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Wall Writing Protests in Times of Economic Crisis in Athens

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Wall Writing Protests in times of Economic Crisis in Athens

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Abstract

This paper discusses the urban writing on Athenian walls as an imaginative medium of intercommunication occurring during the socioeconomic and political crisis era in Greece, over the last seven years. The street art activity on the city's walls as a linguistic and imagery phenomenon could be approached as the main symbolic mode of public expression generated by the crisis. To investigate it fieldwork research was conducted in central Athens from January to July 2015. Three research methods were applied: participant observation into two graffiti crews, consequent photo documentation of wall writings, and eight semi-structured interviews with street artists. The research findings disclose the metamorphosis of public walls into an interactive public notebook as an attestation of the processes in the Athenian multimodal urban landscape.

Keywords: street slogans, political graffiti, Athens, crisis, semiotics, multimodality

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CHAPTER 1   Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This early exploratory study deals with wall writing forms (Felisbret 2009: 58) including word-centric street slogans ("Political Stencil," retrieved 2015/02/26) and political graffiti in the center of Athens during the financial crisis period, considering that graffiti, according to Lewisohn (2008) constitutes "an extremely harsh visual language" (ibid: 55). To avoid any misunderstandings throughout this study, it is worth defining from the beginning, what wall writing is based on Felisbret (2009).

> Wall Writing is a highly organized culture. It has a clearly defined code of ethics as well as ideas, motivations, and goals that dictate behavior and aesthetics. The code is structured in a fashion that aids in the growth and preservation of the culture (ibid: 58).

The online version of the Oxford English Dictionary (2005) defines graffiti as writings or drawings scribbled, scratched, or sprayed illicitly on a wall or other surface in a public place and slogans as short and striking or memorable phrases associated with political actions or movements ("OED") .

In this study, I will present the scope, the motivation and the limitations of the research. Furthermore, I will present my expectations, the research questions, the methodological tools, and also the analysis of some indicative examples derived from my corpus.

This study on socially politicized public writing includes both multilingual street slogans as a unique type of literacy of mainly "anti-government content" as noted by Kitis (2011: 2) and wall murals of unified text and image in the center of Athens, during the crisis period. The definition of public writing as social and also politicized is justified by the variety of wall posts in central Athens, which have an impact on contemporary social structures and political ideologies. This means that the

Athenian society should be approached as an ongoing altering area, which follows the sociopolitical changeover.

This work examines the activity of wall writers expressing their thoughts on any available surface, conveying underlined messages, which serve as channels for the street artists' voice. The definition of graffiti writers (graffitists) and street artists will refer to the same group. It has been decided to share the same entity due to the proximity of terms (at least for this study's needs), even though there are dissimilarities. It would be interesting to study the distinct names, but the study's scope, here, is the analysis of public writing from a multimodal perspective; either it is supposed to be a street slogan, graffiti, or in other words, a wall painting. Consequently, the message of wall writing is given either via text, in the case of street slogans, or via the unity of a body text and a figure in the case of graffiti.

Simultaneously, this study explores the street art as a field of protest and complaint, following the mind of street artist *Exit*.

> Greek graffiti reverberates the current urban turmoil. A big city like Athens without color and freedom of speech on public display is like a busted city. (Interview with *Exit*, February 2015).

According to *NSK*, street art includes both street slogans and graffiti, constituting an interesting form of the new generation's expression.

> Graffiti is generally a spray-paint activity with the aim of expressing personal feelings and political statements. Street art includes spray-painted murals, stickers, posters and stencils. Everything that is placed on the street is considered street art. The spray can is your voice! (Interview with *NSK*, February 2015).

Therefore, street art has become a dependent link of Athenian resistance, constituting the call for reaction. According to the stencil street artist *Tona* the so called "urban art" is an art form that got influenced mainly by the street art movement (copying or rearranging the topics and aesthetics of street art).

Urban writing is the call to fight back against all sorts of repressions. In a world that often seems unfair, mean and brutal and people are blinkered, my motivation is to confront this distorted perception, not only with a dreamy, dynamic, sensual and emotional perspective but also with a revolutionary praxis. (Interview with *Tona*, February 2015).

For the reasons outlined above, I decided to examine public wall writing in the city of Athens, following the point of view of Kalogiannaki & Karras (2013), who consider the wall language as a specific literary genre; "not only dynamic, ironic and socially politicized, but also colorful and multiform" (ibid: 12).

However, it's also important to note that the investigation of this particular urban genre deals with the discursive creativity of literary elements, as well as literary quotations, thematic content related to the contemporary crisis, and multiple semiotic modes.

Lastly, the choice of both street slogans and wall writings (graffiti), which have been selected for this study as the data corpus, express certain political views. The central Athens and especially the area that I took the pictures (i. e. Exarchia) are mostly anarchist and left-wing thinking areas. Thus, it would be impossible to find out wall writing protests expressing other political views.

1.2 Aim of Research

The research aims are to examine the wall writings from both linguistic and imagery perspectives (Chmielewska 2007: 148), via sociolinguistic aspects. Applying a multimodal approach, textual and pictorial matters will be explored through the prism of recent crisis. More specifically, the analysis will be restricted to the textual and visual "representational functions" (Gee 2014: 167) of the open dialogue as a transmitting medium of the sociopolitical opposition during the period from 2008 until now (2015) in Athens. Gee (2014) defines the representational function, as

the idea that (visual) language connects directly and straightforwardly (objectively) to the world out there" (re-presents it)…based on the people's lived experiences (ibid: 167).

Finally, this paper will provide evidence that the understanding of wall statements (street slogans) and literary artifacts (graffiti) is a basis for comprehending the dominant "urban political discourse," as defined by Kitis (2011: 55).

1.3 Motivation of Research

The motivation for this research project was not so much the artistic form of wall paintings, but the linguistic content, as well as literary forms and modes, the wordplay as a literary technique, and the freedom of thought. The street artists who agreed to take part in this study assert that street art helps them to share their thoughts with all those who pass accidentally in front of one of their works, and express themselves through partly concealed linguistic features.

These facts outweigh the ephemeral nature of their projects, and based on the theory of Franz Fanon (1967) "every human problem must be considered from the stand-point of time" (ibid: 14-15), the social researchers like the writer of this study carried out the research in a distinct area, where sociopolitical changes occur.

Greece, and more particularly Athens, faces significant problems moving forward, which give birth to the idea that if, some years later, somebody found what was written on Athenian walls that would be their testimonial of the indignation and sadness of our times. Nevertheless, I could only discover a small part of all those due to the fact that they are inherently so alternating and mutable.

1.4 Limitation of Research

Given the limitations of this paper, it should be mentioned that it would be impossible to document every political graffiti and street slogan and to interview every street artist. Therefore, this paper excludes graffiti accompanied by text in languages other than Greek or graffiti without any text at all. Nevertheless, for

avoiding any misunderstandings, it is important noting that some characteristic pictures with text in English language have been included in this study. They concern some indicative words (crisis, drachma), which have been introduced in the contemporary vocabulary of crisis with some differences in their meaning. Therefore, it has been deemed necessary to include these instances. Most of my photographs are the outcome of sporadic urban roaming conducted from the 1st of January until July 2015, even though there are some pictures derived either from social media or from personal web pages of graffiti writers.

A second limitation is the ongoing nature of wall writing; the wall pieces are constantly reproduced and repainted. Therefore, an important technique in this research was to visit the same places in Athens several times.

Another limitation of this paper is regarding the metaphors conceived by the combination of both linguistic and iconographic elements. Only some concrete parts of the analysis refer to metaphor as a function of the applied multimodal approach. The focal point is how wall writing conveys messages (either verbally or visually) and ideas to the public, and thus the metaphor theory seems to be irrelevant for the aim of this study.

1.5 Greek Crisis - Situating Athens

Before I continue describing the perspectives of this work, I assume that it would be effective to briefly address the general crisis[1] outline according to Giovanopoulos (2011), such as the causes, the effects, and the reflections of Greek society (cf. Alogoskoufis 2012; Giovanopoulos 2011; Kyriakopoulos 2012; Matsaganis 2013).

The scope of this study does not allow a description in detail of the crisis. Therefore, for a better understanding of what is called crisis and how it has influenced the Greek economy, the political stability, and subsequently the social structures, the aforesaid studies are highly recommended.

However, how and why the crisis is interconnected to urban protest language on the walls? Based on Matsaganis (2013: 34), the crisis of the contemporary political

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[1] It is worthwhile to cite what exactly crisis means and also the word's originality from the Greek. "…even if the colloquial meaning of the word suggests a downfall, in its original (Greek) meaning…the notion of crisis may also imply a moment of rapid change…"

system, characterized as the failure of politics to address the needs and demands of citizens, has strongly affected social structures. Therefore, the political instability and the insecurity of citizens lead not only to peaceful mass manifestations of protests in traffic areas (areas with high visibility for slogan writing) such as Panepistimiou and Stadiou Streets, but also to riots and continuous strike actions. The International Troika, consisted of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Union (EU) nations and the European Central Bank (ECB) have agreed on bailout packages for Greece (Goutsos & Polymeneas 2014: 683; Matsaganis 2013: 4). Afterwards, the reduction of incomes was unexpectedly announced, and thousands of Greek citizens came out in the streets in order to share their collective frustration (Matsaganis 2013: 5-6).

For the purpose of the analysis, the following map displays the fieldwork research area in central Athens in a perimeter of about twelve kilometers.

Figure 1 *Fieldwork research in central Athens*

The street artist, *Yiakou,* claims that the financial crisis has created a new kind of urban wall writing, as a form of "outcry communication" in Athenian districts, one that is more artistic.

> The street art is a form of communication that meets the receiver (public) without the creator (transmitter). You are painting in a public spot, because you are waiting for the answer from the social chain. Well, this form of outcry communication is such a dynamic agent that can awake emotions and hidden thoughts. (Interview with *Yiakou*, February 2015).

More particularly, I will focus on political wall writing as a communication channel in the center of Athens, as defined by Avramides (2012: 1), where the recent urban turmoil has led to a new artistic language of disillusionment against Greek reality. *WD* and *Exit* explain their motivation to reconstruct the Athenian walls, admitting that the crisis has influenced their art in a direct way.

> Athens is characterized by a sweet chaos that makes her so vivid! I love this kind of chaos because it gives me unexpectable inspiration. (Interview with *WD*, February 2015).

> Wall-fever has become apocalyptic, reflecting the heartbeat of a boiling city. (Interview with *Exit*, February 2015)

As the crisis in Athens continues, the quantitative growth of street art works motivates new researchers to capture the visual-lingual messages on the streets. The street artist, *Yiakou*, explains why his activity is mainly based on emotional freedom.

> The economic crisis does not make you poor in emotions, unless you have a poor mind. However, if crisis causes negative thoughts or feelings as anxiety, fear, and depression; then I will be there in order to speak emotionally! (Interview with *Yiakou*, February 2015).

1.6   Previous Studies on Wall Protest Language

Three case-studies in the context of the boom of graffiti[2] – constitutive of text analysis – (Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 276) during hard social times have contributed to the investigation process of this paper. Both studied the universality of graffiti's impact on society.

The first two cases, "Gaza Graffiti: Messages of Love and Politics" (Gröndahl 2009) and "Revolution Graffiti: Street Art of the New Egypt" (Gröndahl 2012) comprised an extended collection of wall protest messages that have been published by the Swedish writer and photographer Mia Gröndahl. Interviews with some local Gaza and Egyptian street artists were conducted.

The third study "Moscow Graffiti: Language and Subculture" (Bushnell 1990) is a cultural linguistic project dealing with the interpretation of the walls of Moscow. It supports the idea that contemporary sociopolitical rebellious changes give birth to graffiti painting.

1.7   Previous Studies on Athenian Wall Writing

This subchapter attempts to look at the previous studies around the subject of Athenian street art. Even though, somewhat tardily, Greece has produced a few scholarly papers on the subject, it is noteworthy that increasing interest has been focused on graffiti and street art.

One example is Zaimakis's (2013) sociological study of graffiti "Η ετερογλωσσία του γκράφιτι στην ποιοτική έρευνα: μεθοδολογικές διασταυρώσεις σε ανοίκειους κοινωνικούς κόσμους." Zaimakis's approach according to the Heteroglossia term follows.

> The heteroglossia of graffiti in qualitative research: methodological intersections in unfamiliar social worlds. Zaimakis explains that heteroglossia is what insures the primacy of context (urban Athenian environment) over text (wall writing)...At any given time, in any given

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[2] Except for these three studies, several academic articles and publications (including PhD and Master's theses) have dealt with the urban writing phenomenon from different perspectives around the world.

place, there will be a set of social and economic circumstances that will insure that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a different meaning than it would have under any other conditions (ibid: 2013).

Zaimakis suggests that we should examine the types of subcultures that have been developed mostly by young people in their quest to find an audience - suitable for their political voices, and their communication practices. The definition and meaning of subculture, as it is given by Hebdige (1979)

includes the expressive forms and rituals of those subordinate groups […] the meaning of subculture is, then, always in dispute, and style is the area in which the opposing definitions clash with most dramatic force (ibid: 2-3).

In short, subculture is connected with political antithesis and resistance against state institutions. This paper uses an analytical framework based on the combination of mainly qualitative methodologies focused on: the semiotic analysis of pictorial and linguistic decoding of graffiti, the context of each piece, and the social processes behind them.

Another researcher of this political subculture discourse is Kitis (2011), who in his article entitled "Street slogans: a specialized genre" analyzes wall slogans captured in the Thessaloniki area, as the most dominant characteristic of Greek urban landscape. Kitis, using a quantitative analysis, verified his main hypothesis; street slogans constitute a distinct genre with anarchist content, often produced during mass riots in traffic areas.

Moving forward, Tsoumas with his paper "The aesthetic impact of graffiti art on modern Greek urban landscape" (2011) discusses about the graffiti practice from architectural perspectives not only as a collective action, but also as a new way of public decoration.

Yet another architectural researcher is Avramides (2012); his paper "'Live your Greece in Myths': Reading the Crisis on Athens' walls" reflects the idea that the

politicized urban art on Athenian walls functions as a creative testimony for later generations reconstructing the whole Athenian urban environment.

Tsilimpounidi, in her doctoral thesis, "Remapping Athens: An Analysis of Urban Cosmopolitan Milieus" (2012) and also via the collective recent study (2014) "Remapping 'Crisis': A Guide to Athens," approaches the street art scene sociologically, including, not only the wall statements and artworks as physical markers of social place, but also the multiple projects in Athenian space organized by local authorities and artists (music concerts, filmic/photographic exhibitions) and urban manifestations. This work provides a critical perspective of protest and sociopolitical actions in contemporary Athenian capital, focusing on its streets. Several authors examine the Athenian urban writing story during the crisis from different views (architecturally, historically, and sociologically). Based on the editors Tsilimpounidi and Walsh (2014) "…its scope allows for contributors to engage with empirical details that testify to the lived reality of life in a state of crisis" (ibid: 9).

Furthermore, Tsilimpounidi (2015) publishes a paper entitled "*If These Walls Could Talk": Street Art and Urban Belonging in the Athens of Crisis*, as a continuation study of her PhD thesis. Her perspective in this work is again sociological and focused on the new urbanism aesthetics. To cite her quotes: "Political street art…subversive imagining on the walls…directly challenges the inevitability of capitalist ideology" (ibid: 33).

Later on, Tulke (2013) conducts an ethnographic research project, "Aesthetics of Crisis," based on the artistic code of Athenian street art. She investigated the crossing of urban theory and visual-iconographic culture.

Lastly, Leventis (2014) publishes his study "Walls of Crisis: Street Art and Urban Fabric in Central Athens, 2000-2012." The paper checks thoroughly the production and the continuation of the urban art fabric of Athens from 2000 to 2012, through the 2004 Olympic Games, proposing that the respective sociopolitical and financial stress influence the socio-urban landscapes, at least from an architect's perspective.

The foregoing projects have focused mainly on the crisis in Greece, and have unquestionably played a significant role in influencing my decision to write this thesis exploring the sociolinguistic implications of the crisis on Athenian urban semioscape.

However, as I continued my literature review, I found that no previous studies have examined the issue of Athenian wall writing protests during the crisis from a sociolinguistic multimodal appeal. Therefore, even though it is crucial to recognize the previous studies conducted as useful data for the present study, this research project opens new paths into an unexplored area of the Athenian case.

1.8 Problem Definition

For as much as this work is a case research, no specific upshots or proper hypotheses are preoccupied, apart from a general expectation that "wall writing expresses sociopolitical messages through the visual and verbal code."

Main Research Question: As a primary research question, I examine what the graffiti and slogan phrases seen during the crisis on Athenian walls mean, and how the messages are conveyed in them.

In order to answer this question, this study addresses the following three subsidiary research questions, which aim at clarifying the research topic.

Subsidiary Questions:
- What message do street artists and youth groups intend to pass on to Greek society via text and image?
- What is the main thematic content and what are the contextualized interpretations of it?
- Are any intertextual sources derived from Greek history, traditional culture, oral poetry or literature used?

The nature of my research questions is strongly related to my aforementioned expectation in terms of the influence of distinct sociocultural issues, particular language usage, symbols, political ideals and beliefs based on current Greek reality. Hence, semiotics and multimodal discourse analysis have been selected as the main theoretical framework to analyze the slogans, graffiti forms, colors and lettering, but

also situated meanings (Gee 2014: 185) embedded in the Greek street subculture, depending on the sociopolitical occasions and also on the given sociocultural models (ibid: 185-186).

Ultimately, it is to be hoped that the research findings of this MA thesis contribute to the body of knowledge surrounding the Greek graffiti language of the crisis. More precisely, the research hypothesis is going to be displayed in the last concluding chapter of this study, after the analysis (results section), functioning as a basis for future research in this field.

1.9 **Disposition**

This work consists of six parts.

Chapter 2 presents the graffiti origin and evolution and the description of street slogans as certain urban discourse.

Chapter 3 examines the theoretical and methodological framework of this study.

Chapter 4 focuses on data gathering tools and research design.

Chapter 5 is devoted to the in-depth analysis, which examines the instances of wall writings during the current sociopolitical situation in Greece by focusing on the period of crisis. The selected examples for the analysis part are investigated in terms of linguistic and visual features. A discussion of the wall writing protests in Athens through the intertextual references is also presented.

Chapter 6 is composed of some concluding considerations and prospects for possible future paths in this field.

CHAPTER 2   Research Background

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will proceed to the definition of both types of urban writing. It should be highlighted that forms of wall writing, as noted by Avramides (2012), are created "by different people, in different landscapes, for different purposes and under different conditions" (ibid: 6). Therefore, the task of public writing developed nowadays in Greece is spread around via the following means: a) street slogans (verbal) and b) wall paintings and graffiti (verbovisual). It is important to clarify that the street slogan writers (Greek youth protesters) write slogans on the walls especially during demonstrations, whereas graffiti writers (or street artists) try to communicate their conceptions throughout their art. Thereafter, the overview of the theoretical background will follow.

2.2 Street Slogans

Kitis (2011) suggested that street slogans constitute a mode of communication based on a "visually riotous poetry" (ibid: 54) with an "individual dynamism" (ibid: 56). It is considered a type of graffiti, with mainly written language, with no attention paid to the form. They have mainly anti-state political content (ibid: 53-54), and they have some affinity with sociopolitical graffiti. According to Sidtis (2004) they are characterized by stereotypical traits (ibid: 5), trying to communicate with the wider public as shared protest. Thereby, it isn't clear if they are individual or collective actions, even if it is broadly known that their authors-creators support a collective identity.

In addition, Kitis (2011) proposed that the slogan-writers are concerned to show an anarchistic identity (ibid: 63, 66), transmitting collective visions directly to the passersby. According to their linguistic form, predominantly Standard Modern Greek is used in Athenian slogans and thus they can be understood by Greek standard speakers. Besides, it should be underlined that either common slang terms, or words derived by Katharevousa, the "purist" form of Modern Greek are used.

2.3 Graffiti

Graffiti is supposed to be the inscription of text, as signs or the paintings in surfaces where they are usually found in public spaces, as the walls. Felisbret (2009) defines the graffiti phenomenon as follows:

> Graffiti international phenomenon is a largely illegal movement; extremely controversial and misunderstood…Practitioners of graffiti refer to the art form simply as writing and to themselves as writers. Graffiti is considered a derogatory and inappropriate media-imposed label that carries a great deal of stigma and prejudice, as the root of the word means to scratch or scrawl… (ibid: 6-7).

Etymologically, according to DeNotto (2014), graffiti is derived from the Italian word "graffiti," which refers to artworks originating from the artist's attempt to draw shapes, political figures, symbols, and catchy letterings into a city surface (ibid: 208).

2.3.1 The Evolution of Graffiti

> Worldwide, from ancient to modern times, the form and content of graffiti remained remarkably unchanged until the mid-1960s, when much larger-scale graffiti began appearing in Philadelphia (Ley and Cybriwsky 1974: 491 in Stewart 2009).

The form of current sociopolitical graffiti was born in 1960s New York ("ProQuest Historical Newspapers, The New York Times," n.d., Taki 183 Spawns Pen Pals, Jul 21, 1971, retrieved 2015/08/09). The American political activists became ambassadors of the urban iconography, coupled with local gangs and immigrants, who adopted it as an expressed reaction in the urban scriptural landscape. Hebdige (1979) argued that the official authorities declared the graffiti as illegal, because of its relation to

ghetto districts and gangs, while simultaneously the critics of art began recognizing it as a new form of literary avant-garde art (ibid: 27).

In addition, a long tradition of inscription-sign style graffiti could be found in Greece. According to Tsoumas (2011: 18), the graffiti sign took the form of resistance in occupied Greece 1939-1945, in the postwar period and particularly in the dictatorial seven-year period 1967-1974 (Dimaras 1981). Thereby, the era of political changeover was characterized by political signs and slogans, featuring a multidimensional meaning with strongly anti-authoritarian overtones.

In consequence, graffiti in connection with the movement presented in New York, was propagated in Greece in closed groups, initiating from the Greek group TerrorXCrew that created the first graffiti between 1989 and 1990 (Tsoumas 2011). Today, according to Tsoumas (2011), the omnipresence of sociopolitical graffiti in Athens has contributed to the development of an alternative aesthetic to urban politics, via the significance of bold political quotes with anti-memorandum content. With increasing intensity, the last seven years in Greece have seen new paths opened in the direction of free expression and creation on city surfaces.

2.3.2 Street Art Crews and Society

The members of the Athenian street art writing community, who participated in the ongoing research project, as *WD* and *Yiakou* in the following interview quotes, believe that presenting their works in the active environments and sharing their artistic vision with the social change of the current period, is the best way to gain audience for their ideas, opinions and thoughts. The graffiti also acts as a rebellion against an anonymity that affects large cities.

> As a part of the Greek reality, I cannot, and I do not want to ignore what is happening in the society through all these years of austerity. The increase of poverty, the increase of homeless people, the increase of unemployment, the increase of suicides, the rise of a neo-nazi party, I just can't close my eyes... When you walk in the city and see the people's desperation, anger or depression, then you

can't go and paint a blue sky or a beautiful beach, like the campaign
Live your myth in Greece. Most of my works are inspired by social
phenomena such as poverty, unemployment, injustice. (Interview
with *WD*, February 2015).

The truth is that people who paint on the walls are characterized by
their nature with spirit of reaction and release. In general, there are
many anti-fascist messages, poverty and war images. (Interview with
Yiakou, February 2015).

Some graffiti phrases are generally short and concise but there are some others
using only one word like *βασανίζομαι* meaning *I am tormented* or *λάθως* meaning
wrong, which is repeatedly found in many ways and in many different places in
Athens (Figures 2, 3, 4, and 5). The graffiti crew names *βασανίζομαι* and *λάθως* are
considered as the most interactive artworks during the recent years, not only as
dense expressions of diffuse collective dysthymia but also as an expression of a
philosophical standpoint.

It is worth analyzing this intentionally misspelled word *λάθως-wrong*. The *λάθως*
is a wall movement; it is a form of reaction to everything that they were told they
should not do because it is *wrong*. The Greek translation of the English word *wrong*
is *λάθος* (noun). Nevertheless, they prefer to write it in a slightly different way, as
λάθως, which in the Greek language refers to the grammatical category of adverbs
of manner. From the ongoing conversations with the graffiti crew members, the
following explanation could be drawn; the adverbs of manner indicate how the
energy denotes the verb. So, graffiti denote action; energy to be active, with the
ironical misspelling.

Most of the Athenian graffiti artists clearly seek to combine their art with
propaganda techniques, as *NSK* clearly admits. So, the graffiti artist's job is mostly to
pass the hidden political message out, and to make their presence visible.

New messages are written on Athenian walls every single day,
replacing the old ones. Graffiti applying mostly propaganda

techniques has been the indication of the political situation in Athens. (Interview with *NSK*, February 2015).

Both crew names, *βασανίζομαι* and *λάθ<u>ως</u>*, describe the torment of the Greek people and the wrong-ness in their present lives. Both statements enlist the help of the Greek language to cause discomfort, in most cases through the dissemination of socio-political propaganda. A study of these words proves that all wall statements are designed and executed by the same group of people, even though there are some changes in handwriting. They are repeated in the same place, which means that this is a way to promote propaganda directly against the Greek state.

Figure 2 *I am tormented,* Sturnari Street-Exarchia, Athens

"Βασανίζομαι…"
"Vasanizome…"
"I am tormented…"

Figure 3 *I am tormented,* Gazi-Pireos Street, Athens

"Βασανίζομαι…"

"Vasanizome…"
"I am tormented…"

Figure 4 *Wrong,* SHOULD WE OPEN GOVERNMENTS?, **Benaki Street-Exarchia, Athens**

"Λάθ<u>ως</u>, SHOULD WE OPEN GOVERNMENTS?"
"Lath<u>os</u>, SHOULD WE OPEN GOVERNMENTS?"
"Wrong, SHOULD WE OPEN GOVERNMENTS?"

Figure 5 *YOUR SYSTEM IS Wrong,* **University of Athens, Panepistimiou Street, Athens**

"Λάθ<u>ως</u> ΕΙΝΑΙ ΤΟ ΣΥΣΤΗΜΑ ΣΑΣ "
"Lath<u>os</u> INE TO SISTIMA SAS"
"YOUR SYSTEM IS Wrong"

2.3.3 Graffiti: Art or vandalism

Concerning the role and the importance of graffiti, opinions vary. Felisbret (2009) argues that for some it constitutes a phenomenon of creation as an appreciable work of art, and for others a phenomenon of destruction and desecration of public property (ibid: 13).

As can be extracted from my personal experiences during fieldwork in Athens, there are a number of people who view graffiti positively, who see it as avant-garde art, and as a form of direct expression of sentiments and political ideals. For them, it is considered a culture of the street, opposed to color monotony and to the grey background of "ideological construction of space," (Hodge and Kress 1993: 212) that is present in Athens. Those who see graffiti with suspiciousness consider it to be an expression of marginalized social groups and often they characterize it as art through vandalism, according to Stewart (2008), and also as a fold of subculture (ibid: 89), while on the contrary, leading critics of art characterize graffiti as an important artistic creation , according to Hebdige (1979: 64).

Nowadays, graffiti is made by various social groups of people and serve several social needs expressing different social interests, which should be studied in a wider sociopolitical and ideological but also sociolinguistic frame (ibid: 13). For most people graffiti constitutes the global youth language (ibid: 14-16), which reflects changes in the society.

2.3.4 Graffiti Styles and Techniques

As I observed, while techniques vary from person to person, most graffiti artists use standard spray cans to broadcast their message. According to the artists' experience, these materials give the possibility for greater speed in the implementation because graffiti most times are considered illegal (as aforesaid in Section 2.3.1).

For the creation of graffiti, the graffiti (street) artist will have to select a nickname, referred to as a *tag* (Graffiti Glossary 2012) and experiment him/herself with a preliminary draft on a paper. In other words, the artist makes the first lines of the selected drawing with bright colors and continues adding the basic colors for the

fill-in. With a darker color, from fill-in colors, the artist stresses outlines, which is the most important process. Finally, the graffiti artists give depth (3D) and create a background, giving more volume to the graffiti. In graffiti the signature is small and can be either in the drawing or under the drawing in the edge. The tag can also be created independently of the existence of graffiti.[3] When a signature or graffiti overlaps the work of another, it is called tagging. They can be seen especially on walls with tags and graffiti, which have been destroyed by the passage of time. However, it is worth clarifying that my knowledge about urban (graffiti) culture derived mainly from my participation in some of the most active street art crews in Athens (*βασανίζομαι, λάθ<u>ως</u>*). The conducted interviews reveal that the members of the urban writing community respect each other and avoid repainting the works of other artists. Nevertheless, they usually repaint or rewrite quotations or artifacts on worn walls and public surfaces, which have already been destroyed due to external conditions or anarchist quotes.

Figure 6 *Example of Tagging,* **Mesologiou Street-Exarchia, Athens**

Consequently, the paste-up (poster is the technique to create big printable stickers) and stencil technique have become very popular in this space. The stencil creators print their work, then they plasticize it and cut it. Afterwards, they paint it onto public place. Both techniques are used for the production of artifacts on any available surface in order to generate new visual protest representations. The

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[3] The specific information about graffiti styles and techniques comes directly from the ongoing observation during the fieldwork process in Athens.

following are indicative examples of aesthetically new arts detected in central Athens:

Figure 7 Example of Poster-up, Spirou Trikoupi Street-Exarchia, Athens (street artist: Absent)

This poster vividly presents Greek national symbols and the Euro currency as a bomb. According to its creator, *Absent*, it expresses the untamed spirit of Greek people referring to the Greek War of Independence of 1821 against the Turks and the historical past of Greece. The euro currency symbol of the monetary union is presented as a lit Molotov cocktail. As shown, the image of Theodoros Kolokotronis comes; the immortal symbol of the Greek nation as the hero of the Greek Revolution of 1821.

Figure 8 Example of Stencil, *ΨΗΦΟΣ ΣΕ ΚΑΝΕΝΑ - VOTE FOR NOBODY,* **Iera Odos Street, Athens**
(street artist: Bleeps.gr)

This stencil is inspired by the ancient Greek culture. *Bleeps.gr* applies the well-known symbols such as this ancient Greek monument. Again, the historical past of classical antiquity with the cultural ideals is reconceptualized and interconnected with the Greek present. The meaning of this artwork is specified by the subsequent textual content on the placard "VOTE FOR NOBODY," which is addressed to all Athenian voters.

CHAPTER 3   Theoretical and Methodological Framework

3.1   Visual Semiotics; an approach to reading Athenian Politicized Wall Writings

Visual semiotics, as defined by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), in *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*; is referred to as the study and the analysis of conventional meanings produced by images. The scholars propose a practical conceptualization about the interpretation of visual images, providing evidence that visual images, in our case graffiti and street slogans, have their own "semantics, syntax, and unique grammar expressing messages of great complexity" (ibid: 34).

In addition, the social and visual semiotic principles have been chosen in order to decode the special linguistic nuances of the Athenian urban landscape including symbols and signs. So, it should be understood that the semiotic analysis serves to illustrate how meaning is conveyed and generated by texts and artifacts in relation to the urban sphere. It is obvious, from what has been said so far, that the focus on iconographic messages does not mean that the verbal text is not substantial compared to wall paintings. Based on Lester (2011: 142-143) the most effective messages are united with words and pictures equally. This strengthens the opinion that nothing written or painted on the wall exists in isolation from the specific environment, implying that they are social processes interconnected through the cultural bonds of society (Lefebvre 1977: 63 in Tsilimpounidi 2012: 23). Thus, visual semiotics examines signs and symbols as physical markers of experiences, and ideas as representative images, which take the form of a word, a picture or an object (Jacobson 1960: 358-359).

Based on Barthes (1971) in Hebdige (1979: 100), images are "complex articulations of specific codes and practices," which means that the study of representation of meanings depends on deliberate strategies. To make matters more concrete, referring to Saussure's theories (1983), the linguistic sign is divided into two parts, "the signifier and the signified" (ibid: 67). The signifier is designated as a meaningful mental image or word and the signified refers to the meaning (broader concept) of the idea it represents. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 6-8), on

the other hand, define these terms as "form and meaning," respectively. As can be easily extracted, "signifier and signified" or "form and meaning" with different words cannot be separated, because both constitute strongly dependent constituents of the same sign entity. Besides, they do not necessarily mean or represent the same notion in every place. Because of this, the meaning of a sign is defined by its synergy with an object and other sign systems within a particular society in order to be interpreted by the public.

In short, when someone gives a meaning to an object, their experiences and ideas are organized into that sign system, revealing what they know about it. Therefore, in order to understand and gain insight into the Greek society, any symbols and particular signs as well as the current sociopolitical process must be examined. Obviously, by scanning the living semiotic Athenian landscape as a text, contact with the particular coding systems is established in order to be able to decode its multiple sociosymbolic meanings.

3.2 Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA)

Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) is considered an important part of the broader concept of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). According to Fairclough and Wodak (1997), CDA functions as a framework for orderly connecting the discourse modes with the sociocultural and political models. However, the multisemiotic analytical frame is a useful medium to determine meaning constructed not only by verbal discourse modes but also by numerous "semiotic resources" (Halliday 1978 in O'Halloran 2008: 444). Van Leeuwen (2005: 281) shows that "multimodality is the combination of different semiotic modes in a communicative artefact or event."

O'Halloran's volume (2008) inspired by Halliday (1978) explores the laminated form of meaning-making across several modes of communication – "Gaze, Color, Shape, Movement, Framing, Layout, and Lighting" (ibid: 461) – and their special usage and pragmatic interactive process with the sociocultural bound context within the society in which they occur (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996: 2). Thus, the concept of multimodality is surely the most important part of the semiotic environment in which humans live and act and constitutes a semiotic activity, which produces and

reproduces possible symbolic meanings (cf. Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 35; O'Halloran 2008: 442,461).

Furthermore, Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) pursue their theory underlining the juxtaposition between the "context of production and the context of reception," acknowledging the semiotic resources which contribute to the understanding and decoding of any sociocultural and political synergies. In particular, the model of the scholars' Hodge and Kress (1988) is emerged from the Hallidayan theoretical framework of "social semiotics" (ibid: 261) about the systemic functional grammar (cf. Halliday 1978; O'Halloran 2011). The systemic functional grammar, based on Halliday (2003), constitutes the basic rules considering the decoding of meaning of any verbal text (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006: 42). Halliday (2003) introduced three accurate functions and defined them as "metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual." Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), inspired by Halliday's framework, applied their theoretical construction, handling the following three criteria (ibid: 42-44), which constitute the main pillars of the analysis of this study:

1. **Visual representation:** This first level of ideational metafunctions of analysis concerns what artistic practices are apparent in graffiti and slogan images.

2. **Representation and interaction:** The analysis of interpersonal metafunctions focuses on various "non-verbal perspectives of interaction – semiotic, multimodal, visual;" (Wodak & Meyer 2008: 2), characteristics of sociopolitical references (sings/symbols), lighting, style and color are provided. Salience and framing as tools of spatial formation of message are also described in detail. Salience could be realized as the size of the image / figure or the specific color application. Framing could be realized as the frame lines to emphasize distinct imagery and iconographic features.

3. **Representation and textual design:** The analysis of textual metafunctions focuses on the meaning organization in a piece of wall writing. It investigates any grammatical, lexical, semantic, or typographical features of the verbal text.
   - ✓ Person, number, tense
   - ✓ Size of verbal text

- ✓ Size of letters and style
- ✓ Intertextuality: poems, extracts, idioms, well-known stereotypical phrases, and word-games
- ✓ Use of punctuation marks

The "Grammar of Visual Design" introduced by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) proves that the images are constructed through a multiplicity of elements, which can be split up during the process of meaning-making in order to form complex meaningful symbolisms (ibid: 42-44). Therefore, it is obvious that the meaning of visual representations comes from the synthesis of different varied visual and textual characteristics and the "message is independently organized and structured" (ibid: 18) by both image and verbal text. The aforesaid criteria imported by Kress and van Leeuwen (ibid: 42-44) constitute the proposed formula for the reconstruction and decoding of any modalities and semiotic representations.

Complementarily, critical discourse analysis (CDA) of the political environment, based on Wodak & Meyer (2008: 9), affirms visual signs and textual elements indicating that the "language usage with power and control" investigates multiple social conditions and political actions (ibid: 2). Broadly speaking, I have decided to apply primarily MDA in the analysis because multimodality validates a more objective and clear comprehension of visual symbols and cues.

3.3 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis, as defined by Boyatzis (1998) in Braun & Clarke (2006: 5) and other scholars, is a form of both analytic and flexible qualitative method, which performs the analysis of quotations (street slogans) and images accompanied by text (wall paintings/graffiti) – data – that are linked by frequent theme or ideas – widespread patterns – allowing me to classify this kind of visual text into categories. "Through its theoretical freedom, thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data" (ibid: 5). The terms "data" and "patterns" have been found in Braun & Clarke (2006).

Similarly, based on Holloway & Todres (2003) in Braun & Clarke (2006), the thematic analytic framework is considered the main tool for qualitative clarification. They determine that "thematizing meanings" is a way of collecting similar thematic codes to relevant groups of meaning, as this paper on the analysis of wall writing categories demonstrates (See Table 1 Wall Writing Categories).

To make this more concrete: the scope of the thematic analysis of this essay of urban discourse illustrates its thematic content and provides coherence to the study. It is necessary to clarify the following issue; both street slogan writers and graffiti writers are sharing common concerns. Therefore, throughout my field work experience and also the photographic survey, it should be asserted that the thematic patterns can overlap. Thus, even though in this study the data corpus is distinguished into thematic categories in order to be able to examine the content and the contextual meanings of some characteristic examples of public writing, the dividing lines between the categories are avowedly not completely noticeable. The material discrimination is based on the word and thematic motif frequency. Due to the limitation of space, five instances per thematic category (key themes) will be examined in this paper (fifteen instances per data subset). As Day (1993) argues

> the important point is that our analysis throughout should be animated by an endeavor to identify and develop key themes and features, to which all the individual details of analysis can be related. We need to set boundaries or we can easily get lost in the mass of data (ibid: 76).

Following Tsilimpounidi (2012: 78), the reason that I did not apply an automatic thematic coding on my data corpus, as complex data analysis software, is that my main objective was to be in continuous contact and interaction with my data; several times I needed to change the certain thematic categories depending on my analysis route and the growing data corpus. Therefore, I made the decision to define the precise deadline of my fieldwork for this paper. The time limit was set to July 2015, even though new wall projects and street slogans are constantly added to my photographic corpus.

Hence, my main purpose for conducting this thematic analysis in an inductive way according to Frith & Gleeson (2004) in Braun & Clarke (2006: 12, 17) was not only the possibility to categorize my data into groups of themes, such as socio-political (fascism, future, hope, poverty, racism, social alienation), economic, or even anti-state, but also to investigate my visual material in-depth. It is quite important to highlight the difficulty in distinguishing the social from the political thematic content due to their complementarity in issues adapted not only to social but also to political contemporary circumstances.

3.4   **Intertextual and Interdiscursive Interpretations**

To answer the third research question about the intertextual resources, it seems important to clarify that traditions play an important role among people who live inside and outside the borders of that culture. Along these lines, this study deals with the figurative lexicon specific for the Greek crisis used in the urban scenery of Athens in recent years. Cultural, historical, traditional and other social features including typical or not symbols are being considered significant factors, which influence the expansion of contemporary urban writing, as it is admitted by *Bleeps.gr*.

> Since the economic crisis I have created a series of works related to the credit crunch, but not as a straight commentary. I prefer to create allegorical images, borrowing from historical events similar to the ones in the present, philosophical researches, poetry and quotes which I alter usually to create an obscure meaning; my aim is to link the present with the past somehow. Always the past can teach us and drives us in the future. (Interview with *Bleeps.gr*, March 2015).

The use of color plays a crucial role in graffiti paintings. According to Danesi (2004: 75) "colors are, in effect, signs that we can use to represent whatever we deem appropriate." Remarkably, colors bear a lot of symbolic sense and, can therefore be interpreted in many various ways.

For instance, the color red can be interpreted either as a symbol of battle/fighting/protest/war or intensity/strength/vitality. Red and black colors are usually found in the Athenian landscape and are exploited to convey rebellious and riotous conceptions together with descriptive logos or signs (e.g. an enclosed "A" for anarchists) and colors (e.g. red for leftist groups or the combination of black and red signifying anarchism).

In the light of the above, Kress & van Leeuwen (2006) suggest that colors and forms might be said to acquire different meanings within different sociocultural contexts "…color clearly can be used to denote people, places and things as well as classes of people, places and things…" (ibid: 229). The social groups, based on the scholars (ibid: 229), share prevailing ideas and thoughts around the color issue in order to express visual and linguistic representations. For example, blue and white colors in Greek culture represent national Greek symbols like the Greek flag, as noted by Berlin & Kay (1969) in Davies (2006: 6). Hence, it becomes clear that wall writers/painters use colors to highlight and describe ideas, to communicate in a code.

CHAPTER 4   Research Design

4.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to describe the data gathering tools. During the time of conducting the study I lived in Athens, collecting data for my MA thesis in various contexts in the local society. I used a methodological approach, which includes participant observation, photo documentation and semi-structured interviews (Litosseliti 2010: 158) with urban street artists. Interviews have been carried out only with the street artists (graffitists), not with the street slogan writers. The conducted interviews were undertaken to gain a better understanding of issues that could not be completely comprehended from the photographic corpus alone. Mainly the qualitative empirical approach has been used, as my main focus is to qualitatively describe and analyze what kind of linguistic trends occur in Athenian urban writing. Thus, the study is a case study, and it would not be possible to come to universal principles, as stated at the outset.

4.2 Participant Observation - Photo Documentation

For collecting authentic visual data that reflect the wall writing usage of Athenian scene, the initial methodological tool for running this study was participant observation, since it serves to create an in-depth understanding of what street art means. Participant observation of this study was held occasionally from mid-January until mid-March 2015, in different environments. Being an active participant-member of the groups gave me the opportunity to decipher and explain the reasons why they transform the walls into a sociopolitical magazine.

> I work a lot, for the people that spend a lot of time on the streets. Unlike elsewhere in the street art world (which probably works more with criticism and irony), my motivation is to deconstruct the viewers "ordinary" perceptions, give them inner peace, joy or a smile as a new communication medium. (Interview with *Tona*, February 2015).

Regarding photo documentation, I recorded my personal experiences in a data collection, which grew larger during the fieldwork in Athens, with a satisfactory number of photographs of wall writings either with the aid of my mobile camera phone during several days of roaming in central Athens or via personal websites of street artists. Naar (2007) argued that "they are full-color and text images, which indicate the inspirational artistry, the humor and the sarcasm, the courage and the energy" (ibid: 12).

The photographic corpus contains of a total of about 1500 pictures from places in central Athens during the crisis. Some of them existed before January 2015, when I started my fieldwork in Athens. However, the majority of these wall writings have been either repainted by other works or destroyed due to weather conditions and passage of time. Nevertheless, the preexisted wall writing projects have also been included in the data corpus, because they all come up with similar issues of the current Greek crisis. This was deemed as necessary for the reliability of the research. Besides, I have decided to share a sample with everyone using Flickr. Flickr is a website that allows users to post and store photos online. Everyone can access this photo repository without username or password by clicking on the following link: https://www.flickr.com/photos/athenian_wall_writing_2015/

4.3 Semi-Structured Interviews / Sample

Eight semi-structured interviews took place from 1st of February until the 1st of March 2015. They were carried out either in Greek or in English when the interviewees did not speak Greek. Three of them were conducted with a voice recorder, mostly in public spaces in the Exarchia district, which is an intellectual and restless neighborhood in downtown Athens where mainly left thinking people, anarchists, artists, but also ordinary people live, one of them via the online call service Skype and four of them via e-mail. Broadly speaking, an average interview lasted around 30 to 40 minutes. The audiotape set of recordings and online call service Skype have all been transcribed and translated into English by me.

The interviews were semi-structured, which means that they were pre-decided and were the same for all participants (Appendix C). Most of my questions were

focused on my fundamental research question: *What do the graffiti and catchy slogan phrases on Athenian walls mean and how the messages are conveyed on them?* The order of the questions was different for each participant (if I excluded the interviews conducted via email) and, thus, the interviews were held as normal conversations about fixed issues.

The sample (Litosseliti 2010: 158) is consisted of six male Greek street artists (Bleeps.gr, Exit, Mapet, NSK, SX and Yiakou), one male stencil street artist from Germany (Tona), who has created a great amount of public artworks in some places in Europe, including Athens, but also in Asia. Lastly, one Indonesian male street artist (Wild Drawing – well known as WD) participated in this project (Appendix B).

Nonetheless, it should be noted that the process of arranging and conducting the interviews was fairly hard and challenging due to their outlawed activity; it is difficult for them to trust someone, who is not a member of their so-called closed network and who attempts to enter with the status of a researcher. This justifies why only three interviews were managed face-to-face and the rest, five, were carried out either via the online call service Skype or via email. Additionally, the interviewees appear in this study only with their tags in order to "ensure respondents' anonymity" (Litosseliti 2010: 64). To make it clearer, the most important interview sections are the following:

1. The impact of the crisis on the Athenian street art.
2. The sociopoliticized character of the Athenian urban art.
3. Typical symbols, messages, colors and forms, highly charged emotionally words and connotative messages/meanings.
4. Certain images or symbols with a particular meaning.
5. The most frequent words/word-phrases that appear in Athenian graffiti paintings and slogan writings.

4.4 Data Classification

The content of public writing gathered for this paper unveils that society and politics, economic crisis, fiscal austerity[4] measures and similar issues are considered common motifs to the street artifacts displayed in the Exarchia district and generally in the center of Athens.[5]

As Tsilimpounidi (2012) states, the use of images provides not only accuracy and objectivity to the data analysis, but also can help the researcher to validate the findings (ibid: 79). Therefore, characteristic instances of contemporary public writing are classified into two groups: street slogans and wall paintings/graffiti (Table 1). To further verify the originality of the outcomes, three thematic categories per group of data are analyzed in detail (Sections 5.3 and 5.4).

The selected images of the analysis part in this study constitute characteristic instances of the thematic coding content, and thus, the classification criteria are qualitative. This means that these distinct images were not selected unintentionally; the criterion was the frequency of the thematic content. On the other hand, it was considered crucial to include some quantitative information about the most frequent words and word-phases, used by the street artists and youth indignant writers. The list of the most common words and word-phases (Section 5.2) allows me to take into consideration the repeated thematic motifs of graffiti language, and thus, it makes the division into three thematic categories per group of data valid, as can be seen in the following table.

The table has been inspired by Avramides (2012: 6), who divides the Athenian public writing into three groups: slogan, wall painting, and graffiti. He supports the opinion that the street slogan writers express their opinions, the wall writers express their internal sentiments without being interested in influencing the public opinion, and the graffiti writers do both depending on the situation. His own interpretation derives from the architectural perspective; whether and how public writing can change the contemporary urban environment. On the other hand, this work, as a

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[4] The word "austerity" is a fairly new definition term to describe cutbacks in government spending. It has been introduced in crisis lexicon the recent years and is being detected in various articles and academic papers.

[5] However, my corpus does not include street slogans of distinct political parties or organizations.

sociolinguistic study, investigates the situated meaning of public writing via the data classification into thematic categories from a semiotic and multimodal appeal.

Table 1 Wall Writing Categories

Wall Writing	Thematic Categories	Creators	Content	Form	Audience
Street Slogans	1. Bank 2. Against Politicians-Bankers 3. Greek Crisis Lexicon	Youth Indignant	Sociopolitical, economic	Verbal Code	Passersby
Wall Paintings, Graffiti	1. Call for Action 2. fascism-nazism 3. Freedom (Liberty)-Fear-Hope	Street Artists / Graffitists	Sociopolitical, economic	Imagery Code	Passersby

4.5 **Applying the Theoretical and Methodological Framework**

My understanding of the application of semiotic and multimodal resources for analyzing and decoding the empirical data has influenced the interpretation of street slogans and wall paintings. In particular, the contextual sign coding systems, and also, the multisemiotic nature of the Athenian wall discourse, are examined in the light of my individual personal experiences and reflections on the graffiti subculture. In addition, via the data collection tools, the sociocultural background and the social conceptions of interactive communication of the wall writers are detected in the graphic images. The style of lettering, the reconceptualized symbols, the colors and the logos, as well as the wall writers' thoughts, are included in the data analysis, which, as shown, is closely connected with the theoretical and methodological framework, and thereby makes it valid.

4.6 **Ethical Considerations**

Since this study deals with the task of urban writing, which in a broader concept is characterized as unauthorized and unlicensed, ethical issues should be evaluated. At

first, all participants were informed about the special interest of my research as a sociolinguistic scrutiny about graffiti meaning decoding. In consequence, the Ethics Protocol (Appendix A) has been carefully read and signed by each of the interviewees. However, due to the reason that wall writers wish to keep their existence secret, their anonymity has been maintained; they appear only with their tags. Lastly, the set of recordings and e-mail material is internal and cannot be recovered by the participants.

CHAPTER 5   Results and Discussion

5.1 Introduction

My aim in this chapter is to peruse the sociolinguistic perspective of graffiti painting and slogan writing, considering the variety of sociopolitical meanings depending on the different thematic environment. However, before going through the abstract concept of the Athenian wall writings, it is worth briefly noting that the subsequent analysis part through the prism of multisemiotic analytical perspective is open to further discussion. As Gee (2014) highlights

> […] the validity analysis is never once for all […] other people working on our data, or similar data, will discover things that support, revise, or challenge our own conclusions. Validity is social […] (ibid: 122, 167).

Thus, whether they are true or not, the approach is debatable and may be subject to revision. Having that in mind, some readers might have some objection, considering that certain images and text representations provide a strong influence of the ideological viewpoint of graffiti. This issue becomes highly understandable, if one considers, according to Kress & van Leeuwen (1996), the difficulty of the task as "a highly political enterprise" (ibid: 42).

5.2 Most Frequents Words / Word-Phrases

The following tables summarize the most frequent words and word-phases found on Athenian walls during the generalized debt crisis period by grouping the research data for thematic similarities. Before elaborating this presentation, it is important to highlight that the Athenian wall language – as all wall writing – establishes an instant reaction to the times of crisis and a reflection of the situation in which the writers live.

Furthermore, new literary artifacts and slogan phrases appear on the public sphere replacing the old ones, as has already been mentioned in the methodology

chapter. Thus, the research material is not static; it increases and changes constantly. Hence, the following three word tables establish the thematic framework of the most frequent words and word-phases in Athenian graffiti context at the time of the study.

Consequently, new texts have already appeared on the walls; as the anger and the frustration are perpetually rising to the surface due to social and financial problems, so the artistic inspiration and the dialogic imagination are multiplied. Therefore, in order to manage my verbo-visual documentation of public writing, I divided these words into three word categories, as follows: 1) Political System, 2) Society and Politics, and 3) Economic Terms (words with different meanings during the crisis). Day (1993) argues that

> In general, it will involve going through the data case by case in a systematic way, and deciding whether and how bits of data should be categorized. This requires considerable concentration, in order to ensure that all the appropriate categories for all the data have been considered (ibid: 126).

Moreover, it becomes feasible to address the research question of this study with these three categories of words; the various reasons for the extended Athenian wall writings are fairly presented.

Finally, I decided to list these words in an alphabetical index of terms in the nominative case (either singular or plural form), devoting particular attention to the interpretation of certain frequently recurring words. The word frequency can be found in the following thematic categories with the indicative street slogans and graffiti figures. However, it was impossible to include all the instances in this work; thus, the potential readers can easily have access to the data corpus, and then, it could be figured out the bidirectional link between the word frequencies and the thematic patterns (Appendix D).

Table 2 Political System

1.	*εξουσία* → power
2.	*κράτος* → state
3.	*κυβέρνηση* → government
4.	*νόμοι* → laws
5.	*πολιτικό σύστημα* → political system
6.	*σύστημα* → system
7.	*υπουργός* → minister

Table 3 Society and Politics

1.	*αγώνας* → fight
2.	*αλληλεγγύη* → solidarity
3.	*αναρχία* → anarchy
4.	*αναταραχή* → agitation
5.	*ανατροπή* → overturn
6.	*ανεργία* → unemployment
7.	*αντίδραση* → reaction
8.	*αντι-ναζί* → anti-nazi
9.	*αντίσταση* → resistance
10.	*αντιφασισμός* → antifascism
11.	*ανυπακοή* → disobedience
12.	*αξιοπρέπεια* → dignity
13.	*αστυνομία* → police
14.	*δίκαιο* → right
15.	*διαφθορά* → corruption
16.	*εκδίκηση* → revenge
17.	*ελευθερία* → freedom/liberty
18.	*έλπίς* → hope
19.	*εξαθλίωση* → seediness/misery
20.	*εξέγερση* → revolt
21.	*επανάσταση* → revolution
22.	*επιβολή* → enforcement/infliction
23.	*επίθεση* → attack
24.	*ευρο-εξόντωση* → euro-extermination
25.	*θάνατος* → death
26.	*κατάθλιψη* → depression
27.	*κλέφτης* → thief
28.	*κοινωνία* → society
29.	*κρατιστές* → statists
30.	*κράτος τρομοκράτης* → terrorist state

31. *λαός* → people	
32. *λήθη* → oblivion	
33. *μάχη* → battle	
34. *(χωρίς) μέλλον* → (no) future	
35. *μετανάστες* → immigrants	
36. *μίσος* → hate	
37. *μολότοφ* → molotov cocktail	
38. *μπάτσοι* → cops	
39. *νεο-ναζί* → neo-nazi	
40. *νέος κόσμος* → new world	
41. *ξένοι* → foreigners	
42. *όχι* → no	
43. *παραίτηση* → resignation	
44. *πολιτισμός του φόβου* → civilization of fear	
45. *ρατσισμός* → racism	
46. *σκλάβος* → slave	
47. *ταξικός πόλεμος* → class war	
48. *τρόμος* → terror	
49. *υποδούλωση* → submission	
50. *φασισμός* → fascism	
51. *φόβος* → fear	
52. *φτώχια* → poverty	
53. *χάος* → chaos	

Table 4 Economic Terms

1. *Γκρέξιτ* → GREXIT – Greek Exit from the Eurozone
2. *Διαπραγματεύσεις* → negotiations
3. *διάσωση* → bailout
4. *Διεθνές Νομισματικό Ταμείο – ΔΝΤ* → International Monetary Fund – IMF
5. *δραχμή* → drachma
6. *ΕΕ* → EU
7. *ευρώ* → euro
8. *Ευρωπαϊκή Κεντρική Τράπεζα* → European Central Bank (ECB)
9. *κούρεμα* → haircut
10. *κρίση* → crisis
11. *λεφτά/χρήματα* → money/funds
12. *λιτότητα* → austerity

13. *μνημόνιο* → memorandum
14. *νέα μέτρα* → new measures
15. *τράπεζα* → bank
16. *τρόικα* → troika
17. *φόροι* → taxes
18. *χρεοκοπία* → default
19. *χρέος* → debt

5.3 Street Slogan Analysis

In this part of the study, five instances of street slogans per thematic coding category are to be examined. I have chosen the most frequent thematic framework, as shown in the above tables. The most frequent thematic content of the Athenian urban landscape could be summarized in the following key-themes listed alphabetically: anarchy, (anti)-nazi, (anti)-fascism, bank, crisis, drachma, (neo)-nazi, politicians, troika. However, due to the limited space of this work, I decided to classify the sample of street slogans data into the three following broader thematic categories; *Bank*, *Against Politicians-Bankers*, and *Greek Crisis Lexicon*, taking into account the thematic pattern frequencies.

5.3.1 Category "Bank"

The first category is referred to banking system of Greece and the socioeconomic impact of the current Eurozone financial crisis on the Greek banking system. The sample of this category consists of five characteristic instances derived from a wide spectrum of pictures, which particularly indicate the indignation of street slogan writers against the banking system. Subsequently, as defined by Matsaganis (2013), it describes the rise of Greek social resistance and disobedience against the bailout and the harsh austerity programs (ibid: 4-6). The messages of these wall writings are considered of particularly economic nature with social perspectives. Thereon, multimodal analysis of the wall language message follows.

"ΚΑΛΥΤΕΡΑ ΔΡΑΧΜΗ ΚΑΙ ΑΦΡΑΓΚΟΙ ΠΑΡΑ ΕΥΡΩ ΚΑΙ ΣΚΛΑΒΟΙ"
"KALITERA DRAXMI KE AFRAGI PARA EURO KE SKLAVI"
"BETTER PENNILESS WITH DRACHMA THAN SLAVES IN EURO"

The picture in figure 9 was captured in downtown Athens a short time before the conduction of the Greek bailout referendum on 5th July 2015 ("Referendum July 5 2015," n.d., Final Results of the July 5th Greek Referendum section, retrieved 2015/07/12).[6] This street slogan is written on the exterior wall of the bank next to ATM machine and expresses the thoughts of writer(s), sending a message to lenders of the bank. Almost fifteen different facets of this wall lettering have been found in different places around the city of Athens. These instances are included in my data corpus. Kitis (2011) argues that the exterior wall of the bank is obviously strongly connected to the memorable meaning of the street slogan.

> …the meaning of slogans is not dependent on the texts alone; their
> physical context on the street is just as important (ibid: 63-64).

The same applies to all the examples. The public space is the canvas and the spray is the struggling voice of urban protesters. Regarding the linguistic form of the lettering, the capitalized letter and rhyme formation should be mentioned. A rhyme

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[6] The focal question of the Greek referendum 2015 was whether Greece should continue fiscal austerity programs imposed by its creditors' willingness or not.

is a saying when two or more words have similar terminal sounds (άφραγκοι [penniless] –σκλάβοι [slaves]). In fact, rhyming can be an important technique to help the readers remember the meaning and content of the street slogan. Rhythm, rhyme, and imagery of this street slogan can provide great support for the phrase meaning memorization.

From a multimodal understanding of this sample of protest wall writing, the Euro symbol (€) as the European currency unit is being equivalent with the swastika (as can be seen from the picture). Through the analysis and the careful consideration of the interaction between the street slogan thematic content and the historical past of Europe, one could memorize the role, the history, and the beliefs of the nazi party in Germany in the 1930s. This can be explained by Kress & van Leuven (2006), who state the basic pile of their theory; the space and communicative (semiotic) modes are interconnected and should be comprehended through the light of historical and social context. Also, the explanation by van Dijk (2003: 89) should be added that the social context encapsulates both the individual and collective interactions as a field of sociopolitical process. What can be found particularly interesting in this comment is that the contemporary street slogan writers express their frustration against the censured influence of Germany and the country's control of the European Union. They stress that they prefer their national currency "Drachma" instead of the Euro. In this writing the Greek national currency is associated with freedom whilst the euro currency is connected with slavery, respectively. The slogans express the vivid Athenian environment in which issues of "freedom and slavery" have been detected several times. They are ongoing themes.

Figure 10 *BURN A BANK YOO TOO; YOU CAN DO IT,* **Plaka, Athens**

"ΚΑΨΕ ΚΙ ΕΣΥ ΜΙΑ ΤΡΑΠΕΖΑ; ΜΠΟΡΕΙΣ"
"KAPSE KI ESI MIA TRAPEZA; BORIS"
"BURN A BANK YOO TOO; YOU CAN DO IT"

Figure 11 *BURN THE BANKS,* **Panepistimiou Street, Athens**

"ΚΑΨΤΕ ΤΙΣ ΤΡΑΠΕΖΕΣ"
"KAPSTE TIS TRAPEZES"
"BURN THE BANKS"

Figure 12 *FIRE TO THE BANKS,* Solonos Street, Athens

"ΦΩΤΙΑ ΣΤΙΣ ΤΡΑΠΕΖΕΣ"
"FOTIA STIS TRAPEZES"
"FIRE TO THE BANKS"

The interpretation of the foregoing three pictures (Figures 10, 11, and 12) explains why they constitute political slogans with mostly economic thematic content written either on the exterior wall of the bank, next to the ATM machine, or on any public surfaces.

All of them adhere to the idea that the banking crisis has affected the living conditions of the social majority globally. More specifically, Greek protesters make explicit their rage and hatred against the whole banking system using this form of hate language in public facilities. If we delve into these slogans, from a linguistic perspective, it becomes evident that the second person singular or plural usage in imperative mood "Κάψε/Κάψτε → Burn" indicates that the street slogan creators induce someone, in our case the angry Greek citizens, to perform an action, which is presented here as something imperative.

Approaching the text's plot in a more in-depth linguistic way focusing on the vocabulary choice would certainly guide us to foresee the visual and textual manners that Greeks use in sample wall writing. Via the specific chosen style with font and deep black or red color as a mode, the reader observes the bold political statements. As Kress and van Leeuwen (2006: 229) claim, the "…color is primarily related to

affect…" The statements, on the other hand, appear as repetitive writing codes, revealing the gravity and decisiveness of the wall writers, on the one hand, and their exasperation with the world banking system crisis, on the other. The writer(s) of street slogan in figure 10 "BURN A BANK YOO TOO; YOU CAN DO IT" applies the technique of stereotypical phrases, as the phrase "YOU CAN DO IT," which is easily memorized by the public. It is a popular expression, which is widely used in both advertising language and in political statements. The street slogan writer, via these techniques (intertextual references and different discourses), expects to transmit the idea that the political expression of the writing is crucial for the potential reader.

Besides, it is worth mentioning the obvious connection between the ideas' significance of fire and bank in most of the derived slogans from my corpus, which refer to the banking crisis in Athens. As can be seen, the words *burn* and *fire* accompany the feelings of hate and resistance of the wall writers against the bankers and may display repressed feelings of anger and anxiety (Goutsos & Polymeneas 2014: 682).[7] Thus, these slogan writings were applied in the political context as repetitious statements, recommending a section for interaction and dialogue processing between the wall writers and the readers. Additionally, an exclamation mark "!" is sometimes added at the end of those phrases, underlining the strong feelings of the demonstrators.

Furthermore, if the word order in those slogans, like the lyrics of a revolutionary anti-state poem would be examined, then, it would be obvious that there is a focus on the word "τράπεζα/τράπεζες → bank/banks," denoting that the banking system is mainly one of the multiple causes of the financial crisis as a core of what happened. As a consequence, analyzing the text in terms of social interaction, thoroughly taking into account both the power relations among writers and the public opinion (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996: 2), it could be affirmed that this form of hate speech acquires an extended comprehension of how effectively protesters express themselves against the social degradation.

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[7] In the period of May 2010, when the first impacts of the economic crisis were felt in many neighborhoods of Athens, three people "died of asphyxiation from the bomb's toxic fumes." This incident was a tragic consequence of a fire in a bank in central Athens during the anti-austerity demonstrations and also a big shock for the Greek society. Noteworthy, it should be noted that this incident occurred once and it unquestionably constitutes a negative and unpleasant memory of that period.

Figure 13 *BANK OF BERLIN*, Panepistimiou Street, Athens

"BANK OF BERLIN…"

The picture in figure 13 was taken on February 2015 during the peaceful demonstrations outside the Greek Parliament in Syntagma Square in Athens. It is a street slogan belonging to the coding thematic category "BANK", as has been determined from the data classification and it refers to the German pressure against Greece. Obviously, special attention has been paid to the sociopolitical commentary of the slogan writer demonstrator, who has made a circle around the letters –EEC– referring to the European Economic Community, which, according to the writers, aims at financial and political "slavery" towards financially weaker countries of the EU.[8]

The writer here apparently attempts to make a sociopolitical comment expressing the indignation about the context of European equality among EU in the current circumstances. The dots probably indicate the idea of the perpetuation of that situation in Greece. Additionally, this warning wall graphic could visually express that the future of the Greek people and possibly the future of the Eurozone (via the circle round EEC -European Economic Community-) is still uncertain.

5.3.2 Category "Against Politicians-Bankers"

In this thematic category special attention has been devoted not only to the Greek political corruption, which has been approached as the heart and the cradle of the Greek crisis but also to the corrupt banking system. Street quotes with the words "κλέφτες-thieves, ληστές-robbers" appear almost everywhere in Athenian center.

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[8] The analysis doesn't show what the letters "H" and "C" outside the circle mean.

Concerning this group of street slogans, one might assert insult since slogans constitute a warning and an extremely alarming act. The insults against politicians and bankers are considered caustically ironic and they are strongly related to the common idea among indignant Greek demonstrators that politicians do not care about the people's will, that they are immoral and that they do not express the "ideology" which elected them. Hebdige (1979) explains the term of ideology as "the word ideology came to acquire a much wider range of meanings than had previously been the case" (ibid: 10).

Similarly, the slogans also refer to the banker's assault against the Greek people, who are driven by their quest for more money (bankers). Street slogans such as "ψεύτες-liars" and "κλέφτες-thieves" codify, through constant repetition, the general impression about politicians and bankers within the Athenian urban landscape, especially during the last years of Greek crisis and struggling economic circumstances (Matsaganis 2013: 14, 16).

Figure 14 *THE THIEVES ARE HERE,* Stadiou Street-Omonoia Square, Athens

"ΕΔΩ ΕΙΝΑΙ ΟΙ ΚΛΕΦΤΕΣ"
"EDO INE I KLEFTES"
"THE THIEVES ARE HERE"
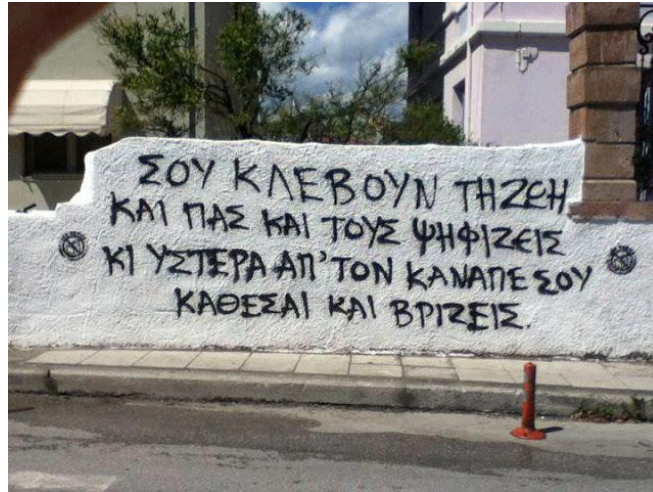
Figure 15 *THEY STEAL YOUR LIFE AND YOU GO TO VOTE THEM AND THEN YOU SIT ON THE COUCH AND BELCH,* **Metaxourgeio, Athens**

"ΣΟΥ ΚΛΕΒΟΥΝ ΤΗ ΖΩΗ ΚΑΙ ΠΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥΣ ΨΗΦΙΖΕΙΣ ΚΙ ΥΣΤΕΡΑ ΑΠ' ΤΟΝ ΚΑΝΑΠΕ ΣΟΥ ΚΑΘΕΣΑΙ ΚΑΙ ΒΡΙΖΕΙΣ"
"SOU KLEVOUN TI ZOI KE PAS KE TOUS PSIFIZIS KI ISTERA AP'TON KANAPE SOU KATHESE KAI TOUS VRIZIS"
"THEY STEAL YOUR LIFE AND YOU GO TO VOTE THEM AND THEN YOU SIT ON THE COUCH AND BELCH"

The unlocking of the first two slogans of this category "Against Politicians-Bankers," shown in Figure 14 and Figure 15, respectively, from a multimodal semiotic perspective, develops the general idea that Greek politicians are not only liars and thieves, creating the circumstances for the development of political corruption, but also that bankers steal money of the Greek people.

In the first picture the local adverb "ΕΔΩ-HERE" introduces the significance of location (central Athens, close to Greek Parliament). According to Goutsos & Polymeneas (2014) local adverbs like "ΕΔΩ-HERE" have acquired high frequency in the Athenian public space (ibid: 688) and have also been detected several times in my data corpus in instances where it relates to the social interactions within a certain place. As defined by Hart (2010: 57) and Chilton & Schaffner (2002: 30) in Goutsos and Polymeneas (2014: 690) , the local adverb "ΕΔΩ-HERE" functions not only as a medium of locality within Athenian centre but also as cognition between Athenian demonstrators with the collective identity "WE" and the bankers-politicians with the criticism "THEY."

In the second picture the third person plural pronoun or verbal type "ΚΛΕΒΟΥΝ-THEY STEAL" is mainly negatively classified in terms of collocation in contrast to the first person plural pronoun "ΕΜΕΙΣ-WE" defining the collective spirit. It is clear throughout these cases that the slogan writer(s) try to alert the Greek citizens by writing either on the exterior walls of banks or on any public surface. In the second example the second person pronoun and verbal types "YOU GO, YOU VOTE, YOU SIT, and YOU BELCH" indicate the direct and instant address to Athenian passersby to be activated in the light of irony and sarcasm.

Figure 16 *ROBB€RS: BANKS GOVERNMENT MONEY,* Kerameikos, Athens[9]

"ΛΗΣΤ€Σ: ΤΡΑΠΕΖΕΣ ΚΥΒΕΡΝΗΣΗ ΧΡΗΜΑΤΑ"
"LIST€S: TRAPEZES KIVERNISI CHRIMATA"
"ROBB€RS: BANKS GOVERNMENT MONEY"

Similarly, picture 16 could be considered an attempt to show that the message connotation is that the government and the banks steal money from people. In the first word of this slogan, "ΛΗΣΤ€Σ-ROBB€RS," the use of the euro sign "€" indicates the critical perspective on EU in the Athenian landscape.
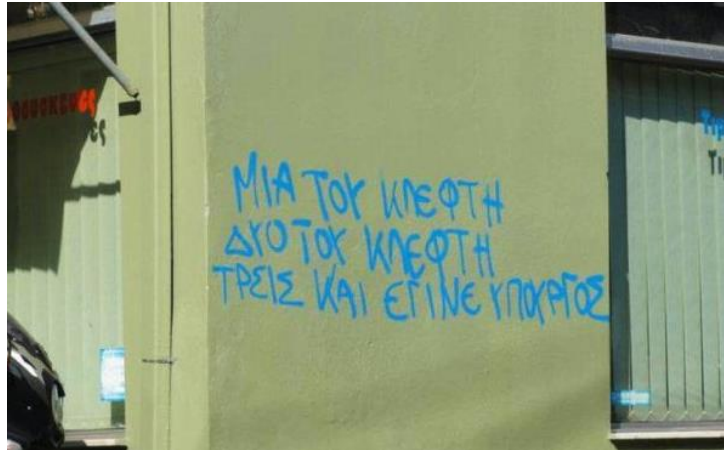
Figure 17 *ONCE A THIEF, TWICE A THIEF; THIRD TIME A MINISTER,* Metaxa Street-Exarchia, Athens

"ΜΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΚΛΕΦΤΗ, ΔΥΟ ΤΟΥ ΚΛΕΦΤΗ, ΤΡΕΙΣ ΚΑΙ ΕΓΙΝΕ ΥΠΟΥΡΓΟΣ"
"MIA TOU KLEFTI, DIO TOU KLEFTI, TRIS KE EGINE IPOURGOS"
"ONCE A THIEF, TWICE A THIEF, THIRD TIME A MINISTER"

The visual writing shown in figure 17 is derived from the Greek proverb "Μια του κλέφτη...δυο του κλέφτη...τρεις και τον τσακώσανε," which means that someone got away the first two times, but the third time, he got caught. Concerning its format, the slogan is written with uppercase letters, as most of the street slogans in my corpus, and it is divided into three parts, possibly representing the lyrics of a revolutionary voice, giving musicality, conceptuality and a certain rhythm to the statement.

This particular wall writing is relevant to a political movement trying to get rid of politicians who are considered to be "thieves" in the Greek government. It is a frequent indicative slogan of the social scream or declaration placing the Greek society in a war condition with the state. This social language of popular indignation towards the government and the state, dominates when anarchists, demonstrators and mostly leftist political thinking people express their thoughts on public walls of abandoned public buildings or monuments. These topics refer to riotous demonstrations, or even satirize the ruling class as in our case. Furthermore, the words are expressive and the caustic message is overemphasized via the specific visual arrangement of the lyrics (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996: 40-41). The main situated meaning of this writing is the political corruption and also the willingness of Greeks to change it.

With reference to the above, it should be mentioned the Indignant Movement –
Αγανακτισμένοι (Aganaktismeni) from May to August 2011, which was a protest
action at the Greek Parliament Building on Syntagma Square (Goutsos & Polymeneas
2014: 675), calling ministers "thief-ministers" or "Graecokleptocrats" that demand
reelection. The rhythmic repetition of various protest slogans like "Hellas, Hellas" or
"once a thief, twice a thief, third time a minister" was enhanced with collective
practices - mountzas - (a traditional offensive gesture among the Greeks), chanting
"Κλέφτες! Κλέφτες! - Thieves! Thieves!" near the Greek Parliament Building (ibid:
680, 685).

Figure 18 *ROBBERS / CLASS AGAINST CLASS / MOLOTOV NOT LOANS…,* **Panepistimiou Street,
Athens**

"ΛΗΣΤΕΣ / ΤΑΞΗ ΕΝΑΝΤΙΟΝ ΤΑΞΗΣ / ΜΟΛΟΤΟΦ ΟΧΙ ΔΑΝΕΙΑ…"
"LISTES / TAXI ENANTION TAXIS / MOLOTOV OCHI DANIA…"
"ROBBERS / CLASS AGAINST CLASS / MOLOTOV NOT LOANS…"

The visual representation featured in figure 18 includes three slogans, intending to
be a very meaningful symbolic writing as a whole. The first one is "ROBBERS," which
refers to the corrupted Greek political landscape, the second one is "CLASS AGAINST
CLASS," which constitutes a social commentary on the economic slowdown and class
war, and the last one is "MOLOTOV NOT LOANS," which is connected with the Greek
indignation.

    All these slogans are represented by quite short phrases, which are written with
bold black capital letters to draw public's attention. Therefore, as these words could

need an explanation, in our case these slogans constitute clear and unequivocal commentaries expressing that for the youth almost everything that had value disappeared or was carelessly squandered by a society caring only about money (loans). In the eyes of the youth, Greek society seems to be ready to sacrifice everything of value just for the sake of a fake social status linked to having temporal success. Moreover, it is noteworthy that these revolutionary street slogans focus on the dramatic impacts of austerity on the lower middle classes.

5.3.3 Category "Greek Crisis Lexicon"

This category consists of words with different, mostly connotative, meanings concerning their emotional gravity since the last seven years of struggling (three bailouts). It is crucial to include all these common words and themes in this paper, since they to the fullest extent reflect the microcosm of the current social problems; the feelings of anxiety and fear for the future of the Greek nation.[10]

Figure 19 *TROIKA GET OUT,* Panepistimiou Street, Athens

"ΕΞΩ Η ΤΡΟΙΚΑ"
"EXO I TROIKA"
"TROIKA GET OUT"

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[10] The last two street slogans in this category are written in English. It was deemed appropriate to include the words "crisis" and "drachma" (even though they are written in English), because they appear everywhere in the center of Athens; this proves the universality of these street slogans and also reflects in the best possible way the current Greek situation.

The financial term "TROIKA," or mainly the Hellenized word "TPOIKA," is mentioned several times, not only on any public surfaces in Athens, but also in every article globally dealing with the financial crisis in Greece.[11] The public writers of this slogan apply uppercase bold characters shouting angrily to the "TROIKA" to get out and hollering against the subsequent sociopolitical degradation of quality of life. The application of the local adverb "ΕΞΩ-OUT" functions as an indication of a social location (Goutsos & Polymeneas 2014: 688), meaning out of Greece. Practically, the main objective of this large lettering slogan is to transmit a direct and clarion message to the "TROIKA."

Figure 20 *NO TO FEAR,* **Athens**

"OXI ΣΤΟ ΦΟΒΟ"
"OCHI STO FOVO"
"NO TO FEAR"

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[11] The EU "TROIKA," based on the Financial Times Lexicon is a slang term for the three European institutions which have the most power over the economic future of Greece as it is clarified within the European Union. The three organizations are the European Commission (EC), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the European Central Bank (ECB).

Figure 21 *NO TO TERROR*, Athens

"OXI ΣΤΟΝ ΤΡΟΜΟ"
"OCHI STON TROMO"
"NO TO TERROR"

The pictures 19, 20, and 21 introduce three word terms, "τρόικα-troika, φόβος-fear, and τρόμος-terror," which have received a considerably different semantic meaning during the times of crisis. Given the oversized graffiti lettering of the linguistic code as a discursive function of red and black graphics in font according to O'Halloran (2008: 450), the impression is committed that the Greeks will be bond "slaves" in case they fail to repay the massive loans from their creditors on time. The above street slogans appeared in central Athens some days before the Greek referendum in July 2015. They reveal the full extent of the feelings of the Greeks against European institutions and the country's creditors. They also claim to show that the Greek nation can recover without fear, terror, and submission.

Furthermore, from the historical perspective of these street slogans, as an intertextual reference, the written word "OXI-NO" on the Athenian walls reminds "THE DAY OF NO!" of October 28th 1940, when the Greek Prime Minister and dictator Ioannis Metaxas strongly gave a negative response of "OXI-NO"[12] to Mussolini's demands to take over Greece, thus repulsing the Italian attack. October 28th of each year is dedicated to the National Day of No for Greeks. Accordingly, the link between the Greek past and present, and also the possible interpretations of similar situations, constitute a source of motivational stimuli for slogan writers.

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[12] A closer transliteration of the Greek word "OXI" would be "OCHI."

Figure 22 *WHERE IS MY DRACHMA?,* **Athens**

Figure 22 responds as a dynamic street slogan written in English on the exterior wall of a bank in central Athens ending with a question mark. In terms of contextualization, the writer asks "WHERE IS MY DRACHMA?" referring either to nostalgia of a group of Greek people for their national currency or to the value of the Drachma and the purchasing power of the Greeks before and after joining the euro. The message is composed entirely with capital letters and the question mark "?" allows the beginning of a dialogue processing between the writer and the public.

From a multimodal perspective the usage of capital letters and the punctuation mark gives access to the reader's perceptibility realizing the font and the style of the slogan. Additionally, following Martin's (1968) thought cited in Kress & van Leeuwen (2006), it could be noted that the message is characterized by high communicative power emphasizing on the word "DRACHMA" (ibid: 140). According to the scholars (ibid), the picture is at eye catching level (as most of the instances analyzed in this paper) influencing both the reader's ideological perspective and the social power of the statement. From a sociolinguistic perspective, it is worth noting that the decoding of this distinct meaning is not accidental. Having in our mind that the social texts written under certain social circumstances profess specific social meaning, it is easy to accept that the post "WHERE IS MY DRACHMA?" is strongly related to the broader context of the banking crisis. Hodge and Kress (1988) suggested that the "…social context and purpose…" are intrinsically intertwined (ibid: 5).

Figure 23 *MERRY CRISIS AND A HAPPY NEW FEAR*, Sina Street, Athens

"MERRY CRISIS AND A HAPPY NEW FEAR" constitutes a wordplay slogan directly connected with the common phrase related to the Christmas season "Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year." *Christmas* is replaced by *crisis* and *year* is replaced by *fear* respectively. The strong link between the words fear and crisis uncovers the feelings of sadness and subsequent anxiety associated with the economic measures. Based on the Greek political discourse, the word *crisis* was introduced into the contemporary everyday vocabulary of the Greek people as the main key word slogan of the 2008 revolution in Athens, after the shooting of 15 year old student by the police on December 6, 2008 in the Exarchia district ("Kathimerini Newspaper," retrieved 2015/03/17).[13] As wall protesters write, they feel the need to express the perception of the country's dismal future. Thus, according to Alogoskoufis (2012), the protest actions in 2008 constituted the "onset of the 2008 financial crisis;" the mass student demonstrations signified the end of Greek society of the last decades (ibid: 2, 5, 11).

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[13] The newspaper *Kathimerini* published an article on December 6, 2014. Six years after the dramatic events of December 2008.

5.4 Wall Paintings - Graffiti Analysis

In this part of the study, five instances[14] of political graffiti writing per thematic coding category with the most frequent thematic framework are analyzed. The most frequent thematic framework of the Athenian political graffiti paintings could be summarized in the following words listed alphabetically: (anti)-fascism, crisis, fascism, fear, freedom, hope, nazism, slavery. However, again, due to the limited space of this study, the sample of political graffiti is divided into the three following broader thematic categories, considering not only the word frequencies, but also the material data; *Call for Action*, *fascism-nazism*, *Freedom (Liberty)-Fear-Hope.*

5.4.1 Category "Call for Action"

The first thematic category of political graffiti sample consists of some typical pictures, which highlight the voice of the Athenian society; how Greek Athenian street artists face the effects of the crisis. The transmission of political messages via wall paintings, as well as their conceptual visualization, contributes to the development of sociopolitical propaganda. Wodak & Cillia (2006) argue that

> [...] discourses express societal power relations, which in turn are affected by discourses. This 'overall discourse' of society, which could be visualized as a ''diskursives Gewimmel'' (literally: discursive swarming) [...] (ibid: 714).

This assigns various meanings analyzing the images, whose content is connected with iconic and semantic symbols and logos.

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[14] Figures 28 and 29 are examined jointly.

Figure 24 *NAK€D CHRISTMAS!,* Evripidou Street-Psiri, Athens (street artist: Bleeps.gr)

"ΓΥΜΝΑ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥΓ€ΝΝΑ!"
"YIMNA CHRISTOUY€NNA!"
"NAKED CHRISTMAS!"

In the first example, figure 24, the linguistic code is analyzed in accordance with the pictorial code, as they are strongly unified as a whole. This sociopolitical graffiti constitutes an ironic social commentary, which according to O'Halloran (2008: 448) conceptualizes the linguistic content image and the image language during the Christmas period. Everyone would see the cowardly efforts to promote a festive atmosphere as a gradually deconstructed market. Thus, it acquires an ironic satirical tone, as the iconographic representation with the festival sense is contrast to the religiosity and to the reality of fictitious happiness. It is justified by the fact that the festive element does not exist if the citizens cannot consume. The obvious irony could also be symbolized by the exclamation mark "!" at the end of the statement (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 48) and by the iconic gesture of a sad compliant face of a young woman with "…subversive value" (Hebdige 1979: 3).

It could be asserted that this image with the special facial expression and body posture creates "a visual form of direct address" (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 117-118), which means that the figure looks straight with a direct gaze at the potential reader, trying to start a dialogue. The political discourse in this mural refers to the homeless people and exploits the Christmas period of love at a time when poverty and homelessness exist. So, in essence, according to the Athenian street artist *Exit,* it is a social commentary, which reflects the whole idea of modern society.

Social and caustic commentary uses anything recognizable. We do not forget our culture and our roots, but nevertheless not remain inactive. It is purely symbolic. It's a way to stay within the narrow graffiti and create something that is communicated to a wide audience. (Interview with *Exit*, February 2015).

The mode of blue color is used repeatedly as the main background in the artifacts of *Bleeps.gr* playing an important role in the project. The scholars assert that "the color modality is characterized as an important aspect for decoding the compositionality of image" (ibid: 228). According to the creator, *Bleeps.gr*, this figure may not have a clear political handling, but it transmits a clear political idea and color, because as the artist stated, both of them have social dynamics in Greek society.

Accordingly, the consolidation of both semiotic modes builds a metaphor showing expanded synergy of the situated meaning. The "€" symbol, as a mode, is accompanied by the sad compliant face of the figure, which is intersected with the framework of the Eurozone crisis along the prevailing pessimistic financial climate. On the other hand, the figure wears the Christmas symbols like the Christmas cap and the Christmas garland, whereas the focal point remains the warning wake-up message for action against poverty, among others. In visual details *Bleeps.gr*, according to Chaffee (1993: 8-9) in Tsilimpounidi & Walsh (2014: 87), applies mostly special coding systems along with textual-iconographic syntheses in order to develop deeper sociopolitical and ideological implications. However, at the same, his painting technique aims to be easily decoded and quickly comprehended by passersby.

Figure 25 *WAKE UP,* Psiri, Athens (street artist: Bleeps.gr)[15]

"ΞΥΠΝΗΣΤΕ!"
"XIPNISTE!"
"WAKE UP!"

Figure 26 *40 YEARS,* Corner Theatrou square & Menandrou Street-Psiri, Athens (street artist: Bleeps.gr)[16]

"40 XPONIA"
"40 CHRONIA"
"40 YEARS"

The images featured in Figure 25 and Figure 26[17] respectively, highlight the relationship between Greece and EU as it is perceived by the Athenian street artist's

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[15] Figure 25 is based on the "Wake Up" project, which took place in central Athens for several years in the past, available at www.bleeps.gr. The following "The Wake Up Call" documentary describes the Street art activity in downtown Athens. Here you access the video: https://vimeo.com/55286729 (retrieved 2015/10/23).
[16] The street artist, *Bleeps.gr*, gives the title "40 Years of Debtocracy" to his work.

gaze, *Bleeps.gr*. The creator highlights his attempts to force Greek people to look around on the urban landscape by applying both artistic and activist political sub-discourse.

Metaphorically, the first project is considered a reverberating game through a visualized stimulus, which strives to advance internal thoughts, but finally in the realistic motif of everyday life is considered the wakeup call for the Athenian society. The choice of a girl blowing the trumpet is not accidental; it emphasizes innocence. Therefore, this wall artifact can be considered as either an exhortation or a reminder.

Furthermore, figure 26 is an equally complex and diachronic updated political graffiti found in Athens, which depicts a woman (metaphorically the figure could refer to Greece), keeping a bag full of Euros with a yellow halo on her head, and with the title "40 Years." The golden leaf could also refer to Byzantine iconography by portraying the Virgin Mary. This work, according to the creator *Bleeps.gr*, was created in 2011 and is still on display in downtown Athens. The fact that it seems exceptionally relevant nowadays could be said to make it diachronic.

To cite the writer's quotes from an interview conducted by Nicole Blommers (15 June 2015): "I would have thought art activism can intensify certain initiatives and the subjects, thus play a part in spreading ideas and yes a discourse on various topics" ("Street Art Europe," retrieved 2015/07/03). In essence, even though it is confirmed by numerous scholarly studies that street art opens a dialogue platform with the passersby influencing the urban scenery and ideology, the street artists *Exit* and *WD* assert that a piece of art on walls cannot be a chance to open a dialogue among other people. They do not believe that their aesthetic intervention could set off any changes; they do not accept the idea that street art could solve the current society's issues. As can be uncovered, the street artists' opinions vary depending on their individual approach to sociopolitical affairs.

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[17] It is noticeable to refer that in these two instances both languages are used; Greek and English. This characteristic has been identified in numerous artworks. However, the reason remains open for further discussion.

Figure 27 *WE LIVED OUR LIVES; WRONG· SO WE CHANGED OUR PATHWAY (LIVES),* **Corner Konstantinoupoleos & Iera Odos Street-Kerameikos, Athens (street artist: Bleeps.gr)**

"ΠΗΡΑΜΕ ΤΗ ΖΩΗ ΜΑΣ; ΛΑΘΟΣ· ΚΙ ΑΛΛΑΞΑΜΕ ΖΩΗ"
"PIRAME TI ZOI MAS; LATHOS· KI ALLAXAME ZOI"
"WE LIVED OUR LIVES; WRONG· SO WE CHANGED OUR PATHWAY (LIVES)"

This artwork borrows elements of the traditional art and, thus, the insertion of the chair, table and other painted elements (glass with water, the painted urn with roses) in blue are explained by referring to the classic colors of the Aegean Sea. All this referring to Greek tradition reminds people of the remote past. *Bleeps.gr* claims that in this project the human figure within the fake wooden frame gives the impression of relics. Also, he mentions that the hat with the Greek national emblem creates an ironic comment on the established Greek perceptions. Moreover, the protagonist figure refers rather to a fashionable hipster, according to *Bleeps.gr*, wearing an imprinted T-shirt with the flags of Great Britain and USA, which can be explained as the obvious fear of the increasing globalization of the world economy. Hence, it should be mentioned that it could refer to the crisis period as one of the main root causes for the current Eurozone crisis. A deeper look at this picture, according to the scholars Kress & van Leeuwen (2006: 119), provides the connotations of the ideological background of national superiority – via the visual representation of the national emblem of Greece – ("Hellenic Presidency," retrieved

2015/03/18),[18] which combines the message of opposition to the European integration.

According to Fairclough (1992) intertextuality is defined as:

> […] text may incorporate another text without the latter being explicitly cued: one can respond to another text in the way one words one's own text […] (ibid: 102).

In terms of intertextuality, a verse from the poem "Denial" (Άρνηση) of Greek poet Seferis[19] can be identified, including the musical version of Mikis Theodorakis, on the label that the figure keeps. According to Anagnostakis (2012)

> the issue could not have been that "notorious" missing semicolon in the penultimate line of the poem "Denial" alone. Theodoraki's melodic phrase turned Seferis's emphatic noun "λάθος" ("We took our life: a mistake!") into an adverb ("We took our life in a wrong way!"). Whereas Seferis's version implies a certain hubris in even daring to take control of our life, Theodoraki's rendition leaves the possibility open of taking our life the right way as well (ibid: 59).

The textual code is also interrupted, as the artist claims, by the symbol of the Holy Roman Empire of Germany,[20] indicating the dissolution of the German Confederation

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[18] "The national emblem of Greece consists of a blue escutcheon with a white cross totally surrounded by two laurel branches." The figure probably refers to Greek guards in front of the Greek Parliament.

[19] http://www.translatum.gr/poetry/seferis.htm (retrieved 2015/03/18).

Denial	ΑΡΝΗΣΗ
[…]	[…]
With what spirit, what heart,	Με τι καρδιά, με τι πνοή,
what desire and passion	τι πόθους και τι πάθος,
we lived our life: a mistake!	πήραμε τη ζωή μας· λάθος!
So we changed our life.	Κι αλλάξαμε ζωή.

[20] http://www.crwflags.com/fotw/flags/de_roman.html (2015/03/18).

in 1866 – Austro-Prussian War of 1866 – (Van Evera 2009: 1). The street artist probably symbolizes and ironically criticizes the "hegemonic position" of Germany, then and now, with the special role that it plays in the European Union, commenting on the historical discrepancy. To illustrate this, modalities such as treat symbols, forms and styles of the past (i.e. the national emblem and the Flag of the Holy Roman Empire) extend the political creativity of the street art scene based on historical knowledge. Signs are combined with iconistic portraits and elements in order to create a visual poetry with challenging contextual features; either symbols or intertextual references.

The many identified social reports on Athenian walls as the socioeconomic crisis deepens, make it necessary to cite *Bleeps.gr* quotes:

> […]I care for what happens in this world […] I care about the social problems […] In Athens when we look at those inscriptions on the walls, firstly the sociopolitical writings come to our minds. (Interview with *Bleeps.gr*, February 2015).

Going through the examination of the textual information, it should be noted that the text is simplified, and as a consequence the message through this political painting is expressed more forcefully. The first person plural pronoun and also the verbal types "WE LIVED" and "WE CHANGED" tend to strongly relate with the meaning of collectiveness among Greeks.[21] What is interesting here is the meaning of "life change," which is included in these verbal types. Apparently, the wall actors visualize their collective identity implying their "Wake-up" action and interaction with their intentions (Goutsos & Polymeneas 2014: 689-690). Simultaneously, it becomes clear that the wall writing creators of the Greek crisis generation try to communicate through Greek literature. The sociopolitical difficulties faced by the communities attract the artistic interest (either it is poetry in Seferis case or it is graffiti as a visual poetry in the Athenian street art case).

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[21] The first person plural pronouns and verbal types have been appeared many times in the data corpus.

Figure 28 *No,* Panepistimiou Street, Athens

"OXI"
"OCHI"
"NO"

Figure 29 *N€IN,* School of Fine Arts-Kallithea, Athens (street artist: N_Grams)

"N€IN"
"NO"

Figures 28 and 29 depict the protest of street art against the last Greek bailout program. The first one is a street slogan, which has been found in central Athens written in Greek "OXI." The second one is graffiti by *N-Gram*, which has been found in the Kallithea district (at a close distance from central Athens). It indicates the power and the willfulness of Greek writer(s) by switching into German answering "OXI-NO" to the Greek referendum on 5th July 2015. The German word N€IN, as an artistic interference, is written on the EU flag as a background, with four bold white uppercase characters at the same font size as typographical features (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 147-150). OXI-N€IN is integrated into the picture with the twelve

golden stars – one of them is red and it could be referring to Greece – of the EU flag on a blue field. Moreover, it is important to note that the second character of the slogan is replaced by the "€" symbol, increasing the significance of the "silent" message.

5.4.2 Category "fascism-nazism"

The thematic spectrum of sociopolitical graffiti in this category is represented by the concept of fascism and nazism. The roots of the ideology of fascism and nazism are deep in Europe, and still influence the memories of the Greeks from the World War II and after. Among the older population of Greeks there is a fear of the return of fascism because, as history has shown, fascists were able to gain power in countries where class war existed, surfacing during periods of deep financial crisis and social uprising ("Noam Chomsky," AlterNet, "Austerity Is Just Class War," retrieved 2015/07/09). After the experience of fascism in the period of German occupation, most Greek people fear the rise of the political party Golden Dawn, as noted by Georgiadou (2013) in Matsaganis (2013: 5). Along these facts and given the predominant situation, a booming of street artifacts and slogans focused on the ideology of anti-fascism and anti-nazism has been observed in central Athens.

Figure 30 *I fought the fascists so that my grandchildren could bring them back,* Mesogeion Street, Athens (street artist: Mapet)

"Πολέμησα τους φασίστες για να τους φέρουν πίσω τα εγγόνια μου.."
"Polemisa tous fasistes gia na tous feroun piso ta egonia mou.."

"I fought the fascists so that my grandchildren could bring them back.."

This mural taken in Mesogeion Street in Athens[22] illustrates an important connection between history and politics. In this large scale stencil by *Mapet*, which expresses the main anti-fascist message with the enormous caricature of an old man smoking a cigarette, a combination of both genres of urban writing can be seen. *Mapet* creates art mainly around central Athens and implies social arousal themes in his artworks.

> The messages are mainly political and social and living in Greece in 2015 things are difficult and most people want to express something. The crisis is a source of imagination in general. The projects are focused on issues such as fascism, and especially during the crisis that Golden Dawn has gotten higher rates. This is also a source to talk about fascism and general issues concerning problems facing modern society. This figure brings to mind the sadness and melancholy like most Greeks feel. (Interview with Mapet, February 2015).

While some political interpretation might be given here, the central mode of communication seems to be a word-image combination (Kress & van Leeuwen 1996: 89) with the presence of the red color in the lowercase lettering. The adjacency of imagery and linguistic code transmits confirming messages, notifying the audience-reader in a way that is pressing to attract attention (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 124). As the scholars Kress & van Leeuwen (2006) note, this type of political message does not ask for an answer; the statements rank alone as textual markers of modality, which are not only meaningful and intentional for older Greek people, but also true according to the current sociopolitical condition, thus expressing the fear about the fascism's return. To cite their quotes

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[22] This particular stencil has been found several times in Athens in different areas and sometimes with different lettering style. Most of these instances are included in the data corpus.

[…] a social semiotic theory cannot claim to establish the absolute truth or untruth of representations. It can only show whether a given 'proposition' (visual, verbal or otherwise) is represented as true or not […] (ibid: 159).

Moreover, it should be mentioned that the most essential reference here is the gradual increase of the extreme right Golden Dawn party over the last four years. The fascist ideas and movements were generalized during the period of the crisis.

Figure 31 *The only good fascist is a dead one,* Tsamadou Street-Exarchia, Athens (street artist: SX)

"Φασίστας καλός μόνο νεκρός"
"Fasistas kalos mono nekros"
"The only good fascist is a dead one"

In Figure 31 the message is absolutely clear and comprehensive. Through the unification of textual and iconographic code, the street artist attempts to portray Adolf Hitler killed, accompanied by the phrase "The only good fascist is a dead one." In this graffiti, in which Hitler's figure is featured, the social commentary about fascism and nazism is evident. There are no good fascists, according to the writer, and society should reject them.

Regarding the lettering application, the writer handles lowercase characters similarly to the previous one, providing more space to the pictorial code rather than to the textual. The dominant function of pictorial code with blood trickling from the eyes and the nose of the protagonist figure, as the main multimodal technique, is

highlighted, whereas the verbal text visually represents its auxiliary function. Without doubt, it should be understood that the contextual meaning of this political message about fascism and nazism concept is transmitted by the merging of both codes.

Figure 32 *Crash THE FASCISTS,* **Kerameikou Street-Metaxourgeio, Athens (street artist: SX)**

"Τσακίστε ΤΟΥΣ ΦΑΣΙΣΤΕΣ"
"Tsakiste TOUS FASISTES"
"Crash THE FASCISTS"

Figure 32 was captured close to the Metaxourgeio metro station in Athens. It is important to comment that during my fieldwork experience, the above picture is one of the most exciting and interesting political graffiti as its underlying structure caught my attention immediately. The warm colors (red and orange) come in contrast to the light and dark lowercase "τσακίστε-crash" and uppercase letters "ΤΟΥΣ ΦΑΣΙΣΤΕΣ-THE FASCISTS." In this image, there is a synthesis between linguistic and iconographic code, as stated for the previous figure as well. The red-orange contrast between the red wall as background and the black characters in this photo take charge and make the message easily comprehensible. This means, according to the scholars, that lightening and darkening (dark sketch and bright colors in the background) different parts of the graffiti emphasize the theme (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 152); the revolt against the fascist ideology.

In addition, it is worth highlighting that the graffiti creator uses special gesture-based techniques in order to escalate the destined meaning (ibid: 152). In this image, the iconic gesture of kicking accompanied by the angry facial expressions of the

figure (ibid: 117-118, 144) could probably signify the indignation of the writers against fascism and nazism.
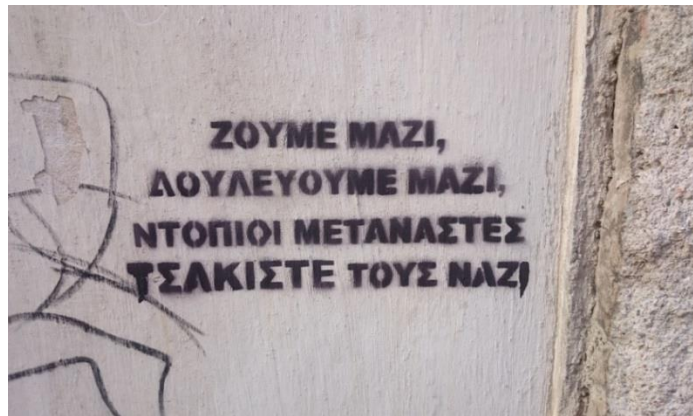
Figure 33 *WE LIVE TOGETHER, WE WORK TOGETHER, LOCALS IMMIGRANTS CRASH THE NAZIS,*
Corner Stournari & Zaimi Street-Exarchia, Athens

"ΖΟΥΜΕ ΜΑΖΙ, ΔΟΥΛΕΥΟΥΜΕ ΜΑΖΙ, ΝΤΟΠΙΟΙ ΜΕΤΑΝΑΣΤΕΣ ΤΣΑΚΙΣΤΕ ΤΟΥΣ ΝΑΖΙ"
"ZOUME MAZI, DOULEVOUME MAZI, DOPII METANASTES TSAKISTE TOUS NAZI"
"WE LIVE TOGETHER, WE WORK TOGETHER, LOCALS IMMIGRANTS CRASH THE NAZIS"

Figure 34 *ANTINAZIS OF MESOLONGIOU STREET,* **Mesolongiou Street-Exarchia, Athens (street artist: NSK)**

"ANTINAZIS OF MESOLONGIOU STREET"

The last two figures of this category (Figure 33 and Figure 34) can roughly be said to express the same anti-nazi sentiments of Athenian graffiti writers. The first image constitutes a stencil anti-nazi slogan, which urges the public to oppose nazism. At this point, it is important to mention a result derived from my case research; the

repetition of ethically charged words within my corpus, like the verb "ΤΣΑΚΙΣΤΕ-CRASH" is remarkable. Thereupon, approaching this figure as visual poetry, it could be seen that the words "MAZI-NAZI" – "TOGETHER-NAZI" as rhymed words share the same sound. Following Kress & van Leeuwen's (2006) observation, it is revealed that a repeated visual rhyme provides coherence to the whole message (ibid); it makes it readily apparent and memorable.

The last figure reflects the opposition to the nazism doctrine via the synergy of text and image. The street artist adopts the "swastika" as the nazi symbol in combination with hand gesture techniques (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 117-118) based on knowledge of the nazi salute. Furthermore, attention should be paid to another symbolism in this graffiti; even though the army boots are connected to fascist and nazist political movements, here it can be understood that the boot kicks this kind of ideology and dissolves it. Concerning the textual code of this figure, the short capitalized phrase "ΜΕΣΟΛΟΓΓΙΟΥ ΑΝΤΙΝΑΖΙ-ANTINAZIS OF MESOLONGIOU STREET" is referred with intense and dynamic vocabulary against the nazi movement.

5.4.3 Category "Freedom (Liberty) – Fear – Hope"

Figure 35 *I hope for nothing, I fear nothing, But I am a SLAVE,* **Benaki Street-Exarchia, Athens (street artist: Bleeps.gr)**

"Δεν ελπίζω τίποτα, δε φοβούμαι τίποτα. *Όμως είμαι ΣΚΛΑΒΟΣ*"
"Den elpizo tipota, de fovoume tipota. *Omos ime SKLAVOS*"

"I hope for nothing, I fear nothing. *But* I am **SLAVE**"
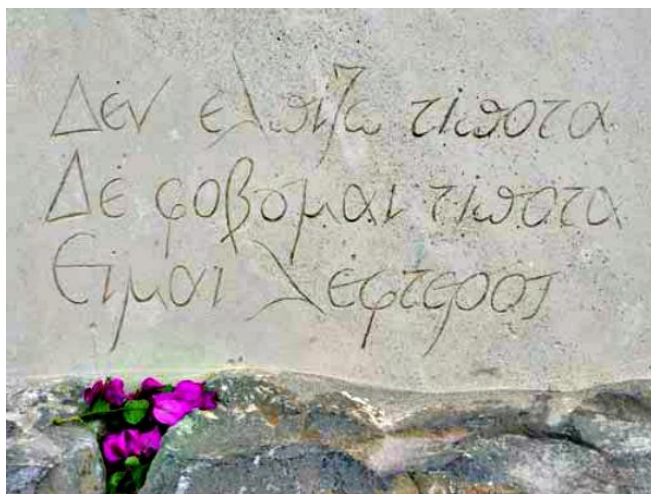
Figure 36 *I hope for nothing, I fear nothing, I am free* **(Epigraph on the grave of N. Kazantzakis in Heraklion, 1957)**

"Δεν ελπίζω τίποτα, δε φοβούμαι τίποτα, είμαι λέφτερος"
"Den elpizo tipota, de fovoume tipota, ime lefteros"
"I hope for nothing, I fear nothing, I am free"

A political wall mural that embodies the themes of this last category is the mural shown in Figure 35, which was captured in the Exarchia district and is painted with a bright blue background, and a black bold lowercase font. However, the last word of this statement, **"ΣΚΛΑΒΟΣ→ SLAVE,"** is written with capital letters in italics, and occupies the most space, and is the focal point of this mural. The artist attempts to declare his conviction that, nowadays, Greeks are presented as slaves within the financial crisis. Looking more closely at this project, it can be seen that the word **"ΣΚΛΑΒΟΣ→ SLAVE"** is written over the word "λέφτερος → free" - this is a recurring technique used by the wall artists.

It is critical to note the semantic contrast between the terms freedom and slavery; Greeks have lost their "freedom" because of the current economic depression and recession. In this way, the street artist, applying the same hand writing as the Greek author and poet, paraphrases the original meaning of a quote of Kazantzakis "I hope for nothing, I fear nothing, I am free," as an intertextual source. From a linguistic approach, it could not be neglected that the certain word *"Όμως →* *But"* is also written in italics as a typographical feature (ibid: 59), giving emphasis and changing the mural's meaning masterfully. Accordingly, the semiotic modalities of

both words, as presented above, function to realize these semantic relations (ibid: 46-47).

As stated, these quotes constitute a masterful paraphrase of the famous inscription on Nikos Kazantzakis' grave, in an existential version by the Athenian street artist. The eight carved words on Kazantzakis' grave referring to hope and fear indicate the ideological and philosophical background of the Greek poet. Thence, the main contextual meaning of this mural is the awakening of the Greek soul; Greeks should be activated in order to gain the esoteric freedom that Kazantzakis did.

Figure 37 *FREEDOM-LIBERTY,* **Mesolongiou & Tzavella Street, Exarchia, Athens**

"ΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΙΑ"
"ELEFTHERIA"
"FREEDOM-LIBERTY"

Figure 37 and 38 refer to the concept of Liberty, as a necessary element for the good of society. The first piece (figure 37), even though it is considered a street slogan by its nature, has been included in the category of wall paintings; the choice was made due to the deliberately chosen scenery, the balanced writing between the lettering, and the colors and painting on the background (ibid: 161). In the case of street slogans, as I extracted from my fieldwork data, the protest writers do not care about the lettering style or specific characters; they care only of expressing their hatred and mostly anti-authoritarian feelings on any public surface.

Correspondingly, this visual abstract of protest could be described as an emphatic demand for freedom and release among the Greeks, and its sociopolitical

content is seen as a reminder of the ideals of freedom and democracy. From a textual aspect, it should be noted that it is written not only with uppercase bold characters as most of the urban wall writings in the corpus, but also that its last character, "A," is encircled; the anarchist symbol embodies ideals and revolutionary feelings against state authorities.

Figure 38 *I WON'T PAY, I WON'T PAY, HAIL, O HAIL, LIBERTY,* **Panepistimio metro station, Athens (street artist: NSK)**

"ΔΕΝ ΠΛΗΡΩΝΩ, ΔΕΝ ΠΛΗΡΩΝΩ, ΧΑΙΡΕ, Ω ΧΑΙΡΕ ΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΙΑ"
"DEN PLIRONO, DEN PLIRONO, CHERE, O CHERE, ELEFTHERIA"
"I WON'T PAY, I WON'T PAY, HAIL, LIBERTY, HAIL,"

The picture featured in figure 38 is a particularly interesting wall mural stencil, found in central Athens, which refers to the National Anthem of Greece - the first two stanzas of the Hymn to Liberty (in Greek: Ὕμνος εἰς τὴν Ἐλευθερίαν). The Hymn to Liberty is a long poem written by the Greek poet Dionysios Solomos in 1823. The phrase "ΧΑΙΡΕ, Ω ΧΑΙΡΕ ΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΙΑ - HAIL, LIBERTY, HAIL" are the last lyrics of the Greek national anthem.

It should be noted that this stencil masterfully combines the significance of both symbolisms of the Greek flag (the modality of blue color and the Greek cross) alongside verbal lyrics referring to Greece's financial troubles. Approaching this project from a sociolinguistic aspect, it should be revealed that the short stereotypical phrase "ΔΕΝ ΠΛΗΡΩΝΩ, ΔΕΝ ΠΛΗΡΩΝΩ" – "I WON'T PAY, I WON'T

PAY" refers to the inability of Greece to pay back its foreign debts. Therefore, it is worth highlighting that this textual declaration has ideological and political direction.

The expression "I (We) won't pay, I (We) won't pay" appeared for first time in the mid-1970s by Dario Fo, the Italian actor and writer of theatrical texts. The work of Dario Fo "We can't pay, we won't pay" was written as a revolutionary glance focusing on crisis problems and class war. As can easily be seen, the semantic and semiotic connotations between the work of Dario Fo and the Athenian graffiti stencil are evident. By this way, the past is ingeniously linked with the present by an unbroken chain of global and diachronic sociopolitical issues.

Taking this reasoning into consideration, the creator's social commentary should be seen as an objection against the form of financial slavery. Thus, the multimodal analysis of text and image, within state symbolisms and intertextual influences, aims at conveying two messages; firstly, the melancholy of living in a country suffering in the crisis, and secondly, the freedom to act, speak and work.

Figure 39 *THEN THEY USED TANKS…NOW THEY USE BANKS,* **Spirou Trikoupi Street-Exarchia, Athens (street artist: Cacao Rocks)**

"ΤΟΤΕ ΜΕ ΤΑΝΚΣ…ΤΩΡΑ ΜΕ BANKS"
"TOTE ME TANKS…TORA ME BANKS"
"THEN THEY USED TANKS…NOW THEY USE BANKS"

Figure 39 is a sociopolitical graffiti found in the Exarchia district that undoubtedly has unique political messages against tough financial measures for a major of the Greek

society. It attempts to motivate its readers to overcome their fears and fight for their freedom.

From a linguistic perspective, it is worth noting that the collaboration between linguistic and pictorial forms of representation testifies to an understanding of social commentary (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 144). In this graffiti the wall writer uses the two words "tanks" and "banks", and two adverbs of time "then" and "now", to compare two periods of Greek history;[23] it is worth mentioning the different periods of time in Greece. The first period could be either the period of the World War II (1939-1945) or the seven year period (1967-1974) of the Greek military junta [THEN] (Tsarouhas 2005: 1) and the second period, according to the writer, is the Greek present.

This wall statement has been used many times during our ongoing conversations with most of the wall artists, highlighting the connection between the meaning of tanks and banks. From a multimodal semiotic approach, the structure of the image affirms that the message is transmitted by the incorporation of an iconic image (tank) accompanied by text (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006: 26). With regard to the words used to connect the idea of protest, it should be noted that the lettering is capitalized and the dots express the heartfelt message of agony and suffering of the Greeks.

Figure 40 *Hope WANTED,* **Kerameikos, Athens (street artist: Bleeps.gr)**

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[23] The words "tanks" and "banks" are written in English.

This picture is classified as purely sociopolitical, functioning as an urban window that offers a Greek version of life to the reader, quite different from the daily experience, and hints at "ἐλπίς-hope," if Greeks want to continue their life. Examining the linguistic code of this urban artifact, the difference between uppercase and lowercase writing, as a typographical feature, should be underlined (van Leeuwen 2006: 142-145).

In the first word, "ΚΑΤΑΖΗΤΕΙΤΑΙ-WANTED," there is the prefix "ΚΑΤΑ," which on the one hand increases the volume and enhances the initial meaning of Samarakis's work. On the other, the verb "ΚΑΤΑΖΗΤΕΙΤΑΙ" has a different meaning than the verb "ΖΗΤΕΙΤΑΙ" in Greek, even though they respond to the same utterance in English "WANTED." "ΚΑΤΑΖΗΤΕΙΤΑΙ-WANTED" means that someone is wanted for punishment or arrest as in "Wanted Posters" for example. Having that in mind, the street artist probably wants to specify with his artistic inspiration the significance and necessity of "ἐλπίς-hope." Additionally, "ΚΑΤΑΖΗΤΕΙΤΑΙ-WANTED" is written with capital letters without intonation, declaring dynamism and vivid emotions. On the other side, the second word of the message, "ἐλπίς-hope," is written with lower case in Greek Katharevusa.

From a multimodal approach, the presented wall writing has been found on a wall with an extensive background filled with letterings in a variety of colors. Nevertheless, the particular framing of the project (as a regular window) determines the decoding of semiotic functions and colors used – black and blue – (ibid: 47, 225), which suggests a new beginning of freedom and hope (ἐλπίς). Both figures (old man and young woman) might symbolize a hope for the future of Greece, according to the street artist.

In intertextual terms, it is based on the broadly recognized as a masterpiece of Antonis Samarakis, "Ζητείται Ἐλπίς" (Hope Wanted).[24] "Ζητείται Ἐλπίς" inspired the

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[24] In 1954, Antonis Samarakis made the decisive turn to Modern Greek prose, editing his first collection of short stories, "Ζητείται Ἐλπίς" (Hope Wanted). "Hope Wanted" is a diachronic project hymn to humanity and to ordinary people, giving hope to the most critical moments of life. It summarizes the crisis of values in very touching stories of social misery, war, and hope.

street artist's creation in downtown Athens, criticizing in his own way the major sociopolitical issues of our days; "There is hope" and we should want it, we should gain it!

5.5 Discussion of Intertextual References

References to intertextual material and connections to previous social and literary genres were clearly applied in the unique language of Athenian wall writing. Regarding the literary references, mostly belonging to Greek literature, their application can be understood in terms of creating a link between the contemporary urban wall practices and Greek sociocultural heritage.

To illustrate this, considering the applied multimodality in this study, it is important to describe the intertextual links. Depending on the dialogue and the intertextual processing, according to Bazerman & Prior (2004: 83-96), each text is conceivably intersected with other texts; Greek proverbs derived from Greek oral tradition, Seferis' poem, Kazantzakis' inscription, Solomos' Hymn to liberty, Dario Fo's work, Samarakis' collection of short stories, and also a number of intertextual stereotypical phrases, have been appearing broadly in the Athenian urban landscape. In this way, a variety of intertextual effects and synecdochic nuances are reconstructed and adapted for a nation in crisis.

As a result, it is remarkable that intertextuality not only extends the sociopolitical implications to contemporary life, but also functions as a powerful medium in comprehending a deep dependency between the political sub-discourse (slogan and graffiti writing), and "its discursive representational power in society" (ibid).

CHAPTER 6   Concluding Remarks and Further Research

6.1 Introduction

In concluding this thesis, the following question arises; did the research meet its aims at analyzing and decoding the communicative dimensions of the multiform, enigmatic and also caustic language of political artworks and street slogans?

This final chapter provides answers to the study's research question, through the crossing of the adapted theoretical principles to the findings and also suggestions for further studies in this field. Likewise, the thematic classification of the Athenian wall writing through the analysis of urban language usage, coupled with a familiarity with the data, have revealed that street art and graffiti language are closely interconnected.

6.2 Interpretation of results

Thousands of wall writings occupy a large part of Athens, reflecting the suffering of the last few years. The conclusion could be drawn that the huge spread of graffiti images and street slogans have historical and political weight through their intertextual references.

Concerning the classification of sample data, apart from anti-authoritarian street slogans and improvised lyrics, political messages are also reflected on Athenian walls through elaborated and recognizable images (mostly from its cultural and historical past), which are subjected to various interpretations. Wall writing, as a visualizing tool, echoes both coherent and sometimes ambiguous sociopolitical messages in "Athenian society in process" (Goutsos & Polymeneas 2014: 696). Seeking the causes of widespread graffiti during the last years, the sociopolitical and economic situation needs to be considered. As shown, wall writing protests reflect not only the political and social uncertainty, but also prove the constant enrichment of this lingua variety.

6.3   Answer to Research Questions: Combining Theory and Results

The fundamental research question has answered how graffiti and street slogans on Athenian walls become meaningful, via linguistic descriptions and imagery resources, and how the messages are conveyed on them.

Throughout the research, special attention and emphasis have been centered on MDA as a medium in explaining in depth the relation between visual images, language usage and interpersonal social power, showing the sociopoliticized urban art acts as a protest form, at the intersection of language and society (Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 258). On the other hand, MDA helped decoding the activity of creating public writing as the main democratic medium of public expression, based on the interactive relationship between wall speech, multimodality, and intertextuality.

Furthermore, based on visual grammar, it is remarkable that Athenian protesters and street artists use a multifaceted and colorful expressions based on different semiotic modes as a visual testimony, in order to establish a spiritual bridge with the Greek society. Answering to the first question according to the intended message of wall writing protests, the findings support the fact that the wall writers engage in a public urban dialogue with society, creating political propaganda against social institutions and state authorities. Without the application of a multimodal interpretative frame it could be difficult to portray the graffiti and slogan forms, including the plethora of symbols and a variety of colors that have been elucidated. By investigating the specific language of these wall messages and their impact on Athenian society, this study revealed an extended usage of appropriate signs and symbols, intertextual references, traditional related subjects, and stereotypical repeated expressions, which reconstruct the current Athenian urban linguistic landscape.

In particular, a more careful examination of the results gives evidence for the second question according to the particular thematic content of wall writings and their situated interpretations. A special thematic glossary of the Greek crisis is used along with the most frequent phrases and themes identified on Athenian walls, to proclaim a public outcry about the contemporary socioeconomic crisis situation. The walls urge the readers/observers to express their feelings, and participate

interactively as active readers and writers. The everyday vocabulary about the sociopolitical changeover has obviously been enriched, as shown in the analysis chapter. As a consequence, a variety of economic and sociopolitical terms like banks, bailout, corruption, fascism, freedom, IMF, nazism, OXI (NO), poverty, slavery, and troika, among others (see Tables 2, 3, and 4) have been transformed into loaded words and word-phrases, with a touching effect on the contemporary Greek ideological context. Hence, the graffiti lexicon of the Greek crisis, as it has been categorized in this work, tells us much about a myriad of short, eye catching, and easy to remember slogans, with new or different connotative meanings in common use in the contemporary Athenian landscape.

More likely, in order to answer the third question, this thesis investigated the visual meanings and the iconographical structures used in graffiti making by referring to Greek culture, and including entire intertextual passages entailed in rich Greek lyrics and several Greek proverbs, idioms and stereotypical phrases. Thus, in this context, a didactic reading of this urban discursive speech as a mirror of a new social life, which should be heard and read, could provide researchers with a large amount of information regarding sociopolitical processes within Greek society.

In sum, after the completion of the examination of a sufficient number of visual texts in the Athenian case, time has come to re-examine the research hypothesis. What I have learned about graffiti writing in Athens supports the assumption that the sociocultural changes give birth to a wave of popular sociopolitical expression, and graffiti language and slogan writing are a central symptom of these changes. Therefore, observing samples of photo documentation and interview data, it becomes obvious that the majority of the works have many common components in terms of applied symbols, various modes such as colors, forms, and different writing styles, attempting to awaken society, and articulating ideologies throughout multiple meanings.

6.4 **Further Research**

This study explored a new and alternating field, which inevitably creates various paths forward due to the fact that the street art inquiry in the Athenian case, especially from a multimodal sociolinguistic perspective, is still in its infancy.

A first prospect for future research could be a comparative study on the urban wall sub-discourse, based on the existing wall writing in the Greek semiotic landscape between the capital of Athens (as this study explored) and the Greek province, where there is less graffiti, or between the contemporary city centre of Athens and other European capitals suffering in the financial crisis.

Subsequently, another future research area could be the examination of bilingual choice between Greek and English in the Athenian urban landscape. It would be interesting to investigate the writers' reasons, motivations, and objectives of this bilingual choice.

Based on the limitation section, one could also carry out a research upgraded to a doctoral thesis focusing on the multimodal metaphors created via verbovisual abstract concepts on Athenian walls, which are understood by the human mind through metaphors.

The last proposal would have the researcher check the various alterations and stages of graffiti, and observing their transformation. According to the findings, the modification of graffiti texts with extra symbols, signs, and lettering is a quite common phenomenon within street art sub-culture. It would be thought-provoking to consider the differences between the initial and the final forms of graffiti statements, which are being altered mostly due to current sociopolitical changeover. However, it should be noted that the street artists quite often rewrite public surfaces, complementing the meaning of already existed signs, symbols, and quotes. Thus, it is strongly believed that a continuous vision of the wall language through time would provide a spherical and more objective perspective of the examination of this case.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Ethics Protocol

Hello, my name is George Stampoulidis and I am Master's Student in Language and Linguistics at Lund University in Sweden. I am currently carrying out my research on Athenian street art, focusing on wall writing. The period of investigation is the crisis period, looking primarily the Greek reality in the light of the synergy between text and image on public surfaces.

Thank you for your wishfulness to participate in this research project. Firstly, I would like to make clear that as a "part" of this research your attendance is voluntary, and thus, you are totally free to deny answering some questions or quitting from the interview process at any time. Interview transcripts may be used in the final research report, but your name will not be included; you will appear only with your nickname.

I would be thankful if you would sign this form in order to show that you know its content.

(Signature - Nickname)

(Date)

Thank you

Appendix B – Interview Sources

Table 5 *Interview sources*

Name	Age	Nationality	Date	Tools	Involved in Politics
Bleeps.gr	34	Greek	March 2015	e-mail	active – strong
Exit	28	Greek	February 2015	voice recorder	Moderate
Mapet	29	Greek	February 2015	Skype	active – strong
NSK	20	Greek	February 2015	voice recorder	active – strong
SX	25	Greek	February 2015	voice recorder	active – strong
Tona	30+	German	February 2015	e-mail	Moderate
Wild Drawing (WD)	30+	Indonesian	February 2015	e-mail	moderate
Yiakou	27	Greek	February 2015	e-mail	active

Appendix C – Interview Schedule

Date: **Place:**

Biographical Questions

Name: Sex: Age:

Politics: How politically active – strong, moderate, inactive, indifferent

Categorical Questions

1. What is street art to you and what was the reason to start or get involved with street art? Has this reason changed since you started?

2. Has the socioeconomic crisis in Greece influenced your art? And if yes, what did affect you?

3. What is politicized urban art for you? Would you describe your job as politicized? How do you feel when you are on the street to make art? Do you consider yourself as a political artist? And if yes, why?

4. Is graffiti a type of personal or social expression?

5. Has your art an impact on society, and if so what kind? How strong is the influence of political graffiti on public opinion?

6. Do you think that a bridge between you and the public/society is being created?

Communication & Signification

7. Please look at some pictures, select those you want, and tell me what they mean to you. Explain: Symbols, messages, colors, ethically charged words, connotation messages.

8. Are there any certain images or symbols that have a particular meaning for you?

9. What are the main topics of politicized creations on Athenian walls in the recent years of crisis?

10. What are you trying to communicate through your art? What is the message you are trying to send across and to whom?

11. Are there any frequently repeated words or word-phrases in the texts accompanying the graffiti? And if so, what?

Appendix D – Access to the data corpus

Please, click here to get access to the photographic corpus:

https://www.flickr.com/photos/athenian_wall_writing_2015/