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The Crisis before "The Crisis": Violence and Urban Neoliberalization in Athens[1]

Dimitris Dalakoglou*

Growth and Poverty

Between 1995 and 2007, Greece experienced one of the European Union's (EU) highest rates of economic growth (Kaplanis 2011; Matsaganis and Leventi 2011, 5). However, a substantial portion of the country's population was partially excluded or had a very unfair share of the material benefits that were linked to that growth. The first victims of exclusion were migrant populations. Between 1991 and 2001, over 600,000 migrants moved to Greece, mostly coming from other parts of the Balkans—Albania in particular. Due to the political and economic meltdown of socialist countries, but also to the lack of migration control apparatuses in Greece, most of these newcomers migrated without documents (Kapsalis 2007a; Dalakoglou 2010a). The first serious attempt at a regularization policy in Greece did not come until 2001 (Kapsalis 2007b). Most of these migrants therefore spent several years in Greece either with temporary documents or entirely without papers, thus becoming an easily exploited and institutionally stigmatized group (see Katsoridas 2007).[2]

If in the 1990s most migrants came from postsocialist countries, in the 2000s increasing numbers came from the world's war zones, e.g., Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Palestine, and Kurdistan, or from dictatorial regimes such as Pakistan, Egypt, or Iran, to mention but a few. Being the most southeastern member of the European Union (EU), and with large sea borders on the east and south of the continent, Greece became the first stop in the Eastern Mediterranean for the flourishing undocumented migratory flows. These people often headed toward the urban centers to remain less visible, to leave the country more easily, or to find acquaintances or a job.

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If part of the early migratory flows of the 1990s might be relatively settled today, many of the undocumented or semi-documented migrants who arrived during the 2000s have been living under extreme precariousness for many years. Financial austerity has exacerbated this situation. One indication of the increased institutional and social pressures endured by migrants was the collective hunger strike by three hundred semi-documented migrants in Athens during the winter of 2010–2011. Their demand was for a more sensible regularization policy for migrants in Greece (see Mantanika and Kouki 2011). As I will show, since that hunger strike things have changed a lot in Greece—for the worse. Soon after the strike, migrants in the country were to experience an increase in racist physical attacks carried out by the extreme Right and the police, especially against people of African or Asian origin (HRW 2012; Dalakoglou 2012, 2013).

If great parts of the migratory populations have experienced high degrees of precariousness and violence for over a decade now, after the outbreak of the 2010 crisis poverty and precariousness have extended well beyond the migrants. Authors such as Kaika (2012) have observed empirically the emergence of a distinction between the neo-poor (Greek passport–holder poor) and the old poor (the migrant poor). Eurostat[3] figures reveal that some 20 percent of the population was living "at risk of poverty" throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, that is during the period of economic growth. Throughout this period, Greece had one of the highest rates of youth unemployment and underemployment in the EU (Mitrakos et al. 2010; Sokou et al. 2000). This trend intensified and was further institutionalized under EU and Greek employment policies that facilitated flexible labor. An example would be the EU-sponsored stage programs, which in fact were a generalized model of underpaid and uninsured internships. Stages, combined with other amendments in employment laws, normalized and institutionalized temporary underpaid labor (Kaplanis 2011); the underpaid youngster became so common that people started talking about the €700 generation. This soon fell to €600 and today does not even exist, since the youth unemployment (of 15–24 year olds) at the end of 2012 was over 57 percent (El.Stat March 14, 2013).[4]

Yet precariousness and exclusion are not a homogeneous experience. For example, the term "€700 generation" was in fact referring to youth who held Greek passports and often university diplomas. Moreover, to varying degrees, some of these "new poor" had access to resources provided, for example, by their families. Although increasingly limited, such resources are/were not available to all the poor: for instance, many impoverished migrants

not only lacked a network of social support, but they were also unable to acquire a work permit. The situation of women or underage migrants, to mention but two more distinctions, further adds to the heterogeneity of the experience of poverty in Greece.

Urban (Re)Development

During the decades of the 1990s and 2000s, growth also took place as a large urban (re)development project. The role of that project was so crucial that the Greek construction sector was labeled the "steam engine" of the period's economic growth, and indeed the sector saw its "golden decade" between the mid-1990s and mid-2000s (Tarpagos 2010). "Modernization"[5] and "growth/development" were the alluring slogans promoted by the governments of the period, and they referred to some very concrete phenomena. In fact, Athens and Attica (wider Athens) were transformed into large construction sites before the Olympics of 2004. The Games' symbolic value was promoted on a mass scale and the Olympics were elevated to a "national goal." Supposedly, everyone had a share in the spectacular dimension of the Games (Totsikas 2004), while the latter became the self-explanatory justification for every policy, including the extensive destruction of the Athens cityscape and its (re)development. Simultaneously, government elements and the corporate media (the owners of which sometime also had significant interests in the construction sector) promoted a hegemonic rhetoric that glorified what Bourdieu (1998) would have called the "utopia of unlimited exploitation."

The slogan on a "Strong Greece" joined the ones on "growth/development" and "modernization," and all together found their materialization in the cityscape of Athens and beyond. The capital city during late 1990s and 2000s saw the construction of the subway system, the new airport, the Attica Tollway, the suburban railway, the tram, the new Acropolis Museum, Olympic facilities (which included among other new sports facilities an Olympic Village), and indeed shopping malls. Across the country, the (re) construction of space encompassed the Rio-Antirrio suspension bridge and monumental projects such as the Via Egnatia motorway, which transverses the north of the country. Moreover, this regime of construction contractors also reached beyond the national borders, as companies based in Greece (partly or entirely) took advantage of the postsocialist collapse and expanded into the Balkans, building infrastructures there (Dalakoglou 2010b). In tandem with this process, Greece-based capital generated additional profits by purchasing telecommunication companies, refineries, and bank chains that were being privatized in the postsocialist Balkans.

The growth of the construction sector during the 1990s was facilitated by legal adjustments regarding public works. The new legal framework provided for an easy rearrangement and accumulation of capital in that sector (Tarpagos 2010). For example, in the 1990s the state changed the regulations governing the auctioning of public works, favoring the concentration of activity in a few large firms (ibid.). Another important aspect of this golden period for construction capital was the implementation of privatization models such as self-funded or co-funded (public and private) "public" works (ibid.). As private firms undertook infrastructure construction projects, they contributed know-how and management teams and subcontracted parts of the construction work to smaller firms. But when such "self-funded" projects were completed, the same big private firms rather than the state assumed control of the newly built infrastructure for several decades, paying the state a portion of the profits. The share of profits was often scandalous in favor of the private firms. This allegedly was the case with the Athens Airport, the Attica Tollway, and the Rio–Antirio Bridge. This model of privatized infrastructures expanded beyond these new mega-infrastructures: for example, since 2007 the state has increasingly privatized the existing national highway network, with new toll stations appearing along a deteriorating road system.

Additionally, the enormous urban development of the 1990s and 2000s is linked with systematic efforts toward the gradual privatization of state-owned spaces. A typical example is the founding of organizations such as the Hellenic Tourist Real Estate SA (2000) and the Olympic Real Estate SA (2002). Although both were state owned, legally they were private companies functioning according to corporate criteria. In 2011 they were unified and now have the right to use, manage, and administrate some of the country's most expensive real estate. This includes seafront properties, small islands, peninsulas, the old Athens airport, archaeological sites, museums, stadiums and sport facilities, marinas, ski centers, casinos, etc. Altogether, the two original corporations and the Public Properties Company SA, which replaced them, signify the explicit transfer of state-owned property into private forms. The importance of that transfer can be seen even more explicitly today, since the Greek state has decided to liquidate its assets, selling real estate for very low prices in the name of the debt to IMF and ECB.

In terms of everyday life, at the heart of neoliberal urban (re)development is the qualitative, physical/material transformation of public spaces (Brenner and Theodore 2005). For example, during the redevelopment of an urban area, physical access to the site is usually restricted and desocialization

occurs. After the end of the works, the time required for people to resocialize, interact, and become (un)familiar with the new spatial configurations often takes years. New material and social limitations are normally imposed, since a key element of neoliberal development of urban materialities is the creation of controlled and disciplining spaces, for example by fencing off or enclosing formerly open spaces.

Syntagma Square typifies such a transformation in central Athens. According to the Athens municipality, Syntagma was totally regenerated in 1896[6] and again in 1990. Between 1990 and 2004, it was completely redeveloped three times, becoming a construction site every few years. Syntagma was advertised as the "square display of the capital city," and authorities of the "Strong Greece" period glorified it since it hosted the "largest Christmas tree in Europe" and the city's New Year's celebrations, along other fiestas. In daily practice, after the changes of the 1990s few people would sit or stand in Syntagma if not within the fenced enclosures of its two coffee shops or for the sake of the carefully orchestrated and controlled events organized by the authorities. The square was transformed into an increasingly regimented site of control. For example, until the late 1990s pedestrians crossed the roads to and from the square, but since the Syntagma Metro Station was built in the square, pedestrians—now under the watchful eye of closed-circuit television, private security guards, and the police—primarily use the Attica Metro SA's underground complex in order to reach or leave the square. Other socio-spatial changes in the Syntagma area included the dedication of neighboring Ermou Street to pedestrian use and its further elevation to one of the main commercial streets of the capital city. Tramlines and tram stops were constructed and bus stops were relocated around Syntagma. Policing of the parliament and the government ministries that line the square gradually became more intense, as did the security controls for bank branches and luxury hotels. Syntagma thus became merely a transit point, just a corridor for most people. Pedestrians used to flow from the metro station to the shops along Ermou and Stadiou Streets. But with the current crisis and recession, the area around Syntagma is gradually becoming a post-apocalyptic urban desert. Many stores that had once thrived are now closed; the remaining merchants feel threatened by the increasing likelihood of going out of business.

Aside from being an area for shops and businesses, Syntagma had typically been a stop along the route protest marches took because of the presence of parliament—the symbolic center of political power in Greece. The burning of Syntagma's Christmas tree during the December 2008 revolt was a symbolic

and physical victory in the ongoing struggle over Syntagma's meanings. Similarly, the centrality of Syntagma for the major anti-austerity movement in the summer of 2011 marked a crucial, generalized transition in the political consciousness of Athenians (Dalakoglou 2011a). The changing meanings of Syntagma square were signified in 2012 by the political suicide-protest of the retired pharmacist Dimitris Christoulas in the middle of the square. But the war over the meanings of Syntagma and its surrounding area has not ended yet, and at the end of February 2013 the government publicized a new plan to redevelop the two central squares of Athens: Syntagma and Omonoia, but also Panepistimiou Avenue, which connects them. So although the enormous development of the city's materialities became the "steam engine" of the rapid growth and accumulation of capital that can eventually be linked to the recession (Harvey 2008), the authorities of the debt-ridden country proposed even more (re)development of Athens' spaces in 2013.

Changing Values

The various urban (re)development projects such as mega-infrastructures, shopping malls, transport networks, etc., built during the period of economic growth led to a transformation in real estate prices around Athens. It was not only the exchange value of real estate that changed: the symbolic values attributed to parts of the cityscape also changed. The emergence of new and renewed spaces in Athens went hand in hand with the descent of a proportion of the city center into "material decay." Marginalized social groups, such as undocumented refugees, started to replace the better-off classes as the latter began to move out of some central Athenian neighborhoods (Maloutas 2007, 2004; Kandylis, Maloutas, and Sayas 2012; Arapoglou and Sayas 2009). Although this is not a clear-cut and rapid process of socio-spatial segregation, since Athens is socio-spatially porous (see, for example, Stavrides 2007; Maloutas 2007; Leontidou 2012), it is still a clearly observable phenomenon.

Antithetical to Syntagma's brightness within that context, in the popular imagination some urban sites were becoming emblematic of the "decaying" central Athenian materialities and socialities. One such site is the Omonoia Square and its surrounding areas. Omonoia was the central transportation hub of Athens until the construction of the Athens Metro, which established Syntagma as the core of the new network in the late 1990s. Omonoia is the terminal station of the old electric rail network and is close to the Athens Railway Station, and buses connecting the city center with the intercity bus station terminate near the square.

Omonoia is in fact a roundabout with highways leading toward almost every direction of the urban complex. Until recently, various public services such as courthouses were located there, and this was the heart of Athens' commercial center, with thousands of shops, hotels, and catering businesses aggregating around it. The area was and remains a very busy central point and for decades it has embraced an impressive mix of activities. But economic and lifestyle changes—such as the increased ownership of private vehicles,[7] the development of new transport infrastructures linked to a more car-centric urban expansion into nearby suburbs, or the building of many new shopping malls outside the city center—contributed to the change of Omonoia's materialities and its symbolic and exchange values. So besides its formal and "normal" functions, in the 1990s and particularly in the 2000s Omonoia was increasingly identified with a number of marginalized activities and diverse urban outcasts. The cheaper hotels or accommodations along the square became the dwellings of migrants or poor people, homelessness became more visible, and some of the most stigmatized preexisting urban activities in the area—e.g., heroin dealing and prostitution—acquired even more negative connotations.

Other central districts in close proximity to Omonoia (for example, Psyrri, Gazi, and Monastiraki) were partly regenerated during the 1990s and 2000s (see Gospodini 2009). Building on the spontaneous Athenian urban palimpsest (Leontidou 1990), this regeneration led to an extreme mix of activities, with, e.g., the same urban block hosting posh bars, undocumented migrants' quarters, abandoned workshops, and prostitution houses, making that proximate otherness much more visible.

The Virtues and Sweepers of Athens

A crucial role in the wider society's perception of the area of Omonoia was played by novel ways of policing the city. First of all, during the period of economic growth and the consequent crisis, the number of police officers in Greece increased from 45,389[8] in 1998 to approximately 61,000 in 2012.[9] There were also qualitative changes in policing over the past 20 years, including the development of specialized units and of more sophisticated tactics, particularly regarding public protest.[10] The new logic of policing involved novel ways of targeting the national "Other," namely migrants, but also the politically "deviant" (anarchists and the far left). This means that the new forms of policing initially targeted urban sites rather than social groups such as "the anarchists" or "the foreigners" (Vradis 2013). The targeting of the

respective social groups did occur eventually, but only after a media blitz by the police and the government. Using a press release industry hosted within the corporate media, popular pairings were established, such as the Exarcheia area with anarchists and the Omonoia area with foreigners and undocumented migrants. An example of how such processes may have created perceptions of urban spaces or social groups can be found in Michael Herzfeld's (2011) recent account of being robbed in Athens and being more or less forced by a police officer to state that the robber was a "foreigner."

So an important part of the social biography of the Omonoia area is the aforementioned heightened policing of the 1990s. Although anti-migrant policing is a nationwide phenomenon, the Omonoia area became the emblematic site of such operations in the inner city (Dalakoglou 2011b). The story starts in early 1990s, when the Greek police introduced "Operation Sweeper." Sweepers were in fact semi-military operations within the urban territory, often centered in Omonoia and supposedly targeting undocumented migrants. These operations included blockades of entire areas and rapid raids on streets, squares, and buildings, after which detainees were taken to concentration points where many of them were made to kneel on the ground and subjected to verbal abuse and physical attacks. It is worth mentioning that a notable increase in Sweepers took place just before the 2004 Olympics. The aim was to clean Omonoia's public façade and push unwanted elements toward less-visible areas of the center, such as Agios Panteleimonas Square (see Dalakoglou and Vradis 2011).

Since August 2012, another mass operation against migrants has been unfolding in the center of Athens, especially in Omonoia. This is called "Xenios Zeus," and it resembles Operation Sweepers. Between August and November 2012, of the 54,751 foreigners stopped and searched by Xenios Zeus in central Athens, 3,996 were arrested for lacking proper documents, whereas 33 were arrested for breaking other laws. Those arrested under Xenios Zeus are held in new detention centers that opened around the country in the spring and summer of 2012. The police reports that nearly every night since August 2012 stop-and-search operations have targeted migrants in the center of the city.[11] Yet obviously Xenios Zeus reveals that the idea promoted by the government that migrants break the law en masse is a complete fraud, since the lack of the proper migratory documents is mainly due to the fact that the Greek state apparatuses that administer the application procedure make it notoriously difficult for migrants to apply for legalization.

As mentioned above, migrants are not the only group targeted by the Greek police over the last few decades. Beginning in the 1980s, new forms of policing in Athens ensnared several radical political groups, once again by targeting certain areas. One such area is the Exarcheia neighborhood in central Athens, characterized by a high concentration of left-wing and anarchist publishers, bookshops, groups, and individuals. So Exracheia became the first downtown site in post-dictatorial Greece (after 1974) where the semi-military "Operations Virtue" took place. Virtues were similar to Sweepers in many ways, with hundreds of police officers often blockading and storming large sections of the neighborhood, and detaining mainly youth who do not look "proper." Operation Virtue officially stopped in the 1980s, but similar operations still take place with varying regularity in the area. In the late 2000s, Exarcheia was regularly under police siege, and the streets leading to the neighborhood were systematically policed at night (Vradis 2013).

Crucial for such operations have been the riot police units (Public Order Restoration Units, or MAT). In 1976, the then young parliamentary democracy introduced MAT—the main anti-protest police unit—in order to militarize policing because the radical Left, which had overthrown the junta, would not tolerate army intervention in the streets. Therefore, throughout the post-dictatorial period, in Exarcheia and elsewhere political opposition in the streets (Giovanopoulos and Dalakoglou 2011) could be targeted with the semi-military tactics of MAT. These police operations gradually had a slight impact on the growing silent majority of mainstream citizens, many of whom did not participate in public protests during the 1990s and 2000s. As a result, most people had no real understanding of how militarized and brutal the policing of public political actions had become.[12]

But in the late 1990s, these extreme forms of policing were expanded beyond the limits existing at the time. For example, since the 1990s, in addition to policing protest and carrying out Sweepers and Virtues, MAT has widely employed "static patrol" tactics. This consists of parking MAT buses in central parts of the city while police officers guard the transit, often holding machine guns. Another example is the generalization of stop-and-search operations, with an apotheosis after the 2004 Olympic Games. In the case of "Operation Polis" of 2005, for instance, police reported that over 226,000 people and 150,000 vehicles were searched.[13] Migrants and younger people were specifically targeted by such operations. Those stopped were sometimes compelled to strip in public to be searched for hidden substances, and illegal detains, threats, and physical violence were routine. In the name

of the Olympic security, massive numbers of police-operated CCTVs were also introduced in Athens.

The Revolt of December

Given this context of poverty and social exclusion, increasing police brutality, and massive urban redevelopment, perhaps the revolt of December 2008 does not come as a surprise (see Vradis and Dalakoglou 2011; Astrinaki 2009; Kallianos 2012; Vradis 2013). For Makrygianni and Tsavdaroglou (2011), these socio-spatial stories of Athens were reflected in the spontaneous spread of the revolt shortly after the murder of 15-year-old Alexis Grigoropoulos by the police. The clashes began in Exarcheia, where the policeman had killed the student and where many people had experienced police brutality during protests or stop-and-search operations. Clashes soon broke out in Omonoia, where for two decades police operations have also targeted some of the most marginalized parts of Athenian population. Indeed, December 2008 saw the first uprisings in Athens with an explicit participation of migrants. Moreover, during that night of December 6, 2008, as news traveled through the relatively recent haunts of youth around Acropolis hill—where one could find, among others, many of the €700 euro generation along with students from various class backgrounds—a mob started to move toward the clashes on the other side of the city center. On Ermou Street, one of the emblematic domains of retail fashion, shops were damaged and looted. During the clashes, of the first police departments attacked by the crowd were the one in Exarcheia and the so-called Acropolis police department.

Feeding the revolt was a collective sense of hopelessness, a long experience of police repression, and dissatisfaction with a political project that had spent billions of euros on the urban development of Athens while poverty and hardship were increasing. Although the December rioters were a profoundly diverse group with different motivations and stories of structural violence, the event was a signifier of the long-term social crisis that accompanied economic growth and urban (re)development. The city that had become a space under constant redevelopment, an alienating socio-spatial domain for substantial parts of its population, overnight was transformed into the terrain of insurrectionary praxis.

Crisis as Intensified Violence

After the December events in Athens came a wave of counter-insurrectionary violence. Among the main measures was DELTA, a new anti-protest

motorcycle police unit. DELTA's tactical aim is to rush through crowds of demonstrators to disperse and beat them up, and/or to make arrests. In December 2009 these units made one of their first appearances at a march commemorating the first anniversary of the December 2008 revolt. As DELTA surged through demonstrators in Syntagma Square, a 61-year-old woman was seriously injured when a police motorbike ran her over.[14] On that day, an unprecedented 1,000-plus people were preemptively detained. During the peak of the anti-austerity protests—the general strike of June 28 and 29, 2011—DELTA's main role was to disperse and injure demonstrators around the center of Athens. Furthermore, after December 2008 policing measures included new steel fencing next to the parliament building during the Syntagma Square movement (2011) and water cannons, which were introduced at the Keratea anti-landfill protests in the winter of 2010–2011.[15] More generally, the repression of the Keratea uprising provides a window into the violent police response to public protest after December 2008.[16]

Besides these new weapons, counter-insurrection police tactics involved extreme uses of older weapons against the "enemy within." Shock grenades were thrown every other minute during the demonstrations for the general strike of June 2011 (in Syntagma), even inside buildings, and new chemical gases were unleashed on an unprecedented scale. For example, during the 48-hour anti-austerity general strike, police launched an estimated 2,000 canisters of tear gas in the center of Athens, up from several dozen at similar events earlier. The extensive use of tear gas has often made it impossible for people to rally, march, or even live in the city center. Of course beatings of protesters were ramped up to an industrial scale during the general strike of June 2011.[17]

Since the outbreak of the 2010 crisis, neo-Nazi groups have been active as well. Historically, since the 1920s the so-called para-state *(parakratos)* far-Right in Greece has functioned as the long arm of the state violent apparatuses, targeting people with left-wing affiliations during most of the twentieth century (see Panourgia 2008; Kostopoulos 2005; Mouzelis and Pagoulatos 2002, 88–89; Mazower 2006, 353–54). The rise of the extreme Right after the outbreak of the 2010 crisis is a continuation of that tradition (Dalakoglou 2012, 2013). Besides the Left or the anarchists, the current victims of extreme Right violence are mainly migrants.

A typical example of this escalation was in mid-May 2011, a few days before the start of the Syntagma Square movement, when a man in his forties was killed and robbed in the center of Athens, allegedly by migrants. Local extreme right-wing groups (see Dalakoglou 2012; Dalakoglou and

Vradis 2011) seized upon this incident to organize one of the country's first large-scale anti-migrant attacks, with the tacit or explicit support of the police. Anti-fascists and radicals were also targeted. Due to these organized fascist attacks, certain parts of the center became a no-go zone for migrants, especially people of color. The most prominent xenophobic group, the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn, was allegedly involved in many of these actions. Their unapologetic racism appears to be gaining in appeal. Golden Dawn received 7 percent of the votes in the national elections of May and June 2012; about half of the police officers serving in Athens voted for Golden Dawn, marking, if nothing else, the ideological links between state and para-state violent apparatuses (Dalakoglou 2012).

This escalation of physical violence by both the far-Right and the police can be understood as reflective of the broader mode of governance that has emerged in Greece during the crisis. In this novel historical and political context, the complete deregulation of the repertoires of publicly performed political violence implies a paradigm change of historical proportions.

Crisis as a Generalized State of Exception

A number of processes from the 1990s and 2000s—such as mass urban redevelopment, economic growth, and new forms of precariousness and policing—provide a partial genealogy of the extensive social crisis that one can observe ethnographically in Athens in the early 2013. The international media (e.g., *The Nation,* December 18, 2011) and NGOs (e.g., Doctors of the World)[18] have begun to talk of an ongoing "humanitarian crisis" in central Athens. A term used in early 2010 by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)[19] in reference to the most marginalized part of society (undocumented refugees) now includes swelling numbers of people living in precarious conditions in Athens. This generalization of structural violence is accompanied by an extensive and intensive expansion of physical violence against protesters and migrants.

The debt crisis, which officially began in May 2010 when the Greek government received a loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Union (EU), and the European Central Bank (ECB), signifies an escalation of the ongoing social crisis. It extends the "state of exception" from a few groups (migrants, the underemployed and unemployed youth, etc.) to the majority of the population. The deep cuts in welfare and other social provisions, the rapid devaluation of labor, and increasing unemployment represent a paradigmatic shift[20] toward a new type of neoliberal governance in Western Europe. After thoroughly penetrating the global

South and postsocialist Europe, extreme neoliberalism in Greece (via the IMF and EU) has led to a fragmentation of the social nexus, triggering a social meltdown in just a few years (Dalakoglou 2011c).

The consequences of the last several years are already apparent. *The Lancet* has directly linked the financial crisis and austerity policies to the downgrading of the general health of the population (Kentikelenis et al. 2011) and to a substantial increase in suicide rates in Greece (Economou et al. 2011). Official unemployment has increased dramatically, from 10.3 percent in January 2010 to 27 percent in winter 2012; small retailers and artisans (for example, those on High Street in Athens) are disappearing.[21] Poverty and social inequality are publicly visible in the increasing number of homeless people or daily soup kitchens.

Whereas this inquiry into the Athenian past is necessary to understand the form that the crisis has taken after 2010, it is necessary to stress that the current extensive and intensive properties of the crisis signal a paradigmatic transformation. Admittedly, the rapid pace of change makes studying Athens and Greece very difficult. For the purposes of critical urban thinking, however, an analysis of the Athenian political-economic crisis is needed to "expose, propose, and politicize" (Marcuse 2009, 186). The point is not to pursue purely academic purposes; rather, critical theorization of the urban must be a parameter of radical and direct action in the city and must help to "decode" (Brenner and Theodore 2003) the contradictions embedded in neoliberal urbanization for the benefit of the antagonistic movement.

NOTES

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2. For ethnographic work, see Lawrence (2005), Psimmenos (1995), and Dalakoglou (2009).

3. At *http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=tsisc030*.

4. See El.Stat press release of March 14, 2013, at *www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/BUCKET/A0101/PressReleases/*.

5. See Featherstone (2005) for a benign academic perspective on these modernization policies.

6. "Work Begins on the Redevelopment of Syntagma Square," at *http://news.in.gr/greece/article/?aid=510893*.

7. Rising from 1.7 million in 1990 to 5.5 million in 2008, with the population holding relatively steady (Eurostat 2012, statistics provided upon request).

8. Eurostat, at *http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/crime/documents/police.pdf*.

9. Nicos Dendias, Minister of Public Order and Citizen Protection, stated the number on November 28, 2012, during the Twenty-Second Pan-Hellenic Federation of High-Ranking Police Officers, Amphitheatre, Attica Police Headquarters, Athens.

10. New forces dating from the late 1990s include the special guards and border guards. Two anti-protest units also emerged, not to be confused with the one funded in 1976 by the post-dictatorial democracy to stem the mass social movements that had just overthrown the regime (1967–1974). One anti-protest unit from the 1990s (YMET) is a lighter force that closely resembles the MAT unit active since the 1970s. The MAT unit of the 1990s was much more formidable and militarized; it increasingly applied soft-core urban warfare tactics, e.g., offensives against protesters using lineal configurations and militarized rhythm (in contrast to the dispersed attack tactics applied earlier). The unit wears khaki uniforms, the color of the Greek army, and recruits former army Special Forces members. After the December revolt, the DELTA anti-protest motorcycle unit appeared.

11. At *www.astynomia.gr/index.php?option=ozo_content&lang='..'&perform=view&id=22585&Itemid=989&lang=*.

12. In 1980, MAT beat demonstrators Iakovos Koumis and Stamatina Kanellopoulou to death during the November 17 demonstration, and in 1985, MAT officer Melistas fatally shot 15-year-old Michalis Kaltezas in the back during the annual November 17 demonstration.

13. Hellenic Police, "Total Statistics of Operation Polis for the Entire Country in 2005," at *www.astynomia.gr/index.php?option=ozo_content&perform=view&id=232&Itemid=232&lang=* (in Greek).

14. Amnesty International (2012) featured the Koutsoubou case in its report on police brutality in Greece.

15. Water cannons were used for the first time against demonstrators in the center of Athens during the general strike of November 6–7, 2012.

16. The inhabitants of Keratea, a town in East Attica (about 25 km. from Athens), revolted against government plans to construct a new landfill site in their area. In the face of one of the first major acts of resistance against the government since the IMF/EU/ECB loan agreement (May 2010), the authorities were profoundly committed to enforcing the decision and supporting the interests of the firm awarded the landfill construction contract. This led to a four-month-long conflict that was carried out on the highways, fields, and in villages on the southern outskirts of Athens. This mini-civil war ended with the physical and political victory of the people of Keratea, exposing the potential of long, persistent public violence against the police and state. Keratea was extraordinary due to its long duration and intensity, as well as its timing. The authorities also gained valuable experience. It offered the police a chance to inaugurate a new type of repression that expanded the limits of public violence. Keratea resembled a soft-core war in which neither side was prepared to back down and each side escalated the conflict to unprecedented levels.

17. Organizations such as the Institute of Rights Equality and Diversity described these incidents as "unjustified brutality against protesters" (i-RED 2011a,b). Amnesty International (2011) called upon the Greek police to refrain from using "excessive force in their handling of violence during protests in Athens."

18. Quoted in *Debtocracy,* a documentary by Katerina Kitidi and Aris Hatzistefanou.

19. "UNHCR Says Asylum Situation in Greece Is 'A Humanitarian Crisis,'" at *www.unhcr.org/4c98a0ac9.html*.

20. For example, the emergency loan granted to the Greek government in May 2010 and the accompanying structural adjustment program implemented by the troika (IMF, EU, and ECB) were extended to Portugal and Ireland within months. A week after the Greek parliament appointed a technocrat as prime minister, Italy followed suit. Then, most European countries introduced austerity policies that curtailed public welfare spending, often citing the collapse of the Greek economy as justification.

21. According to a September 2011 report by the Retailers Association of Athens, over 20 percent of small businesses had failed in the city since 2010.

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