic forms of social relations in a specific space. Therefore, the squat managed to realize and exemplify a possibility which, without such a material essence, would have remained merely an abstract discourse. Thus, K*Vox emerges from this research as an ‘effectively enacted utopia’, a heterotopia of compensation, a ‘laboratory’ which mirrors possibilities of self-organization at the local level.

Furthermore, K*Vox also fits into the category of ‘*heterotopias of illusion*’. As a space in which non-commercial relations, non-hierarchical structures and solidarity prevail, the squat helps to expose the capitalist environment as an illusion – a social and historical construction and not part of a supposed human nature. As a result, K*Vox concentrates elements of both of Foucault’s types, showing how a *heterotopia* can be part of existing social antagonisms by fully affecting the space that remains.

It is precisely this attribute of *heterotopias* to concentrate in specific space elements that functions as a model for the remaining space which makes the squats a crucial aspect of the repressive strategy of the state. That is, not only does the state attempt to erase a ‘threatening’ dissemination of meanings regarding public space, but also, by using particular material spaces as sites of repression, to create its own. In other words, by repressing a space that already has social significance, the state is publicly performing an inversion of the ‘*heterotopia of compensation*’ from a realized model of antagonistic social arrangements, to a realized-through-repression model of a fully controlled, disciplined general public space. Just as K*Vox or Villa Amalias could function as real, material spaces that enable flows, concentrations and re-negotiations of identities, so the state is counter-creating a suffocated public space in which those conditions remain unimaginable. This turns a *hetero-topia* into a *u-topia*: a non-space which by its non-existence contributes to the perpetuation of the social fragmentation that is evident in Greece as a result of the imposed neoliberal reforms (Dalakoglou 2012, Veloudogiani 2013).

As Bourdieu (1998) argues, the precarious and flexible forms of labour and social existence that accompany neoliberalism deprive people of the means to articulate concrete collective identities, which are a crucial prerequisite for any form of resistance. This process can drive people into a passive understanding of their condition as they cannot meet in any social space and collectively envisage alternative possibilities (Papageorgiou 2013). As shown through the ethnographic research present here, space and its materiality can play a role in the concentration and the solidification of dispersed subjects, practices and ideas that lead to radical activity. Therefore, it can be said that the strategy of the sovereign power is not (only) to hit the resistance when it is fully formed, but also to erase the very prerequisites of it; namely, the antagonistic use of public space. Discussing the increased police presence in the public spaces of Athens during the last years, Fillipidis notes that:

The territorial inscription of the demand of public security carries with it the reproduction of a new plexus of meaning-giving, one which re-structures the meaning of public presence in itself – at the precise moment when the operations in question take place. The permanent police presence in public space comprises, in this sense, an essential element of meaning-assigning for public space per se.

(Fillipidis 2013)

Police repression in contemporary Greece functions in a way that makes the Althusserian distinction between the ideological state apparatus and the repressive state apparatus (Althusser 1971) lose its meaning. For Althusser, those two components are in large part responsible for the reproduction of dominant social relations by on the one hand installing ideological representations (the ideological apparatus), and on the other one hand by practising force when necessary (the repressive apparatus). In Greece, however, police repression is not merely the material treatment of an already-formed ‘enemy within’; rather, it aims at the ideological-psychological formation of terrorized subjectivities. This repression bares and conveys a particular *habitus*, to borrow Bourdieu’s term (1990); namely, a combination of representations and (non-)movements within space that people must become accustomed and used to. Returning to Foucault, one could say that in contemporary Greece, characterized as it is by an excessive loss of consensus, ‘discipline proceeds with the distribution of the individuals in space’ (Foucault 1977: 141). Resistance, in Bourdieu’s terms, can be viewed as another form of capital (1986, 1991), which does not emerge merely from the objective conditions (like the economic crisis), but mostly has to be obtained through ‘training’ in techniques, material forms and representations of resistance. It is this ‘training’ as a prerequisite of resistance that is intercepted by the state through the interception of the space that the former can take place. This is how a space of resistance like a squat becomes a ‘space of anomie’. As Hannah Arendt wrote, ‘totalitarian government does not just curtail liberties or abolish essential freedoms . . . it destroys the one essential *prerequisite* of all freedoms, which is simply the capacity of motion which cannot exist without space’ (2004: 466, emphasis added). In this way the state proceeds to a kind of preemptive counter-insurgency.

The popular depiction of neoliberalism as the ‘rolling back of the state’ is a far cry from what is actually happening in Greece today. The state not only is not ‘rolling back’, but is actively pursuing the ‘invisibility’ of social subjects and their integration into the neoliberal paradigm. Neoliberalism cannot by itself lead to social fragmentation, as people will always create structures of solidarity among them, and they will resort to informal forms of sociality, economic transactions and health care as the example of K*Vox showed. This is exactly what the squats aim to achieve. To proliferate the belief that people can organize their lives without need for the state’s institutions and that if there is such a thing as a human nature, it is about

solidarity and dignity and not about cannibalism. This is exactly what the state's aim is; to eliminate places such as squats and thus 'empty' people of such beliefs – to turn hope into a *utopia*. Thus it is not a coincidence that the people who participated in the demonstration on 5 June 2014 in Exarcheia repeatedly shouted the following spontaneous slogan: 'If we don't resist in every neighbourhood, our cities will become a modern prison'.

Note

- 1 ADYE stands for ΑΔΥΕ Self-organised Health Structure of Exarcheia (Αυτοοργανωμένη Δομή Υγείας Εξαρχείων).