Citizen identity through the encounter: a kaleidoscopic view of Athenians' encounters with migrants in a city of compounded crises

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Declaration

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it).

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the construction of citizen identity through difference, not commonality. Specifically, it examines citizens' embodied and mediated encounters with noncitizen migrants in the spatio-temporality of compounded crises. It does so by zooming in on a multicultural Athenian neighbourhood undergoing many changes: most apparently, economic due to the post-2008 financial crisis, and demographic due to arrivals of new migrants post-2015, the so-called 'migration crisis'. Within this spatio-temporality of perceived or experienced crises, the study examines how citizens construct a sense of Self through the Other, more particularly through their encounters with noncitizens on streets and screens.

Aiming to contribute to the literature on media and identity, I draw on an interdisciplinary framework that cross-fertilises theories and methods from media and communications, sociology and urban studies. The study's multi-method approach combines 30 in-depth interviews with Greek citizens with offline and online participant observation.

The empirical chapters investigate citizens' self-making through the Other in three distinct ways. The first empirical chapter (Chapter 4) focuses on *crisis reflexivity*: it thus shows how the constitution of crisis, both in temporal and in discursive terms, shapes meanings of the Self and the Other. The predominance of imaginings of identity through and during crisis becomes more apparent when citizens have few or no embodied encounters with migrants and largely depend on the media to learn about migration. The second empirical chapter (Chapter 5) examines *culturalist reflexivity*: it demonstrates how citizens' co-occupation of local spaces with migrants opens up space to consider what unites or divides citizens and noncitizens. However, when such encounters remain ephemeral, pre-existing conceptions of the citizen Self dominate. Core references here are hegemonic systems of knowledge, including the media, which bind meanings of identity within narratives of cultural distinctiveness. The third empirical chapter (Chapter 6) discusses *convivial reflexivity*: it moves beyond the ephemerality of the encounter, and instead examines the consequences of sustained encounters that include more systematic engagement between citizens and noncitizens. In many of these cases, reflexive negotiations of the boundary between 'us' and 'them' become more common.

Theoretically, the contribution of the thesis is twofold: firstly, it reveals that the process of citizen identity-making through embodied and mediated encounters is shaped through a tripartite process of embodiment, mediation and affect; secondly, it foregrounds crisis as a context of citizen identity construction and explores how identities are configured and reconfigured when certainties about the (citizen) self have been destabilised because of the interaction of perceived and experienced crises.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANEL – Independent Greeks

CSC – Citizens' Service Centre

EU – European Union

NBA – National Basketball Association

ND – New Democracy

NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation

PASOK – Panhellenic Socialist Movement

PPC – Public Power Corporation

R.V.S.P – Répondez s'il vous plait

SYRIZA – The Coalition of the Radical Left

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: encounters with proximal Others and the problematic question of identity

'Now it's your time to learn Greek, at least how to write your name. I can teach you Greek and you can tell me real-life stories from the days you firstly arrived in Thessaloniki as a refugee in 1922,' I used to tell my great-grandmother, Marika,[1] when I enrolled in the first grade of primary school and I realised she could not read subtitles of foreign films or even write her name in Greek. That was the day we made the deal. Having the privilege of living with her essentially meant that every day after school I brought back extra copies of my homework for her.

Marika, at the age of ten, was forced to leave Constantinople in 1922 and find a new home in Thessaloniki because of the Greco-Turkish War (1919–1922). The refugees numbered approximately 120,000 (Agtzidis 2018). Upon arrival, her family found shelter in a shack in the city's Upper Town, Ano Poli, the area around the ruins of the Byzantine castle. She joined primary school in the first grade and, as the oldest one in class, received disrespectful comments both from classmates and teachers. Feelings of isolation at school coupled with alienation from the small neighbourhood community of settled Greek residents. With limited options, given her refugee status and family background, she found work as a servant, polishing the shoes of the owners of Villa Bianca, a famous mansion at the heart of Thessaloniki that was home to one Dino Fernandez Dias, an affluent tradesman, and his wife Blanche (Bianca) Meyer. Not only was

[1] A diminutive name of Maria in traditional societies of Poland, Greece and Japan and rarely found nowadays in a Greek urban context.

Marika treated as the proximate Other because of her financial situation and low-status job, but she also experienced hostility from the settled residents of Ano Poli. Two words in particular were seared into her memory – the labels Greek citizens attached to her and other Anatolian Greeks who fled the war: *tourkosporoi* ('Turkish seeds') and *pastrikies* (literally, 'very clean women', but typically used to characterise 'immoral women'); both demonstrated the citizens' discriminatory stance towards newcomers from Minor Asia.

At the age of six, I could not even understand what the words 'migrant' or 'refugee' connoted, but Marika being Greek, yet born in a neighbouring country which she was forced to leave without any of her belongings, sparked my interest. It also created an 'identity crisis' of my own that was reinforced every time she called me 'seitan' (Turkish for Satan) in her effort to escape the homework I'd given her, or talking loudly in Turkish at other times I annoyed her. I always wondered 'Who am I?', 'Is my family Greek or Turkish?' Since I could not define my great-grandmother's and my own identity, I was more curious to learn why she was forced to leave, how she managed to find a sanctuary, and the attitude of settled residents towards her in her host city. My intention is not to claim that my interest in migration as a topic of research was determined by my great-grandmother's narratives, but growing up with stories from the city of refuge, my own research identity started to materialise from a young age.

Even though these conversations took place in the early 2000s, the 'migration crisis' that started in Greece in 2015 and still continues today brought to my attention stories of other newcomers, now in a similar position to my great-grandmother, and rekindled my childhood memories. However, this time, what intrigued me the most was the *citizen* element within her identity and that of other citizens who are receiving newcomers in present times. How are the identities of the residents who are receiving migrants, the citizens, shaped through their encounter with newcomers, the migrant noncitizens?

The Greek context: the myth of national homogeneity, the reality of compounded crises and the Kypselian field

Greece has always been a mixture of different ethnic groups, such as Muslims,[2] Vlachs,[3] Jews,[4] Moraites,[5] Roumelians,[6] Turkish, Pomaks,[7] Roma,[8] Arvanites,[9] Slavo-Macedonians,[10] and refugees from Asia Minor[11] – groups and communities that, in 1840, formed the modern Greek state in lands that for 400 years had been part of the Ottoman Empire. However, the institutional constitution of modern Greece was developed around the ideas of *national homogeneity* and *Hellenism* that together have long shaped its national imaginaries. To achieve an ethnically homogenous nation following Greece's initial bid for independence in 1822, the country was engaged in a series of successive wars to incorporate the Greek-speaking regions, with the last being the 1919–1922 Greco-Turkish War in Minor Asia. Following Turkey's victory, the two countries signed the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 – a treaty that demanded a forced

[2] **Muslims**: the only explicitly recognised minority in Greece, estimated at 140,000 (1.24% of total population), mostly concentrated in the area of Thrace. The majority originates from populations that were exempt from the 1923 population exchange between Greece and Turkey.

[3] **Vlachs**: living in scattered rural communities in Northern Greece, this population belongs to the same ethnic group as Romanians, sharing a lot of common features (incl. language and religion – Greek Orthodox).

[4] **Jews**: having lived in the territories of today's Greece for more than 2,000 years, this minority group has always been a key stakeholder in Greek history. Significantly shrunk to an estimated population of just 6,000 today following the Nazi Germany invasion during WWII.

[5] **Moraites**: part of the Sarakatsani minority population in Greece who mainly reside in Central and South Greece. An estimated 80,000 Moraites are thought to be currently living in Greece.

[6] **Roumelians**: Roumeli is what Sterea Ellada, Central Greece, is also known as. Like the Moraites, the Roumelian minority forms part of Greece's Sarakatsani population and is considered to have been one of the most instrumental groups during the Greek War of Independence War in 1821.

[7] **Pomaks**: a Muslim minority group sharing Bulgarian cultural and linguistic features. Spread across Bulgaria, Greece, North Macedonia, Albania and Turkey, this group is often confused with the Muslim minority of Thrace.

[8] **Roma**: numbering ~250,000 individuals, this population group has lived scattered throughout Greece (mainly in the suburbs of the towns/cities) for more than 200 years. The majority has been Hellenised and today identify as Orthodox Christians. Rom, meaning 'man of the Roma', is the official name for Gypsies in Greece and other states in Europe.

[9] **Arvanites**: speaking a dialect of the Albanian language, the Arvanites are considered to belong to the same group as Albanians by the majority of the Greek population. Arvanites proudly claim to be direct descendants of Ancient Greeks, bear strong religious ties to Orthodox Christianity and as such today self-identify as Greeks.

[10] **Slavo-Macedonians**: a South Slavic ethnic group native to the region of Macedonia in South-East Europe, speaking a South Slavic language (Macedonian). This population group has been exploited by Bulgarian and Greek governments to promote their nationalist agendas (mainly during the Balkan Wars).

[11] **Refugees from Asia Minor**: this term is used to refer to the more than 1,000,000 refugees who fled from Asia Minor and the Black Sea during the Greek genocide (1914–1923) and after the defeat of the Greek Army in the Greco-Turkish war (1919–1922). This group is considered to have vastly contributed to the homogenisation of Greece throughout the 20th century.

population exchange between Greece and Turkey. According to this, approximately 1.4 million Orthodox Christian Greeks arrived as refugees in Greece and 500,000 Muslim Turks were sent to Turkey from Greek regions (Karakasidou 1995; Agtzidis 2018). At this stage, it is vital to briefly root in the historical trajectory of the state, its language and its ties to Greek Orthodox Christianity. The role of language was an important pre-condition to the process of national homogeneity, with Ioannis Metaxas's dictatorship (1936–1940) prohibiting communication in non-Greek languages in everyday life and decreeing Greek as the country's sole official language. Religion – Christian, Orthodox – also played a fundamental role in the process of national homogenisation and the 'formation of national identity in people otherwise separated in different linguistic and even ethnic communities' (Koumandaraki 2008, 43). The modern Greek state is not secular, and the Greek Orthodox Church is actively engaged in the regulation of affairs, such as education[12] and immigration. Embracing a Greek and Christian culture and identity underpinned the ideology of *ethnikofrosini* (national-mindedness) that set up a dichotomy between the 'national-minded' (*ethnikofrones*) and the 'traitors of the nation' (*communists*) (Elefantis 2003, 137); between the institutional Right and Left – a division which, in line with the Western powers' aim to protect their spheres of influence from Communism during the Cold War, led to or intersected with the Greek Civil War. The triumph of the right in that war in 1949, Orthodox Christianity's status as the official/dominant religion within the country and the subsequent suppression of ethnic differences brought into being an allegedly homogenous Hellenic society; this has become an imagined homogenous society, which though it has never existed as such, has become the one and only way to imagine the nation and the society. Thus, there were two prerequisites to the construction of a homogenous modern state after the Civil War and the Greek Junta: (a) subservience to a sole dogma – the Greek Orthodox one – by leaving aside

[12] In fact, the Department of Education has been integrated with religious affairs and operates as the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs https://www.minedu.gov.gr/

ethnic groups' religious preferences; and (b) the imposed detachment of (ethnic) communities' ties from any other country or culture.

After the overthrow of the 1967 military regime and the first legislative elections in 1974, two main parties, New Democracy (also known as ND) – the liberal conservative political party – and the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (also known as PASOK) – the social democratic political party – alternated in power for almost four decades. In the first years of the 21st century, the 'stable' democratic system of governance following the 1967–1974 military junta was destabilised for two reasons: firstly, because of the lack of trust in the traditional two-party system and, secondly, the lack of trust in EU's role as a partner in the new political reality of the 2007–2008 financial crisis – a crisis that revealed multiple and interacting crises in Greece within a broader Eurozone crisis. This resulted in a sequence of eight different governments and seven Prime Ministers (Giorgos Papandreou, Lucas Papademos, Panagiotis Pikramenos, Antonis Samaras, Vasiliki Thanou, Alexis Tsipras and Kyriakos Mitsotakis), each of whom attempted to lead, and to manage the country's unending crises. This political instability gave popularity and power to the anti-austerity radical leftist SYRIZA, which sought to bring hope and restore sovereignty, and formed a coalition government with the radical right party Independent Greeks (ANEL) in 2015. Despite voters' initial enthusiasm for a government that opposed austerity and its policies, their separation was inevitable after SYRIZA accepted an additional EU bailout package, disregarding the resounding 'NO' to the bailout package in the historic referendum vote of July 2015.

During that period, the tension within the political scene accompanied by the electorate's lack of trust in the clientelist party system led to a fragmentation of the popular vote with seven to eight parties represented in the Hellenic Parliament (double the number compared to the pre-crisis level). This political turmoil led to the rise of the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party whose share of

the popular vote increased from 0.5% in 2009 to 7% in 2012, securing the third place in the Hellenic Parliament in 2012 (Lazaridis and Wadia 2015). The party gained significant power and support while the sense of indignation, anger and hatred towards foreign creditors and governments prevailed. Though suffering a slight setback in the 2015 parliamentary elections, the party still managed to win 6.28% of the votes and receive 18 out of the 300 seats in parliament (Siapera and Veikou 2016). Unlike similar far-right parties in Europe that disassociated themselves from extremism, the Golden Dawn[13] and its members openly expressed violence and racism towards migrants in the country.

In 2009, in anticipation of a series of controversial bailouts by its foreign creditors (the International Monetary Fund, European Commission and European Central Bank), Greece entered a period of unprecedented austerity measures and neoliberal policies that had a radical socio-economic impact on its citizens and especially those living in the margins (Pagoulatos 2017; Stylianidis and Souliotis 2018). The repercussions spanned across all-time-high unemployment rates, a dramatic increase in numbers of people at risk of poverty, widening inequalities in income distribution, and a steep rise in the number of suicides, as well as the degradation of work, insurance, health and pension regimes. A closer look at the country's statistics manifests that from a base level of 7.8% in 2008, unemployment climbed to 27.5% in 2013 (Hellenic Statistical Authority 2021) – the highest rate in the European Union; and, most importantly, youth unemployment rocketed to 58% in the same year, from a base level of 22% in 2008 (*The World Bank* 2021).[14] At the same time, the share of population that lived in poverty or social exclusion rose from 28.1% in 2008 to 36% in 2014 (Hellenic Statistical Authority 2018).[15] The country's minimum wage exhibited a sharp decline, dropping by 20% during the five-year

[13] A five-year historic trial banned the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party and its main leaders were convicted of running a criminal organisation in 2020.
[14] See youth unemployment rate in Greece, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/
[15] See the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT) results on the 2017 Survey on Income and Living Conditions, https://www.statistics.gr/documents

period from 2008 when the crisis began (OECD 2022).[16] Similarly, the health sector shared in the significant degradation of the Greek welfare system, with a 40% reduction in the public hospital budget between 2009 and 2013 (Karagkounis 2017, 654) that left 2.5 million individuals without health insurance (Tufft 2015). The crisis was also accompanied by an unprecedented reversal in the country's demographics, with the 2010–2012 drop in births by 12.5% marking the largest biennial fall in the past six decades (Hellenic Statical Authority 2021).[17]

Zooming in the Athenian reality for the purposes of my fieldwork, I encountered a city that was de facto multicultural. The city may not be new to multiculturalism, but the concept acquired significance with the arrival of a number of migrants, mainly from Albania, who now amount to approximately 5% of the country's population (Ndoci 2021; Gill 2011) – but also from Balkan and eastern European countries (Gill 2011). The arrival of Albanian migrants in 1991 in Greece following the collapse of the state-socialist regimes in eastern Europe reopened histories of encounters that both substantiate and subjugate unfamiliar bodies. Nevertheless, Greece's invisible minorities (such as the Roma or Slavo-Macedonians) have never been officially recognised by the state; the only minority granted recognition, as required by the Treaty of Lausanne, is that of the Muslims in the region of Thrace (Madianou 2005a). In 2019, the Hellenic Statistical Authority estimated the number of migrants to be 129,459 (Hellenic Statistical Authority 2021).[18] It should be noted, though, that migrants are not correctly and accurately accounted for in population statistics (Connor and Passel 2019) because of administrative delays in processing documents and bureaucratic dysfunction.

[16] See chart on the real minimum wages https://stats.oecd.org/
[17]See the press release of the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT) on the evolution of demographic indicators in Greece for 2020 www.statistics.gr/en/
[18] See the press release of the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT) on estimated population and migration flows in 2020 www.statistics.gr/en/

The beginning of the new millennium brought to Greece various migrant populations from Africa (mainly from Nigeria, Ethiopia, Ghana, Somalia, Congo, Senegal and Guinea), Asia (Bangladesh, Pakistan, India) and the Middle East (Egypt, Syria, etc). More recently, in 2015, 857,363 people crossed into Greece from outside Europe (IOM 2015), more than into any other European country, making it the continent's key entry point for people escaping war and destitution in their own countries in search of safety and better living and economic conditions. Over the first half of 2015 the number of people reaching Greek shores soared by 408% compared with the same period in 2014 (Anderson, Kingsley, and Galatsidas 2015). The majority of migrants and refugees living in the country has settled in urban spaces. Athens bears the brunt of managing the resettlement of hundreds of migrants who are relocated mostly in the centre of the city as borders to Northern Europe remained sealed, thus preventing the newcomers from reaching their desired destinations.

The much-discussed diversity of the Athenian population was immediately evident on Kypseli's streets – also known as 'the migrant neighbourhood' (Zaphiriou-Zarifi 2018). Kypseli is a lively multicultural neighbourhood of approximately 50,000 residents, located in the 6th district of the Municipality of the 'global city' of Athens (Sassen 2000). I locate my study in Kypseli mainly for its diverse ethno-cultural constitution (Kandylis, Maloutas, and Sayas 2012) as recent statistics refer to it as the neighbourhood whose migrant population accounts to 65% (Daniilidis 2018).[19] Kypseli was chosen for my fieldwork, because it constitutes an assemblage of established and recent migrant populations living alongside the ethnically Greek majority. In particular, the area has since the 1990s received a large influx of migrants from Eastern European countries that are now well-established residents in Kypseli. More recently, since 2015, Kypseli has become a

[19] While the 2021 census has not been accessible yet, statistics before the symbolic peak of the so-called 'migration crisis' in 2015 mention that 15% of Kypseli's total apartment buildings are inhabited by immigrants (see Athens Social Atlas, retrieved from https://www.athenssocialatlas.gr/). Given the arrivals of new migrant populations since 2015, Kypseli's ethno-cultural constitution has now been more diverse.

(temporary or permanent) home to migrants seeking shelter because of the wars, conflicts and economic destitution of many in the Balkans, the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia – migrants that are largely undocumented in Greece.

In early 1900, Kypseli was primarily the home of the most affluent (upper middle-class and middle-class Athenians) due to its advantaged position almost attached to the centre of Athens. With the rise in population during the 1930s, due to the arrival of refugees from Minor Asia and people from rural areas of the country, Kypseli's purely middle-class status somewhat faded away (Balampanidis and Polyzos 2016). Intense urbanisation during the 1950s and 1960s transformed the neighbourhood's socio-spatial background – it led to the demolition of detached houses and backyards and the construction of blocks of flats reached a peak (ibid). As Kypseli was still inhabited by the city's bourgeoisie, it continued to be thought of as one of the most privileged areas. However, to understand the transformation Kypseli went through following the construction of blocks of apartments, it is vital to mention that these buildings attracted residents of varying socio-economic backgrounds as prices were appropriate to different buyers – ranging from the affordable to the urban poor basement flats to the expensive upper floors (Maloutas and Karadimitriou 2001; Lafazani and Vaiou 2015). While other neighbourhoods in the city of Athens can also be considered multicultural, Kypseli's 'vertical segregation' – social differences based on the floor one resides in the block of apartments – (Maloutas and Botton 2021) offers integration prospects and exposes Greek residents to inevitable embodied encounters with migrant populations (established or recent). Rapid urbanisation gave way to decline in the 1980s. The city expanded and the numbers of cars increased so much that the cloud of pollution became an incentive for Kypseli's well-off residents to seek alternative accommodation in the Athenian suburbs (Maloutas, Emmanuel, and Pantelidou-Malouta 2006). Subsequently, the value of the apartments significantly decreased and, since then, Kypseli has been the 'go-to' neighbourhood for working-class individuals and disadvantaged groups

(including migrants, who remain in their majority economically marginalised or underprivileged) (Lafazani and Vaiou 2015). The existence of migrant-owned shops and the services they offer redefine the image of the urban landscape. Balampanidis and Polyzos (2016) map out the types of commercial activities and places of origin of Kypseli's migrant shop owners. Migrants are engaged in 10% of all catering, 11.5% of services, 14% of hair salons, 16% of general commerce, 24% of call centres and 25% of mini markets (ibid). Their countries of origin spread across continents: Africa (Nigeria, Ethiopia, the Maghreb) 46%, Asia (Bangladesh, Pakistan, India) 19%, eastern Europe (Albania, Poland, Bulgaria and Georgia) 14%, China 8%, Middle East (Egypt, Syria) 7% and a final 6% whose origin the researchers were unable to ascertain (ibid).

Hegemonic ideologies and public discourse have historically held migrant urban dwellers of Kypseli responsible for the neighbourhood's degradation and social and urban decay. The xenophobic rhetoric, according to which the neighbourhood is the 'ghetto' in the city of Athens (Kalantzopoulou, Koutrolikou, and Polihroniadi 2011), is popular in hegemonic political and media discourse. At the same time, grassroots movements have emerged increasingly as a non-institutional response to intolerance and socio-spatial concerns (unemployment, impoverishment, degradation) that the state and municipality cannot address.

An interdisciplinary and dialogical enquiry into the nature of citizen identity

Far from the idea of the 'disappearance' of culture and identity imagined in *The End of History* (1989) and *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), the migrant populations that have arrived in resettlement countries, transit hubs or countries of first asylum in Europe have reshaped the cultural boundaries and identities of the established citizens and their communities. In his most recent book, *Identity: The Demand for Dignity and the Politics of Resentment* (2018), Francis Fukuyama

explores a cultural revolution that is already underway and pays attention to contemporary identity politics. From the humanitarian crisis and the symbolic peak of the so-called 'migration crisis' in 2015 to the 2019 border stand-off with Turkey after President Recep Tayyip Erdogan opened its borders to Europe, there have been vigorous debates in the media about intercultural mixing, a rise in Islamophobia and a contemporary clash of civilisations and cultures (Fekete 2009; McGhee 2008). As the brief historical overview above indicates, the constitution of modern Greece systematically dissociated itself from Eastern and Balkan connections, and instead aggressively and systematically promoted a Eurocentric conception of identity as 'White', imagining its people as more enlightened and civilised compared to migrant Others (Koumandaraki 2008; Jockey 2013; Kompatsiaris 2017). For the Greek hegemonic discourse of identity, like that of many other European countries, distant Others – especially those from the East and the South – are not as civilised as White Europeans and do not value life as much as the latter do (Feagin 2010). Such representations are deeply embedded in colonial history and Eurocentric systems of knowledge (i.e., black skin racism or the 'bad' and 'terrorist' Muslim; see Mamdani 2004) and underpin formal or informal everyday exclusions and hostile attitudes towards migrants (Yuval-Davis, Wemyss, and Cassidy 2019). Relatedly, religion has become associated with race and/or ethnicity, and Islam in particular has become increasingly demonised in Western societies (particularly in the United States and Europe) against a superior Christianity (Titley et al. 2017; Göle 2017; Moore 2005). Populist media and right-wing parties have intensified these narratives through panics of presumed homogenising globalisation and the demonisation of migrants as threatening the imagined homogenous and presumably previously stable communities of citizens (Lentin 2004; Goldberg 2008; Lentin and Titley 2012).

My project focuses on the construction of citizen identities at that present historical juncture: at times of compounded crises (Grossberg 2018) and their intense mediation. Specifically, this is an interdisciplinary enquiry into the nature of Greek citizen identity as it is negotiated and

constructed through everyday encounters between citizens and noncitizens in a crisis-ridden multicultural Athenian locale. It is hoped that the research, situated at the intersection of media and communications, urban studies and sociology, will offer a renewed perspective on citizen identity as it is shaped discursively and materially in a city of difference and crisis. The complexity of citizen identity in the urban landscape is evident in its workings: individuals and groups in an unequal society with different racial, ethnic, class, religious and gender and sexual characteristics (preferences) are thrown together and mingle within a small area. As individuals constantly encounter each other, they are repeatedly reminded that neither their city nor themselves remain unchanged. In fact, it is the city that is changing constantly through population mobility and the reconfiguration of its demographics that most visibly capture the relational, dynamic, and sometimes violent constitution of citizen identities. If such identities do not rely on fixed and stable definitions, it is in the conduct of everyday life (De Certeau 1984; Lefebvre 2014) – a space that never exists independently of wider power systems and social categories (Ahmed 2000, 2004) – that we should study them; it is the ways in which citizen identities are 'lived' and are represented and imagined that are worthy of academic exploration. Within this project, to contribute to the anti-essentialist research on identity in the context of everyday life, my bottom-up approach draws on media and communications, urban studies and social theory in order to offer a holistic depiction of citizen identities as they are shaped in a Greek metropolis.

What happens when citizens and noncitizens come together and when the assumed fearful and distant Others are no longer geographically distant, but instead in spatial proximity within the multicultural city? To address the spatiality of citizen identity, I draw on critical urban scholars and the concept of 'encounter': a meeting that involves surprise and conflict (Ahmed 2000). While urban studies emphasise the spatial dimension of identity, they privilege urban materiality by paying less attention to the symbolic processes of identity construction, especially through

different forms of mediation. In response, Gill Valentine points to the 'paradoxical gap that emerges in geographies of encounter between values and practices' (2008, 325). Sara Ahmed speaks of the encounter that 'presupposes other faces, other encounters of facing, other bodies, other spaces (2000, 7), and other times' and Ash Amin reminds us that 'the physical encounter is no longer the sole or privileged space of relational contact' (2012, 81). In this context, it is important to recognise both the material and the discursive constitution of citizen identity in the city, not least as this is shaped through embodied but also mediated encounters.

Cross-border mobility has configured societies since time immemorial, but what is different now in terms of migration and citizen identities? The nation, the citizenry, but also the process of migration itself, are now intensively mediated with the production, presumption and consumption of narratives in relation to who belongs and who does not belong circulated constantly across media platforms and screens (Chouliaraki and Georgiou 2022). I engage with the concept of 'mediation', as understood in media and communications (see, in particular, Silverstone 2005; Livingstone 2009) in order to address the restrictive theorisation of spatialised definitions of the 'encounter' and theorisations that privilege the material conditions of citizen identity construction. Sometimes, even when encountering migrant populations in proximate distance, individuals tend to depend on (mediated) knowledge and perceptions to support their arguments. This is largely the case across Europe, where relations with the (distant) Other are primarily and intensively facilitated or denied through the media (Silverstone 2002). If the media have a prominent role in culture and social change, then it is important to understand the mediated and hierarchical constitution of identities – for instance, citizens vis-à-vis noncitizens, Christians vis-à-vis Muslims or Europeans vis-à-vis non-Europeans.

Media and communications scholarship will help me address the following question: how are citizens' identities shaped when embodied and mediated encounters in everyday life occur in a

multicultural neighbourhood of compounded crises? In this way, I will shed light on the vital role of communication, imagination and intense mediation as symbolically informing and shaping the encounter in the locale. The further question of the potential of and limits to the power of the media to shape encounters and, consequently, citizen identities in the context of crisis is also key to this thesis. I undertook an investigation of a multicultural neighbourhood in the centre of Athens with the aim of shedding some light on the construction of citizen identity through the encounter with the noncitizen. Viewing citizen identity through the lens of media and communication is necessary but not always sufficient to explore encounters with proximate Others and the problematic question of citizen identity; we learn that identity 'is always constituted out of difference' (Grossberg 1996, 357). Thus, in the case of the city of difference, we need not only a conceptualisation of citizen identity where experience of migration and media narratives converge, but one that includes in its definition identities' relational constitution through the Other (Isin 2002). To this end, I located this enquiry within the complex spatio-temporality of a changing multicultural locale as this is experienced and imagined through affective interactions but also mediated narratives of the city, the Self and the Other.

In so doing, my study addresses the urgent need for an *intersectional*, *dialogical* and *relational* framework within which to study citizen identity; a working model that not only transcends the boundaries of the symbolic and material, but also goes beyond the monolithic understanding of citizen identity as a process that materialises independently of forms of interaction in the urban space. To this end, it is a combination of research on materiality and discourse that permeates the empirical chapters of this thesis. I discuss the interactions between citizens and noncitizens across the neighbourhood but also identify how those encounters are often framed by media narratives widely circulated in the neighbourhood. To examine identity where (media) imagination and lived experience – as practices that are sometimes different, similar and/or overlapping in interpreting events – intersect is a prerequisite for achieving a holistic theorisation

of citizen identity in the context of 21st century European urbanity. This thesis interrogates the significance of understanding the constitution of Otherness (noncitizen identity) as internal to the constitution of citizen identity. This proposal challenges established Eurocentric regimes of knowledge that focus on *the inside*, rather than the relational constitution of *the inside* (of Europe) through the encounter – imaginary and lived – with *its Other*. In line with this logic, the stance I take throughout this thesis does not aspire to fix the condition of Otherness as an eternal parameter of citizen identity-making, but rather to foreground it as a fundamental point of reference for citizens in urban, multicultural locales.

This introduction will not embark on the conceptual thinking behind the tripartite nature of 'citizen identity', 'encounter' and 'mediation', as its convoluted epistemic corollaries necessitate an adequate space to be thoroughly and extensively interrogated. For this reason, I have reserved this discussion for Chapter 2, in which I scrutinise the conceptual rationale briefly introduced below.

Scope and objectives

The thesis' aim is to examine how citizen identities are constructed through the encounter with the noncitizen migrant, as I understand the encounter to be highly mediated but also embodied and affective. The thesis' intention is to challenge techno-determinism and conceptions of causal relationships between media and identity, and instead to recognise the complex embeddedness of the media in everyday life and their important but also contextual role in shaping citizen identity in space and time (Silverstone 2005; Georgiou 2006). This approach recognises mediated encounters in the same way that Georgiou and Zaborowski (2019, 2) understand how representations set rules 'for seeing refugees, not just as external Others, but as strangers who are constituted through their encounters with Europeans and with Europe'. To what extent do

media frames on migrant mobility advance or hinder interaction between the two groups when thrown together in the multicultural city? The thesis is not interested in examining how media influence citizen perceptions on a certain topic, but instead it explores how the very notion of how someone's Self 'arises in large part through mediated practices' (ibid, 7) as the latter are always located in spatial and temporal contexts (Moores 2000). Thus, I study the discourse and practice associated with encounters between citizens and noncitizens in trying to understand how these are intertwined and inform citizen identity construction. This approach surpasses divides between false perception and 'true knowledge' (Schutz 1982, 348). If a Greek citizen in a multicultural city thinks that a Muslim woman poses a threat to the community because of her veil or appearance, this view will possibly guide and structure the behaviour of the particular citizen – and this is sometimes the case, as this study will show. Whether the veiled woman is a threat or whether the veil itself is an indicator of threat is a different story.

For this project, what matters is the dialectic, reciprocal relationship between embodied and mediated encounters. While many empirical studies have captured the mediation of migration on Western screens (Berry, Garcia-Blanco, and Moore 2015; Georgiou and Zaborowski 2016; Wilmott 2017), research that explores the dialogical intertwining of mediated and embodied encounters between citizens and noncitizens is rare. This study aims to shed light on how citizens react to and negotiate knowledge developed through mediated encounters when in physical proximity with migrants within the urban locale. The flows of communication online and offline might shape '(im)possibilities of other kinds of encounters and of newcomers' recognition' (Georgiou and Zaborowski 2019, 2). Therefore, this thesis aims to enable readers to understand intercultural encounters through lived but always mediated experiences that shape, at least in part, citizen identity. The research will provide an understanding of the ways in which micro-level tensions, contradictions and struggles are negotiated in the process of citizen identity-making in the city and at times of crisis. This includes an understanding of the

circulation of discourses about the Self and the Other (both in the digital and material world) and of the technologies of everyday life that mediate relations (i.e., apps, smartphones, hyperlocal media); and I locate the media in the context of the lived urban experience, avoiding a media-centric approach (Couldry 2004; 2012; Krajina, Moores, and Morley 2014; Moores 2012; Markham 2020). This is a fundamental starting point for the project since, by studying mediated identities, we can draw inferences regarding media power, the extent to which media representations have any repercussions for the construction of citizen identity, and whether media hinder or enable communication between a community's members and its nonmembers. In studying mediated identities, we actually explore *discourse* or rather the universe of discourses that reflect social practices – as Couldry puts it, 'surely a concern with discourse would lead us to be interested in practices that are associated with discourse' (2004, 120). Similarly, by studying discourse, emphasis is given to *practice*, as Couldry, among other media and communication scholars, urges us to 'open our lens even wider to take in the whole range of practices in which media consumption and media-related talk is embedded' (Couldry 2004, 120; Swidler 2001).

The original angle of the current project is that it treats crisis as a context of identity construction in a multicultural city – as a temporal and discursive framework of everyday life that reframes the imaginary of crisis and of the nation. In particular, crisis becomes a condition and a discourse that individuals reflect on when they speak about the Self and the Other. As significant numbers of migrant populations have settled in European metropolises, the city becomes a 'space of encounter' (Valentine and Harris 2016, 915). Driven by the urban condition of unavoidable 'throwntogetherness' (Massey 2005), the thesis emphasises the renewed need to understand citizen identity in a dialogical framework which is always defined through the encounter with the Other, who, in the case of the crisis-ridden and multicultural city, is mainly embodied and represented as the migrant noncitizen. The encounter is informed both through the symbolic constitution of citizens and noncitizens (as we learn from media and communication scholars),

but also through the materiality of the experience of everyday life (as we learn from urban studies scholars). By referring to 'embodied encounter', I refer to a form of interaction that allows the self to think normatively about how we live together in a crisis-ridden multicultural city. Regarding the 'mediated encounter', I refer to the discursive encounter (that is circulated through and by traditional and mass media) and the technologies of everyday life (that are part of the embodied interaction) that mediate relations. The thesis sheds light on the understudied dimension of citizen identity that is understood as taking its meanings from embodied and mediated encounters, symbolically, materially and affectively in crisis-ridden multicultural cities. The conceptual and methodological proposition of this doctoral thesis is to study citizen identity construction at the micro-level of everyday life by turning to a particular case – migrant populations in a European city of compounded crises, Athens. The thesis does not take for granted binary categorisations of 'we-ness' and 'otherness', 'European and non-European', 'East and West' and what constitutes 'community and non-community members', but instead understands these binaries as being constructed discursively within specific political and social contexts. The frame of analysis proposed here recognises the discursive emergence of those binaries that divide populations and their access to rights and resources but also offers a multi-layered understanding of the range of different positions individuals might hold within the structural and ideological systems that promote such binaries and divisions. The current project approaches the media-citizen identity relationship through an analytical matrix that includes the four main interfaces where this relation unfolds: embodied encounters, mediated encounters, reflexivity and crisis.

Structure of the thesis

To address my research question, this thesis is structured into seven chapters. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 – *Beyond a monolithic identity: theorising a processual construction of*

citizen identity in a crisis-ridden multicultural city – provides my theoretical and conceptual starting point. The chapter develops an interdisciplinary working model of the encounter in dialogue with theorisations of the processual construction of identity. Following an outline of the forces that destabilise people's conceptions of stable identities, not least the effect of the transborder mobility of people, ideas, and media, I offer a critical review of scholarly work on the concept of crisis. I then focus on how crisis comes to be construed as an imagined and experiential condition – as a cultural process. My framework builds on the sociological approach of the reflexive subject, placing reflexivity at the core of identity construction. I then offer an interdisciplinary perspective on the encounter, as a spatialised but also symbolic and increasingly mediated process of bringing together citizens and noncitizen migrants into shared communicative or experiential spaces of the city or media screens. I explain how it is important to learn from urban studies and media and communications in understanding, on the one hand, the spatial, material constitution of the encounter and, on the other, its symbolic constitution through media representations of the citizen and the noncitizen. My interdisciplinary approach informs my understanding of the encounter as both embodied and mediated – an encounter that shapes perceptions of the Self and the Other.

Following the elucidation of the epistemological assumptions that underpin the theoretical background and conceptual framework developed in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 –*Methodology: embracing an ethnographic sensibility* – outlines the methodological approach of my study. Informed by the interdisciplinary approaches to ethnographic urban and media research, the chapter explains why I decided to study citizen identity as processual and how I designed my empirical study accordingly. The second part of the chapter focuses on the operationalisation of my research question and research design. More specifically, I explain that since citizen identity is (a) *practised*, I adapt my methods and locate them within the practice of everyday life – and thus my project has an ethnographic (offline and online) sensibility; (b) *discursive*, I conduct in-depth interviews to

understand how citizens react to and negotiate their embodied encounters with Others; (c) *changing*, my study takes place in the context of the changing city and in the changing space of the encounter to capture the interaction between the mediated and embodied encounters. Outlining the types of data I collected – 30 in-depth interviews, screenshots from my online ethnographic observations (from participants' social media accounts), and visual material such as videos and images received on the Facebook chat and street graffiti – as well as the grounded theory approach I take to analyse their themes – I offer a detailed account both of the innovations and limitations of my methodological decisions. Chapter 3 ends with a reflection on my positionality as a researcher, the ways in which I negotiated power relations in the field and the ethical considerations that my project entails. Initiated in Chapter 2, the analytical framework that I describe in Chapter 3 enables me to explore the question of citizen identity-making in three distinct ways: through crisis, culturalism and conviviality.

Chapter 4, the first empirical chapter – *Crisis reflexivity: constructing identities of crisis and the inevitable rise of populism* – examines how few or no encounters between citizens and noncitizens in the neighbourhood enhance fear and hostility towards migrants, especially in the context of crisis, as well as the extent to which these encounters are subjected to ideological identities. Instead of assuming that the spatialised encounters are a panacea for social change, I explore the 'crisis imaginary' (Taylor 2002; Chouliaraki and Georgiou 2022) that becomes the symbolic space within which reflexivity (the practical negotiation of the imaginary that takes place through reflexivity) mobilises discourses and narratives present in the mediated encounter with the Other. I observe the experience of crisis as mediated through practices in the digital and material street of Kypseli. In particular, emphasis is not placed on conceptions of migration as exceptionality or the 'state of emergency' (Agamben 2020b); rather, my attention focuses on the everyday experience of migration in the city and on the urban neighbourhood that is partly transformed and partly normalised as a socio-cultural space through human mobility; and finally, instead of

reproducing the false debate of whether crisis is 'real or socially constructed' (Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde 1998; Mirowski 2013), the chapter seeks to address 'what crisis means for Greek citizens' and how it relates to everyday experience – as always relational and situated to the historical, social and temporal dimensions of everydayness. I describe, how the crisis imaginary can be discussed through media disinformation regarding migration-related stories and becomes a platform of victimised citizens. As an extension to this, I demonstrate that anger and indignation are mobilised as affective forces to bestow legitimacy on claims of victimhood as expressed by Greek citizens (Chouliaraki 2020). The chapter ends by examining how predominantly mediated encounters can open up an avenue for a politics of justice and generate feelings of cosmopolitanism towards citizens-in-the-making – that is how an 'alternative imaginary' (Zehfuss 2020) becomes the means to diversify the city of Athens.

Chapter 5 – *Culturalist reflexivity: constructing identities of fear* – focuses on the ephemeral encounters of citizens with noncitizen migrants in the urban neighbourhood. Specifically, the chapter examines whether and to what extent urban throwntogetherness reaffirms or challenges hegemonic discourses widely circulated in the media on migrants' Otherness. The chapter approaches this interrogation through an exploration of the affective and symbolic dimensions of Orientalism – beyond fixed theorisations that do not account for the Western subject in its definition – as Orientalism emerges when citizens ephemerally encounter noncitizens. The analysis reveals the impact of short-lived and sudden interfaces between Greek citizens and non-European Others as well as the extent to which such encounters are limited to hegemonic ideologies and moralities. The first part of the analysis demonstrates in what ways the media-enhanced and widely-circulated-in-the-city discourse of 'femonationalism' projects incompatible differences between citizens and noncitizens, both on the basis of a hierarchical European/Eastern humanity, but also on the basis of presumed Eastern and Muslim sexism. Femonationalism does not only create rigid Otherness, but also conceals the structures of

misogyny that exist within Greece itself. In what follows, I pay particular attention to cultural practices of routine erasure of the Other and normative Eurocentric discourses as they play out in the material and digital street of the locale. My final section fleshes out the conditionality of this discourse and how it operates, placing 'exceptionalism' – the neoliberal discourse of the Self that appropriates Black Otherness – within a nationalist frame that generates both difference and superiority. The chapter ends by emphasising that the neighbourhood encounters are always subordinate to and contingent upon wider hegemonic discourses of Otherness which remain prominent in the media, such as femonationalism, cultural erasure and neoliberal exceptionalism. It demonstrates that the spatialised encounter sometimes fails in ephemeral relations that are subjected to the master frames of the media, but the encounter can become more promising when it develops into consistent, regular interaction.

Chapter 6, *Convivial reflexivity – a tale of hospitality or hostility,* focuses on sustained and systematic encounters between citizens and noncitizens in the locale. The core aim of the chapter is to examine whether and under what circumstances close proximity and sustained encounters shape citizen identities that are welcoming and respectful to migrant co-habitants of the city. To do this, I explore the consequences of systematic encounters between citizens and noncitizens in their negotiation of spatial and ideological boundaries in the context of everyday life. In this regard, this chapter's discussion presents and analyses data in relation to questions of conviviality and reflexivity and reveals their contradictions. Rather than treating conviviality as a natural outcome of urban encounters, the findings demonstrate that even systematic encounters are limited by and subordinate to hegemonic discourses of nationalism and neoliberalism. In my empirical analysis, I demonstrate that the issue of living-together-in-difference is not predictable but rather always dependent on citizens' class background, and their local and national position in an unequal society. I pay particular attention to a classed dimension of solidarities that emerge in the micro-publics of the neighbourhood and how they are supported by networks of

mediation and a sharing culture on social media platforms. Following Chouliaraki and Georgiou's (2022) conception of the networked commons, I explore sustained encounters and political experimentations that bring together citizens and noncitizens in sharing the material and digital space of the neighbourhood. The final section of the analysis demonstrates the complexity and contradictions of convivial encounters and shows how they are on the one hand subject to the order of neoliberal nationalism, while on the other they become opportunities for a 'convivial reflexivity' (Koulaxi 2022) that advances affect and solidarity against the boundedness of We-ness and Otherness.

Chapter 7, *Through the kaleidoscope: encounters with the familiar stranger and the construction of citizen identities* – the concluding chapter – reflects on what the thesis has revealed about the construction of citizens' identity in the context of the crisis-ridden European metropolis of Athens. The chapter reflects on the interdisciplinary and ethnographic approach taken, which reveals how different kinds of encounters create a range of opportunities for conviviality or hostility in the city. The concluding chapter also reflects on the thesis' contribution to understanding the citizen identity–media relationship, especially in the context of migration and crisis. It discusses challenges and opportunities for citizens to become more open and respectful to difference as well as for identities to become dialectic and relational in the multicultural city, as these were revealed in the course of the research. In examining the historical, social, cultural and temporal situatedness of citizen identity, the closing chapter presents five identity discourses that asymmetrically emerge and cut across the three forms of reflexive subjectivities beyond the Greek context: (i) *neoliberal national*; (ii) *Europeanist/White*; (iii) *class*; (iv) *nationalist populist*; and, (v) *cosmopolitan*. Without assuming a clear-cut fixity of these themes, the chapter draws on the spill-over, connections and divergences of citizen identity categories in the respective national multicultural locale and beyond. In the final remarks, the chapter presents a point of reflection on the logics and dynamics that could potentially relate to other multicultural cities of

compounded crises. I reflect on the relational construction of citizen identity in the city, especially as this process is deeply rooted in urban change associated with transnational mobility, compounded crises and intense ideological struggles for and against recognition of difference.

CHAPTER 2

Beyond a monolithic identity: theorising a processual construction of citizen identity in a crisis-ridden multicultural city

The processes of globalisation and post-industrialisation that led to new patterns of migration also change the city and redefine its cultural boundaries. Cities have historically been the primary destination for migrants seeking opportunities for a better life (Isin 2002; De Genova 2015). However, the impact of migration on how the recipient communities experience and imagine urban life is understudied. Migration, forced or chosen, has played an essential role in the transformation of urban spaces and communities across the globe. Given that different individuals constantly mix and interact, it is easy to visualise the locale as a space, on the one hand, of marginalisation and exclusion and, on the other, simultaneously, of belonging, a space that offers migrants opportunities and recognition as citizens-in-the-making (Georgiou 2019b). As significant numbers of migrants have recently settled in European metropolises, there is a renewed need to reflect on the changing city in the context of migration. Migration destabilises definitions of belonging and citizenship and thus constitutes a complex phenomenon intrinsically associated with different forms of encounter in the city: not least, between citizens and noncitizens, materiality and temporality, imagination and experience. For cities that are more ethnically homogenous than others, mediated encounters, that is, where information about migration emerges primarily through media representations, probably constitute the most common kind of interactions between those receiving and those arriving. Such encounters are themselves contradictory and conflicting because of the different narratives contained within them as well as the different forms that mediated communication takes in everyday life.

This chapter provides an interdisciplinary working model of encounters as central to the study of citizen identity construction in the context of crisis-ridden urbanity. Examining the temporal situatedness of citizens in the city, I locate crisis as discursively and materially constituted in the context of everyday life. To capture the micro-political implications of crisis I therefore start by asking: can crisis be treated as an analytical concept that shapes encounters and generates identities? I then go on to discuss identity construction in the multicultural city, with primary reference to conceptions of the reflexive subject. In the section that follows, the sociological articulation of reflexivity cross-fertilises with urban studies to address the experiential dimension of citizen identity construction as throwntogetherness (Massey 2005), that is, as a process that is situated in the inevitability of the encounter with difference within a multicultural locale. Addressing the ways that identities are imagined and communicated necessitates an enquiry grounded in media and communications – an enquiry that is related to the mediation of symbols that shape meanings and frame citizens' identity. Understanding citizen identity through difference (Isin 2002) requires a theorisation that positions the media within broader systems of power and knowledge: a theorisation that conceives citizen identities as discursively constructed in dialogue and through the vast circulation of media narratives on migrant mobility and how these interact with the spatiality of the encounter in the material street.

Citizens encounter newcomers on the streets and on the screen and try to make sense of them, reach out to them or push them away in the geographical space of the locale. This condition forms a complex and contradictory context of encounters that is both embodied and technologically mediated. To engage with the complexity of the respective debate, this chapter creates a dialogue between the embodied encounter and the mediated encounter – discussions of which have, in scholarly terms, largely taken place independently of each other. I start the dialogue between the two with my conception of the mediated encounter, drawing on media and communications studies to address a significant omission in the study of encounters as

approached by urban and geography scholars – who pay little attention to the role of communication and intense mediation as symbolically shaping the encounter vis-à-vis the role of co-presence in the city as materially shaping the encounter. To introduce mediation as an important theoretical strut in this interdisciplinary framework for the study of encounters, I mainly draw on Silverstone's (1994) notion of 'double articulation', as well as Chouliaraki's (2011) view of the media as discourse, on the one hand, and Couldry's (2004) insistence on media as practice, on the other. At the intersection of media and communications, urban studies and sociology, I explore what happens when the predominant encounters between citizens and noncitizens, in screen representations, become embodied, as citizens engage with noncitizens within the experiential, physical space of urban everyday life. Within the spatio-temporality of perceived or experienced crises, this thesis seeks to examine how citizens construct a sense of Self through the Other, and in particular, through encounters with noncitizens on the material and digital streets.

Demystifying 'crisis' in the changing city

Because of its ubiquitous nature, crisis is one of the most debated concepts in social and political sciences (Krzyżanowski 2019). How can the concept be best understood in social theory and how has the concept evolved within the context of globalisation, especially when it comes to financial crises and migration? Giddens (1990, 1991) considers crisis as an inherent pathology of the system and Beck's 'catastrophic risk society' refers to the 'systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernization itself' (1992, 21). In the same vein, Reinhart Koselleck (1988), a German historian who has explored the historiography of the term and how its meaning has evolved over time, refers to crisis as an intrinsic moment in the culture of modernity. Crisis has been associated with lessons (to avoid) from the past and feelings of insecurity, anxiety and fear towards anything or anyone that could possibly disturb

our stability (as individuals, communities and nations) (Koselleck 2004). For Koselleck (2006, 358), crisis connotes 'a critical transition period after which – if not everything, then much – will be different'. In alignment with Giddens, Koselleck claims that crisis 'becomes a structural signature of modernity' as it gives the space for historical imagination: 'it takes hold of old experiences and transforms them metaphorically in ways that create altogether new expectations' (Koselleck 2006, 374). Fuchs (2015), as well as Forster and McChesney (2012), claim that capitalism is seen as a never-ending crisis, while there are obvious moments of deep crisis. Based on these claims, the 2007–2008 financial crisis was 'the offspring of a systemic change in capitalism' (Indovina 2015, 110). Beck (2002, 2006) reminds us that, despite the fact that an internalised globalisation of society has happened, inequalities (social, economic, political and cultural) have been a major factor explaining the overwhelming condition of a crisis époque – the impression that 'civilization is permanently and seemingly ineluctably under threat (Beck 1992, 116) – and reasons why certain groups have neither benefited from globalisation nor from neoliberalism and/or cosmopolitanism (see, e.g., the *gilets jaunes* (yellow vests) in France, policies around immigration in the US and many other instances in Europe and elsewhere). What this analysis demonstrates is the contradictory character of crisis; while crisis is discussed as a reflexive moment, a moment of opportunity or profit, it can also refer to the loss of life, faith and wellbeing – a condition that benefits certain individuals and, at the same time, penalises and victimises others (Grossberg 2018; Chouliaraki 2020).

From Beck's (1992) and Giddens's (1991, 1994) reflexive modernity and narratives of the self under condition of crisis to Boltanski's (2011) pragmatic sociology and his emphasis on the everyday reflexivity of social actors, crisis has been recognised as also having a vernacular dimension that needs closer attention. While a theorisation of crisis should consider its macro-level dimensions, it should also account for the hardships individuals face in the context of everyday life as a result of neoliberal agendas and the economic crisis (Grossberg 2018; Peck and

Tickell 2002). Although the aforementioned theorisations constitute a productive starting point in thinking about 'crisis' at a macro and abstract level, crisis at micro-level as *lived, discursive and affective experience* is also theoretically useful – as a term that is approached and positioned within the context of everyday life in the city where austerity bites (Peck 2012). The impact of the crisis-prone system of capitalism and the neoliberal framework is mostly felt in urban spaces. With Southern European countries struggling to meet the demands of fractured politics, austerity and economic stagnation have become serious challenges for urban populations. Hit hard by the multiple crises, especially since 2008 (the financial crisis, increased migrant mobility in Europe and most recently the pandemic), large metropolises have become victims of 'austerity urbanism' (Peck 2012), bearing the brunt of welfare cuts (Matsaganis 2011; Hall, Massey, and Rustin 2013) and being forced mostly to function with a restricted budget in relation to social issues. When zooming into the reality of large urban areas where residents are highly dependent on institutional mechanisms, crisis encompasses several sub-crises that emerge from established economic mechanisms: (youth) unemployment, gentrification and the housing issue it entails, poverty, and increased demand for financial support and services and social support for disadvantaged groups. Amongst these others, the issue of migration in cities also comes to be construed as 'crisis' by political actors and the media in a struggle to represent these issues as concerns to the citizenry.

Given the increased instabilities, including rising poverty and job and housing insecurity, locales become sites of conflict, parochiality and hostility, but also of solidarity and conviviality; or both simultaneously. Morley argues that 'conflict is generated in the process of identity formation by the attempt to expel alterity and beyond the boundaries of some ethnically, culturally or civilisationally purified homogenous enclave' (2004, 309). Therefore, migration starts to become an issue because of an underlying interaction of two or more crises that are related to economic chauvinism: 'the wealth is ours and we do not want to share it with any-body' (Gingrich and

Bank 2006, 37–38). In particular, feelings of ontological insecurity are frequently expressed through the particularity of the so-called 'migration crisis' and, especially through Orientalist discourses that scapegoat potential 'welfare scroungers' (Golding 1999) vis-à-vis the tax paying majority. The 'crisis imaginary' (Chouliaraki and Georgiou 2022), according to which the newcomer will steal something from the majority (Žižek 1993), is highly attached to the rise in national populism (Simonsen 2015; Mazzoleni and Bracciale 2018; Simonsen and Koefoed 2020). This might happen because times of crisis create what Appadurai (2006) has called the 'anxiety of incompleteness' where small, vulnerable populations (such as migrants and refugees) seem threatening to the national majorities, because they remind the latter that the unsullied and complete national whole as well as ethnic purity are simply illusions and do not really exist. The nation is imagined as a homogeneous space, where newcomers but also established migrant populations threaten the security of the nation.

Whether we accept the validity of the aforementioned crises or not, or agree or disagree with the 'crisis narrative', there is heated debate around the concept, especially when economic (post-2008 financial crisis) and demographic (post-2015 arrivals of new migrant populations) changes occur in an urban context – changes that invite further reflection on the 'crisis' term. This reflection frequently leads to a false argument about whether the 'crisis' is socially constructed or real (Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde 1998; Mirowski 2013). Further reflection on 'crisis' raises for me, too, a question of whether it matters whether 'crisis' accurately tracks 'reality' in some naïve sense or is in some 'objective' sense incorrect, or whether scholars should simply be concerned with the ways in which 'crisis' might structure the lived and affective experiences of populations at the micro-level of the locale. Driven by the false dichotomy ('socially constructed' vs 'real') and with the ultimate goal of resolving it, Roitman's (2013) study takes as its point of departure an anthropological claim to the notion of crisis, with a primary focus on the 2007–2008 financial crisis, and therefore focuses on *the practice of the concept of crisis*. Without favouring a political utopia

where the concept of crisis has vanished and opposing the taken-for-granted narrative that crisis is intrinsic to the (capitalist) system and modernity, Roitman challenges the use of the notion of crisis as a narrative strategy and explores how it comes 'to be construed as a protracted historical and experiential condition' (2013, 2). On the same wavelength, Kaun's *Crisis and Critique* (2016) makes an important contribution to a critical approach to the broad, vague concept of crises, viewing them as '*discursive* and *material* complex formations that are constantly under negotiation' (ibid, 21; emphasis added). It is this conceptualisation that I would like to take as my starting point. Thinking of crisis in a productive way requires that crisis is not only a background concept, but one that in its discursive, material and affective manifestations generates new conditions and encapsulates every element of economic, political and social reality.

Nevertheless, the real–social constructed binary is flawed – 'Being socially constructed does not negate the possibilities of a crisis being real at the same time' (Walby 2021, 37). Far from the idea that the crisis is solely socially constructed (Agamben 2005, 2020a, 2020b), the COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated that the crisis also has material and affective consequences and repercussions (Žižek 2020). At the time of writing, more than 6 million people have lost their lives and nearly 500 million have been infected,[20] meaning that the COVID-19 crisis, while it is not over yet, can be referred to as a critical turning point in history (Habermas 1975; Žižek 2020): it might be the case that there is a new 'normal', instead of recuperating back to our pre-COVID-19 realities; it might be remembered as a crisis where many more millions pass away; it might be a turning point of unprecedented surveillance and tightened governmental policies and measures. While the view that crisis is systemic is now more relevant than ever, in the case of the pandemic, we have witnessed that the system in itself, with powers exercised, seeks to contain the crisis (Harvey 2014), albeit being criticised for adopting 'frenetic, irrational and entirely

[20] https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/ (accessed 9th March 2022)

unfounded emergency measures' against 'an alleged epidemic of coronavirus' as well as for 'provoking an authentic state of exception with serious limitations on movement and a suspension of daily life in entire regions (Agamben 2020a, 2005). The crisis-prone system contains and partially resolves the crises it produces through a constant change of its contradictions (Harvey 2014) and, subsequently, ends up changing because of the magnitude of the crisis (in the case of the pandemic, the financial crisis and increased migrant mobility in Europe); and the same holds for the nation that takes on different roles in the process of addressing, containing or exacerbating multiple crises. Similarly, at the local level, the city itself takes on different roles in the process of crisis-generated social, spatial, political and economic transformation; and, in the process, crises restructure and reshape cities.

To summarise, my intention is to resist framing 'crisis' either as an exceptional moment or a taken-for-granted condition, but to posit it as a concept whose definitions and meanings are unstable and constantly change in the context of the city. The emphasis placed on the idea of exceptionality leaves limited scope for exploring crisis in its discursive, material and affective manifestations in the context of everyday life. When crisis designates something more than 'a state of emergency' (Agamben 2020b), exploring the spatio-temporality of crisis is vital. Relatedly, when referring to the term as a condition, crisis acquires a systemic dimension – we are talking about a never-ending situation that is intrinsic to the system. In what ways does crisis relate to everyday experience? How can we comprehend the concept of 'crisis' in a productive way that can be an object of sociological observation? On what conceptual basis can 'crisis' be considered and defined?

I start my enquiry by conceiving crisis through discourse and affective experience, in particular by identifying citizens' perceptions and experiences as they understand them as driven or resulting from conditions of crisis. I intend to locate my own approach within what Kaun refers

to as the discursive and material constitution of crisis, by exploring how citizens make sense of 'crisis' and what 'crisis' means for them in the context of everyday life. When I employ the term crisis in this framework, I refer to, firstly, the lived experience of crisis (materiality) and, secondly, the imagining of crisis (discourse) that is culturally constituted and context-dependent: its changing nature is related to the temporal and socio-historical context in which it takes its meaning as a condition and as a narrative for understanding the Self and Others.

Given that crisis becomes a fundamental condition and discourse for individuals in the changing city because of the many upheavals in economic, social, political and demographic terms (Delanty 2020), it cannot but frame my empirical investigation into how citizens construct their identities. Migration has been constituted in public discourse as yet another crisis and thus contributes to the rising anxieties and uncertainties that increasingly inform – as we will see in this study – individuals' perceptions of what means to belong to a community of citizens.

Identity in social theory: the reflexive project of the Self

In an effort to achieve a productive way of thinking about the process of identity-making in the multicultural city and within a locale of compounded crises, this section focuses on the sociological approach to the reflexive subject. I engage with the theorisation of identity-making through embodied encounters with Others, by placing the process of *reflexivity* at the core of citizens' identity. According to key theorists of reflexive modernisation (Giddens 1991; Beck 1992), the concept of reflexivity describes how subjects construct their identities vis-à-vis constantly changing structural conditions and places individual rationality at the core of the modern self. Giddens's discussion of reflexivity as both an issue for and solution to the long-lasting problem of conceiving the relationship between structure and agency has been very influential. My approach to identity takes as its point of departure Giddens's notion, in the first

place, as it focuses on the volatility and insecurity of life in the context of globalisation and mediation – it addresses a number of social phenomena that take place around the world (risks, crisis, global change). With a focus on individual agency, rationality and cognition, Giddens argues that 'the self today is for everyone a reflexive project – a more or less continuous interrogation of past, present and future' (Giddens 1992, 30). Giddens's influential theorisation of 'reflexivity' is defined as the 'radicalised revision of convention' or the 'susceptibility of most aspects of social activity, and material relations with nature, to chronic revision in the light of new information or knowledge' (Giddens 1991, 21), associated with ideas of detraditionalisation. For Giddens, reflexivity is primarily a cognitive phenomenon that has to do with the intake of new information/knowledge about events that take place in the world and involving the modification of one's own practice as a result of this awareness of events.

While the Giddensian theorisation of reflexivity has influenced academic interest in the reflexive self within modernity, others challenge this preoccupation with rationality and cognitive skills. Are all individuals reflexive? Does every individual acquire the same level of reflexivity? Critics of Giddens's model have argued that the concept can be neither solely reduced to a cognitive process nor treated as a pre-existing property of the individual (Archer 2010, 2012; Adams 2003, 2006; Farrugia 2013). Others criticise the model for implying 'unfettered agency, cognitive deliberation and critical rationality' (Farrugia 2013, 876), 'teleology of self-mastery' (Adams 2003, 226), and for dis-embedding 'identities from contexts such as locality' (Farrugia 2013, 874). Although Giddens clearly aims to connect the complexities of everydayness to macro-level risks in the world (and does not talk about society at an abstract level), everyday life does not explicitly constitute a dynamic political space for his theorisation. His Western-centric approach might be able to account for everyday life but interprets it from within the norms and assumptions associated with Western modernity and/or colonial intellectual heritage. By somehow overlooking the micro-level dimension of identity-making, Giddens's (and likeminded

sociologists') account of the reflexive subject fails to integrate the centrality of everyday life and therefore generates critiques of the Eurocentric frame of reference that characterises such social theory, and its colonising ideology (i.e., normalisation of Empire). However, criticism of Giddens's reflexive identities is not limited to their cultural specificity. In particular, the processes involved in identity-making within his model project Western European realities, politics, norms and ethics as universally applicable. Universalism does not only exist as a problematic Western-centric framework when investigating different geographical regions, but when researching diversities within Western societies as well. Despite its widely recognised contribution to the field of sociology, the Giddensian approach diminishes the significance of categories such as gender, ethnicity, race and class.

A critical way of thinking about reflexivity, in response to that of Giddens, is Adam's (2003) culturally-situated account of self-identity, according to which one's identity is always explored within a dialogical framework that is created by the 'interaction between the individual and the collective' (Adams 2003, 233), 'the macro and the micro' (Farrugia 2013, 884) – the relational aspect of identity that I will further unpack in this chapter.

Thus, for the purposes of this thesis, reflexivity acknowledges cognition (Giddens 1991, 1992), but at the same time seeks to move beyond that to recognise the non-verbal dimensions of embodied feeling (Seyfert 2012) at the core of identity-making. An overemphasis on the role of individual agency and reflexivity takes attention away from 'less cognitive ways of navigating reflexively in a world full of choices and individual challenges' (Mouzelis 1999, 85) and mediations that draw upon orders of discourse, materiality, embodied experience and affect that are related to race, boundaries and othering, and the Self-Other construction. Given that individuals do not solely acquire cognitive knowledge, my approach aligns with the critical scholarship that treats reflexivity also as a property of human bodies and interactions, and

focuses on the self that is 'immersed in relations with others and shared experienced' (Adams 2003, 236). Although the concept of discourse – as emerging through language – does not acquire a prominent role for the process of identity-making in his conceptualisation, knowledge for Giddens is constitutive of the social world and manifests itself at two levels: the discursive and the practical – where discourse is viewed as a reflexive and deliberate way of articulating knowledge and practice is related to 'all things which actors know tacitly about how to "go on" in the contexts of social life without being able to give them discursive expression' (Giddens 1984, xxiii). This view of knowledge aligns with the idea that identities cannot be considered separately and outside the specific cultural, temporal and social space in which they are practised. A few years later, Giddens writes that 'all social interaction involved mediation in so far as there are always "vehicles" that "carry" social interchange across spatial and temporal gaps' (1990, 103). In this regard, the sociological articulation of the reflexive subject might foreground *action* in comprehending identity, but his later addition of processes of social mediation encourages me to view Giddens's structuration logic as a *mediated communication* model. If every reality is mediated, this is necessarily the case for encounters in the streets – they are already mediated through the pre-existing forms of communication concerning similar encounters in the city and elsewhere. Individuals might not have previous direct experience of such encounters, and thus know only what is transferred or represented to them, including via the media. Despite not directly centring the media in his discussion, the mediating element that is a form of knowledge or information in Giddens's theorisation encourages me to explore more thoroughly the mediated dimension of identity as discussed in the field of media and communications – one that adequately addresses both communicative action and discourse, and links the lived with the mediated world, the material with the symbolic. To undertake this exploration, it is necessary first to understand how meanings emerge in the space of everyday life where media and experience co-exist, and with what consequences.

Identity in media and communications: from media and identity to mediated identities

While social theory is an important starting point for addressing the macro-level dimension of identity, the theorisations I have outlined above do not fully provide the framework to understand how the latter is negotiated in the context of everyday life – a space that gives individuals the opportunity to move beyond pre-set and fixed relations and identities. What is currently missing from the concept of identity as understood in social theory is an account of how identity works on different levels – there is a constant interplay in which cognitive capabilities do not pre-exist, but are shaped through discourse that is circulated across different domains of everyday life and which co-constitutes practice. Stuart Hall, in his influential *Questions of Cultural Identity*, argued that:

> …because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies. Moreover, they emerge within the play of specific modalities of power, and thus are more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion, than they are the sign of an identical, naturally constituted unity – an 'identity' in its traditional meaning … (Hall 1996, 4)

The process of identity-making concerns questions around history, language, culture and takes place within representation and discourse.

Within media and communications since the mid-1980s identity has become a recognised object of study for interpreting meanings of individuals' media consumption, use, practices and discourses. Concerned with the power of television vis-à-vis the agency of consumers, the classic

study, *The Nationwide Audience* (Morley 1980), emphasised the role of class identities in audiences' interpretation of television messages. This study demonstrated that interpretations of TV programmes varied according to individuals' class background and the socio-economic context of their lived experience. The realisation that meaning was contingent on individuals' identities and social positioning led in part to the move towards ethnographic research – where scholars observed the media experience in the context of everyday life (Silverstone 1994; Schlecker and Hirsch 2001). Identity formation through and by the media was also the focal point of Marie Gillespie's *Television, Ethnicity and Cultural Change* (1995) and Roger Silverstone's *Television and Everyday life* (1994) – studies focusing solely on television (the prime medium of social influence and use at the time of their writing). Gillespie studied the role of the media in the formation of teenage Asian ethnic identities in Southall, London, and made an original contribution to the field by showing the mutual significance of Western media and Indian religious films for the negotiation and construction of ethnic/diasporic identities. In a similar vein, Silverstone argued that television reinforced people's sense of ontological security, forming a bridge between the mediated knowledge and face-to-face interaction, and assisted in the construction of viewers' identity in the context of growing anxieties about a changing and fragile world. Besides television's reproduction of the familiar and ordinary at times of crisis, Silverstone later specifically foregrounds the role of the media in the formation of identity when he designates their function as 'doing community' – as symbolically shaping and informing identities (2005, 198). By locating the politics of mediation at the intersection of the institutional, symbolic and material, he further argues that 'media and media practices enable the creation of community as a symbolic space, mostly but not exclusively for the construction of nationhood' (ibid). Given the further integration of mediated communication in people's lives that has come with the internet and social media, scholarly attention has shifted to examining the totality of the media as a process that is directly entangled with the ordering of everyday life and how people make sense of themselves (Livingstone 2009; Silverstone 2005a; Georgiou 2006).

Given the diverse and constantly changing socio-cultural landscapes – on the one hand through the growing mediation of everyday life and on the other through intensified population mobility – scholarship on media and identity has raised questions about the extent to which the mediated and physical mobility of people between and across spaces of belonging also shifts meanings and practices of identity (Georgiou and Leurs 2016; Hepp, Bozdag, and Suna 2012). More recently, scholars have addressed such questions by demonstrating the crucial role of gender, ethnic, and national identities in appropriating, challenging and negotiating norms and values that are prominent in the media (Madianou 2006; Georgiou 2006; Nightingale 2014). Georgiou's *Diaspora, Identity and the Media* (2006) further explores identity and community construction and the role of diasporic media in this process. Georgiou emphasises the dialogical constitution of identity, understanding the latter as 'the outcome of discursive relations of power, negotiations and redefinition of boundaries within specific historical and cultural contexts' (2006, 44). Her study demonstrates that diasporic subjects make sense of the media from their specific socio-cultural positions, as these are constituted at the juncture of ethnicity, gender and class. The same body of scholarly work has demonstrated that as mediated communication becomes more of a prominent system to organise access to information and knowledge in the context of everyday life, the more difficult it becomes to conceive identity outside its intense mediation. Thus, scholarship has shifted: firstly, from conceiving media as a category external to identity construction, to instead addressing identity as mediated in its core constitution (Silverstone 2005; Siapera 2006, 2010; Georgiou 2006; Morley 2001); and, secondly – and largely influenced by Stuart Hall – to understanding identity as diverse, multiple and constituted through *discourses* and *practices*. For example, in their attempt to address the issue of 'fictive unity' through which transnational audiences are usually understood, Robins and Aksoy (2001) conducted research on diasporic transnational audiences – that live between physical and mediated spaces – with a particular focus on Turkish-Cypriot cultural experience in London. Their study demonstrated that as media diversify so do conceptions of identity, with audiences imagining 'being Turkish' in

different ways. Pursuing the idea of the 'disappearance' of identity, the scholars entangle themselves with the de-operationalisation of 'the discourse of identity' and with the question 'Is it the case that new identities, or new kinds of identities, will, or will have to, emerge out of the processes of cultural transnationalisation?' (Robins and Aksoy 2001, 708). In response to the 'dilemma of essentialism or fluidity' of identities, Siapera (2006) found that British Muslims who conducted multicultural politics online constructed multiple identities. Ien Ang (2003) also oscillates between notions of the space of identity as valuable and fragile: on the one hand, a politics of identity and struggles for the rights of indigenous and ethnic minorities expand public debates and policies in relation to the recognition of different groups within a shared system of citizenship; and, on the other hand, diasporic identification both essentialises and further reaffirms the fixity of Chinese identity. In a critical engagement with the concept of identity, Ang introduces the concept of 'hybridity' as a means of investigating and analysing convoluted and multidimensional relations of similarities and differences between groups in 'a world where we no longer have the secure capacity to draw a line between us and them, the different and the same, here and there, and indeed between "Asian" and "Western"' (2003, 141).

By transcending conceptions of fixed binaries there is the potential to achieve a more embedded, holistic and wide-ranging conceptualisation of identity construction within wider contexts of shifting and diversifying communicative ecologies. On the same wavelength, Madianou's work on the role of media among Turkish speakers living in Gazi, a neighbourhood in the heart of Athens, demonstrates how media 'contribute in creating symbolic communicative spaces that either include or exclude' (2005a, 522). Far from the idea that media determine identities, her study directly addresses the problematic of exploring a profoundly multicultural society without accounting for its diversity. Rather than adopting either a bottom-up or a top-down approach to address the media-identity relationship, Madianou combines the two and acknowledges the complex process of identity-making that extends beyond ethnicity by accounting for the range of

material and social factors that inform individuals' subjectivities. Instead of the dichotomous concern of 'is media catalytic for the sense of belonging?' and similar debates, her study follows 'the circulation of meaning in the context of discourses and practices about the nation and belonging' (Madianou 2005b, 51). She explores the potential impact of the media on the way individuals speak of the self and the nation as well as the ways in which media 'reflect existing material inequalities' (ibid, 537). Her work has demonstrated that individuals actively contest the meanings and forms of hegemonic representations of national identities in the media. Studying the emergence of national identity from an ethnic minority's perspective, she finds that the former is deeply constructed through the idea of 'us' and 'them' – that, as Triadafyllidou (2010) has argued, the Other is inseparably associated with the concept of national identity. The essentialist and parochial news discourse, that is also grounded on the binary of 'we-ness' and 'otherness', constitutes the image of the nation as culturally and ethnically homogenous, an image that both excludes minorities/disadvantaged groups and exacerbates differences. An important consideration comes from Anderson's frequently cited notion of difference in terms of imagined communities, where the nation is imagined 'because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (Anderson 1983, 6). As Anderson argues, conceptions of the nation are largely dependent on the shared imagination of sameness that dismisses the possibility of difference as external to the national community: 'Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined' (ibid). Grossberg takes this argument further, reminding us that 'any identity depends upon its difference from, its negation of, some other term, even as identity of the latter term depends upon its difference from, its negation of, the former' (1997, 357). In the same vein that the process of identity-making can be defined by and through the binary between the Self and the Other, national identity takes its meaning through processes of imagining (and representing)

the nation as fundamentally unique, homogenous and as shaped 'only through the contrast with others' (Triadafyllidou 2010, abstract).

Challenging the notion of homogenous and single national identity, identities should be studied as culturally, historically and spatially situated within established regimes of knowledge (Hall 1996). Driven by recent studies on identity and digital media (Livingstone 2002; Wood 2010; Cover 2015; Szulc 2018; Leurs and Ponzanesi 2013; Latonero et al. 2019) and the advances of communication technologies, the cultural context and different social structures (race, class, gender, ethnicity, crisis) within which citizen identity is shaped is central to the present study – where media cannot be separated from the materiality of space and the affective, embodied experience of urban dwellers in multicultural cities.

Citizen identity as relationally constituted through 'alterity'

So far, I have explored theorisations of identity as *discursive* and *practised*. Besides these dimensions of identity, I aim in this section to reflect on identity's (re)constitution in the face of the *changing* and increasingly diverse cities that represent intense sites of change, especially as the mobility of populations destabilises the conceptions of homogenous and stable communities that the imaginaries of national identities tend still to assume (Anderson 1993; Anthias 2021). The city that constitutes a space that produces difference (Back and Sinha 2018; Hall, King, and Finlay 2016) by bringing close together citizens with noncitizens opens up avenues for advancing understanding of what it means to belong to a community of citizens. Importantly, 'far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past' (Hall 1990, 225), identities go through a transformation process in the city that changes through migrant mobility even as it redefines and reshapes the cultural boundaries of the city and its citizens. To this end, there is a need to conceptualise 'identities that are immanent in the city' (Isin 2002, 4), contrary to exclusionary

systems of formal citizenship that fail to account for those individuals/groups that do not formally belong in the community or the nation.

Avoiding reducing identity to the category of the nation that 'is not as permanent or as taken for granted as it used to be' (Georgiou 2006, 139), the current section theorises citizen identity as one that reflects, responds to and contests the rate and degree of change in cities that have historically received large numbers of migrant populations. Despite being granted the right to vote as national subjects, 'one could possess these rights and still be marginalised' (Beaman 2016, 850). There are social, economic and cultural considerations which deny individuals political representation or having their voice heard, or being recognised as equal to the ethnic majority, in decision-making processes that have important implications or consequences for the sense of the individual and collective Self. In contrast to the exclusionary system of formal citizenship that emphasises national identity and territorial belonging (Marshall 1950; Turner 2009), cultural citizenship emerges to problematise the limits of the latter, and issues of rights, recognition and belonging are largely defined also through cultural practices. Scholarly work on cultural citizenship (Pakulski 1997; Isin 2002, 2008; Stevenson 2003) has addressed the limitations of political citizenship (Marshall 1950; Turner 2009) and unanimously emphasises the symbolic and ideational sphere in their conceptualisation. Deviating from traditional citizenship studies, Pakulski (1997) acknowledges the importance of symbolic capacities for identity construction and cultural representation. Isin suggests that citizenship 'involves practices of making citizens – social, political, cultural, and symbolic' (2012, 17). Stevenson points out that cultural citizenship 'asks us to attend to the ways in which civil society becomes encoded by powerful symbolic codes and discourses' (2003, 24). According to those theorisations, citizenship is not only founded on laws and the legal system, but also on clearly defined norms, practices and meanings that are negotiated by those with formal and non-formal rights in the context of everyday life.

Inspired by this scholarship, which highlights that cultural citizenship can only materialise in relation to those that do not have formal citizenship rights, I engage with a processual theorisation of citizen identity that demonstrates that the constitution of Otherness (noncitizen identity) is internal to the construction of the Self (citizen identity). For Connolly (1993, x-xi), 'identity requires difference' and all identities (class, gender, race, ethnic) depend on imaginings of boundedness and exclusions of Otherness. What, then, happens to citizen identity when it meets noncitizens in the context of the city? Isin (2002) observes that communities of citizens have historically emerged through alterity – through the constitutive outside not just of distant but also of the proximal in the locale. Citizen identity, Isin emphasises, only becomes meaningful through alterity – the identification of what *it is not* and those individuals who do not have it, i.e., formal citizenship. He elaborates on the notion of citizenship as a type of identity within a city:

> While the logics of exclusion would have us believe in zero-sum, discrete, and binary groups, the logics of alterity assume overlapping, fluid, contingent, dynamic, and reversible boundaries and positions, where agents engage in solidaristic strategies such as recognition and affiliation, agonistic strategies such as domination and authorization, or alienating strategies such as disbarment across various positions within social space … That is why it is important to distinguish between the logics of alterity that constitute strangers and outsiders as immanent identities and the logics of exclusion and enclosure that constitute aliens or barbarians as transitive or exterior identities. (Isin 2002, 30)

Taking Isin's exploration of citizenship from the perspective of its *alterity* in the urban context as its starting point, the current project explores citizen identity, not as emerging internal to its own self-perception of similarity, but as constituted *from* the outside and *through* the Other. The condition of citizenry is constructed both by those who formally belong and those not formally recognised. In this regard, the notion of citizen identity in the changing city transcends – and

often undermines – national boundaries and territorial belonging. Alterity accounts for the *simultaneous* enactment of noncitizen identity and emergent Greek/European identity and order in the multicultural locale. To this end, the relationship between the citizen and the noncitizen is 'interdependent, mutual, and symbiotic (ibid, 267). Alterity thus refers to the process through which the then distant Other becomes a point of reference for the Greek/European citizen identity and vice versa (Isin and Saward 2013); the Greek/European identity constitutes an integral part of the citizen-in-the-making (Georgiou 2019b). The 'logic of alterity', as distinct from the binary 'logic of exclusion', offers a more productive way of thinking through the 'in flux' (Isin 2008) and explaining the capabilities of individuals to negotiate and respond to difference, on the one hand, and to navigate across 'various positions within social space' (Isin 2002, 44), on the other. The historicity of identity, together with dimensions of culture and power, allows us to claim that there is no such thing as 'one experience, one identity' or a binary of 'we' versus 'Other' – especially in the context of the changing city. Transcending these positions connotes individuals' engagement in convivial and antagonistic strategies in uneven and contradictory ways, sometimes *concurrently*. Shedding some light not only on the binary of *in* and *out,* but also on the interaction of different ideologies and relations to power, constitutes a useful way in to understanding how citizen identity comes into being. This theorisation points to a form of identity that is evidently associated with what Balibar names 'a composition of difference' – a conceptualisation of identity that is not grounded within bounded spaces, but one that is 'formed through crossing borders: visible and invisible, internal and external' (Balibar 2012, 448).

William Walters writes that 'the spatial practices Engin Isin suggests are central but often ignored factors in the formation of group identities and relations' (2002, 267). Isin argues the following to foreground the role of the city in the production of alterity: 'Groups cannot materialise themselves as real without realising themselves in space, without creating configurations of

buildings, patterns, and arrangements, and symbolic representations of these arrangements' (Isin 2002, 43). In my own account of citizen identity as it is constituted at the level of the city, I interrogate urban conceptions and spatialised theories of encounter to shed light on the interactions that formulate the Self and the Other in the locale. Inspired by theories of the encounter as it is discussed in urban studies, I start a conversation that focuses and combines the materiality of spatialised identity with its symbolic configuration. This theorisation of citizen identity is premised on three key ideas: that it is *practised* within everyday life and within a specific spatial context of a bounded nation but also of the city (Back and Sinha 2018; Hall, King, and Finlay 2016; Isin 2002); it is *imagined* within the imagined community of the nation – it can be enacted as claims where 'new actors articulate claims for justice through new sites that involve multiple and overlapping scales of rights and obligations' (Isin 2002, 370); and, it is *relational*, through the constitutive outside(r) – always contextualised within urban systems and experiences of uneven distribution of knowledge and power.

The current project is not another study of the distant and excluded 'Other' and 'categories of strangers and outsiders' that pre-exist identity (Isin 2002, 3). On the contrary, as we shall see, the emphasis on Otherness as a condition of citizenship assumes that citizen identity and its alterity in fact always emerge 'simultaneously in a *dialogical* manner' and constitute 'each other' (ibid, 4; emphasis added). It is the dialogical nature of citizen identity that 'enables various categories of otherness to be investigated historically, rather than relying on a universal or dialectical distinction between inside/outside' (ibid). I thus explore citizens' identity in a dialogical framework, which is always defined through the encounter with the Other who, in the case of the multicultural city, is primarily embodied and represented as the migrant noncitizen. Thus, the present theorisation seeks to examine how migrant noncitizens' proximity to citizens shapes the latter's sense of identity. The ways in which representations of the Self and of the Other traverse

and complicate the spatiality of the encounter is the key question that I tackle in the next section below.

Encounters in urban studies: materiality of space and practice

My understanding of the encounter is grounded in scholarship that examines cities as multicultural and diverse socio-cultural spaces (Amin 2002; Gilroy 2004; Vertovec 2007; Valentine 2008). The city, now more than ever, constitutes a space where citizens have situated encounters with urban dwellers of different communities and cultures (Wilson 2011; Amin 2012; Neal et al. 2015). In the seminal work *The Nature of Prejudice* (1954), the social psychologist Gordon Allport introduces the notion of 'contact hypothesis' to argue that bringing different groups into spatial proximity can mitigate prejudice and achieve social integration in the city. The basis of 'contact hypothesis' is the idea that individuals fear the unfamiliar – and the unfamiliar inevitably becomes familiar when groups are brought together in close proximity. Shifting scholarly attention from the majority stereotypes and prejudice to the lived experience of minority groups has opened up research perspectives into *geographies of togetherness.* Across the literature of urban and critical race studies, analysis of the *practice* of people living together-in-difference as expressed through the concepts of 'throwntogetherness' (Massey 2005), 'conviviality' (Gilroy 2004) and 'super-diversity' (Vertovec 2007) has opened up spaces for conceiving belonging beyond the binaries of 'us' and 'them' that dominate conceptions of national identities.

Urban scholarship that addresses the issue of togetherness-in-difference centres its attention on *spatialised encounters* and particularly urban locales, such as neighbourhoods which have become 'space[s] of encounter' (Valentine and Harris 2016, 915) – thus opposing ideas of the city as a space of unfamiliar strangers. Coupled with the ability to imagine, the embodied presence of the

Other in the city has been characterised by conflict, but also influenced by a convivial and cosmopolitan shift. Adopting a cosmopolitan analytical lens, Iris Marion Young became one of the first scholars to celebrate the city of diversity and difference: the city life is seen as 'a being together of strangers' (1990, 240). To comprehend the quotidian routines of multicultural cities and the ways of living with difference, Gilroy refers to conviviality as 'the process of cohabitation and interaction that have made multi-culture an ordinary feature of social life' (1990, 240). Its usefulness for the theorisation of encounter lies, first and foremost, in an acknowledgement of Other's proximate distance and embodied presence in the locale. The primary focus on the material space and bottom-up face-to-face interactions that recognise the process of cohabitation in the city of difference is a theoretical yardstick for the study of encounter. Do close proximity and co-presence always lead to meaningful contact and lasting relationships with the Other? Conviviality might offer great potential for disadvantaged groups to come together (Wilson 2011; Laurier and Philo 2006; Gilroy 2004), such as migrants and refugees in the city, but it cannot be taken for granted (Valentine and Harris 2016) and will not necessarily achieve solidarity, respect, mutual learning and/or hospitality. The physical proximity may variously produce 'convivial separation' (Georgiou 2017), an 'indifference to difference' (Amin 2012) or 'meaningful contact' (Valentine 2008), but it can also negatively intensify relations and perceptions (ibid).

How do different communities co-occupy the same space? Under what conditions do they come together? How are similar aspects of different cultures incorporated at a sustained distance rather than proximity in the multicultural space? Public spaces such as parks and squares were referred to as sufficient for bringing social change and negotiating urban diversity in the city. In an effort to map out the various possibilities of encounter and when meaningful contact is best achieved, Amin has introduced the idea of "'micro-publics" of everyday social contact and encounter' (2002, 959), such as neighbourhoods, schools, workplaces and other spaces of interaction where

ethnic, cultural and racial differences are confronted in order to achieve a common goal. Negotiated on an everyday basis, encounters with noncitizens can generate 'moments of cultural destabilization, offering individuals the chance to break out of fixed relations and fixed notions…' (ibid, 970). However, when intercultural exchange and habitual engagement are not systematic and/or take place in purely public spaces, Amin claims that there is no impact on learning how to live-together-in-difference. But Amin's idea of 'micro-publics' in the city can advance understandings of identity in its totality (but also incompleteness), by grasping the ways in which the spatial and temporal presence of proximate 'others' is actually experienced, lived and communicated, and with what consequences for citizenry in the Western tradition.

Condoning difference 'is a matter of everyday practices … and it needs to be inculcated as a habit of practice (not just co-presence)' (Amin 2002, 976). More recently, 'the phenomenology of everyday experience' and practice of encounter that Amin refers to in *Land of Strangers* (2012, 5), shift epistemological as well as methodological attention to multicultural cities and neighbourhoods. *Land of Strangers* makes the affective turn in the study of encounters by showing how embodied encounters are expressions of culture, history and politics – a valuable resource for the current project. Although somewhat ill-defined and therefore ambiguous in meaning, the affective element Amin aims to foreground adds to the originality of his argument. According to this work, in order to fully comprehend everyday encounters in the city of difference, it is vital to consider their affective dimensions and think about interactions as more than just co-presence or proximal distance. Amin unpacks how embodied encounters with difference acquire an affective dimension. Approaching 'affect' through a cultural lens, he describes how relations among urban dwellers, between citizens and migrant noncitizens, 'are formed without conscious thought and deliberation' and arise out of 'human experience' and 'the negotiation of the city as an assembly of humans, things, symbols, technologies, matter and nature' (2012, 66). This turn has offered a

geographic and material understanding of the study of encounters – one that is grounded in face-to-face interactions – but also paves the way for thinking beyond geographical co-presence.

Theories about the spatialised encounter and geography of togetherness fail to account 'for the structural conditions in which "local encounters" with hybridity and difference take place' (Ahmed 2000, 12). With emerging patterns of inequality and segregation in the city, the spatiality of the encounter becomes political and needs further academic scrutiny. The city might be 'the place, above all, of living with others' (Laurier and Philo 2006, 193), but spatial proximity does not always equate to cultural proximity and intercultural interaction. Based on this assumption, Valentine (2008, 333) is reluctant to embrace wholeheartedly the idea of 'encounter' as a panacea for racial and socio-cultural antagonisms. The romanticisation of the encounter has generated criticism that such analysis neglects 'how individuals approach and experience encounters and … their ability to make choices around the control of their feelings, relationships and identifications' (Valentine and Harris 2016, 915; Valentine and Sadgrove 2012). The idea that the encounter is innocent and overcomes the divide is romanticised; the encounter does not necessarily connote 'meaningful contact' and respect for difference. Positive experience with individuals that belong to a minority group often constitutes the exception for the majority, while a negative experience with someone that belongs to a disadvantaged group (i.e., asylum seeker) is generalised to the rest of the respective group (Valentine 2010). Valentine's previous work with MacDonald (2004) shows that different social groups that co-exist in the same neighbourhood, and consequently share a common space, cannot always create important relationships. All this work has revealed that sometimes embodied encounters with difference may produce no change in local attitudes, and may even intensify negative attitudes. Beyond the focus on spatiality and material conditions, encounters in the multicultural city are subjected to histories of the unequal distribution of power and resources (Valentine 2008). Individuals' embodied encounters with migrants and refugees manifest the 'being political' (Isin 2002) process and the ways that power operates in

and through a city of difference and compounded crises to systematically (re)produce certain inequalities.

Speaking directly to the reasons why encounters with strangers cannot always produce important relationships despite geographical proximity, Sara Ahmed's *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (2000) problematises the idea that the stranger is simply unrecognisable and unknowable to us unless physically proximate. She turns our attention to certain conditions that pre-exist physical encounters. Her considerations challenge established psychoanalytical and feminist approaches to embodiment by thinking through the lens of cultural difference and social antagonism in determining how the stranger gets recognised. Critical race and ethnicity scholarship has repeatedly argued that race is never fixed, but constructed (Ahmed 2004; Hall 1996; Gilroy 2004). When migrant populations are recognised as strangers, the national subject reaffirms the boundedness of their belonging against the migrant noncitizen: 'it is the recognition of others that is central to the constitution of the subject … the subject is not, then, simply differentiated from the (its) other, but comes into being by learning how to differentiate between others' (Ahmed 2000, 22). In so doing, the Other is constitutive of identity as 'it is only through meeting with an-other that the identity of a given person *comes to be inhabited as living*' (ibid, 8; emphasis in original). To establish and define the territory of the citizen – that is, to simultaneously define the 'outsider'– is the condition of possibility for the citizen identity, the process through which the individual comes into being.

This is one of the most comprehensive theorisations of the encounter, as embodiment, affect, experience and social mediation (as discussed in critical social theory) are all foregrounded in the discussion. More specifically, Ahmed refers to an embodied experience with strangers in the streets that works through economies of difference. The economies of difference through which the encounters work are as follows: firstly, embodied encounters, meaning face-to-face meetings

in the neighbourhood, involve 'an economy of touch' and rely on the 'skin-to-skin' interaction between the stranger and the Self; secondly, they also involve an 'economy of recognition' (ibid, 7), which is symbolic and related to systems of representation on screens and in public discourse. This theorisation argues against assumptions of the figure of the stranger 'as that which we fail to recognise, but as that which we have already recognized as a "stranger"' (ibid, 3). For Ahmed, 'strangers are not simply those who are, in their very proximity, *already recognised as not belonging,* as being out of place' (ibid, 20; emphasis in original). Drawing on Anderson's (1983) idea of imagined communities, Ahmed claims that nations are not only treated as either 'geographical or geopolitical', but are also 'discursive' and 'familiar spaces' (2000, 98 and 97). This claim has provided a stepping stone for my own approach in this project that brings together imagination (through the media) as well as practice and affect (through the body and experience) in order to explore the ways in which the mediated encounter that fits into imagination and the embodied encounter that fits into practice work together in the dialogical space of the multicultural city.

Consequently, the importance of this understanding of the encounter relies on the idea that it is socially and spatially mediated by the inequalities of class, race, ethnicity and religion:

> The face-to-face encounter is mediated precisely by that which allows the face to appear in the present. The face-to-face is hence about two persons facing each other – the face to face cannot be thought of as a coupling. This encounter is mediated; it presupposes other faces, other encounters of facing, other bodies, other spaces, and other times (Ahmed 2000, 7).

As the encounter takes its meanings within the symbolic and material space of the city, it is important that we understand it both as embodied but also as technologically mediated – and that these media representations shape the encounter symbolically in the same way that co-

presence in the city shapes the encounter materially. In the sections that follow, I explain how I understand this dual shaping of citizen identities.

Conceiving encounters through mediation

Urban studies scholars tend to emphasise the material space and practices and 'typically overlook the use of communication technologies within the geography of the city' (Lane 2019, 3). In addition to observing the banal interaction of ethnic, cultural and social differences and how they are confronted (Laurier and Philo 2006), scholarly attention should turn its focus to the rationale behind relationships and bonds between citizens and noncitizens and how encounters impact their identity. Inspired by the concept of encounter as discussed in urban studies and critical social theory, I am seeking to take further their notions of the city as a dialogical space, which is mediated in multiple ways. Identifying spatialised theories of encounter as an important point of reference, I aim to start a conversation in which both *practice* and *discourse* become analytical tools in the making of citizen identities through embodied encounters. To overcome the limitations of spatialised theories of encounter, I propose that the encounter can be conceptualised vis-à-vis its mediated dimension – and, consequently, that citizen identity can thus be explored as a phenomenon of mediation.

Let me explain how I conceive this. A set of studies rooted in media and communications examines the encounter's symbolic dimensions. As Georgiou writes, encounters are experienced physically and are 'managed through proximity' (2017, 27), but are also 'symbolically managed' on mass and social media through the circulation of dominant discourses and representations (Lane 2019). Following the cosmopolitan turn in the study of the city, Mica Nava (2007) introduces the concept of 'domestic cosmopolitanism' and adds to Amin's 'micro-publics' by claiming that intercultural negotiation does not take place solely in the micro-publics of the

multicultural city, but also in the private space: 'the intimate albeit mediated form of TV must also be included here insofar as, cumulatively, it generates in the familiar domesticscape of the living room an increasing deterritorialisation of the globe by normalising difference in the spheres of music, fashion, even politics, although often against the message of individual programmes' (Nava 2007, 13). In addition to the materiality of space, media play a crucial role in advancing our understanding of the material and symbolic dimensions of migration, with people confronting 'the world in its Otherness as never before' (Silverstone 1999, 138). The cultural space of the media does not only circulate symbols *per se* – as well as disseminating ideas, images and information; the media actively engage individuals with Others. They construct meanings of the Self, circulate symbols that make politics, orient public imagination and/or define the parameters of individuals' sense of belonging. At the same time, technologies of the city and of urban life connect the local with the national and the global, offering for comparison bodies seen on the screen and similar bodies experienced in the locale, while also enabling various forms of mediated social interactions (Moores 2000). The symbiotic co-existence of media technologies with embodiment in everyday life facilitates interactions which acquire symbolic and material dimensions. Thus, exploring the embodied encounter through the lens of media and communications is fundamental to understand its spatiality because it is not only experienced on the material street, but is also highly mediated (Georgiou 2017).

By bring these bodies of literature into dialogue, and adding imagination to this intersectional analysis, my aim is to move beyond the materiality of space alone and to capture key contradictions in the theorisation of encounter. Urban studies focus on the encounter as *practice* and *face-to-face interaction*, but the encounter is also *imagined*, and so discursively constituted through the circulation and consumption of representations of the Self and the Other and how they should (or should not) encounter each other. For cities that are more ethnically homogeneous than others, at least in the European context, mediated (imagined) encounters are

probably the most consistent interactions that exist for most citizens who have no direct engagement with migrants (Moore 2000). Such encounters are themselves contradictory and diverse of course, as different narratives circulate across different media. Drawing on Massey's (2005) emphasis on throwntogetherness as an expression of stories and narratives-so-far that come into play when individuals meet one another, I am suggesting that encounters can be treated as embodied communication – as bodies that meet, subjects that speak or remain silent. As identity narratives (who belongs and who does not) are present in a 'simultaneity of stories-so-far' (Massey 2005, 11) in urban space, I am arguing for a conceptualisation of the encounter that speaks to its diverging experiential and discursive dimensions and so enables me to highlight the entanglement of practice and discourse in shaping the meanings of the encounter.

My rationale for bringing the diverging experiential and discursive dimensions of encounters into the discussion about the construction of citizen identity relies on work by Silverstone (2007), Livingstone (2007) and Livingstone and Das (2013), all of which open up avenues for understanding citizen identity formation at the juncture of imagination and action. The concept that connects the dual conceptualisation of media both as discourse and technologies is that of *mediation*. What does this media approach bring to theorisations of identity that others do not?

Firstly, the mediating element that is a form of knowledge or information encourages me to think about the *media as discourse* and *as technologies of urban life* (Moores 2000) – with the urban space being increasingly mediated and 'experienced through digital messages' (Livingstone and Das 2013, 2). Silverstone argues that the study of mediation 'requires us to address the processes of communication as both institutionally and technologically driven and embedded' (2005, 189). His notion of mediation entangles both communication technology and communicative actions in the never-ending dialectical 'circulation of meaning' (Silverstone 1999, 13). In a similar way, I explore the fundamentally dialectical processes in which institutions and individuals are

implicated in the circulation of meanings 'through the media, but not exclusively located *within* the media' (Georgiou 2013, 15; emphasis in original). Georgiou's distinction is explained through the constantly changing media landscape which generates alternative means of production, circulation and consumption that intersect with 'practices of representation and reproduction of social identities' (Ardévol and Gómez-Cruz 2014, 8).

Taking theorisations of mediation as a theoretical underpinning, the thesis aims to explore individuals' consistent or inconsistent practices in the digital media ecology, and its socio-technical foundation (Hepp 2013), for the construction of citizen identity. The study of citizen identity cannot be simply defined in relation to one medium alone, but to wider processes of mediation (Silverstone 2007) that fundamentally structure socio-cultural environments. As communication takes place through mediated channels across the mediascapes of the everyday – digitally and in non (i.e., virtual) places – 'spreadable' media (Jenkins, Ford, and Green 2013), which are defined by diversification, decentralisation and interaction, are not merely technologies, but socio-cultural practices (Macnamara 2010). The diversification and decentralisation of communication through social media – our organisers of perception (Couldry and Hepp 2016; Markham 2020) – invite further examination of how mediascapes create the symbolic communicative terrain in which citizens' identities can be constructed. As Koen Leurs argues, 'digital spaces are not mere mute, neutral and external backdrops of identity formation, but distinct expressive cultures filled with ideologies, hierarchies and politics' (2015, 15).

Silverstone's inclusive definition of mediation is also able to address interpersonal processes of moderation, negotiation and resistance as well as other communication practices and forms of expression that produce meanings around migration/mobility. This concept of mediation places symbolic power at the core of contemporary societies in an attempt to demonstrate that the 'discourse of mediation' which constitutes 'a relatively contingent arrangement of symbolic

power' 'can be reflected on and changed' (Chouliaraki 2010, 17). The process of negotiation and change takes place as individuals are seen as agents that are involved in the production, circulation and negotiation of discourses around the Self-Other construction – going beyond theorisations of media that view individuals as incapable of making choices and of resisting hegemonic media narratives. Being ascribed an active role in production, access, dissemination and consumption of the 'symbolic forms that surround us means participating in, even occasionally controlling, the symbolic processes associated with the construction of identity' (Georgiou 2013, 15).

Besides treating the media as discourse, the conceptualisation of media as *practice* became the threshold for a change in the study of media and communication (Couldry 2004). The discussion around practices and 'situated activities' through which certain phenomena 'emerge as media' (Markham and Rodgers 2017, 10) is what separates a media-centric from a media-centred approach. A media-centric approach that views media 'as objects, texts, apparatuses of perception or production processes' (Couldry 2012, 35) fails to ask significant questions about knowledge production, the symbolic structuring of meanings of the Self-Other construction, the generation of symbolic orders and the cultural consequences that the media provoke. Moving away from the semiotic analysis of text, which focuses on the object (media), to the social process (mediation), allows individuals to recognise how ideology and structures of inequality shape conditions of migrants' lives and the meanings of citizens' encounters with them. As Couldry and Cefai claim in exploring how individuals' media practices mediate the presence of others, 'media practices orient attention around the presence and absence of others' (2019, 302–333). This simply means that individuals that are located in a specific 'physical space increasingly co-ordinate their actions in relations of interactivity with the information space of digital media' (ibid) – an interactivity that alters what generates attention around the presence and absence of others and what determines or structures the reaction (Skeggs and Wood 2012). Such an account

accords greater significance to social actors and aims to explore the role of the media in broader systems of mediation for its contribution to the circulation of information, the social production of knowledge (Couldry 2012) and the process of identity-making.

As media are embedded in everyday life (Silverstone 1999; Moores 2000; Markham 2017, 2020; Lane 2019), shifting our attention to the contextualisation of mediation in everyday life has the potential to uncover 'not only the reproductive power of social stratification and forms of structured inequality, but also the ways in which microtactics of appropriation reshape and remediate media texts and technologies' (Livingstone and Das 2013, 6). As Livingstone and Das remind us, audiences are always situated in a physical space and position themselves 'between text and context' (2013, 3); and despite the fact that the new media ecology constantly advances, 'people's relation to and through media remains doubly articulated'. The moment that meanings around the Self and the Other are circulated on television screens or on a Twitter newsfeed, for instance, we experience a connection both with these representational discourses, but also with individuals we physically encounter in the neighbourhood. We might consume representations of others and of us, and consequently, our identities are challenged, negotiated and (re)constructed as a response to the symbolic power of communication. While audience (re)create meanings of the Self and the Other by negotiating the relationship between the text and the reader, they also '(re)produce social relations by negotiating the material/social determinations that structure their everyday contexts of action' (ibid, 2). Although the process of production is highly uneven and asymmetrical, it nonetheless takes place due to the dual conceptualisation of media as discourse and as practice.

How, then, does this approach to media help us understand embodied face-to-face encounters in the multicultural city? Media become involved in the Self-Other construction even when Others are in spatial proximity and in the context of everyday life. Therefore, I position the mediated

and the embodied encounter as an instance of Silverstone's (1994) *double articulation* of mediation – introduced to contrast 'the analysis of the media *qua* material objects located in particular spatio-temporal settings with the analysis of the media *qua* texts or symbolic messages located within the flows of particular socio-cultural discourses' (Livingstone 2007, 18). As 'information and communication technologies' constitute 'the focus of meaning construction at the same time as they enable it' (Silverstone and Mansell 1996, 213), Silverstone's *double articulation* enables me to comprehend the encounter as an embodied/mediated accumulation within a complex system of mediations, which is both technologically and symbolically constituted. The aforementioned articulation cannot but (partially or entirely) determine the construction of Greek citizen identity and provides a framework for exploring and interpreting how such identities are shaped in relation to the migrant noncitizen, that is now embodied and represented on the traditional and digital screens.

Investigating citizen identity through the encounter in the context of crisis

The project therefore takes a social constructivist approach that aims to explore how both embodied interactions and mediated encounters with migrant populations work through differentiated and enacted classifications of the Self and the Other to constantly (re)affirm and/or challenge the boundaries between 'we-ness' and 'otherness' in a multicultural city of compounded crises.

The overarching objective of this thesis is to theorise the processual construction of citizen identity through mediated and embodied encounters with noncitizens in a crisis-ridden multicultural neighbourhood. The 'idea of otherness as an inner compulsion' (Hall 1990, 226) as precondition to our perception of citizen identity drives the conceptual thinking of this thesis. It is important to highlight that the distinctiveness of this thesis does not lie on the study of identity through

difference – as this is well established in the literature across social sciences (especially in cultural studies and sociology). Relatedly, the originality of my work is not the study of citizen identity through alterity, which has been extensively explored in recent decades (cf. Isin 2002). The originality of my project is twofold. Firstly, the thesis reveals the distinct role of media and communications in identity construction in contexts of crisis and urban multiculturalism. Hence, I argue that the relationship between the citizen identity and the Other is constructed within a framework where narratives of migration and of migrants dominate the way that we understand the Self and the Other. Consequently, the media create the symbolic environment and ecology of understanding and reconceptualising the relationship between the citizen Self and the Other. Within the complex and contradictory context of encounters that is both embodied and technologically mediated, lived experience with proximate Others may be read differently by different individuals and generate distinctive meanings that are catalytic for the process of citizen identity-making. Therefore, I address citizen identity as constituted in the context of compounded crises that citizens are constantly reminded of, through media representations and when they encounter its expressions on the urban street of the impoverished, divided, and unsafe city. Secondly, the second dimension of my thesis' contribution lies on the study of citizen identity within the spatio-temporality of perceived and experienced crises. Hence, crisis is another way in which discourses and practices enter the encounter. The everyday encounter with the one that does not formally belong in the community of citizens is a constant reminder that the letter is inside the borders of the city to share and define boundaries as well as to disturb the assumed homogeneity of the nation. All in all, my study aims to expand existing theorisations of citizen identity in the multicultural city as a relational construction with its own temporal, social, historical and spatial dimensions, especially as these are shaped in the context of 'crisis'. The research question that drives this study is as follows:

RQ1: How are citizens' identities shaped when embodied and mediated encounters with noncitizens in everyday life occur in a multicultural city of compounded crises?

In the current chapter, I have developed an interdisciplinary conceptual framework for addressing the aforementioned question, which understands citizen identity as constituted relationally and as an incomplete process of Self-making through the Other, in particular as a result of the encounter in the context of urban throwntogetherness. I have argued that the encounter is informed both through the symbolic constitution of citizens and noncitizens, but also through the materiality of the experience of everyday life. Citizen identity is thus understood as taking its meaning from the embodied and mediated encounter, symbolically and materially; citizen identity is not pre-existing, but affectively emerges in the city as a result of mediations of narratives of migration, alongside embodied interaction and physical proximity with the Other. All dimensions of citizen identity are informed by historical processes of mediation in the sense that both everyday actions and media representations are grounded in historical orders of meaning-making associated with race, class, gender or sexuality.

I have operationalised the dual nature of the encounter by developing a framework of conceptual tools that will guide and inform the analysis that follows in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. My conceptualisation of citizen identity as processual and relational suggests that taking an ethnographic lens to examine the encounters between citizens and noncitizens is the most productive way to understand the construction and meaning of that identity. Mediated encounters with Others refer to discourse that is produced and circulated via mass and social media, as well as to the technologies (smartphones, apps, etc.) of everyday life, which are integral to embodied interaction between individuals and thus mediate affective relationships and antagonisms. When it comes to mediation that is related to the circulation of discourse and framing of imagination, the project takes a media-focused approach to uncover moments of media influence, but also

resistance. Mediation as understood by Silverstone (1999 and 2005) and Livingstone (2009) and as employed here enables an analysis of the role of the media – both mass and social – in their diffused and specific consequences for social and cultural order. Mediation thus helps us understand how the categories of the citizen and the noncitizen are discursively constituted in the wide circulation of media narratives on migration and how they are also interacting – informing, contesting, opposing – with the embodied encounter between citizens and noncitizens in the urban material street.

In this way, the project brings together imagination (through the media) and practice (through the affective force and the material nature of the encounter) for the study of citizen identity. Mediated and embodied encounters will not be treated as separate and distinct categories. Rather, I will explore how mediated encounters converge with or contradict embodied ones, to investigate the interplay between mediated and embodied encounters in the construction of citizen identity – the embodied as mediated and the mediated as embodied. I treat the encounter as embodied communication – bodies that meet, subjects that speak or remain silent. I argue for a conceptualisation that speaks to its diverging experiential and discursive conditions as situated in history and relations of power that pre-exist but which are also shared in current encounters. The mediated encounter does not exclude the embodied encounter and vice versa.

It is the duality and co-existence of experience and imagination in the context of everyday life that gives individuals the opportunity to solidify or move beyond pre-set and fixed relations and identities. Incorporating the role of the media into this discussion has the potential to uncover how embodied encounters with migrant populations problematise the mediated, but also how the mediated encounters have shaped the embodied in the context of crisis-ridden urbanity.

The main research question (RQ1) will be investigated through empirical research addressing the following three sub-questions. These questions will be tackled through the analysis of embodied interactions between Greek citizens and migrant populations (recent and settled) as a site of struggle replete with numerous contradictions, ideologies, narratives, practices and rationalities:

> AQ1: How does the temporal context of crisis construct the citizen Self in relation to the migrant noncitizen?
>
> AQ2: How does the city's throwntogetherness confirm or challenge media representations of the migrant Other?
>
> AQ3: How are encounters with established and recent migrant populations experienced, beyond the spatial co-existence in the locale, and what are their consequences for citizens' identity?

AQ1 starts an enquiry into the temporal context of crisis and the symbolic environment, within which the crisis imaginaries of citizens are generative of alternative identities in the multicultural city. AQ1 focuses on the overarching condition of crisis and the extent to which it determines the Self-Other construction (through mediated encounters) whereas AQ2 and AQ3, in contrast, are more concerned with the interpersonal interaction between citizens and migrant populations – whether they are ephemeral or sustained. While AQ1 and AQ2 converge in the absence or ephemerality of the encounter, AQ3 widens the analytical scope to account for regular and systematic interaction between citizens and migrant noncitizens, beyond a banal co-existence in the landscape of the city, and for the politics of conviviality that allow sustained encounters. I shall address these questions in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. Before then, however, Chapter 3, elucidates

the epistemological assumptions and the methodological choices made and practices adopted to enable me to do so.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology: embracing an ethnographic sensibility

Informed by the theoretical underpinnings outlined in Chapter 2, my methodological orientation seeks to suggest a theoretically grounded empirical investigation of the encounter with the Other that accounts for its material and symbolic dimensions – one that aspires to examine the at times contradictory implications of the encounter's mediations of citizens' construction of identity. My orientation aims to contribute to existing methodological approaches for the study of citizen identity by adopting an innovative lens to directly address the three key intersecting elements of citizen identity: as *practised*, *discursive* and *changing*. How do we know what we know about citizen identity? In the city, more than anywhere else, people use smartphones and social media platforms, interact through apps, communicate through body language (gestures, expressions, physical and nonverbal behaviours), use Google Translate or other translator applications when they do not share a language with fellow urban dwellers, or turn to Facebook pages or simply rely on television to understand their newly arrived neighbour. To this end, when addressing the process of citizen identity-making in the constantly changing multicultural space, it might not be enough to ask individuals to narrate their stories, because often what they say does not align with what they do; nor to locate data collection methods solely within the practice of everyday life and follow participants in-person and in their interactions with noncitizens; or to trace the mediated narratives in people's confessions.

As the encounter with the Other is now embodied in European metropolises, I made a conscious choice to look beyond how citizens react to symbolic constructions of the Other in

the media – as migrants enter a material space which, of course, is also symbolically constructed through representations of being, for example, as Greek, poor and multicultural. My decision not to limit my research to interpretations of media representations reflects my understanding of the dual role of the media. First, I understand *media as discourse* (Chouliaraki 2011) – as meaningful in the context of everyday life and through the framing of living-together-in-difference and the ways this discourse is ingrained in pre-existing hierarchies. Second, I situate media in dialogue with the *embodied* encounter, so I also understand *media as practice* (Couldry 2004) – a form of interaction that allows subjects to think normatively about how they live together in a multicultural city. As I locate 'media' in the context of urban life, I also locate 'experience' in the context of its intense mediation. Thus, it is not enough to investigate embodied encounters without intersectionally studying the mediated ones, because the encounter has two dimensions: as embodied, on the one hand, and as mediated, on the other. Regarding the mediated encounter, I refer to the discursive encounter that is produced and reproduced through discourses circulated via different media, as well as through the technologies of everyday life (that are part of the embodied interaction) that mediate relations and as citizens use their smartphones to connect or disconnect from those close by. Therefore, it is through a dialogical (dialogue between the mediated and embodied encounter) approach, I argue, that we can understand the encounter in its totality. This approach allows me to grasp the ways in which the spatial and physical presence of Others is actually experienced, lived and communicated. With these considerations in mind, I designed the current research project that seeks to explore and further expand the concept of citizen identity through the constitutive *Other* (Isin 2002). Given my exploration of citizen identity at the juncture of imagination and experience, I sought to explore the interconnections between the symbolic and material spaces, and between embodied and mediated encounters. In my empirical investigation, I aimed to understand, and thus demonstrate, how the embodied and the mediated encounter interact and how the citizens'

identity positions that emerge are shaped through – and in turn shape the meanings of – the Self and the Other at the same time.

The analytical framework I propose in my study acknowledges both the tangibility and embodiment of encounters in everyday life as well as the circulation of discourses and framing of imagination that pre-exists the offline interaction in the locale. While analyses of media coverage of migration-related news have raised questions about its impact on citizens (Berry, Garcia-Blanco, and Moore 2016; Holzberg, Kolbe, and Zaborowski 2018; Georgiou and Zaborowski 2019), less research attention has been paid to how encounters with migrants both in the media and on the street have impacted citizen identities. I therefore chose to focus on discourses of the Self as expressed in terms of the Other as well as how these discourses, circulated via mass and social media, are then expressed in conduct and embodied interactions in the neighbourhood. In particular, my approach speaks to both symbolic and material nature of encounter. I learn from the affective turn (Massumi 2002; Ahmed 2004; Amin 2012) in studying embodied encounters in the multicultural city, but equally pay attention to narratives and discourses that might shape meanings of citizens' identities over and beyond the embodied encounter. In this way, I can explore how embodied encounters with the Other problematise those which have been represented on the screen (via traditional and social media), but also how the mediated encounters have shaped the very materiality of migrant proximity that is embodied and affective.

As citizen identity is constructed at the intersection of discourse and practice in a space that constantly transforms, the methodological orientation of my thesis cannot but be qualitative: an approach that valorises the micro-level complexities of everyday life by always linking them to macro-level structures. The project takes a qualitative approach – an ethnographic one, in particular – as the most productive one for its materialisation. Ethnography (with its digital and in situ dimensions) has become a dominant data collection method in the study of media and

migration (Leurs and Prabhakar 2018; Georgiou, Hall, and Dajani 2019). Overall, in the field of media and communications, ethnography takes a particular expression that accounts for both the digital and material aspects of everyday life and aims to capture the multidimensional and multi-leveled aspect of media as a key element of the practice of everyday life (Silverstone 1994). My research design and the implementation of this study has evolved within this tradition.

This chapter is divided into three sections. Building on the previous, theoretical chapter, the first part briefly outlines the epistemological rationale behind the decision to take not only a discursive-material but also a relational approach to the study of citizen identity and to the development of my analytical framework. In the second part, I offer a detailed account of the operationalisation of my research question and my research design: sampling, data collection methods and strategies, as well as my analytical strategy. Last but not least, and always committed to researcher's reflexivity, I reflect on my own positionality, ethical considerations and aspirations and limitations in organising an ethnographic study.

Navigating my methods in approaching 'citizen identity' as *practised*, *discursive* and *changing*

The present study is informed by previous work on encounters in the changing city and seeks to engage with and contribute to the methodological agenda within the particular field of migration and the media research, as this relates to the question of citizen identity. The study follows the thinking of communications and urban ethnography scholars researching the city, who treat 'neighbourhoods as communication environments' that emerge at the juncture of in-person and 'technologically mediated forms of involvement (Lane 2019, 4). In a similar vein, for the purposes of my 4-month fieldwork in the neighbourhood of Kypseli, I approached the city as a

material and symbolic space – a space that I aimed to understand by moving within its material and digital streets deploying various methods to capture its complex, multifaceted and often contradictory realities. The brief section that follows introduces the ethnographic design of my project that includes in-depth interviews as well as offline and online participant observation as data collection methods that seek to address the tripartite nature of citizen identity: as *practised*, *discursive* and *changing*.

Citizen identity as *practised*: Moving away from a media-centric approach and treating identity as a practised process connotes a research design that studies the mediated and embodied encounters between citizens and noncitizens in the space where everydayness is lived. As the space of everyday life is where identities take their shape through mediated and face-to-face interactions (Georgiou 2006), I empirically deploy offline participant observation to unravel the affective force and materiality of the encounter. I aim to explore citizen identity by turning to the space of everyday life in a multicultural locale – which constitutes a dynamic political space – and to the media appropriation and/or resistance that takes place within that context. This approach understands everyday life as a context within which discourses and actions are constructed and recognises that 'media and everyday life are in significant ways inseparable' (Silverstone 2007, 110).

Citizen identity as *discursive*: For the purposes of my study, I conducted in-depth interviews in conjunction with offline and online participant observation. I decided to refer to media representations as part of participants' discourse, with the media acquiring a prominent role in the study by being embedded within informants' narratives. This is why the embodied encounter – itself contradictory and conflictual because of the various discourses in mediated communication – matters. There is now growing scholarship on interviewing which shows that identities are treated as discourses that individuals construct within the micro-context of

everyday life (McCrone 2002; Fox 2004; Girloy 2004; Georgiou 2006). As a researcher, this data collection method gave me the opportunity to understand how identities are imagined and communicated – to comprehend how the Self, the Other and context interact, while showing how social processes constitute reality.

Citizen identity as *changing*: Foregrounding the materiality of space that undergoes social, political and demographic transformations is inevitably part of conducting an ethnographic study in a locale that meets the criteria of a 'changing city'. Considering how many South European cities are still enduring the repercussions of a 'crisis époque', the Athenian case is not unique, but a paradigmatic case study (Flyvbjerg 2006). Besides the context of the changing city, the project directly addresses the changing space of the encounter that is understood as taking place at the intersection of embodiment and mediation, imagination and action. To address the dual nature of the encounter, empirically, the design takes a twofold approach: firstly, it accounts for participants' mediated narratives in the study of spatialised encounters; and secondly, it adopts a methodological design that combines online and offline participant observation to capture the holistic process of citizens' identity make-up within the ever-changing media ecosystem.

In-depth Interviews

Besides a series of unstructured interviews and informal discussions conducted in the context of online and offline participant observation, I also conducted 30 in-depth individual interviews. This method was important for me to understand the narrative constitution of citizen identity. Trust and confidentiality were more easily guaranteed and these were important aspects in capturing the complexity of sentiments, the historicity of migration, experience and meanings of the experience and the mediation of encounters with noncitizens.

Conducting individual interviews was a decision that emerged inductively. During a pilot study I carried out in the context of my fieldwork preparation back in April 2018, I deployed the focus group method as the most appropriate one to explore '*what* participants think' and uncover '*why*' they think 'as they do' (Morgan 1988, 25). I aimed to capture the collective discourse in a group discussion where individuals engaged with others' opinions and experiences in discussing a topic of shared interest and/or concern. Reflecting on this experience afterwards, it was clear that the focus group method was unable to fulfil this purpose. A key consideration in relation to my data collection method was whether citizens living in the same neighbourhood brought together for the purposes of the study would open up to speak to each other about their inner thoughts on the controversial issue of migration or whether they would be reluctant to do so. When I conducted my pilot study, one of my participants told me, after the focus group, that his father had twice been beaten out of his office in the heart of Athens. This information was not shared with the rest of the group, which raised doubts for using this method to explore my research questions. One-to-one interviews presented a better method to capture personal information that individuals would share under conditions of confidentiality, as well as emotional comments, while reluctant to share these in a group discussion setting, especially when knowing that fellow participants were local to their neighbourhood. As was evident from my fieldwork, self-disclosure on personal/sensitive topics is more likely in a one-to-one interview context than in a group discussion unless the group is homogeneous and united (i.e., rape survivors).

My empirical data first and foremost emerged out of 30 in-depth interviews with citizens to better understand the social circulation of media discourse and to uncover how they make sense and narrate their ordinary interactions between themselves and noncitizens. Participants were recruited using both purposive (Cresswell and Plano Clark 2011) and snowball (Given 2008) techniques and were selected in the first place on the basis of their Greek nationality. Additionally, I recruited participants by means of a word-of-mouth strategy with the assistance

of contacts I had already established with my neighbours and participants I had already spoken with; and through Facebook, which sometimes added unexpected and additional challenges to my research (as I further elaborate on in the reflexivity section of this chapter). Greek adults, between 30 and 50 years old, were chosen for my in-depth interviews not only because of their more diverse and complex experience of the neighbourhood and engagement with the media, but also because I wanted to capture the formation of political and media capital among people who lived through the perpetual crises of the period 2008 to 2019. Besides being of a particular age, participants also represented Kypseli's diversity, in relation to education and class, i.e., they included both working-class and middle-class residents. There was an equal number of participants across classes and genders – the sample consisted of 15 working-class and 15 middle-class individuals; 15 women and men respectively.

While the aspiration of my project was to give voice to national subjects from every socio-economic background within Kypseli, the first month was mainly characterised by my difficulty – if not inability – to recruit Greek working-class citizens. This is for the reason that the current form of working-class in Greece is complex, multinational and multidimensional. Those individuals engaged in manual labour were well-educated (i.e., Nikitas, the butcher who had an economics degree) in addition to their manual dexterity, with a combination of intellectual and labour-intensive backgrounds. In the beginning, every time I came across working-class individuals without higher education in the neighbourhood (plumbers, electricians, technicians, cleaners), they were either over 60 years-old or non-Greeks. An additional challenge was the recruitment of female working-class individuals as they were largely invisible in the public space (i.e., Greek housewives or nannies). Eventually, after a few weeks of my settlement in Kypseli, the word-of-mouth strategy, as well as hours of wandering in the area and speaking to people I met there, gave me access to individuals who were initially more difficult to reach. It was on the material street of Kypseli and without any connections or gatekeepers that I recruited the

locksmith, an employee of the wine shop, the owner of the music shop, the tailor, the woman who worked at the local restaurant. It was in the Municipal Market of Kypseli that I came closer to residents of the neighbourhood. Although public discourse might characterise Kypseli as a working-class neighbourhood, the different socio-economic backgrounds of my interviewees were reflective of the neighbourhood's diversity. This was an important dimension that this project considered by recording, for instance, income and/or conditions of life (i.e., unemployment, supported or living with parents, lifestyle etc.).

Out of the 30 interviews, 28 were audio-recorded via 'Voice Recorder' app; in the two other instances where the interlocutors did not wish to be recorded, I relied on my detailed notes that were turned into a coherent text after my conversations. The majority were conducted as one-to-one encounters in a setting of the participant's choice (such as their homes or an unoccupied room in their workplace). Other interviews took place in public spaces such as benches in front of the Municipal Market of Kypseli or benches in Kypseli Square and during walks around the area (as I describe in another section). Integrating in-depth interviews within my ethnographic approach gave me the opportunity to locate *discourse* in dialogue to *practice* – on every occasion that this was possible, the interview was part of a more systematic engagement with participants, for example, by spending time walking with them, spending time in their homes and accompanying them in everyday activities around the neighbourhood.

There was one interview guide (see Appendix B) for my interlocutors. Besides the introductory ice-breaking conversation and information about the project and informed consent, my questions covered the following five areas: (a) life in the neighbourhood; (b) personal contacts/relationships with migrants (established and recent) and reflection on the case of Albanian immigration to Greece during the 1990s; (c) new migrant populations in the area; (d) experience of 'crisis'; (e) defining their Greekness; and, last but not least, (f) media practices and

discussion about Greek media in particular. I paid particular attention to my linguistic choices when phrasing certain questions to avoid asking directive ones or imposing normative assumptions. For example, as 'crisis' had economic connotations for some, for others it meant 'migration crisis'. For this reason, I never used words such as 'Greek crisis' or 'migration crisis', but every time there was a 'crisis' reference, I asked 'which crisis are you referring to?'.

Emphasis was given to the 'how do you know' question (see Appendix B for interview guide), which consistently proved one of the most catalytic ones whenever labels and/or characteristics were attached to certain migrant populations. Through such questions, I was able to uncover possible dependence on media and how normalised this was in everyday life. My aim was mainly to understand cases where interlocutors made references to the media in order to legitimise their views – something which would illustrate a paradox of the mediated society (Koulaxi 2019). For instance, my ultimate goal was to comprehend where certain perceptions about noncitizens come from: whether a piece of information stemmed from broadcast narratives, social media stories or interpersonal interaction with the individual.

On average, interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. Being able to dedicate time to the interview differed between those individuals who had young children and those who did not. Mothers in particular were always short of time, as their children depended on them (they had to pick them up from school, prepare lunch/dinner or take them to extracurricular activities). Despite their tight schedules, my interviewees rarely rescheduled and never cancelled our meeting(s). Overall, their willingness to participate in the interviews was evident: they appreciated the fact that it was a university-based project and understood that their contribution to it was valuable. I was given the impression that, for some, our conversation was cathartic (Davies and Cannon 2006) as it was an opportunity to be listened to with empathy, especially when participants brought up sensitive and personal issues; in some cases the interviews lasted more

than two hours. In particular, their 'experience with crisis' and the way it has impacted their lives was a topic that they elaborated on – they were relieved of a burden. For others, our conversation operated as an opportunity to express their indignation and anger in relation to migrant benefits (see Chapter 4).

While participants were eager to open up and speak without any hesitation, there were moments of emotional outburst and sensitivity. Although the label 'sensitive' has been contested in many topics in qualitative studies, research that has been characterised as such 'potentially poses for those involved a substantial threat, the emergence of which renders problematic for the researcher and/or the researched the collection, holding and/or the dissemination of research data' (Lee and Renzetti 1990, 512). In my case, sensitive topics included media coverage of migrant tragedies (such as the summer of 2015 in the Mediterranean Sea); personal stories of newcomers, who themselves confessed to participants; or participants' own personal, health and financial issues. For example, Valeria, the teacher at the intercultural school in Athens, mentioned how 'shocked' she was seven times in less than a minute when describing the ordeals of migrants and refugees in the summer of 2015 in their effort to cross the Greek–Turkey sea border. Her shock emerged from images of drowned adults and kids, with a particular emphasis on Alan Kurdi.[21] Tears welled up in her eyes when referring to Alan Kurdi's tragic death. Seeing her distressed, I gently suggested interrupting the conversation. She said 'I am easily moved' and continued. In a similar case, Nikitas, a butcher in Kypseli, became upset as he was describing the shock he suffered when reading in the news about a migrant family that the father was missing, the mother drowned and the children were unaccompanied. Interviewing participants in a respectful manner regarding their everyday experience with forced encounters and in an urban context of crisis is undoubtedly challenging, but the ethos of the researcher can negotiate the

[21] News story reporting Alan Kurdi's death: https://www.bbc.com/

complexity of power relations. The following section will shed light on the participant online and offline observation and the strategies employed.

Offline participant observation

Only ethnography can begin to answer questions about what people really do with media. (Bird 2003, 191)

I undertook offline participant observation between April and July 2019, focusing on the embodied encounters with newcomers in the material streets and public and private spaces of Kypseli. I need to clarify that my ethnographic observations do not constitute a full ethnographic study of Kypseli citizens; instead, they give an ethnographic account, which I produce by adopting ethnographic tools and imagination (Willis 2013) – delving into the neighbourhood's life, engaging in long observation and unstructured conversations with participants. My interest in citizen identity is sociologically and urban-studies driven, but is always grounded in the study of media and communications. Therefore, my ethnographic approach was not the typical one, one that is unstructured and long-term. Instead, my research positions itself as a short-term ethnographic study (Morgan and Pink 2013) of citizens' embodied encounters with noncitizens in a multicultural locale of multiple crises. Morgan and Pink (2013, 359) outline four ways through which the ethnographic place of 'short-term multiresearcher ethnography might be constituted' – elements that I also adopt in my own study: 1) the intensity of the research encounter; 2) a focus on detail; 3) the ethnographic-theoretical dialogue; and, 4) audiovisual and other traces of ethnographic encounters. To support the depth and breadth of short-term ethnography and respond to those who argue that it is superficial, the sociologist Hubert Knoblauch characterises this data collection method as 'focused' (Knoblauch 2005, 16). Following the same line of thought and responding to researchers that characterise short-term ethnography as 'quick and dirty' (Hughes et al. 1995, 61), my methodological approach is

underpinned by the 'ubiquity of digital media in both the everyday environments we research and in our research practices' (Morgan and Pink 2013, 353). A media and communications project like the current one is not only interested in studying the media *per se*, but also in monitoring comments and references around and about media, including discussions in which media are directly or indirectly cited. In other words, this project is interested in studying *media practices*. I was interested in participants' media consumption and use (their sources of information, social media platforms they use, pages and accounts they follow and engagement with migration-related news, their comments on news stories), the ways in which media and communication technologies shape and inform (or not) their communication with other residents in Kypseli, as well as how these technologies mediate their access to information and actual events in the neighbourhood and beyond. Therefore, Kypseli is treated as an 'open' (Massey 2005) and 'unbounded' (Ingold 2008) place to be studied not only in the material space, but also in the digital.

I gained familiarity with and knowledge of the field by becoming a resident of the area in order to experience everyday life in the same way as the locals in my project did. For this reason, I rented a studio flat on Evvoias street in the heart of Kypseli for the whole duration of my fieldwork. Aiming also to capture in my data the visual (offline and online) landscape of the city that constitutes another representation of mediated encounters (Hughes 2013) in my data, the first week of April found me wandering in the neighbourhood and being astonished by the numerous graffiti messages on the walls – messages of solidarity towards migrant populations in the area (see Chapter 6). The graffiti material I studied only consisted of verbal elements: (coloured) figures, symbols, images and any multimodal elements that could lead to a reading and analysis of visual content (see Kress and van Leeuwen's Visual Grammar 2006; or visual analysis of graffiti) were absent. For this reason, I made the decision to treat my graffiti material as *discourse* and not as *visual*, in the same way I treated interviews as discourse. Consequently, the

content of the graffiti writing I collected was categorised according to the same thematic codes (Braun and Clarke 2006) and patterns as my interview material. Although I understand the implications and the limitations of this choice, my rationale for treating graffiti as discourse aims to reflect the various ways in which locals construct the sense of the Self and the Other through their verbalisation in interview contexts and on the urban street.

As aforementioned, my ethnographic approach gave me the opportunity to position discourse in dialogue to practice. To this end, I did not engage with the interviews as a singular event but also, in most cases, tried to situate those conversations within ecologies of place and embodied practices (Pink 2009). I aimed to engage with interviewees before and/or after the interview event so as to develop a contextual framework of interpretation of their discourse. Thus, and while the interviews represent the primary method of systematic data collection, they are located within the wider ethnographic approach which I adopted in the field. My approach did not solely rely on my visits to the local cafés, bakery, market, school gates, parks and the shops around the Kypseli Square. Following strategies from Pink's 'sensory ethnography' (2009) that accounts for bodily functions and integrates senses, I asked my interviewees if it was possible for me to join them in embodied activities (walking, shopping or eating) – to follow them in places with potential newcomer–citizen interaction, such as school gates, grocery stores, or simply in Fokionos Negri (the car-free street where many shops, restaurants and cafes are located) or in Kypseli Square. I also asked a few (female) parent participants if I could accompany them on their way to school where they picked up their children or when doing their grocery shopping. Treating interviews as a multisensory event (Pink 2009) in the context of an ethnographic study turned walking around the area with participants into a research opportunity (Lee and Ingold 2006; Adams et al. 2008; Pink 2007, 2008); during the walks, we discussed while they were showing me Kypseli through their own eyes, as well as the local spots they usually visited and why, and places they avoided and why). The walks enabled me to understand the views and

experiences of Greek citizens as situated within the materiality and socio-spatial dynamics of the neighbourhood. Similarly, having multisensorial experiences, such as tasting Greek-Syrian street food from the food truck of Giorgos Glynos in the context of the *Cooking #WithRefugees festival* in the Municipal Market of Kypseli, further enhanced my fieldwork. Having followed this strategy, I managed to trace the in-person, affective experience and its entanglement with the mediated dimension of the event.

I also collected visual material during these walks with participants (when they showed me places of particular importance for their narrated story) or during migration-related events I attended with participants and/or at the Municipal Market of Kypseli (see Chapter 6) to further enrich my thick descriptions. Although photos were taken, they are complementary to my participant observation and will be not treated as visual material. Following a more condensed but intense approach to participant observation, I aimed to uncover who was visible and who was not, who spoke and who did not, and uncover whether special events in the Market, for instance, were more celebrated and mediated whilst there was limited migrant presence.

Online participant observation

This study aligns methodologically with digital urban ethnography that employs various methods to explore the role of mass and digital media in relation to other everyday life practices and contexts (Pink et al. 2016). Aiming to create new techniques, which reflect the diverse media landscape, to supplement the traditional ethnographic approach, Pink et. al (2016) introduce a series of criteria and tools to digital ethnographies. The advocates of this approach claim that material and digital environments cannot be studied independently from each other but are integral to the same processes that produce spatiality, materiality and experiences.

While I conducted in-depth interviews in homes, workplaces and around the city, I systematised my participant observations in the material and digital environments of the locale. An obvious digital space to start with my recruitment and participant observation was Kypseli's Facebook groups and Instagram accounts, such as the 'dimotiki_agora_kypselis' (Kypseli Municipal Market). 'Η Κυψέλη μας' (Our Kypseli), a non-institutionalised collective group of settled residents of Kypseli and a public Facebook group was a possible space of observation that would give me access to potential interviewees. Despite Willis's (2019) claims that no consent is needed when the Facebook group is public, I reached out to the administrator to ask permission to conduct my online participant observation. Although the administrator was very willing to discuss with me, the active members of the group that organised offline events were mainly retired residents, and thus outside the scope of my project. Another potential group was 'KYPSELI' – a closed Facebook group in which you had to prove you were a resident of Kypseli, by answering certain questions. When my request to join was accepted, I again reached out to the administrator for a permission to observe the posts and discussions. Unfortunately, I was unsuccessful, as the administrator was reluctant to contribute to the research due to a previous negative experience within another research project. However, as a resident and member of the Kypseli group, I used it as a space to recruit potential participants for my research: I publicly posted on the Facebook group about my research intention and call for participants. This was a successful strategy, as I managed to recruit a significant number of participants through the group.

Reading Jeffrey Lane's inspiring ethnographic study of networked streets in Harlem, I connected with as many of my research participants as possible on social media in an effort to 'move online and offline with the same set of people' (2016, 54). Besides exchanging mobile phone numbers with participants, I also asked them to connect on Facebook for the purposes of my project. Following Lane (2019), I mentioned to my participants that I was interested in both their

analogue and digital lives because of my affiliation with a media and communications department. Despite their willingness to connect with me online, I explicitly mentioned that they could remove me from their friend list on Facebook at any time without any notice or explanation. This was a crucial step, yet an elementary one to 'build richer accounts' (ibid). I firstly built rapport with participants and then expanded my observation to the digital space of Facebook. During the course of the fieldwork, I was monitoring the feeds on a daily basis.

Besides my use of Facebook, the online participant observation included an interactive part, an exchange of migration-related news stories and videos between participants and myself. We exchanged a couple of messages on Facebook to discuss or follow up on a particular news story that was referenced during our in-person conversation. Needless to say, that, given the age group choice and the commitments of participants, they were not constantly active or engaging with news stories. Overall, I monitored their self-profiling practices (Leurs 2015): posts, reposts and comments/reactions on news stories. I was only interested in comments and posts about migration-related issues or about the self. To be clearer about the 'self' dimension, there were many instances in which participants reposted memes to talk about unemployment and the hurdles of being young in Greece's crisis. I took screenshots of activity on their Facebook timeline and feed. However, capturing screenshots that included comments, likes or reactions of nonparticipants was an additional challenge. Since I had not asked permission from users that commented or liked a post on participants' timeline, I only used this information descriptively: for instance, I only write about the popularity of the post, number of comments or provide a summary of a comment that matters to my analysis.

While urban and digital ethnography, by default, immerse researchers in observations and information about individuals who are not taking part in the research, to mitigate the risk of revealing an individual's identity, from my side, I never used information of non-participants that

appeared on social media. I used this content and added it to a Microsoft Word document in order to ask participants if they were happy for me to use the data collected when the fieldwork was completed in July 2019. As an extension to this, I felt most comfortable when I shared the Microsoft Word document (with participants) with all the selected posts and comments that I intended to include in my collected data, because then they had the final say on data I had collected which could identify them. Additionally, I saved material gathered from my online participant observation to ask follow-up questions in a future meeting with them. This was possible in those cases where I managed to meet participants more than once, or others that I happened to meet more frequently (such as the woman that worked at the local restaurant I often passed by, or parents I repeatedly met during school activities on Fridays and Saturdays).

My strategy included keeping a digital notebook, where I stored screenshots. Following the guidance of the Ethics Committee of my institution, the digital notebook was not synced with my smartphone. I annotated the screenshots in order to cross-check my findings – how knowledge from the ground confirms or challenges online presence and vice versa; how the online self converges or diverges from the offline one. For instance, a typical example was the overrepresentation of progressiveness on the Facebook timeline: there were cases where participants appeared to be more 'progressive' and 'liberal' on their Facebook posts, but challenged those views during in-depth interviews, observations and walks around the city. As a digital urban ethnographer, Jeffrey Lane reflects on the importance of studying the use of communication technologies for scholars that explore urban life phenomena: 'Saying and doing are situated online and offline, which requires our attention to the overlap and tension between the two (Lane 2019, 171).

The richness of my material gave me the opportunity to meaningfully reflect on the gains and limitations of the material and digital space respectively and to better understand the purpose

each one of those served, by avoiding generalisations and favouring one dimension over the other. As expected, citizens participated to a greater or lesser extent in my research: some of them were interviewed (and that was the totality of our encounter due to time constraints), others walked with me for a couple of hours around Kypseli and befriended me on Facebook and allowed me to follow them on Instagram (which only a few of them used), but all of them invested their time and opened their hearts for the purposes of my project. For that, I am grateful and have done my best to represent their narratives and practices respectfully and fairly throughout this study.

While the current project begins by highlighting the challenge within ethnographic research of integrating the micro-political and macro-political implications of the media – implications that shape perceptions and meanings of identity – the ultimate goal remains a fuller understanding of everyday life in a well-defined context. The focus on everyday life as a space of contestation between agency, structural inequalities and resistance always prevails. Hammersley (2006) highlights the importance of ethnographic approaches that are not restricted but are always bounded by the particular historical, spatial and temporal context. The intense and short-term nature of the present ethnography is intellectually stimulating, because it pays attention to contradictions, consistencies and existing power dynamics and hierarchies within a particular locale (that of Kypseli). It aims to directly or indirectly address the media–citizen identity relationship in the hope that the specific case study has the potential to further explain similar issues in a different context.

Data Analysis

Having outlined the theoretical-analytical underpinnings of this study and the operationalisation of my research question, I here discuss the process of data analysis. To begin with, my data

corpus consisted of ethnographic (online and offline) fieldwork notes, interview transcripts, recordings, street graffiti, screenshots from participants' social media accounts, videos and images received on the Facebook chat. When the fieldwork came to an end, I found myself with a large quantity of empirical material.

As a matter of convenience and in order to register information efficiently, I used a smartphone app to record descriptions instead of hand-writing them. I followed a colleague's advice to write a page of fieldnotes with my expectations, beliefs, prospects upon my arrival to the field site, and so the first page of my fieldnotes was written during the flight from London to Athens. It was interesting to compare my expectations with the reality I encountered in Kypseli. In the course of the fieldwork, it was not always an easy task to record or create fieldnotes during walks, house visits or participation in events. I wanted to be fully engaged with the field site and participants. For instance, in the beginning I had a notebook to write down thoughts in bullet point format, but I soon realised that this strategy distracted participants. For some, I had the impression that they were more concerned about the notes I was taking than our actual conversation. On the other hand, there were informants who specifically asked me not only to write down but also to highlight a story or piece information they shared with me. To manage the demanding task of fieldnote creation, Sanjek and Tratner's (2015) technique dividing notes into three different categories – head notes, scratch notes and fieldnotes – proved useful for a smooth process of keeping fieldnotes. Head notes were mentally recorded in cases where I was not in a position to write down or record my thoughts. When the visit or walk was over, head notes turned to scratch notes on the way home: notes that were in bullet point format or short recording entries on my phone. Although scratch notes were not my preferred strategy of keeping track of important details and observations when I had arranged consecutive meetings or walks or attended events that lasted a long time, they proved to be useful in recording the most important discussion topics, reactions, comments etc. When there was no recording, I created a note on my

smartphone with a description of a participant's particular face expression or body movement, such as a flushed face when referring to migrant benefits, followed by the explanation given when a respective participant was asked to describe why she was feeling that way. In cases where the session was recorded, I verbalised this observation in order to transcribe it. For example, I said 'I can see you are rolling your eyes, does that mean you are annoyed? or 'Could you please describe to me why you are rolling your eyes?'. The 'mission' of turning the scratch notes into proper fieldnotes within 12 hours of the event was somewhat challenging, but always rewarding and helped my memory retrieval. Despite my extensive fieldnotes, writing notes in the margins of the paper to my 'future self' was a habit I picked up in the first two weeks (Edwards et al. 2017).

The audio recordings of my in-depth interviews were transcribed verbatim through dictation on Microsoft Word app: a very useful strategy to avoid the exhausting process of manual transcription. The voices of my participants were translated from Greek into English – a far from neutral process. Thus, it is vital to say that the choice of and explanation of direct quotations and interview extracts was a result of my personal coding decisions. To organise and code the array of different types of data (from visual to textual and interview transcripts) that my project generated, I used NVivo 11 software for storing, coding, highlighting and hyperlinking (Pinks 2007).

However, I coded interview transcripts and online participant observation notes in separate files (Bazeley 2007). Similar to the graffiti that I analysed as discourse and not as visual material, I also treated videos, images and screenshots collected from participants' timelines as well as from our Facebook chat conversation as part of digital fieldnotes (Lane 2019) (and kept in a separate folder to the fieldnotes created from the offline participant observation). Far from being complementary data to my offline participant observation or in-depth interviews, I treated digital

fieldwork notes as discourse and I put emphasis on participants' interpretation of and meanings ascribed to the respective material. For instance, when Pavlos shared with me a video about alt-right activists that worked undercover in the refugee camp in Lesbos, I did not analyse the video itself, but, rather, analysed how the informant interpreted its content.

My analysis of (both offline and online) participant observation fieldwork notes was not separate to the data collection process. Following sensory ethnographers, I treated my fieldwork notes as a process rather than as product (Pink 2009; Morgan and Pink 2013). The first step preliminary analysis included colour-coded themes or notes assigned to the electronic version of the transcript. As a second step in approaching the dataset, I took a grounded theory approach and applied its three levels of abstraction (Strauss and Corbin 1998) to inductively generate codes and analyse my data (Braun and Clarke 2006). My agenda of themes to cover and the three sub-questions of the study functioned as a priori themes that assisted in the structuring of the complex dataset (Lapadat 2010). The first step was to read all empirical material and construct a coding tree with the main topics of the project: citizen identity, crisis, migration crisis, mediated narratives and the interplay between mediated narratives and lived experience with the same populations, online and offline dynamics, interactions in the neighbourhood, co-existence with established and recent migrant populations. Inductive thematic analysis was employed to foreground the connections between categories and themes as well as the often-contradictory narratives and realities at the level of the neighbourhood (Fine and Fields 2008). Despite its inductive nature, the analysis adopted both a theory- and data-driven approach: there was constant interplay and interpretation of the codes between theoretical assumptions and empirical findings (Boyatzis 1998). As a researcher, I avoided isolating sentences and quotes to support a respective code or theme and instead contextualised that information to fully reflect the individual's interpretation (Braun and Clarke 2012).

The overarching aim was to identify relationships between the codes that inform my conceptual framework and the main themes that answer my research questions, a method that Boyatzis (1998) recommends for dissemination of data and findings. The final stage included a comparison of themes and required analysis at an abstract theoretical level. The extensive examination of the aforementioned codes was further unpacked during or even after the long process of thematic analysis. For this reason, the concept of conviviality (in Chapter 6), for instance, did not emerge as an umbrella concept in the NVivo codes, but was later introduced as a driving one in the final empirical chapter.

Positionality

Given the undoubted interconnection between power and knowledge, I aim to discuss my positionality as a doctoral researcher without making any claims to objectivity and/or neutrality (if these concepts even exist in social research). Following this line of thinking, reflexivity emerges as a reflective space where the epistemological location as well as the political and social position of the researcher are disclosed rather than hidden. My aim in this project is not overambitious – I cannot explain the phenomenon of migration or Greek national identity in their totality, but I approach reflexivity 'as a methodological guard against error emerging from positioning and difference' (Dean 2021, abstract).

First and foremost, one of the most evident aspects of my positionality as a researcher in the current project was my affiliation to the London School of Economics and Political Science. My affiliation to a prestigious institution of the United Kingdom recognised internationally in my field (and others) had important implications for the ways in which I negotiated power relations during the fieldwork. For instance, middle-class participants, that were mostly aware of the LSE, were very enthusiastic to take part in my study because they believed that my findings would be

disseminated and, thus, heard at an institutional level. Those who were not aware of my university were still very keen to talk to me and open up because of their willingness to help me with my project. The fact that I belong to a media and communications department made two participants very reluctant to talk to me: they were conscious that I had connections with the Greek media and that I used to work as a journalist and thus they were suspicious of me recording our conversation in case this subsequently appeared in the media. Despite my familiarity with the Greek context and insiderness in domestic affairs that undoubtedly provided 'a level of trust and openness' (Dwyer and Buckle 2009, 58), I was at the same time mindful of my then seven-year absence from the country that also made me an outsider (Ryan 2015). Participants either viewed me as part of the brain drain (and thus one of those hit by Greece's economic crisis) or as a researcher from a prestigious university (and thus an outsider). At the same time, my position as a PhD researcher from a UK university generated some unfriendly comments on Facebook – as I used the social media platform in order to recruit participants that resided in the neighbourhood. Some of the comments I received suggested that my supervisor was using my free labour to generate these empirical findings, while in fact my research was fully funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). I assume that the issue of PhD student exploitation was raised as the majority of doctoral positions in Greece are unfunded, and thus students rely heavily on their supervisors' projects. Those that criticised the institution for being 'elitist' made references to Greek politicians and ministers that graduated from the LSE, and thus my presence created negative connotations for that individual from the beginning. Fortunately, the Facebook comments I received by nonparticipants were not reproduced in my offline conversations with those that participated in my study.

Besides my institutional affiliation, my Greek nationality, and the fact that I was born and bred in Thessaloniki, were further elements of my positionality that granted me an extensive familiarity with the social, cultural and political context in the field. For instance, while I was intending for

discussion of citizens' encounters with migrant populations to be limited to newcomers who had arrived and settled in Athens from 2015 onwards, interview questions about immigration from the Balkans and Eastern European countries in the 1990s uncovered unresolved concerns with those groups, despite decades of co-existence. If I had not had this contextual information, I would not have been able to see the parallels between the recent migrant waves and the immigration of the 1990s. Additionally, even though I had not personally known any of my participants before the study, there was certainly a high level of identification with most of them. There was a particular level of identification with middle-class individuals that were educated in Greek universities or abroad (as I was). I should mention that I have a background in politics and international relations and completed a master's degree in media and communications governance. At the same time, there was also an important degree of identification with working-class participants who were not educated, as I also come from a family with low levels of educational attainment.

Aware of these complexities, in order to successfully negotiate the power relations of fieldwork, I did not present myself as the knowledgeable researcher, but instead adopted a position of humility and empathy – especially when participants referred to the repercussions of economic crisis on their lives. My Greek nationality and personal contacts gave me easy access to the neighbourhood and my identity as a young female scholar made participants more willing to talk to me. Given the structural inequalities, as far as the status of women in Greek society is concerned, my relatively young age (25) at the time of my fieldwork and gender (female) assigned to me the inferior subject label, which meant that participants did not feel threatened by me, and were happy to open up. I should mention that I am a privileged migrant and have a long history of migration in my family, as I mentioned in the Introduction – my great-grandmother from my mother's side, Marika, was a refugee from Constantinople (now Istanbul) and the one from my father's side was a refugee from Smirne (in Turkish İzmir), settling in Thessaloniki. Of course, I

cannot and do not claim that my interest in migration emerged solely from my close ties with my great-grandmother, Marika, but I can definitely claim that while growing up with her stories about her arrival in Thessaloniki as a refugee, a research identity was developing inside me – I always wanted to hear and understand 'real-life' stories of settlement in the city, as I was constantly telling her, and not fairy tales.

As expected, the level of enthusiasm and engagement was higher in in-depth interviews and participant observations with participants with whom I shared a similar vision: a Greece (and world) defined not by nationalism and xenophobia, but by hope and intercultural solidarities. While I never expressed my personal views on migration, I should not hide the fact that I was overwhelmed by optimism and hope inside me when hearing about bottom-up solidarities and respect. However, this does not connote that I was ever overtly or covertly judgemental of participants whose vision, moralities and ideologies were not close to mine. Rather, those observations and interviews offered me the best opportunity to develop important skills as a researcher: listening, understanding and contextualising certain perceptions. Views that I did not identify with taught me to constantly look to record and understand the causes of things and understand how and from where particular beliefs and thoughts stem. For instance, tracing back to the constitution of the modern Greek state, one could easily understand why (contemporary) citizens still strive for homogenisation and the purity of the nation. In my view, my critical academic background has taught be to be dismissive of any kind of political extremism – whether this is far-left or far-right. Besides my academic trajectory, my exposure to Greek politics as a political correspondent intern for the Greek media has equipped me with the skills required to critically evaluate the information I am given.

I shall not disregard the importance of the historical processes within which I was writing up my thesis. Key events that better informed my understanding of Greek identity were the news of the

historical agreement resolving a long-lasting dispute over the official name of Macedonia that Greece signed with North Macedonia in 2018 and also the news of Turkey opening its borders to migrants and refugees that aimed to reach Western Europe through Greece towards the end of 2019 up until March 2020. Given the Greek government's decision to push back would-be migrants arriving from Turkey and to deny requests for asylum, not only did the issue of migration climb toward the top of the political agenda in Greece, but it also generated discourses of racism and xenophobia amongst the public.

While the aforementioned had significant implications for my work, the COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented challenges and disrupted my flow of writing. I completed my fieldwork in 2019, so the pandemic found me in the crucial period of writing up my thesis. In parallel with the pandemic, a key event was the several fires that broke out in the Moria refugee camp on Lesbos after the camp was in quarantine – 'the darkest dimension of the invisible crises of the border' (Chouliaraki and Georgiou 2022). Also in the midst of the pandemic, the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States and the United Kingdom reinforced conversations regarding the structural anti-Blackness and racism that permeates Western society, and higher education, in particular. Without any doubt, these processes were fundamental in informing my understanding around structural and everyday racism in various ways and further intensified my perception of the need of a change towards a de-Westernised way of doing things.

Last but not least, I would like to account for my methodological decision to focus on a citizen population who identifies as ethnically Greek. This was a deliberate choice which I considered for a long time at the beginning of my research. This choice was made as I have been interested in understanding constructions of identity within contexts of nationalism and neoliberalism, especially as these reflect convergences of citizenship with ideologies of distinctiveness on the basis of unique ethnic attributes. A different study could be implemented in the following way: it

could include non-ethnically Greek citizens (i.e., including citizens with Albanian, Sub-Saharan African origins and others) and inductively generate conclusions about the consequences of personal experience of migration and mobility for the citizen-noncitizen co-existence and co-ownership of the landscape of the city. This bias is explained by my desire to situate conceptions of the (Greek) self within the historical longue durée that has shaped imaginings of what it means to be Greek within specific frames of an ethnically defined national self. Although my intention was to shed light on an understudied dimension of citizen identity – that of constructing citizen identity through the Other in a multicultural neighbourhood – I understand a possible contradiction as the binary between citizens and noncitizens risks the reproduction of an unwanted hierarchy. I have tackled this contradiction by identifying participants based on their own identification as ethnically Greek and based on their narratives through which they regularly counterpoised the citizen Self to the noncitizen Other. Another methodological decision I aim to account for is the one to exclude noncitizens from my sampling. As there has been an abundance of research projects that explores identity through migrant experiences and narratives (asylum seekers, refugees, migrants) in destination countries and cities – especially across Europe – (Leurs 2017; Gillespie, Osseiran, and Cheesman 2018; Georgiou, Hall, and Dajani 2019), my doctoral thesis aimed to address another gap in the literature. Specifically, by focusing on citizens, I aimed to challenge existing understandings of citizen identity as *unchanged* or as *taken-for-granted* in contexts of migration. While migrant identities are constructed through their experience of uprooting, mobility and resettlement, so are citizens' identities, especially when they encounter migrants both on screens and streets as the par excellence Other. My ultimate goal is to challenge the normativity of Greek citizen identity, and to contribute to conversations on identities shaped in multicultural spaces beyond the Greek contexts. However, I do not assume that Greek citizen identities exist in a vacuum; I am interested in citizens who receive migrant populations and whose identities are shaped through their encounters with the Other. My interest lies in the way through which these two identities (citizen and noncitizen)

emerge simultaneously, dialectically and how each one becomes a point of reference for the other. This is also reflected in my methodological choices: my ethnographic approach in the context of the changing city that undergoes demographic transformation because of the arrival of migrant populations supports my decision to deliberately explore the presence of the Other as a point of reference for citizen identity. I believe that researching citizen identity through the 'constitutive outside' (Ahmed 2000; Isin 2002), represents an opportunity to contribute to a politics of justice – to ask different questions about citizen identity and treat newcomers as citizens-in-the-making in the changing city. I recognise an evident contradiction since I distinguish between citizens and noncitizens on the basis of Greek citizenship and ethnicity, but at the same time the project remains situated within hierarchies between Western and non-Westernised knowledge (Shome and Hedge 2002). The doctoral thesis however does not aim to reproduce binaries between Us and Them, but given the persistent binary between noncitizens and citizens which I repeatedly observed in the field, the unwanted duality needs to be addressed, understood and of course challenged through analyses that deconstruct the rigid conceptions of Us/Them.

Ethical considerations

A thorough discussion of my approach to ethical considerations and how I dealt with issues of confidentiality and anonymity is the focus of this section. This study received the approval of the LSE's Ethics Committee in February 2019 (see Appendix A). A leaflet providing background to my research and an informed consent form (see Appendix C) were given to all those who took part in the project as interviewees. Before each interview, I ensured that my participants had fully understood all important points of data collection, storage and analysis. To ensure anonymity, I never asked for names during the recorded interview. To further ensure anonymity, I gave each participant a pseudonym. When conducting my offline and online participant observation, I

never mentioned in my field notes information that could identify individuals. Original recordings were imported from the recording app to my laptop at first instance, and the original recording files from my mobile phone were deleted as soon as they were imported. The files of the transcriptions did not include any names but were assigned a name that included the date of the interview, the location and the three first letters of the pseudonym. Codes, pseudonyms and categories were kept in an anonymisation log – a spreadsheet log which was securely and separately stored in a hard drive or LSE H: Space. I never used Dropbox or Google Drive, which do not meet the data protection regulations. When I finished the transcription of my interviews, I deleted the material from my laptop. Data will be kept safely for ten years to allow for publication and potential peer review. As my research is funded by ESRC, I need to keep my data saved in open and recommended formats as per UK Data Archive recommendations. Data generated by my research participants (social media accounts, interviews) was used with their permission as set out in my consent forms. Regarding the issue of data archiving to share data, I added on my consent form the following point: 'I give permission for the (anonymised) information I provide to be deposited in a data archive so that it may be used for future research'.

Drawing the boundaries in the digital space is challenging; but exploring *identity* (citizen, national, personal, cultural etc.) in the 21st century is impossible without an intersectional analysis of the online and offline practices. Regarding online participant observation and the ethical consideration that entails, it is vital to mention that I had not been on Facebook since 2014. However, for the purposes of the project, I created one account, in late 2018, firstly to immerse myself in the digital space within which residents of Kypseli interacted and, secondly, to befriend those participants that were willing to add me on Facebook. Managing my participants' privacy when harvesting social media content/posts from their Facebook timeline was somewhat demanding due to the nature of my research. A more ethical practice for researchers – the one I

personally followed – was to firstly gain their trust and, secondly, as I have already explained above, to share with them the content I aimed to use in my work. By referring to social media content, I understand that 'people's identities were less protected than if I had systematically excluded this information' (Lane 2019, 185). However, following Shklovski and Vertesi's (2013) anonymisation definition, I based my strategy on an 'un-Googling work' basis: although the material was written in Greek, I ensured that I altered identifying information that might reveal the user's identity or direct link/page in which the respective comment/post was written and/or uploaded. I Google-translated quotes I aimed to include in my analysis and made minor changes in translation in order to make sure all participants were protected. In this respect, given that most of the Facebook timelines I was looking at were private (and thus required befriending) and all participants were given pseudonyms, I can guarantee that no post or comment is identifiable by another person.

Additional challenges that I faced in the course of the project included ensuring my own personal safety during the fieldwork. In my effort to recruit participants door-to-door, usually in their workplaces (car service, plumbing service, locksmith, fisherman etc), I had to share either my Facebook account or phone number for them to reach out to me when they were first available for an interview. My gender identity placed me in an uncomfortable position with potential male participants on three occasions. While I always aimed to build rapport with my potential participants, three male participants misinterpreted my polite stance and messaged me regarding their intention to 'get to know me better'; I decided not to contact those participants for an interview and instead seek for alternative ones. In addition, whenever I was meeting a participant, I always shared the time and location of my meeting with my neighbour.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the methodological approach and decisions made before, during and after my fieldwork. I presented my rationale for undertaking an intense, yet short-term ethnography with an emphasis on in-depth interviews, and offline and online participant observation. Concerning my research design, I detailed the decisions taken during data collection and analysis as well as the ways in which I negotiated power relations in the field. In this respect, I outlined the implications of undertaking research in a city of compounded crises, media sensationalism, everyday violence and intersecting inequalities. With a focus on reflexivity and ethical considerations, I discussed the aims and challenges of combining online and offline ethnographic participant observation. Having discussed both the theoretical framework and methodological approach of my thesis, the empirical chapters that follow demonstrate how the aforementioned work in practice. In particular, the following chapter discusses how the temporal context and the imaginary of 'crisis' shaped citizens' identity through the constitutive outside – the migrant noncitizen. As I will discuss across all the empirical chapters, different imaginings of the reflexive Self were shaped within the imagined and lived crisis.

CHAPTER 4

Crisis reflexivity: constructing identities of crisis and the inevitable rise of populism

On 1 April, when I first arrived in the neighbourhood and as soon as I entered the building, my landlord was waiting to show me around and give me the keys to the studio that I was renting for the next four months. We had an introductory conversation – the usual one you have with your landlord. When he asked if I was a student, I explained that I was doing my PhD and had come to the neighbourhood to record and understand encounters between Greeks and migrants. He nodded his head and said: 'Oh, you'll hear many stories about them [i.e., migrants]. Take extra care when you walk on the streets. You might be robbed. I bet you watch the news – as a young lady, you know what's going on in Athens. Just watch the news tonight and you'll get the point. Criminality has risen because of all these migrants in the area…because of the migration crisis'. 'I will', I said, and realised that my first ethnographic fieldnote was already written in my mind. Needless to say, my landlord's view was far from exceptional.

Discourses on criminality and urban decay as inevitable repercussions of the so-called 'migration crisis' – as they were circulated through traditional and social media platforms – were reproduced whenever citizens, whose encounters with migrants were either very few, or fully mediated by television news and social media, spoke about the neighbourhood's issues. For example, Elpida, a woman who has a background in religious studies but works in her husband's family-run restaurant, said: 'On a daily basis, crime news is full of burglaries committed by foreigners. The majority of news bulletins are related to such news'. Andreas, a bus driver, spoke of media

representations in general that made him feel insecure in the neighbourhood: 'You don't hear people speaking in Greek. So, I don't let my wife and daughter go through the main square. I have a feeling my daughter feels insecure the last years of crisis [referring to the 2015 symbolic peak of the 'migration crisis']. We read about this on the online news platforms, people talk about this in the neighbourhood.' On the other side of the coin, I met Nefeli, an artist who, from the beginning of our conversation, dissociated herself from the unwelcoming positions other locals took towards recent arrivals of migrant populations in Kypseli. In an attempt to celebrate multiculturalism in the neighbourhood, Nefeli and two of her close friends created a group chat on Messenger with the title 'Kypseli is wonderful' in which they shared interesting stories that made their area and its people remarkable 'exactly as they are', to quote her words directly.

'Crisis' has become the condition of being and becoming for Greeks, but, somehow, this crisis, even though it is complex and diverse, for many participants, has come to be epitomised as 'migration'; or what is mostly referred to as the 'migration crisis'. Migration has been constituted in public discourse as a phenomenon that destabilises meanings of sovereignty, belonging and identity – as yet another crisis that adds to existing inequalities, uncertainties and anxieties. In line with narratives of populism, nationalism and Europeanism, migration as a topic is at the core of citizens' anxieties and insecurities; for many, migration reframes the imaginary of crisis and of the nation – it becomes a condition and a discourse of identity that individuals reflect on when they speak of the citizen Self and the non-European/non-White Other. Inspired by Taylor's conception of the social imaginary as 'those images, stories and legends' through which 'people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others … and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations' (2002, 106), and following Chouliaraki and Georgiou (2022), I adopt what they call the 'crisis imaginary'. By 'crisis imaginary', they refer to the symbolic space of Westernised narratives and representations through which individual

citizens are invited to *imagine* what their encounters with migrants mean to their lives and identities. The crisis imaginary becomes a 'distinction that makes certain things visible and invisible' in the temporal and socio-historical context individuals experience on a daily basis (Roitman 2013, 39). And, in the reality of the multicultural European city, the noncitizen is not only an imagined force, but also an embodied agent, who lives close by. Building on this conception of the crisis imaginary, I draw on Roitman's (2013) use of 'crisis', that besides its 'narrative strategy', acknowledges how the concept can be treated as an 'experiential condition' with discursive, material and affective manifestations. Consequently, in a similar way of thinking to Roitman (2013) and Kaun (2016), I aim to comprehend crisis through discourse and affective experience alike, in particular by exploring citizens' views and everyday life experiences, as they understand them as stimulated by or emerging from conditions of crisis. How does the crisis imaginary shape processes of citizen identity-making? This is a question that this chapter aims to address.

This chapter's first section addresses crisis through media disinformation (Bennet and Livingston 2018) in migration-related news. News becomes a platform channelling citizens' own anxieties for their present and future condition of insecurity in relation to work, money, education and health. I explore to what extent economic and ontological insecurities reproduce, through the crisis imaginary, an unwelcoming attitude for migrant populations. I show why non-European/non-White migrants are imagined as constituting a threat to the Greek welfare system, especially among those participants that seem to systematically draw on television and social media narratives of the Other (Hamm and Spaaij 2017; McCauley and Moskalenko 2011). The story of 'welfare chauvinism' (Bommes and Geddes 2000) reveals affective forces of anger and indignation and the fragility of citizens' own identity that is expressed through the construct of the Self-Other and grants legitimacy to anti-migrant discourses. In the inductive analysis that I present below, driven by participants' own narratives and practices, this chapter shows that the

media constitute a powerful tool for individuals' ontological insecurities (Giddens 1990; Silverstone 1994), especially when the media offer a specific set of responses to the causes of crisis – and above all by targeting migrants as the source of many evils.

After showing how disinformation becomes a vehicle for self-victimisation among citizens, I discuss the ways in which victimhood is reproduced through citizens' reflexive accounts. By victimhood, I refer to 'an act of affective communication that attaches the moral value accrued to the vulnerable to everyone who claims it' (Chouliaraki 2020, 12). In that respect, I explore how citizens self-identify as victims, both suffering from intensified inequalities in the city and at the same time enjoying certain rights and privileges compared to noncitizens. My empirical findings identified the obstacles that citizens experience during a crisis which then restrict their active engagement with the proximate Other on the material streets of Kypseli. I call the discourse that emerges through citizens' self-victimisation '*nationalist populist* identity discourse' and discuss it in more detail in Chapter 7.

The last section of this chapter will illustrate how the context of everyday encounters in the urban micro-publics unsettles but does not fully contest narratives of victimhood and self-pity. In the neighbourhood, narratives of justice and cosmopolitan imaginings of the city compete with the divisive narratives of citizen victimhood in what Zehfuss calls the 'alternative imaginary' (2020, 13).

The current chapter focuses on the analysis of self-making through narratives that speak persistently and repeatedly about the Self – with identity discourses of nationalist populism, cosmopolitanism and Eurowhiteness being more prominent and cutting across crisis reflexivity, which is situated within more persistent systems of power and knowledge. This is different to what emerges more clearly in Chapters 5 and 6 – the constitution of the citizen identity through

narratives of and experiences with the Other. Within the context of victimhood, the Self is always centre-stage.

Anti-migrant disinformation: a platform for citizens' ontological insecurities

Following the introduction, empirical findings in this section reveal how media disinformation and the ordinary reproduction of anti-migration news become a platform for citizens' ontological insecurities. I will show that anti-migrant attitudes are at the core of disinformation in which noncitizens become direct targets of attack, and add to the normalisation of racism as an integral part of everyday life. This part of the chapter explores how media sensationalism and disinformation in migration-related news can fuel feelings of anger and indignation as affective forces that mobilise and grant legitimacy to anti-migrant narratives.

For many, the mere presence of migrants in the Kypseli square, on the streets and in public transport mobilised discourses of the 'threatening' (to Greek citizens) Other. When I walked with Daphne to do some grocery shopping around Kypseli Square close to her flat, we encountered a group of men of Middle Eastern appearance sitting on a bench in front of the playground. They were holding their mobile phones and chatting. Based on the conversation we had while sitting at the local café, I observed her reactions when she encountered the men: she closed her eyes, took a deep breath and shook her head with dissatisfaction. Andreas, Daphne, Anargyros and Lydia were annoyed by the apparent expense of migrants' and refugees' belongings. 'Have you seen their mobile phones?' asked Lydia during our conversation. Even when participants did not directly refer to migrants' personal items, I could easily feel their dissatisfaction when following them on daily activities. Anargyros and Daphne commented on the popular clothing brands and fashionable shoes that migrants wore when seen on the streets; it was 'unacceptable' for migrants to be

'claiming benefits and seeking for a shelter when wearing such expensive clothes', they said in tones of outrage.

Those observations generated populist narratives of the mythical 'bottomless' funding for refugees – disinformation that spreads effortlessly in high-anxiety environments (Calrson, Jakli, and Linos 2018) and is widely circulated on mass media and social media. More specifically, in line with existing literature on media, immigration and social benefits (Schemer 2012; Freeman, Hansen, and Leal 2013; Caviedes 2015), the issue of undeserving access to 'benefits' acquired negative connotations among participants who held an intolerant stance towards noncitizens. Participants mentioned that historically social benefits have been considered to be 'abused' by migrants – the so-called, in the literature, 'welfare scroungers' (Golding 1999; Larsen and Dejgaard 2013) and those that the neoliberal order failed and those who were vulnerable. In the current section, I draw on stories about struggles for fair welfare and affective reactions of anger and indignation that lead to the '*nationalist populist* identity discourse', as I discuss in Chapter 7. In line with populist narratives, participants reproduced stories about their own lack of access to benefits as a result of actions that came from above (the government) and from below (migrant populations, recent and established):

> **Daphne**: They [meaning migrants and refugees] are here and WE pay for them…and WE pay a lot for them. They are in a much better condition to a Greek, I'm telling you. They are sitting all day long and we are paying for them…they cost us 200€ per person. The state gives them money. They are here, we pay for them, they ignore us, they do not respect us. And we have nothing. What can I say about these people then? They do not work at all. I have not seen any Syrian working. But Syrians do not work. I have not seen any Syrian working. They get easy money. They find it easy…why should they work? I

have to work for them. While for Albanians, Polish and others there wasn't such an allowance. So, they were forced to work.

Where does this money come from? You tell me. They definitely tax us to make some money for them.

Researcher: Have you read this anywhere?

Daphne: Of course. Both on TV, in newspapers, in articles…On the internet. That WE pay for them. WE pay for them.

The circulation of questionable information regarding migration-related news supports the formation of 'affective publics' (Papacharissi 2014). Daphne, a female nail specialist, was evidently upset because, according to her words, Syrians (who, in her narrative, represented all the migrant populations that had settled in Greece) were attracted by Greece's social benefits – benefits and taxes that 'WE pay for them'. I have capitalised WE in the above quotes as it was repeatedly emphasised during our conversation. WE corresponded to Greek citizens, a WE that excluded all migrant populations that reached Greece after 2015. Syrians were seen as an economic burden for the hardworking taxpayers vis-à-vis one-way-philanthropist Greeks who were exploited due to the increased taxes to support newcomers. The key takeaway, though, came following the question 'have you read this anywhere?' Daphne had seen this on 'TV, in newspapers, in articles'. Couldry's main question that seeks to explore what people do with the media (Couldry 2004), can be answered as follows: citizens use the media (access migration-related news on social media platforms or television) to reaffirm their ontological insecurities. Arguably, a component of disinformation can indeed be facticity: 'the degree to which' disinformation or misinformation 'rel[y] on facts' (Tandoc, Wei Lim, and Ling 2018, 147).

However, Ruokolainen and Widén (2020) have argued that rumours/information in relation to migrants' social benefits become very easily distorted when passed on by word of mouth or circulated on the media. The screenshots in Figures 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 of online news stories attest to this view and link such narratives to the theme of anti-immigrant disinformation:

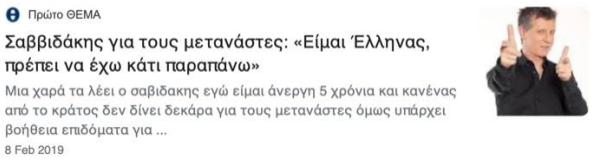


Figure 4.1

Figure 4.2

Figure 4.3

'Stop allowances to migrants', 'I said the obvious for benefits', 'I am Greek and deserve something more' were some of the titles of news stories found online regarding migrant benefits in Greece. These are direct quotes coming from a popular singer (Figure 4.1), a New Democracy politician (now Member of the Hellenic Parliament) (Figure 4.2), and the Greek Solution party leader (Figure 4.3). Fake and/distorted news about migrant populations' stipends, which allegedly came from citizen taxpayers, was evidently connected to right-wing and nationalist party positions as well as to the rise of xenophobia and racism which have infiltrated the banal space of everyday life (Simonsen 2015; Mazzoleni and Bracciale 2018).

In line with the populist narrative of 'welfare chauvinism' (Bommes and Geddes 2000; Larsen and Dejgaard 2013) that is centred on nation-building and national belonging, many participants reiterated that 'refugees received better treatment to citizens'. Their anger was mobilised to

legitimise anxieties that came from below – anxieties about refugees who receive the benefits and Greek citizens as the ones 'who do not get anything' in return – and emerged as a result of disinformation circulated on mass and social media. The digital space amplifies the spread of misinformation and disinformation as far as migration news is concerned, adding to the 'digital hate culture' (Ganesh 2018). The antagonism between citizens and noncitizens also appeared in media practices of producing content on Facebook: 'The flat of an unemployed Greek was taken because she couldn't afford to pay the electricity bill. In Kypseli, an NGO rents a flat for migrants and the lights are on 24/7'. My interlocutors complained about migrants who had settled in apartments offered by NGOs – that catered for the new arrivals' needs and paid their electricity and water bills. It was common knowledge in the area that many blocks of flats did not operate their central heating, because tenants and property owners could not afford to pay their electricity and gas bills. The central heating issue was something that concerned many local residents. The few who could afford it did not wish to pay for those who could not and so there was no heating for anyone. Those that had individual boilers never turned on the heating because it was 'too expensive'. Almost all residents had a similar story to share and it was widely known that everyone had a neighbour who was struggling to pay the bills.

Their struggles were expressed through an Orientalist discourse familiar across Europe, which reaffirms that race still matters (Lentin 2020) and vilifies 'welfare scroungers' that allegedly get stipends from the hard-working tax paying majority (Golding 1999). According to my participants, 'their' benefits were something that needed protecting from noncitizens who aimed to 'exploit the system' by taking 'money that comes from citizens' pockets', to quote a few. In addition to taxation, a further popular narrative that circulated on social media (mainly Facebook and Twitter) was that migrants benefited from the Public Utility Services[22] (known as ΥΚΩ in Greek) charge on the Public Power Corporation (PPC) bill (Figure 4.4) that was intended for

[22] https://www.dei.gr/el/

vulnerable groups of citizens. Responding to a participant's Facebook post, someone writes: 'You live on your own and have to pay the PPC bill for: families, unemployed and immigrants. Who is going to pay for me?' In the same vein, another angry post commented: 'It was not enough that immigrants, illegal or not, received social benefits…now, they will all have a 70% discount on the PPC bill. While for us the price of electricity is constantly increasing to cater for migrants at our expense and enable PPC to make ends meet'. Lydia, a 30-year-old nail technician, was the first participant to reproduce this narrative, which was widely circulated on social media platforms:

> If you consider the state budget…where the money from active citizens goes…everything is recorded on the state budget. It mentions that so many millions go directly to migrants. The state can't find so much money on its own. They collect it from citizens. For instance, PPC has all these social tariffs included for migrants.[23] When people do not have enough income to pay, it's okay. They can have some discount. But to pay for migrants, which are not included in any category, it is only a burden. This isn't the case for PPC only. It is even worse in our taxation. What we pay in utility bills and in taxation for migrants is what they need to have a decent life. Life in Mytilene [i.e., in Moria camp] is not a decent life, of course.

[23] According to the PPC (Public Power Corporation) legal framework on Public Utility Services (ΥΚΩ), services that are included are as follows:
• Electricity supply for the inhabitants of the isolated islands, at the same prices as those of the inhabitants of the mainland, despite the fact that the cost of electricity production on the islands is much higher.
• Electricity supply at very low prices to large families.
• Supply of electricity at low prices for vulnerable categories of consumers, such as people with special needs, low-income children with three children, the long-term unemployed, etc., which are included in the Social Housing Tariff (CTO).

Figure 1

Markos, a 47-year-old middle-class man whom I met at his mother's shop, was another participant who unwillingly spread disinformation regarding migrants' connection with PPC's Public Utility Services (PUS) charge. When he was telling me about the utility bill, he asked me to pause our conversation. He was looking for something in his desk's drawers. He took out a PPC utility bill and pointed at the PUS charge. Given my then seven-year absence from Greece and my limited engagement with those services, I was unaware of the break down given in the electricity bill. I took a picture of it so that I could do my research in my own time. When I posed the catalytic 'how do you know?' question to participants, everyone gave answers like the following: 'it's common knowledge', 'it's a fact', 'we've heard of it' and 'it's written on the utility bill' – answers that emerged as a result of their engagement with the media (Couldry 2004) and of repeated exposure to anti-immigrant disinformation (Fazio et al. 2015). Based on PPC's legal framework on the official website, it was evident that migrants did not benefit from the PUS charge intended for vulnerable groups of citizens, such as those living on isolated islands, people with special needs, the long-term unemployed and others (see Footnotes 21 and 22). This was another instance where an originally accurate piece of information (Public Utility Services

charge) turned into an inaccurate one related to migrants and circulated through word of mouth and online both by middle- and working-class participants (Ruokolainen and Widén 2020).

The second dimension of participants' anxieties, which also led to the '*nationalist populist* identity discourse', was built on anti-elitism (Mazzoleni and Bracciale 2018) – this time, it was the Greek state that 'did not protect' its citizens and supported refugees instead. The majority of my participants felt unprotected by the government and the story of their ontological and economic insecurities became the story of unfair migrant benefits and increased taxation:

> **Daphne**: The state gets subsidies for these people to come and for the borders to remain open. And the living is easy for migrants. But, Greek citizens struggle. We all struggle. We shouldn't only blame the current government. Every government is to blame. Borders did not open for these specific migrants. Every government is doing the same and no one cares for the financial difficulties Greeks face.

> **Faidra**: The government shoulders the responsibility to protect its citizens. Needless to say, there is no state in our case [said ironically]. The Greek state does not protect me as a Greek, how can they support these people [i.e., refugees] too? So when the state cannot protect me, I don't know if there is anything to give to them. This makes me upset. There will be issues.

> **Anastasia**: The state helps these people a lot. They take from us and give more to them. They support them a lot, but they take money from us. What I told you earlier… taxation has made us crumble. They take from us and there is great support for them.

Researcher: How do you know that what you pay in taxes goes to refugees and migrants?

Anastasia: It's common knowledge. Well, they take my money and the state supports them. They take it from us. What can I say now…I would have liked a better treatment. They should have taken it [money] from those who have. It's okay to help and support them, for sure. But, take it from those who have it. Not from us who also have issues. They take the little we've got to raise our kids and support others. They must find this money and support others. They take it from us.

Anastasia's struggle to meet the demands of high taxation is expressed as a story of the 'migrant who came to take our money through benefits'. 'Taxation has made us crumble', said Anastasia in her effort to explain the challenges her family had to face. Some participants that were hard hit by the economic crisis aligned with Peck, Theodore, and Brenner (2012, 266–67) who consider a post-crisis 'new normal', in which 'the costs of restructuring and insecurity are being visited, once again, upon the poor and the vulnerable'. Anastasia thought that the money she paid to tax authorities went directly to support migrant populations in the country. The proximal Other becomes a proxy for risk and disappointment and a threat to the Greek welfare system and, consequently, to Greek society. Participants that held similar views implied that migrants not only aimed to exploit the welfare system, but they also undermined the identity and quality of life of Greek citizens. Anastasia's use of emotional language ('not from us that have our own problems') was not solely a response to the migration issue, but was embedded in the facts of her situation, which at the same time constructed her identity, as a vulnerable subject with a fragile identity (Chouliaraki 2020).

Amongst female participants (both middle- and working-class), the story of unfair migrant benefits was repeatedly expressed as a fundamental factor that contributed to low birth rate as

well as to the difficulty of raising children in a 'Greece of crisis'. Greek mothers I spoke to complained that refugees got more money from allowances than the total household income of a Greek couple that worked all day long to make ends meet. The presence of Others (or knowledge of the presence of Others in the same space) in the neighbourhood uncovered negative reactions linked to feelings of ontological insecurity and was expressed in the narrative of victimhood. For these mothers, migrants became a threat, because they received their benefits from hardworking Greek taxpayers, while Greek women could not afford to raise more than one child, or not even one as Faidra described:

> You know what…as a woman, I'd like to have children. But do you know what? I am very concerned that I can't afford to have children…while refugees get their monthly stipends and allowances and don't care about this. They've got so many children. Because they can. You can see them. I don't know how they think about it. They might not care, because the state supports them. They get the benefits I pay for.

Like many other female participants, Faidra – a female shop owner – expressed her (financial) concerns regarding raising children. Faidra, as the quote above indicates, 'can't afford to have children'. Caring responsibilities were undoubtedly a concern for those who wished to bring up a family. In a similar conversation, Daphne compared the amount of money she received for her only child to the stipend refugees received on a monthly basis:

> **Daphne**: The government gives me 200€ in benefits for my child annually. Do you know how little this is to raise a child? What kind of expenses can I cover with 200€ for my daughter per year? And they [i.e., refugees] get 200€ per month for each child. I have just one. Just one kid, because I can't afford a second one.

Researcher: How do you know this amount?

Daphne: It's a fact…it's widely known. They get a lot of money monthly. It may be 150€ and not 200€…whatever this is, but it's a lot of money for just one child. An unemployed person in Greece gets the same amount of money. Those are doing nothing and get paid in my country. How fair it that?

'It's a fact' and 'widely known' that refugees received 150€ or 200€ per person on a monthly basis, according to Daphne's sources. She felt she could not raise a second child with the little money she received from the government vis-à-vis refugees' alleged allowances. In cases where participants referred to rumours about migrants, disinformation might have happened unintentionally when originally valid information was mediated and transferred to several individuals (Rosnow and Fine 1976).

Speaking of benefits in Greece and abroad, Petros, a plumber and father of two kids, expressed his anger, arguing that refugees did not pay taxes in his country. Through the media-enabled interaction with his sister who emigrated to Germany, he mentioned that all migrants received allowances and benefits there until they settled in the country. Being a Greek abroad and receiving benefits was acceptable to the majority of my participants. According to Petros, amongst others, Greeks were part of the brain drain – scientists and highly educated individuals looking for opportunities and offering their skill sets abroad. The discussion of who deserved to get allowances was dominated by Orientalist narratives that targeted Muslims in particular. Petros referred to 'Muslims who have two children by 23 different women' in order to receive their benefits. What came out of many interviews, repeatedly, was a widespread narrative of migrant populations (i.e., Muslims) constituting a 'threat' to Greek society, not only because of their cultural differences but also their demands on the national system. What such comments

had in common was a certainty that they were drawing upon 'facts' – information circulated widely, especially through citizens' media practices on social media, and which made some participants confident in expressing opinions that, in their eyes, were factually correct. 'The orientalisation of welfare state nationalism' was evident (Simonsen and Koefed 2020, 118); there was a clear distinction between the 'Oriental' migrant and the well-educated 'Occidental' citizen in their eyes. I explained to participants with similar views that when I graduated from my university in the UK, I would also be eligible to receive the statutory Jobseeker's Allowance until I found a job in the country. In a nutshell, I understood that I 'deserved' to receive UK benefits, because I 'was not a refugee' and I 'went there to complete my studies and look for a job':

> **Faidra**: The UK might protect you, but it also protects its citizen. Doesn't it? That country supported you, it gave you the allowance, but it also protects its citizen. It protects Londoners. This is the difference. In this country, when refugees received benefits, I am the one who does not get anything.

There are three takeaways from this body of evidence. Firstly, citizens' anger and indignation towards the noncitizen were fundamentally mobilised in contexts of disinformation and racist discourse and widely circulated through citizens' media practices on mass media and social media. Strong anti-migrant sentiments were usually expressed by participants who had little engagement with migrants on an interpersonal level and who tended to make intensive use of television and social media (Newman et al. 2019). More specifically, I have shown above how such affective responses intersected with disinformation (regarding alleged benefits that migrant populations received) and Orientalism (regarding exploitation of the Greek welfare system by refugees and migrants). Nevertheless, the empirical evidence does not posit a causal relationship between anti-migrant disinformation and citizens' negative attitudes towards migrant populations, despite existing evidence that strongly links digital media with exposure to ideas that

scapegoat the migrant (Siapera 2019; Hamm and Spaaij 2017; McCauley and Moskalenko 2011). Secondly, there was a banal and unnoticed trust in the media in their narratives and media practices (Koulaxi 2019),[24] which was completely normalised as an intrinsic part of being an informed citizen, given the lack of trust in democratic institutions (Bennett and Livingston 2018; Newman et al. 2019); participants made references to media-related practices of news consumption to legitimise their arguments, despite embodied encounters on the material street. The presence of Others (or knowledge of the presence of Others in the same space) in the neighbourhood mobilised discourses of the menacing Other and, overall, identity discourses of nationalist populism (see Chapter 7). Lastly, intentionally or unintentionally, unreliable and/or distorted information about migrants' social benefits perpetuated their precarity and misrepresented them in the Greek context. Citizens' insecurities were exacerbated when stories about welfare-benefiting migrants were produced and circulated through word of mouth, social media networks and, finally, traditional mass media (especially television) which remained highly influential. One of the words most frequently reproduced among participants was 'unprotected'. My discussions and observations manifested the structural limitations and inequalities of a government that prioritised security over a welfare system that protected its citizens.

[24] In my fieldwork I have observed a striking contradiction in our understanding of Greek media cultures – and associated systems of media trust. According to the Digital News Report 2022, 'Greece is well behind most countries for trust in news and there was a further decline (-5pp) this year'. Aligning with the report, according to which 'Only a small minority think the news is free from undue political influence in Greece (7%), participants manifested evident mistrust when speaking about the Greek media and journalists overall. During fieldwork, and contrary to these findings, I encountered many participants who constantly made references to the media to legitimise their views in a banal and taken-for-granted way. Specifically, I have noticed a contradictory condition in which, even if participants would not admit that they trust the media, they still use them as a primary system for gaining information and developing their perceptions about public life and political affairs.

Self-pity and victimhood, and their entanglement with xenophobia

Orestis: Here, you'll see the article I came across today.

The editorial, published on Kathimerini (the centre-right newspaper in Greece), that Orestis shared with me on Messenger is entitled 'How refugee kids enrich public schools'.

Researcher: What do you think of this and what made you send this? What are your thoughts?

Orestis: I just think that the quality of education our kids receive is really poor, really poor. And this article says that refugee kids can enrich public schools in the country. And I ask…how can refugee kids improve the situation in Greek public schools when…they need guidance and can't follow the rest of the pupils in class? Our schools already suffer…and I've got no money to pay for private schools or home tutoring. I've got my own problems…We can't help ourselves in the first place. Before [the] crisis, Greeks were willing to help. Migrants come to a country that has no education, no health care system. (Facebook Messenger chat, 3rd July 2019)


ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΑ

Πώς τα προσφυγόπουλα εμπλουτίζουν το δημόσιο σχολείο

ΓΙΩΡΓΟΣ ΜΟΣΧΟΣ*

03.07.2019 - 08:09

Figure 4.5

At a time when Greek pupils received a poor quality of education and parents struggled to make ends meet, as many informants said during our conversations, they felt that they were not willing to share the same space and limited resources with migrant noncitizens, as the Messenger conversation above illustrates. Discourses of national victimhood were clearly mobilised to place citizens in a disadvantaged position. Orestis emphasised that he had his 'own problems'. Without trying to confirm or reject narratives of crisis, it was a reality that many citizens experienced 'crisis' in multiple ways and struggled to meet their expected standards of schooling, work, housing and so on. While the previous section demonstrated how disinformation effectively frames conceptions of the noncitizen's undeserving access to services, this section explores how media related practices of victimhood produces a specific kind of reflexivity; citizens, looking inwards, justify their lack of welcome towards migrants on the basis of their own personal experiences of inequality rather than migrants' wrongdoing.

What was distinct in the particular socio-historic moment in Greece at the time of my fieldwork was that the economic crisis had not only affected the already poor, 'but [had] also threatened to impoverish the middle class' (Chouliaraki 2020, 9; Bermeo and Bartlells 2014). Ioanna, a civil servant in her 30s, mentioned seeing people in the neighbourhood, who from their appearance did not seem to be homeless, finding food in the rubbish. Indeed, one rainy morning, on my way to the supermarket, I saw a well-dressed man take an over-ripe banana from the rubbish bin; he peeled the banana, squeezed lemon onto it and ate it. During the interviews, middle-class participants reported a significant and constant decline in their income: a teacher explained that she was subjected to a 40% salary cut; an airline hostess lived on a 530€ monthly salary; a lawyer saw a 50% decline in his annual income; while artists have been seriously affected by the crisis, with almost no possibilities for paid employment. A typical theme of the populist discourse is addressing 'the people' as 'underprivileged citizens' in relation to class (Reinemann et al. 2016, 17; Mazzoleni and Bracciale 2018, 5). During my conversations with and observations of Greek

citizens' media practices and digital interactions on Facebook, it was evident that 'self-pity' emerged organically – a self-pity condition that entangled with racism and xenophobia, as the quotes below demonstrate. Artemis, a young woman in her early 30s, was the daughter of a plumber and a housewife. A meme from the popular page 'The wall had its own hysteria' [*ο τοίχος είχε τη δική του υστερία*] remediated and uploaded by Artemis's Facebook timeline, summed up how Greek middle-class individuals feel (Figure 4.6).

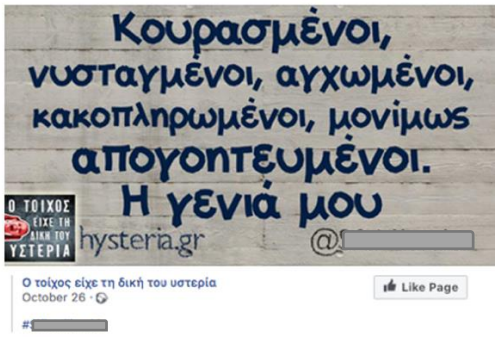


Figure 4.6

'Tired, sleepy, stressed, underpaid, constantly disappointed. My generation' – this is the meme's translation. Without having written anything on the caption, my participant publicly showed her total agreement with the meme she uploaded on her timeline. The original post had received 24,446 likes and was shared 1,723 times, while 34 Facebook friends of Artemis liked her repost.

As an extension to this post, when the discussion shifted to 'whether migrants could settle in Athens (and Greece in general)', Artemis said: 'I think it's impossible for them to settle here. As you watch on the news, there are no jobs for young people of my age. How can they survive on their own? We are helpless.' Speaking from the relatively privileged position of being able to stay with her parents without contributing to family expenses, like so many young people[25] – given that low wages and high living costs make flat prices unaffordable – Artemis described the limited

[25] For more about the situation of 25- to 34-year-olds living with their parents, see https://ec.europa.eu/

opportunities for people of her age during Greece's crisis. She started working as a bank clerk for 1100€ a month, because she was 'qualified', as she said. When the bank merged with another one, her salary plunged from 1100€ to 545€ net for eight-hour shift five days a week. The experience she had already gained was not appreciated, her foreign languages were no longer an asset, her undergraduate degree made no difference. As she described, her manager told her 'you either stay or leave, because there are other people on the waiting list'. She had to make a decision about whether to continue living in precarious conditions or to be unemployed. With the haunting thought of being unemployed and the fear of unemployment in Greece's crisis – as no one could survive on the state job seeker's allowance – Artemis was forced to stay in precarity. Reflecting on the country's unemployment rates and justifying her stance towards migrants' settlement in the country, Artemis requested some time, during our walk, to look for a meme on the 'The wall had its own hysteria' page, that according to her clearly explained why Greek citizens were disadvantaged. The meme (Figure 4.7) translates as 'I am so sorry that employers cannot find candidates with undergraduate and postgraduate studies, three foreign languages to work for 500€ to work 12 hours a day without paying their stamps'. She added: 'This meme is the story of my life. It sums my own life and the life of all people in their 30s I know'.

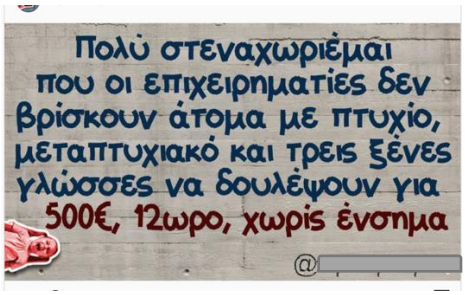


Figure 4.7

Artemis's views were reproduced by majority of my participants. For them, Greece's financial status constituted the main reason for their unwelcoming attitude towards the recent arrivals of migrants and refugees from 2015 until 2019 – during these years Greece was considered to be in the most difficult and deepest period of economic crisis:

Filippos: We are the real victims. Greece should first start solving its problem with the crisis that it has been struggling to deal with for several years, and if it steps firmly on its feet, then they could start helping millions of people who arrive from other parts of the world. We have reached a point where we can't help each other and they want us to help someone else? That's very difficult. And even more so when the state is a mess.

Researcher: How do you know it is 'millions' of people that arrive in the country?

Filippos: It was yesterday, I think…or two, three days ago. I don't remember exactly, but I was watching the OPEN TV news. And they very clearly said that since 2015, 1 million refugees have arrived in the country...in a country of 10 million people. Are Greeks a punch bag? You tell me. And when you don't deal with the problem, it will escalate whether you live in a prosperous country or in a country that is going through multiple crises. You have to deal with the problem [migration].

Figure 4.8

After my conversation with Filippos, I watched the news broadcasts of the previous three days in my attempt to find the information he referred to when discussing the media practice that was related to the consumption of migration-related news. It turned out I had to watch the last five days, as my participant's memory was not accurate this time. Followed by a visual presentation (Figure 4.8), the news anchor and the journalist said that, in 2015, 861,630 people entered the

country (both via the islands and across the Evros border); in 2016, 177,234 arrived; in 2017, the number was 36,310 and, in 2018, 50,508. During the year of my fieldwork, 2019, 62,190 arrived. Having examined these numbers, it was clear what the 1 million my participant mentioned referred to. The battle over numbers and statistics has been sensitive for television audiences (Newman et al. 2019) who seem to favour and rely on 'scientific' evidence to legitimise their views, without addressing the issue as an ideological one (Megrelis 2017). In a claim that prioritises the nation (assumed to be a bounded and stable community), Filippos believed that Greece had to start solving its own problems before helping others. This was a common view amongst participants who were financially hit by Greece's several crises. Grossberg (2018) claims that the system not only fosters and intensifies the boundaries between the rich and the poor, the privileged and the deprived, 'but it also inflicts serious emotional harms on the latter, perpetuating their anxieties and affirming their self-perception as victims' (Chouliaraki 2020, 10). In line with the view that depicts Greek citizens 'as a deprived socio-economic class or subset of the population' (Mazzoleni and Bracciale 2018, 5), even the knowledge of the co-presence of the Other inflicted feelings of insecurity and self-pity on citizens – as the economic crisis seemed to be the overwhelming condition that determined not only the social, cultural and political life, but also citizens' interactions with their migrant co-habitants.

My informants all unanimously agreed with the view that, despite their alleged privileges as national subjects, the violence of urban life attached the precarity label to them and rendered them no less vulnerable than migrant noncitizens – a populist media discourse that not only emerges through citizens' media practices and news consumption about migrant benefits, but also through existing structural inequalities and vulnerabilities in the city:

> **Michalis**: Given that we [i.e., Greeks] are already disadvantaged, priority should be given to us. I don't want this to sound racist…I don't mind if my neighbour is Greek or not. I

just want to explain that citizens in any country should be generally privileged and not worse off. Their country should care for them. The last decade this hasn't been the case…in terms of bureaucracy, in terms of benefits, in terms of support. I can't believe that immigrants get their benefits, their papers, automatically and citizens of this country have to suffer. Everything happens automatically. We have to wait years and years.

Researcher: This means that you do not feel privileged as a citizen, right?

Michalis: I don't think that any Greek person feels privileged vis-à-vis migrants. I don't know if any of your other participants felt privileged…I would be surprised to know that any Greek person feels privileged. From the youngest to the oldest, no one feels they are heard and welcomed in their own country. Sometimes, it's better not to be Greek. It's better to be a migrant.

Contrasting citizens' privileges with those of noncitizens, Michalis adopted the narrative of victimhood and reproduced the myth that 'sometimes, it's better not to be Greek' and that 'it's better to be a migrant'. My empirical evidence has shown that citizens did not adopt a welcoming attitude towards newcomers, because they themselves felt unwanted, marginalised and excluded in their own country. Kimon mentioned that it was 'provocative' and 'inhumane' to force Greek citizens, who faced deep effects of growing inequalities and were already highly oppressed by the imposed austerity, to deal with the influx of migrant populations from 2015 onwards. Citizens already felt deprived and explained the reasons why, in their opinion, the state could not shoulder the responsibility to cater for non-Greek populations:

Filippos: What will these people do here? Will they work? If they get sick, where will they be taken to hospitals that cannot cater for Greek citizens? I was reading

> an article the other day about mothers giving birth in a hospital with Arctic temperatures…they are hospitalised in temperatures below zero. So, how on earth will they [i.e., hospitals] cover these people's needs? They have the right to go to the hospital and they should have the right to go to the hospitals. In general, the state is to blame for everything, and I am neither talking about the current government nor the previous government. We have never had a good leader in this country. No one took it seriously and everyone is concerned for their position.

Without blaming the then government of the Coalition of the Radical Left – Progressive Alliance (SYRIZA), Filippos referred to a news story to justify his view that the healthcare system, in particular, lacked the infrastructure to care for noncitizens as it was unable to even 'cater for Greek citizens'. The crisis imaginary was reinforced through a click on a news story and revealed the 'easy' life of refugees or the 'alleged generous' care they were entitled to by the government. As I have already demonstrated in the previous section on migration and disinformation, the Other was mediated as either exploiting or using the scarce resources of the already overstretched welfare system with a cost to citizens' wellbeing and care. In all of the above cases, there was a close connection between the condition of victimhood and xenophobia that generates the '*nationalist populist* identity discourse' (that the thesis unpacks in Chapter 7). Nevertheless, it would be inaccurate to claim that victimhood was only tied to xenophobia. Deprivation, alienation and anxiety were also difficult sentiments shared by many who struggled in a city torn by a deep financial crisis. Sentiments of xenophobia, I argue, are entangled with those of victimhood, but they are not contained within them [i.e., not all self-perceived victims were xenophobes], especially as many participants were indeed struggling to meet basic needs or at least conditions of life with dignity.

Another indicative example where Greece's crisis and the condition of victimhood were most felt was when travelling by bus in the city – an everyday practice that involved media (Couldry 2012) and entailed an unavoidable 'throwntogetherness' (Massey 2005) for citizens and newcomers. The more I immersed myself into urban life, by using regularly public transport, the more I came to realise that the bus becomes a public space and a 'mediator of subjects meeting with ethnic diversity and imagined Others' (Simonsen and Koefoed 2020, 71). Everyday encounters with Others could be indifferent, uneventful, unpleasant, but definitely quite intimate. As a result of austerity and fiscal policies, residents of Athens had to deal with reduced public transport services and, consequently, with crowds on a daily basis to reach their destinations. The wait during rush hour was as long as 20 to 30 minutes because there were so few bus and trolley services. Especially in an area like Kypseli, which is at the heart of the city of Athens, there were no alternative means of public transportation that commuters could use, with passengers fainting because of the crush, particularly during the summer months.

Commuters thus found themselves in the closest proximity to Others, bodies touched other bodies, and personal space, even a limited one, constituted a fantasy. The majority of women I encountered on buses would place their bags in front of them, not to create more space for others, but in an effort to avoid pickpockets. There was, undoubtedly, an intensity of experience that it was important for me to understand as part of my field observations. During one of the first weeks of my fieldwork, I took the trolley bus, line 2, to go to the city centre – one of the busiest routes. The trolley bus was packed, but I was in a hurry and did not have the time to wait for the next one to come. I entered from the front door [unlike London, in Greece commuters are allowed to enter from all doors]. Bodies were touching other bodies, familiar faces and familiar Others. There was a constant flow of passengers, but the trolley never got empty. There was no air-conditioning. Passengers were sweating; not because of the heat, but because they were squashed up one against the other. It was very difficult to breathe and to move from your

limited space. There was no spatial organisation of the bodies, it was even difficult to make your way to the doors when ready to disembark. There was one young man who looked as if he might be from the Middle East and in front of him a Greek woman in her 40s clearly showing her discomfort. She nudged and shoved him. Without exchanging any words, her passive-aggressive movements escalated to physical and verbal violence. She raised her arms and pushed the man with force saying, 'Move away from me! You are to blame for what we're going through right now! You're constantly on the news. You and your doings'. The man was evidently shocked, but did not say a word. Neither did any of the other passengers. The woman continued lashing out, 'All I read is how you make my life difficult. We have to accommodate you, but no one cares about us!' No one really understood what was going on and the woman was full of rage. Possibly she overreacted because of the long wait, the overpacked trolley, personal concerns, but also because of her media practices and the circulation of migration-related news that scapegoated noncitizens, and, which, evidently, had an impact on her. Thus, the simple visibility of the Other, on top of other concerns, appeared to have mobilised representations and discourses about newcomers' origins, perceived as Others and undeserving. This dichotomous order was manifest in the idea of 'the threatening noncitizen' versus 'the people'. The everyday practice of encountering noncitizens on public transport was far from pure, because the knowledge of the co-presence of the encounter, which is hyper-mediated through individuals, technological devices and social media platforms as well as through physical spaces, added to the interaction of other social, economic and political crises within the Greek community.

The section has explored the enactment of citizen identity through media practices of online interactions and news consumption about migration-related news that encouraged participants to justify their positionality as victims. Grossberg (2018, 20–1) claims for the post-crisis period (if there has yet been a post-crisis moment in the Greek context) that citizens 'experience themselves as victims of people or forces outside of their immediate lives and communities, in

circumstances of economic and racial anxiety, which result in expressions of resentment, rage and even a reactionary desire for revenge'. I have shown that the affective antagonism between 'Us' and 'Them' that often drove citizens' reflexive accounts of a difficult life in the city was closely entangled with narratives in the media – the mediated encounters that they so often had with migrants, far more frequent than the embodied ones they had in the city's streets. Greek citizens conceived of themselves as victims due to existing and growing inequalities, and in the citizens' imaginaries of crisis migrants were to blame for making things even worse. Ephemeral encounters on the urban street often reaffirmed the image of the victim citizen-Self vis-à-vis the privileged noncitizen, that conformed with national and racial hierarchies; obstacles that participants faced were construed as a battle of 'us' versus the 'them'. The crisis imaginary that mobilised identity discourses of nationalist populism and Eurowhiteness was vital – and justified through informants' everyday hurdles – but the condition of victimhood was regularly reaffirmed through the visual and textual narratives they so often encountered through their media-related practices, especially through the news consumption.

Migration and the city's alternative imaginaries

Despite the fact that everyday encounters in the city mobilised narratives of victimhood and self-pity that entangled with racism and xenophobia, the current section seeks to show that justice is not fully absorbed by the struggles and anxieties of crisis. Adopting Zehfuss's (2020) idea of 'alternative imaginary', I examine how individuals' political beliefs also mediated encounters with migrants. The nationalist and xenophobic positions that some participants adopted, as above, were more common among participants with conservative and nationalist positions more generally. In this section, I demonstrate that, in contrast, the '*cosmopolitan* identity discourse' and progressive ideological positions among other participants were mediated every day in

encounters on streets and on citizens' media practices, opening up spaces for imagining a diverse, cosmopolitan and convivial city.

For all left-leaning participants whose media consumption practices relied on 'alternative' – as they characterised them – social media networks, migrants cosmopolitanised and enriched the city of Athens (Young 1990). Those participants aimed to demonstrate their political and/or ideological alignment in an effort to position themselves in favour of migrant populations. Nefeli, the 48-year-old artist, claimed from the very beginning: 'I lean towards a leftist political orientation…centrist politics and the Left…definitely not the Right. So, when you ask me about co-existence with migrants, I just understand that you ask me about co-existence with human beings. We are all humans.' Kimon, a 30-year-old actor, celebrated 'his global identity' and the fact that 'migrants and their families, that were transient in Athens, started to become citizens-in-the making'. Ioanna, a young civil servant, emphasised from the first couple of minutes that the only reason she lived in Kypseli was because of the area's 'multicultural character'; she enjoyed 'the co-existence with people from different cultural backgrounds'. Valeria, one of my interlocutors and a teacher in a multicultural school of Kypseli, said: 'What I love about Kypseli is that it's colourful, multicultural, international…I don't know how to say it, but I love living in a neighbourhood with people from all over the world'. Aelia, a civil servant, took a defensive stance towards me when the discussion shifted to sources of information and she rushed to disclaim their political identity: 'Before we move on, I just want to clarify at this point that I am a leftist.' While we were sitting on a bench in Fokionos Negri, she said:

> 'You wouldn't see this face over there. You wouldn't see this face, because Athens was a very conservative city to live. Now, it's full of people that express themselves freely. Or that one over there, with the piercings. You wouldn't see this face, but now this has become part of the neighbourhood's identity'.

People expressed themselves freely, according to Aelia's observations. She referred to a woman of colour with colourfully dyed hair and an eccentric clothing style and another whose face had multiple piercings. On a Facebook post, Aelia uploaded an article entitled 'Atmospheric images of Kypseli through the lens of 3rdmobb' with the caption 'Proud to live in this neighbourhood (Figure 4.9):

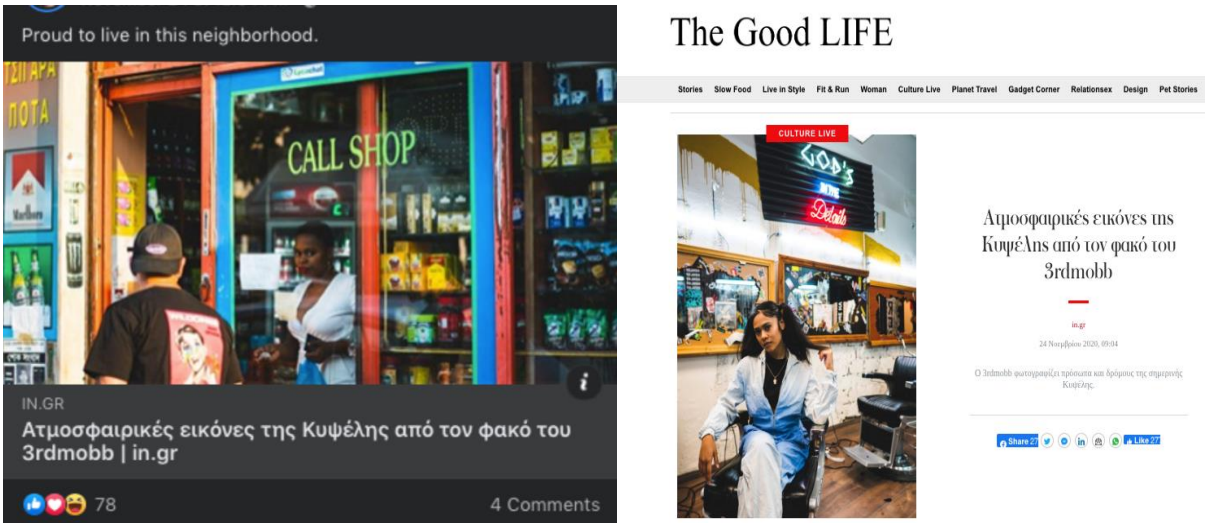


Figure 4.9

The page contained pictures of everyday faces of Kypseli; people of colour, individuals from various ethnic and racial communities of the neighbourhood were protagonists in the writer's/photographer's work. It depicted shop owners of colour, hairdressers of non-Greek origins, tenants on their balconies. Using Facebook for the symbolic reconstitution of Kypseli, Aelia celebrated that 'face' of the neighbourhood and expressed her pride to be a resident of that area.

Nefeli belonged in the same category of participants who not only dissociated herself from the unwelcoming positions that other locals identified with, but also made reflexive attempts to resist traditional media narratives of 'moral panic' regarding migration-related news. When I saw her

patiently sitting at the back of the hair salon with aluminium foil on her head, I assumed she was not in a rush and would be probably willing to participate in my research. Fortunately, I was right. Living in Kypseli for the past 19 years, Nefeli spoke about Athens and the neighbourhood's transformation during that time. She said that up until a decade ago, Athens was still a very conservative city with tendencies of conformism, consumerism and chauvinism. In her eyes, throughout the past decade, Athens made its transition to become an international and cosmopolitan metropolis, a metropolis comparable with London, Berlin and New York. But now, for most of its citizens, Athens was felt to be something else, something shapeless and contradictory – though a city with a lot of potential and great interest, particularly in relation to culture and financial investment. Whilst celebrating Athens' open and multicultural urban space, the informant was pessimistic when referring to television and the coverage of Kypseli's stories in the media. Drawing on a practice that is related to the media (Couldry 2004), she narrated a personal experience with a reporter from a private TV channel that covered a car theft outside the hair salon where I first met her:

> At the time I was leaving with Niki (the hairdresser), who was locking the door of the hair salon, the reporter started asking her about criminality and foreigners in the area. She referred to a broken padlock she found a couple of years ago, but she clearly mentioned that she couldn't tell if it was foreigners or not. They were asking about criminality in the area, if we feel insecure living with foreigners, or if they have attacked/smashed any shop nearby…If we have heard of any extreme and newsworthy incident and whether I have been a victim of burglary or theft.

As the middle-class participant explained above, scapegoating migrants in Kypseli was the angle traditional mass media preferred to take. To this end, in reaction to news stories that vilify the Other and the neighbourhood, Nefeli and two of her close friends came up with the media practice

of creating a group chat with the title 'Kypseli is wonderful' on Facebook Messenger in which they shared interesting stories that made their area and its people remarkable – 'exactly as they are', to directly quote her words. Rather than ask for permission to check their conversation myself, I instead asked my participant to share with me any stories that she felt comfortable about doing so. Some indicative examples shared on the group that Nefeli referred to during the conversation were the following: cooks from the Collective Kitchen El Chef [Συλλογική Κουζίνα El Chef],[26] based at the Migrants Social Center, prepared meals for an anti-racist festival; Zahir, an Afghan migrant, competed for and won a place in the TV programme *MasterChef Greece*; information about a local restaurant serving authentic Middle Eastern and plant-based food; a documentary at Trianon cinema in Kypseli about migrants and refugees who survived and created a new life in Athens. Despite the fact that their media practice stayed in the more 'private' space of social media networks – that of Facebook Messenger – and was not published on a user's timeline, the chat group symbolically constituted a powerful initiative by the three friends to perform 'domestic cosmopolitanism' (Nava 2007) and create their own narrative of citizen identity beyond hegemonic narratives that vilify their migrant co-habitants in Kypseli.

The exchange of information above mainly took place in the hair salon, but we left together to continue our interesting conversation. Nefeli asked me to accompany her to do some quick shopping in her local shop, owned by a Pakistani man. When we entered, she greeted Adeel (pseudonym) and his two young daughters. They seemed to know each other well. When Nefeli asked for cigarettes without mentioning the brand, Adeel already knew which pack to give her. He told her, 'I am so tired. It's Ramadan time. I usually leave my daughters at home. I've got no energy to run over there with them. You can imagine how tired I am'. Nefeli was very understanding and said 'Oh, yes, it's Ramadan time. Okay, I'll leave you be. Greetings to Azra

[26] For more on the Collective Kitchen El Chef, see https://elchef.gr/

[pseudonym].' There was mutual understanding between Adeel and Nefeli. Adeel explained to my participant that he was very tired and without energy because of Ramadan and Nefeli, from her side, was very understanding, kept the conversation brief and did not aim to stay longer in the shop. As she told me after we went out, having individuals from different religions was only positive in the Greek context, in which the church-state relationship was very strong (as explored in Chapter 1). Nefeli was atheist, and so was her family, yet my participant showed respect to the religious choice of Adeel. For her, mutual respect was the key to overcoming anything that separates people. As an extension to the idea of alternative imaginary, the idea of global identity dominated my discussions with individuals with a leftist-leaning political stance. In their eyes, the neighbourhoods became more vivid and more multicultural, as people of different age groups, from children to my middle-aged parent participants said:

> **Nefeli**: Migrants probably brought some parts of the neighbourhood to life. Greek mothers did not take their children to play at the park. My peers took them to playgrounds indoors. Pedion Areos [one of the largest public parks in Athens] was full of Albanians, Africans and Russians, because they all have it in their culture…that we take our kids to the park to have fun and play. Greeks didn't go to parks, until very recently.

> **Panagiotis**: I like that my child is growing up with kids from all over the world. He takes for granted that his friends come from different countries of the world. He doesn't care. And because of him, we learnt not to care. We learn from each other. There are no stereotypes in their friendship and we [parents] learn from this.

What characterised these participants was that they valorised the cultural heritage that earlier migrant populations had brought to destination cities, such as Thessaloniki and Athens after the Asia Minor catastrophe at the start of the 20th century – what leads to the emergence of the

'*cosmopolitan* identity discourse'. They recognised that transient individuals who then settled in cities contributed to them by engaging with culture, business, politics and so on – every aspect of city life. My interlocutors said that cities around the world, such as New York, 'culturally flourished' because of the arrival of expected or unexpected migrant populations. For several of my interviewees, the newcomers, by living, working, opening their stores or by producing art, gradually became an integral part of culture and pioneers in many fields in destination cities. Those that shared this view valorised population mobility and stressed the need to rethink whether Greece has ever been a homogenous Hellenic society or whether it is a de facto multicultural one. Valeria said that 'multiculturalism is not a bad thing and I am not really sure why the media tries to convince us of the opposite'. Criticising the Greek media treatment of the so-called 'migration crisis' and the emphasis on it as an unprecedented phenomenon, Valeria mentioned that 2015 was not the first time that waves of different populations and tribes had moved from different parts of the world to others. According to her, human history was full of population mobility. 'This is not strange, it is the natural flow of life', she said, referring to migrant populations on the move. It was evident that for those participants the years of 'migration crisis' opened up avenues for the alternative imaginary, according to which migrants are considered an opportunity rather than a burden (Chouliaraki and Georgiou 2022). Such 'intervention can be read as departing from the political imaginary valorising the appearance of control performed through bordering' (Zehfuss 2020, 13).

In a similar vein, when discussing the issue of living-together-in-difference, Kimon, a young man in his early 30s, was the participant who most powerfully narrated and performed a cosmopolitan identity through the media practices of producing content on his Facebook timeline. While I was looking for Facebook groups concerning Kypseli or neighbourhood-related posts, Kimon's post featured almost at the top of the search. In the post, he expressed his dissatisfaction that, despite Kypseli's multicultural population, local citizens seemed to be deeply divided. Having now lived

in the area for many years, he found it surprising that many Greeks even refused to co-occupy and/or even to share the same space with noncitizen migrants. 'Despite multinationalism and multiculturalism that characterises the Kypseli neighbourhood, inhabitants of the area are deeply divided', he wrote. His long post also referred to the racist and fascist tendencies that always addressed the poor and the weak, because the problems were essentially class and systemic/institutional. Kimon used the Facebook platform in an activist-like statement to symbolically bridge the social and ideological ferment between the citizens and noncitizens of Kypseli, and wrote: 'It is a matter of education, it is a matter of movement, it is a matter of political, labour and clearly anti-fascist mobilisation with a class, international and anti-capitalist character'. As in his Facebook post, Kimon spoke fluently, articulately and confidently, drawing on his experience living and working in the neighbourhood over the previous couple of years. As a young person who had studied, lived, and travelled in Europe, America and Africa, Kimon celebrated his 'cosmopolitan identity' (Hall 2008). For him, no matter how different individuals were, whether they wore the burqa or not, as he mentioned, whether they believed in this god or the other one, whether Christians or Muslims, all could live harmoniously together and peacefully co-occupy the same space. The city of Athens gave Kimon the motivation to remain a 'citizen of the world', as he put it, while at the same time, to live in the neighbourhood where he was born and bred:

> Living and working in Athens, and experiencing the difficulties Athens has been through the last decade as well as having been abroad to study and work, a global identity started to be emerging inside me. I did not expect that this could be achieved here. I thought you had to leave Greece in order to broaden your horizons and get to meet people from other cultures. The crisis, in a sense, because Greece was at the public eye of international news, and Athens was the place where most things happened and accepted the wave of the crisis [i.e., migration] in the harshest way and first in relation to the rest

> of Greece and the rest of Europe, this brought people. Things calmed down a bit and right after the refugee issue began. The refugee issue concerned the country, and all of a sudden, we started to solely discuss about the refugee issue and not politics. Once again, the refugee issue internationalised things in Athens.

An urban cosmopolitan identity emerged for Kimon through his life in the city. As he pointed out, one did not need to leave Greece in order to meet people from all over the world and broaden one's horizons. While some experienced the so-called 'migration crisis' as an event that disrupted the rhythm of Greek reality, for Kimon it constituted a phenomenon that 'liberalised the city of Athens': 'People who were all transient in our city, refugees and their families, have now started to become residents, especially in areas such as Kypseli…Soon, most of them, and those who have not yet become, will become Greek citizens.'

My empirical evidence has shown that progressive political beliefs became more influential mediators, against the mass media, of welcoming attitudes, even among those who had limited or no encounters in the city. For them, social media offered an alternative viewpoint and space that mostly aligned with and was catalytic in the symbolic reconstitution of their citizen self. Cosmopolitan imaginaries of solidarity and conviviality (Siapera 2019) countered the hegemonic narratives of nationalism and xenophobia which circulated in mainstream media spaces. Resistance, in this case, can be conceptualised as a preceding opposition to nationalist and racialist discourse where anti-racist identities resist structural inequalities that pre-exist and frame encounters in the city. I call the discourse that emerges through citizens' expressions of hospitality and celebration of multiculturalism '*cosmopolitan* identity discourse' and discuss it further in Chapter 7. The '*cosmopolitan* identity discourse' did not necessarily emerge as a result of throwntogetherness in Kypseli – given the minimal interaction with migrant populations – but provided a cognitive frame for explaining and evaluating it. The imaginary of the citizen-

noncitizen interaction was what reinforced feelings of hope and cosmopolitanism in the digital (through their mediation and intermediation on Facebook) and, momentarily, in the material space (e.g., going to Pedion Areos with unknown migrant mothers and children). Far from face-to-face interactions in the locale, I have shown how citizens' media practices demonstrated that the so-called 'migration crisis' in Athens was as an opportunity for solidarity and connection; how citizens valorised the idea of 'cultural heritage' as one of multiculturalism not of ethnic exclusivity, shaping imaginaries of world citizenry and cosmopolitan identity. As I will sum up in the conclusion to this chapter below, media appeared to shape and affirm imaginaries of the Self and the Other, not outside the political and cultural context of the Athenian society, but precisely within a context of a society where narratives about migration and national belonging circulate constantly on mass media and social media and where conflicting ideologies of citizen identities clash both on media and on the street.

Conclusion: the crisis imaginary and the citizen identity of crisis

In this chapter, I have shown that citizen identities that are polarised and hostile to migrants are shaped within highly mediated and equally polarised ideological spaces, where narratives of the victim Self are regularly reproduced against the undeserving and unwelcome Other. Most often, I observed, conceptions of victimhood were more prominent when participants had limited or no embodied encounters with migrants, thus mostly dependent on the media to get to 'know' migrants – constructing a sense of citizen identity through the mediated encounter with the Other. The wide influence of online news consumption (often as disinformation) was situated within the time and space of a 'crisis imaginary'. On the one hand, the 'crisis imaginary' mobilised a discourse of victimised citizens vis-à-vis noncitizen welfare scroungers. Lack of face-to-face interaction with migrant populations and reliance on anti-migrant disinformation (narratives that victimise the Self and ostracise the Other) and the myths (e.g., bottomless

funding for migrants) that are constantly circulated on social and mass media add to the emergence of '*nationalist populist* identity discourse' (see Chapter 7). How do identities of crisis against the Other become parochial and polarised? With populist narratives normalised in the media, for many citizens disinformation about migration turned into 'facts' that were consequently mobilised to justify introvert identities that were at once superior and under threat.

On the other hand, the 'crisis imaginary' was not uniformly conceived; rather, different processes of reflexivity justified a range of positions towards migrants. For example, as we saw, voices of resistance to disinformation and xenophobia emerge as progressive ideological positionalities that contest the culture of hostility. Nefeli's media practice that was related to the creation of a Messenger group illustrated not only the construction of progressive identities, but also the ways in which citizens responded to and resisted hegemonic systems of power and knowledge that vilify the neighbourhood. Similarly, Aelia and Kimon's media practices of creating alternative content on Facebook about the multicultural character of the neighbourhood constituted a retreat from an imposed form of mediated othering that scapegoats Kypseli and renders migrants responsible for Kypseli's urban decay. Deploying the concept of 'alternative imaginary' (Zehfuss 2020), I have shown that the 'crisis imaginary' does not fully displace openness and leads to the emergence of the '*cosmopolitan* identity discourse'.

What this chapter has also demonstrated is that ideological positions are fundamental to conceptions of the Self and the Other, especially when participants have no or limited direct contact with migrants. When the encounter is primarily mediated, migrants have little say about who they are and why they are in the city; instead, they are subjected to ideological frames, which

in most cases marginalise them (through persistent xenophobic narratives circulated in the media) and occasionally recognise them (through alternative media and progressive politics[27]).

All in all, the discursive, material and affective dimensions of crisis through which the citizens of Kypseli experienced migration appeared to popularise the '*Europeanist/White* and *nationalist populist* identity discourses', even if not fully displacing progressive and cosmopolitan positionalities (as I shall explicitly discuss in Chapter 7). This was mostly the case when citizens have little engagement with migrants. As I will show in the next two chapters, embodied encounters can create different conditions of possibility next to and sometimes against media narratives.

[27] Although this doctoral thesis is deeply interested in power relations and the enacted classifications of the Self and the Other within structures and cultures of inequality that drive ideologies and practices of citizenship, it does not focus on high-level politics at an institutional level. Rather, it focuses on the experiential, narrated and affective politics of everyday life, as these relate to citizens' own understanding of nationality and rights associated with citizenship status and its racialised composition. By focusing on conceptions of citizenship identities in the context of everyday life, the thesis aims to offer a cultural reading of politics of identity in the context of crisis, which is often absent from mainstream political science primarily focusing on the institutional articulations of citizenship.

My work makes use and relies on political concepts such as that of citizenship, neoliberalism and others, but does understand them within theorisations of identity, especially in cultural studies, media studies and sociology. In practice this means exploring politics of citizenship through citizens' own discourse and practices. I specifically investigate the ways everyday life generates imaginings of citizen identities, articulated discourses and enacted practices that inform and shape individual and collective meanings of citizen identity as ordinary.

My project is deeply inspired by cultural studies scholars (Hall, 1990; Williams 1983) who explore 'the way existing structures of power are represented, negotiated and challenged through "mass" culture' in the micro-level context of everyday life (Finlayson and Martin 1997, 185). Everyday culture, and increasingly through media and communications, becomes the terrain of social and political contestation that takes place at the level of the individual experience. This approach valorises the micro-level complexities that take place in the everyday life but which I always try to analyse in dialogue with macro-scale structural, political and cultural processes.

CHAPTER 5

Culturalist reflexivity: constructing identities of fear

Kypselians, like most citizens in European metropolises, turn to Facebook and follow news pages that cover stories on distant Others, or not so distant ones – stories about their journeys, the culture, their history and impact on destination or transit cities. When switching on the TV – still a powerful medium in Greece – there is a discussion about the veil and how this does not constitute a religious issue/barrier, but is a symbol that infringes the rights and freedoms of women in the Middle East. At the same time in the urban neighbourhood where everyone lives 'on top of each other', veiled women are briefly encountered outside the school gate waiting for their kids, on the bus, in the main square or at the till after the grocery shopping. Citizens constantly have to find ways to negotiate how experience in the neighbourhood corroborates or contests the narratives they constantly engage with on their screens.

What differentiates this and the following empirical chapters from Chapter 4 is their focus on embodied encounters between citizens and noncitizens in the urban neighbourhood. Specifically, in this chapter, I examine how *ephemeral* embodied encounters might influence citizen identities. In the next chapter, I ask the same question in relation to *sustained* encounters. The present chapter explores how citizens' identities are shaped, where embodied – yet ephemeral – encounters on the street and mediated encounters on screens with migrants become ordinary. Relatedly, I ask, how does this proximity between citizens and noncitizens reaffirm or challenge boundaries between 'us' and 'them'? In this context, I address AQ2: How does spatial co-presence with migrants and the city's throwntogetherness (Massey 2005) confirm or challenge

media representations of the migrant Other? The chapter shows that ephemeral embodied encounters are not enough to shape open and welcoming identities. Instead, what they offer is a space to negotiate pre-existing ideological positions and affective experiences in the city – what I refer to as 'practical orientalism' – the translation of hegemonic discourses into everyday practices so that they enter into the habitual spaces of ordinary experiences' (Haldrup, Koefoed, and Simonsen 2006). Below, I will show three manifestations of practical Orientalism in Kypseli.

In the first section, I discuss how practical Orientalism becomes manifested through narratives of everyday femonationalism (Farris 2017) and popular feminism (Banet-Weiser 2018). More specifically, I explore how identity positions that oscillate between these narratives not only construct the We/Them divide based on Eurocentric ideologies, but more specifically on the basis of a divide between egalitarian Western gender relations on the one hand and Muslim/Eastern misogyny on the other. show how femonationalism is a pre-existing ideology that is affectively mobilised in the material streets of Kypseli and conceals the structures of misogyny within Greek society (Kissas and Koulaxi forthcoming). I call the discourse that emerges through narratives of femonationalism and popular feminism '*neoliberal nationalist* identity discourse' and I further unpack it in the concluding chapter of the thesis.

The second section explores how migrant agency is denied recognition when ephemeral encounters are only used to justify Orientalist positions of blaming the Other. I show how historically embedded knowledge and values associated with certain ethnic and racial groups are mobilised to explain discontent in the neighbourhood and urban challenges (such as overcrowding, lack of space, noise) that then lead to the emergence of the '*Europeanist/White* identity discourse' (see Chapter 7). This section shows how Orientalist narratives and media practices are mobilised to explain how the Other is responsible for urban problems – not only reaffirming in this process the boundaries between 'us' and 'them', but also juxtaposing the

citizen Self as European and superior. As I demonstrate, the narrative articulation of Orientalism primarily relies on discourses circulated on social media platforms, but is justified with reference to everyday practices in the locale. Social media play a key role in converging ideological frames of migration circulated in the media with locals' own justification of Orientalist responses to urban problems.

In the last section of this chapter, I show that although face-to-face encounters in Kypseli mediate femonationalism and cultural erasure, they are also accompanied by conceptions of 'migrant exceptionalism' – a fragile discourse that conditionally and exceptionally recognises migrants, but only within frames of citizens' superiority. Citizens show momentary openness to migrants they encounter ephemerally in the locale, but they disconnect individual experience from wider attitudes towards racialised Others. I explore how their Orientalising conceptions of migrants are disrupted by the exceptional individual who might be a popular athlete, an endearing neighbour, an outstanding professional or customer in the multicultural neighbourhood. This section adds to the literature of practical Orientalism, that is not solely associated with race, but intersects with neoliberalism and nationalism, as observed in the Athenian context.

As explained in Chapter 3, the study uses offline and online participant observation as well as in-depth interviews with Greek citizens of the multicultural neighbourhood of Kypseli to illustrate how various modes of encounters shape citizens' conceptions of the Self in relation to the Other. Avoiding a media-centric approach to identity, I adopt a media practice approach to examine how different kinds of encounters – on the street and the screen, ephemeral and sustained – shape Greek citizens' identities. In this chapter more particularly, I examine how identity discourses of neoliberal nationalism and Eurowhiteness emerge when embodied encounters are ephemeral and when mediated encounters predominate.

Between popular feminism and femonationalism

There were always one or two veiled women waiting for their kids outside the school gate of public schools in Kypseli. One day, I joined a participant, a middle-class mother and housewife, Ioli, to collect her two daughters from school. On the way she told me, 'Now you'll see the Syrian mother I was telling you about, the one with the veil'. The school was very close, and before I realised it we had already arrived. The school was a colourful and relatively small building in a narrow street of Kypseli. Three mothers were waiting, including the Syrian mother pushing a stroller with a baby. Ioli did not greet all women in the group, only one of them. She nudged me and discreetly indicated that the woman with the veil and the stroller was the Syrian mother whose child was classmates with one of her daughters. The mother was staring at the school gate, waiting for her child. Her eyes had a hunted look. It was as if she tried to avoid making eye contact with other parents. She did not greet anyone and no one greeted her while we were waiting. 'Poor her', Ioli whispered. On our way back, I asked why she gave the label 'poor' to the Syrian mother. In accordance with the media narratives that repeatedly rely on the 'brown women need saving' story (Abu-Lugod 2013), Ioli explained to me that 'she is not free because she wears the veil and she holds the responsibility to take care of all four children on her own'.

From my conversations and observations, practical Orientalism was evidently gendered and manifested in narratives of banal femonationalism: a term that refers to the ways in which political parties and elites use gender equality and women's rights as a pretext to promote a nationalist agenda and argue for policies against migrants and Islam in particular (Farris 2017). In my fieldwork, *gender* was weaponised as a tool to ascribe to Eurocentrism a sense of superiority vis-à-vis Muslim women who were recognised as inferior Others when encountered by participants in the neighbourhood.

Sotiris, a middle-class male participant, uploaded a one-minute video to Facebook while waiting at a traffic light. He highlighted that while waiting for 59 seconds, ten individuals crossed the street – five apparently migrants, two veiled women and three not clearly identified as Greek nationals. 'Take your time and count them and if you think this is a coincidence, you can stay counting at the traffic light all day long' he added on the post's description. 'We are full of veils' another one wrote under the post. Sotiris liked that comment and replied, 'The veil…the ultimate symbol of submission. Women are being treated as bedside tables' – by this he meant that Muslim women were treated unfairly by society and their partners/husbands. The post received a lot of attention and likes, but no further comments. The media practice of uploading and liking the video intensified the process of message circulation. In a similar vein, in an exchange where the veil again constitutes a 'medieval imposition' (Abu-Lugod 2013), Danae, who was a 31-year-old flight attendant and well-educated (to Master's level), explained how 'the figure of the Muslim' (Goldberg 2008) and the veil in particular, would 'move the Greek society backwards'. For Daphne, the young nail technician mentioned in Chapter 4, the veil was a symbol of 'subordination', or 'slavery'. Ioli, a housewife and a mother, characterised a veiled woman on the street as 'poor', as I demonstrated in the example above. There were more statements from participants in which the embodied encounter in the locale became a moment within the victimisation frame, according to which veiled, Muslim women were portrayed as submissive to patriarchy and in need of liberation (Andreassen and Lettinga 2012; Abu-Lughod 2013):

> **Antonis**: Muslim men are misogynists. They don't respect their women. I've seen how they behave to them on the streets. The woman carries 48 grocery bags all alone and the man walks freely with his cigarette. You can't do this. They are more distant from their families. Of course, I don't know what happens in the private space, but it's always the women that shoulder the responsibility to take care of the kids. And it's not because it's the men that work.'

> **Nikitas**: The status of the Muslim woman is subordinate to the man's. If you observe around you, you can see a lot of men from the Middle East. Do you see any women? Any woman walking around with her friends or having coffee? They just go out to do the grocery shopping.
>
> **Anastasia:** Isn't it a pity to see a young woman, like you, in a veil? It's really sad to see. Women are not fairly treated in the Middle East.

Evidently, participants appear to moralise the difference of Muslim women in particular – what leads to the emergence of the '*neoliberal nationalist* identity discourse'. This moralising work offers a route to explaining in my reading of respondents' accounts both the work they are doing to construct *themselves* as morally good in relation to morally inferior others and the work they are doing to assert gendered norms in Greek society that make up the moral order against which the newcomers are judged deficient. Spatial norms about what is legitimate and normal in the Greek public and private space are pivotal not only in permitting individuals to rationalise their negative attitudes towards the Muslim woman in the multicultural neighbourhood, but also to construct an image of the moral Self vis-à-vis the inferior Other. Reducing the Muslim migrant woman to a subdued and controlled Other is a process of dehumanisation which, even though it does not fully deny her humanity, does moral work in which veiled women lack agency and skills in comparison to the national, Western subject's humanity (Manne 2017). Ephemeral encounters such as those I witnessed at the school gate were regular occurrences in the streets of Kypseli. But as participants' words confirmed, such ephemeral encounters often work as reaffirmation of pre-existing ideologies and as exceptional opportunities to affirm the narratives of the incompatible Self/Other that circulate in public and media discourse.

Arguments that linked gender equality with Orientalism dominated my online and offline observations of citizens' media practices and constituted justifications for exclusion:

> **Faidra:** The veil scares me. It pisses me off because, I think that these women wear it because someone else dictated so. And, they don't have the power to stand up against this. They want to be different. So, they are slaves. Or maybe, it's a religious symbol, exactly what the cross is for me, I don't know, but they are not free like us, European women. European women are independent. Greek women are independent.

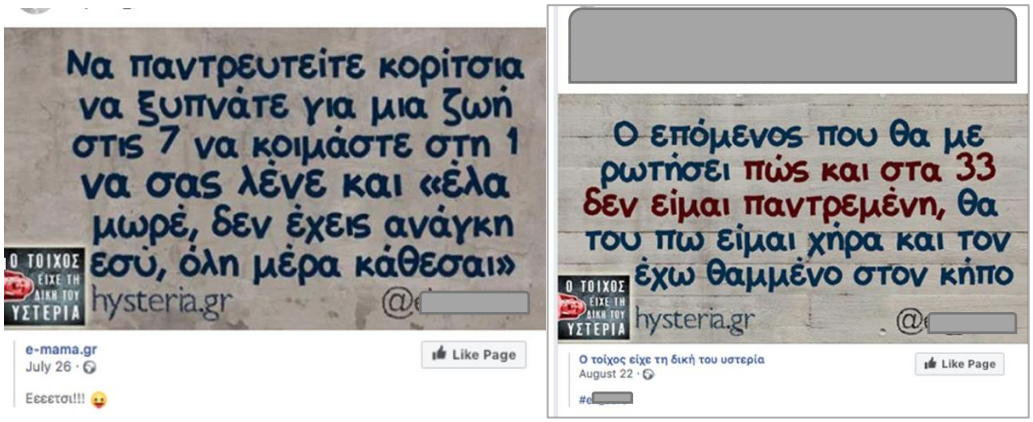
According to Faidra, 'they' (meaning Muslim women) were 'slaves', in comparison to whom she and the rest of Greek and European women are the assumed norm of 'free' and 'independent' agents. The Greek, European woman, according to Farris, becomes 'the standard against which to measure women from elsewhere' (2012, 186), a standard that moralises and justifies the anti-Muslim stance. One of the most evident contradictions of the '*neoliberal nationalist* identity discourse' that I observed was the way individuals negotiated certain cultural traits and perceptions or cultural norms. Firstly, the example above illustrates an important moment of realisation or reflexivity, according to which individuals cannot completely dehumanise familiar Others, in this case the Muslim woman. Faidra's quote above is clearly about nationalism, discrimination, othering, bordering, but the interpretation could also take a more positive orientation related to women's rights and safety. By assuming that veiled women need saving (Abu-Lugod 2013) and 'do not have the power to stand up against' patriarchy and hegemonic voices, even if this assumption relies on unsupported and historically mediated claims, Faidra's view is justified through a Eurocentric, liberal narrative of gender equality. The argument refers to a Eurocentric liberal set of values related to gender equality that partly, if not completely, justify the way individuals perceived veiled women (Gilloz, Hairy, and Flemming 2017) – although this perception still

reaffirms the narrative of the Other's difference and helps to maintain symbolic borders in everyday life. The narrative is reaffirmed at a level of, 'it is not about me, it's about those who are primitive and treat women unfairly and force them to wear the veil or hijab', to directly quote Faidra. The rationale behind this exclusionary narrative relies on a belief in the superiority of imagined 'Greek' and 'European' values. Participants did not always refer to these values overtly, as they assumed that knowledge of what they are is universal. But the Greek and European values that many participants took for granted are allegedly different and superior to those of Islam, which is usually referred to as a misogynistic religion and culture. The identity discourse (of neoliberal nationalism), appearing in many participants' words as ordinarily European and Greek, however, not only reproduces a banal nationalism but also constructs a normativity of the Eurocentric Self, according to which the Greek/European woman is presumed as a fully recognised, competent and confident individual with a voice and symbolic capital that separate her from the 'un-modern' Muslim woman (Abraham 2007). Amongst this axis of different interpretations, there is a parallel one: that of detaching and distancing their Western experience from that of the Muslim woman – despite the fact that, in Greece, 'a woman murdered every month' (Michaelson and Sidiropoulou 2021).[28] Relatedly, Greek women might distance themselves from the Other in general: a discourse that implies reflexive interpretations of the Other's experience, sealing the Self from that same process of reflexivity.

Danae, the 31-year-old flight attendant in my sample, remediated and uploaded the memes in Figures 5.1 and 5.2 from the popular page 'The wall had its own hysteria' [*ο τοίχος είχε τη δική του υστερία*] on her Facebook timeline. The first one says: 'The next person that will ask me how come I turned 33 and I am not married, I will say I am a widow and my ex-husband is buried in the garden.' Danae reposted the meme, tagged two of her friends and wrote with irony, 'What about

[28] Read more on femicides in the contemporary Greek context https://www.theguardian.com/

you, are you married?' 'No, but I have finished my Master's, I have completed a second degree and will now pursue a PhD. In the meantime, I was promoted at work.' 'Oh, you are not married…'. The media practice of writing a caption on the post demonstrates her dissatisfaction with the popular discourse that a woman only feels 'complete' and valued for her existence when she is married, but is not appreciated if she succeeds academically and/or professionally. The second meme expresses a similar view – a view that does not distance and detach the so-called superior Western experience from that of the alleged inferior Muslim woman. The post says: 'Get married girls, wake up at seven and go to bed at one in the morning and have others tell you "Come on, you can do this, you're sitting [i.e., at home] all day long"'. While the Muslim woman appears to participants as the 'slave' and the 'submissive' member of the family, the media practice of posting such memes and commenting alongside notes from the field confirm deep gendered inequalities and the prominence of patriarchy in Greece (Kissas and Koulaxi forthcoming). Interestingly, the reflexivity demonstrated by some of the women in the study when contesting patriarchy is rarely used to reflect on their views of and engagement with their Muslim neighbours' experience.



Figures 5.1 and 5.2

The media practice of interacting on social media platforms has its own story to tell with regards to the 'more general set of attitudes and bahaviours towards women' and gender equality (Ging and Siapera 2019, 2); it was important in participants' articulation of the self. My empirical

findings attest that most of participants rarely made statements such as 'I don't like them because they are Muslims' or 'the veil is horrible'. Within these internal contradictions, 'gender inequality' undoubtedly constitutes a social problem for the majority of participants, with claims based on irrationality, emotions or reducing other people's humanity constituting an outlier.

An example of a right-wing politician using the women's rights agenda to push xenophobic and racist politics in the traditional mass media (Siapera 2010) and then remediated on the politician's Twitter account is shown in Figure 5.3:

Figure 5.3 Twitter quote: Explaining to Mr. Syed Mohammad Jamil that the veil issue is not religious, but an issue that is related to the advocacy for women's rights, safety and respect.

'Conflict over the burqa' is the headline of the news story that was reproduced on Twitter. Konstantinos Bogdanos, a New Democracy politician was invited to speak on the veil issue. According to the Greek MP, the veil issue is not a religious one, but an issue that is related to women's rights, safety and respect. As Farris has written, 'The mobilization, or rather instrumentalization, of the notion of women's equality both by nationalist and xenophobic parties and by neoliberal governments constitutes one of the most important characteristics of the current political conjuncture, particularly in Europe' (2012, 185). Consistent with liberal feminism that

does not challenge other forms of social inequality, the veil issue is powerfully mediated through networks of intermediation and transmediation in terms of suppressing women's freedom, rights and gender equality. Aligning with research on gender hate and misogyny online (Ging and Siapera 2019; Banet-Weiser 2018), the veiled woman is seen as victim and is discriminated against, with sexual and gender repression used as narratives to justify hostility to difference.

Although the primary focus of participants' conversations was the gendered aspect of Muslim women's oppression, the addition of racism and/or religion to the axis of this intersectional analysis explains the wider dehumanisation of people of particular ethnic groups rather than of a particular gendered identity. Fear of the 'religion of hatred', as one middle-class female participant characterised Islam, permeates individuals' mediated encounters that epitomise Islamophobia and engender a distrust of the allegedly primitive religions and cultures of the Middle East. The incompatibility between 'the West' and 'the Rest' (Ferguson 2018) infiltrates the material space of Kypseli, reaffirming racial hierarchies, as narratives of hostile or frightening Islam would regularly circulate on the material street, mobilising narratives of a White, Christian Greece and consequently raising impenetrable boundaries that divide citizens from migrants. According to several participants, both newcomers and established migrants in Greece threaten to violate the purity of the nation. The nation is only imagined as pure by the consistent presentation of this fantasy of violation.

The technology of femonationalism in a context of austerity and compounded crises integrates discourses of the inability of certain cultures and religions to be 'Westernised' and 'Europeanised' in the face-to-face interaction – narratives that are associated with the overarching identity discourse of neoliberal nationalism, as I explain in Chapter 7. Danae explained how the figure of the Muslim woman became for her a point of reference for juxtaposing and valorising Greek values, with a particular emphasis on Christianity:

> If we leave some populations aside, such as Albanians, who are Muslims, the rest is all Christian populations…Not that I am particularly religious, but this instinctively creates some specific rules that are in line with Greek standards. For example, when Russians and Ukrainians enter the church they cover their head…[Muslims] are different, they are Muslims, they speak another language, but they don't seem to be able to synchronise with the European standards very easily. Cases of forced marriages, murders in the news that someone killed a little girl because she left the house or cases that someone killed the woman, because she was in a relationship…not to mention female genital mutilation…these practices and customs are not simple. How to say it? They cannot be Europeanised! Yet, it leads to Islamisation because they say 'it is a custom and you have to respect it'.

The practice of encountering a non-White migrant advanced Danae's fears of Islamic influence in Europe, and consequently in Greece, in the future. The ordinary and 'normal', in this case, were imaginary and ignored the patriarchal structures in a country that resists establishing 'femicide' as a specific crime in the name of non-discrimination.[29] The ordinary national subject was produced within an imaginary that materialised through the rejection of patriarchy and mobilisation of fear towards the veiled woman, who, in opposition to the national subject, was imagined as in need of 'development, empowerment, Christianity, women's rights, human rights' (Abu-Lugod 2013, 223). The intersection of racially related arguments and religion (Greek Orthodox Christianity, in particular) constitutes not only an integral part of citizens' identity, but also, since the time of the Civil War, the ideological basis of modern 'homogenous Greece' and 'Greekness', as discussed in Chapter 1.

[29] The Greek penal code only recognises 'intentional homicide' (Art. 299) and 'homicide consensus' (Art. 300), despite the series of femicides that have shaken Greece in 2021.

The current section has demonstrated the emergence of '*neoliberal nationalist* and *Europeanist/White* identity discourses' that integrate in their conjuncture the paradox of the European culture perceived as a superior collective project, while at the same time fundamentally understood as individualistic and dependent upon 'individual experiences' (Kaufmann 2016). Ephemeral encounters in the digital and material streets mediate a popular feminism that is often in dialogue with popular misogyny (Banet-Weiser 2018), which projects individual Greek women as emancipated but remains subject to unquestioned socio-cultural gendered as well as racial hierarchies. The projection of a solid and unnegotiated national, Western Self repeatedly appears to emerge from the interaction of mediated (highly mediated femonationalism), embodied (experience of the veiled woman in the locale) and affective (reaction when encountering the veil) elements of practical Orientalism. When the European subject co-exists in the same space with the Muslim woman on the street, there is an interpretative process that relates to the three dimensions of practical Orientalism: (a) the mediated dimension that relates to the symbols and meanings attributed to the veil and Islam in mass and social media (Siapera 2010); (b) the practical negotiation of the imaginary of the veil within the lived urban space of the neighbourhood; and (c) the affective forces of fear that are mobilised when encountering the veiled woman on the material street to grant legitimacy to established systems of Orientalism, the historical and social construction of Islam in the popular imagination, through education and political narratives. The specific articulation of popular feminism and femonationalism is significant, but, at the same time, it is affectively shaped in the locale of Kypseli (in the practice of encountering the hunted look of the Syrian mother at the school gate or a veiled woman carrying many grocery bags by herself, for instance). Such narratives and practices represent fundamental components of Eurocentric epistemologies that infiltrate the Kypseli locale and its everyday life.

Everyday racism: cultural erasure and the normativity of Eurocentrism

Alongside popular feminism and femonationalism, the current section explores how encounters in the city mediate routine erasure of migrants' agency (Yuval-Davis, Wemyss, and Cassidy 2019) and instead construct set migrant identities to justify everyday racism. I observed particularly how this process takes place in the case of the racialised Other – Black and Brown migrants from the Middle Eastern and Sub-Saharan Africa. I repeatedly observed and heard how individual Greek citizens use their ephemeral encounters with them in the micro-publics of Kypseli to interpret the urban challenges, such as noise pollution, traffic and lack of public or private spaces of calm. Due to the neighbourhood's density, local bars and restaurants were almost always attached to blocks of flats and it was almost inevitable for the neighbourhood never to be free from car traffic or the ordinary urban noises of an overpopulated neighbourhood – varying from music, to laughter and everyday noises that most residents were unable to shut themselves away from. Evidently, the politics of space impacted much more than everyday sociality in the urban space of Kypseli – the constant and unavoidable throwntogetherness was precisely the challenge that impoverished the area (Veikou 2016). Ioli, an aforementioned participant, shared her discomfort with 'Muslim individuals' in the Kypseli Square as a discomfort that was related to a 'noisy' practice of prayer: 'It's not easy to have 300 or 700 people gathered to pray in the main square. No one had an issue with their prayers, but we could not sleep in our own homes. This, though, was an issue because there was no management provision from the municipality's side, which has nothing to do with "migration", whether they are immigrants, White or Black. It's an issue the municipality needs to take care of.' Although Ioli's response demonstrated reflexivity regarding the municipality's responsibility to manage migration in the area, it didn't enable her to further problematise the hypervisibility of non-White migrants in 'White spaces', in the sense that certain spaces are marked White through repetitive practices, rendering some bodies 'bearable' and others as 'unbearable' (Ahmed 2006).

Without any doubt, citizens were overwhelmed by the city's noise pollution and lack of calm, while non-White migrants appeared as scapegoats for the overcrowded urban neighbourhood, lack of urban planning, open spaces and access to proper spaces for worship or entertainment – especially for the (migrant) poor. Vasiliki, the female tailor I met in the area, referred to an African bar close to the Kypseli Square that was *noisy*. 'They make incredible noise without ever looking at a clock!', she said. There was a lot of conversation among local residents about this bar. In relation to the audible experience of prayers, several working- and middle-class Greek residents, who lived around Kypseli Square, complained offline and online about the noise that came from that bar that opened between 11pm and 3am every day, except Mondays. The place looked like a tiny off-licence that only sold beers. There was no space to sit or stand inside, and so customers ended up sitting and drinking outside during the times the store operated.

Complaints were mainly related to the fact that communication between residents and the bar's customers was difficult, or even absent. Residents, like Lydia recalled instances during which they had come out onto their balconies and shouted at the drinkers in the middle of the night:

> An NGO had organised an event for the Africans in the Kypseli Square. And there was a lady, like you, from that NGO asking everyone to go out and start singing. So, all Africans were drunk again. They went to this place [i.e., the African bar] and there was so much noise. So much noise! So, my partner went out to ask them to be quiet. And there was a guy that was drunk and came outside our window and started shouting. He was knocking on our window and was asking my partner to go out.

The above quote demonstrates, amongst other stories about the neighbourhood, how tensions emerge and become enhanced in the overcrowded landscape of Kypseli. Digital connectivity and interaction were constitutive of how relationships between customers at the African bar and

Greek residents were enacted and experienced. Faidon, a young musician, commented on a Facebook post about the African bar: 'Unfortunately, bro, we can't do anything. I have sought legal advice regarding the African bar, that a lot of us know what this means, but have not managed to sort it out for the last three years'. Danae (an aforementioned participant and Faidon's partner) liked the comment and wrote: 'Illegal bars, that pretend to be restaurants, play music all night long until early in the morning. Black people come outside and pee right next to the nursery and school bus'. Some Facebook users mentioned that residents were scared and others complained that there were cancer patients in the neighbourhood, who wanted to sleep, people who worked early in the morning and wanted to sleep, people who had babies and children. The media practice of commenting, liking or re-posting intensified the process of message circulation. Danae and Faidon told me that some residents had created a Messenger group to discuss the bar and decide who would go out every night to talk to them. 'We want to take turns when asking them to be quiet so that it looks like a collective effort, without stigmatising certain residents in the area', Danae and Faidon said. The practice of creating a Messenger group demonstrates that residents appear as 'untrained and unpaid border guards' and police officers (Yuval-Davis, Wemyss, and Cassidy 2019, 17), disciplining the African bar and its customers. Greek Kypselians are symbolically assigned a role in differentiating between those who stand out and those who seem out of place in the area, and evidently reaffirm that 'everyday bordering has come to replace multiculturalism as the hegemonic governance technology for controlling diversity and discourses of diversity' (ibid, 17).

I had the opportunity to speak individually to Faidon and Danae about their experience with the African bar. Faidon said that there were usually five, ten or 15 people. They gathered altogether and had beers. He added: 'They shout and laugh, you go outside say, "Guys, it's 2am, are you serious?" and they shout even more. And they stay there, they do not leave'. He highlighted that half of them did not speak English or 'pretended', to directly quote him, not to speak English.

'Neither do they speak French. I have tried French too. We have even asked if any member of the Messenger group speaks any other language', he added.

Faidon and Danae narrated, in separate conversations, their personal experiences with the African bar opposite their block of flats:

> **Faidon**: If there is someone from the Balkans or Russia [i.e., from Eastern European countries] and you ask them to be quiet because it's 2 o'clock in the morning, she will say 'sorry, sorry' and disappear. It's only if they are super drunk that the issue becomes more complex. Africans don't get this. They simply don't get this. They don't care that we have to work in the morning. None of these people understand the obvious…or one in ten does. Also, I do not know why they do it, but they pee on the cars, on the streets, on our door. They do not go to the bar's toilet. They drink beers and any time they want to go to the toilet…cars. And in front of the doors. That is not normal. They have grown up in a village where the one house is here and the other one might be one kilometre away…if there's even another house. So, she will scream as much as she wants to, for as many hours as she wants to.

> **Danae**: The first thing that creates a problem and starts to worry me the most is that we cannot communicate, because there are not only immigrants from the Balkans and Eastern Europe that speak Greek. These populations [i.e., from the Balkans and Eastern Europe] might have grown up here or were born here or work here and we can communicate. But when you have to deal with people from Sub-Saharan Africa or West Africa who do not speak Greek and speak a French dialect, you understand that we cannot communicate at all.

The couple shared their everyday experience by making references to social awareness and social consciousness of the *non-White* residents that inhabited the *White space* and behaved in a *non-White way*. Their allegations of 'incommensurable racial difference' of urban dwellers in Kypseli, integral to the racist paradigms in European countries, are consistently expressed in terms of cultural essentialism (Grillo 2003) and incompatibility (Silverstein 2005). Such everyday acts of bordering functioned as a technology of racism (Yuval-Davis, Wemyss, and Cassidy 2017; Yuval-Davis 2018) targeting the non-White hypervisible migrant. Their comments refer to the moral basis of 'civilizational superiority' (Choudhury 2014) with an emphasis on rules that racialised migrants at the African bar disrupted and lead to the emergence of the '*Europeanist/White* identity discourse'. Faidon mentioned that those customers did not understand the 'obvious' and the fact that others 'have to work in the morning' – meaning that there were specific hours during the day and night that the neighbourhood should be kept quiet. This sense of superiority is expressed through the stability that came with having a job and having to wake up in the morning, disregarding structures of racism that exclude migrant co-habitants from the (regular) labour market and employment opportunities. Such narratives and practices, that add to the '*Europeanist/White* identity discourse', are clearly about culturalist nationalism that is bound to cultural practices of routine erasure of the Other. Informants did not aim to reflect on the regulatory framework of the civic functions of the city (nightlife and lifestyle options of the city), that is, one the one hand, unregulated, and on the other hand, deprived of space and awareness of co-existence.

Miscommunication between residents and customers of the bar was attributed to customers' African origins in claims that coupled 'modernity and civilization with liberal Western Law' (Choudhury 2014). Danae's quote manifests that the boundary between Greeks and people from Sub-Saharan Africa or West Africa was drawn through the sound of the bar or their different language along lines of race, which seem to be a mobilised frame to explain everything that goes

wrong with the bar. There was 'us' who spoke Greek and tried to communicate our message, and 'them' who spoke their own language and made communication difficult or even impossible. This is also evident through the clear distinction between the Africans and migrants from the Balkans and Eastern European countries. Having realised that his quote directly targeted Sub-Saharan African populations, Faidon said: 'If you go and tell them off, they will call you racist. This political correctness issue…every time you talk about a problem that has to do with a person who is not from the same country as you, has recently emerged.' His statement constituted, momentarily, an important moment of reflexivity ('they will call you racist') – a moment when Faidon demonstrated awareness of the racist connotations of his comments. However, this moment of reflexivity was immediately dismissed vis-à-vis a moral order that denies the 'woke' culture of Kypseli. Despite his reflexive reference to political correctness, the sounds coming from the African bar were linked to behaviours that were not tolerated and accepted in the White space that created the moral order, and transformed into a discourse about the Other who was indifferent to the superior White culture of the city.

Besides the face-to-face communication, Faidon's perception that the 'Orient' was always associated with inferiority, terrorism or threat in general – elements that neither aligned with Europeanism nor with Western superiority – spilled into the symbolic space of Kypseli. Under a *Huffington Post* news story entitled 'The jihadist that left a kid to die from thirst was arrested in Kypseli'—a post that received 33 likes and nine comments — Faidon commented: 'While on the train around Petralona and Omonoia yesterday, I encountered a nice young man who seemed to be 23 to 24 years-old, dark-skinned from Iraq-Afghanistan-Pakistan something like this, his height was about 1.60m, was holding a wrapped mattress on his shoulders, was looking the passengers and said in fluent English "My god will cast his wrath upon you, and you won't even know it's coming" and things like that. We were on the train together for two stops and was alert in case something happened. The strange thing was that I saw no one taking fright at this, at least

visibly. There was not even an expression of question' (see Figure 5.4). It is evident from Faidon's media practice of commenting on a news story that for him the dark-skinned young man on the train constituted 'an Islamophobic signifier, symbolic of the "barbaric Muslim Other" that has been intensely mediated on social and traditional media since the terrorist attacks of 9/11' (Mirza and Metoo 2018, 228).

Figure 5.4

Customers' presence in the African bar and the Middle Eastern man on the train 'activated occidental imagination' (Haldrup, Koefoed, and Simonsen 2006, 181) of civilisation, superiority and democracy as ideas that belong to the Western Greek subject and not to 'them'; citizens' ephemeral encounters with populations from Africa and the Middle East thus stimulated a normative Eurocentrism. A common discourse that dominates my participants' contributions, when referring to the everyday practice of using the public transport alongside non-Greek passengers, was that such migrants could not conform to the 'rules of the West':

> **Anargyros**: I've seen that they don't validate their tickets. Most of the time, they don't have a ticket. The simplest thing. They don't respect the rules of public transport, the rules of the West. They stand right next to the door, so that when they notice the bus conductor, they get off immediately.

> **Daphne**: They get into the trolley bus 300-300 and rush to find a seat. Last week, I was on the bus. An old gentleman was about to sit down, but you know he was old and couldn't move fast. Then, a Syrian got into the bus and immediately pushed the man, she literally pushed him to secure a place. She didn't even offer her seat. He was an old man and she pushed him. Their kids are doing the same. They are rushing to get as many seats as possible and when their parents come, they grab them and sit down. They don't respect anything. They don't respect how we behave in Greece, in Europe. This is how they behave in public transport. They don't have manners.

Anargyros, a middle-aged male notary, and Daphne, a working-class female nail specialist, both commented on instances, that in their eyes, manifested that noncitizen migrants did not respect the rules of 'Greece', 'Europe' or 'the West' – White spaces that were repeatedly associated with notions of respectability (Huq 2013). Such scenes were ordinary in the overcrowded public transport system in Athens, yet, it was the racialised migrants who were targeted and blamed for behaviours widespread in the city. Whiteness was 'a floating signifier' (Hall 1996)[30] and abstract category against which the 'noisy' and 'disrespectful' Black migrants appeared as the ones who disrupt the order of Kypseli. In the comments quoted above, the narrative assumes the form of 'dogmas of cultural difference' (Vertovec 2011, 244) – a discourse of identity that is tied to the normativity of Eurocentrism, as I shall further unpack in Chapter 7. To this end, a common phrase that participants used to describe/racialise the neighbourhood, was 'we became Uganda' (with all countries in the African continent representing that of 'Uganda'). Taking into account that the modern Greek state (and consequently the boundaries of national identity) have largely been shaped within conditions of coloniality, with Germany, France and Britain determining the rules

[30] In *Race: the Floating Signifier*, Hall (1996) defines race as a socio-historical or cultural category, not as a biological one, and I employ a similar definition of whiteness in this doctoral thesis.

of the newly created country in in the 19th century, anti-Black and anti-Muslim (following the 9/11 events) narratives can be traced back to interpretations of bounded identities of Greekness and Europeanness. Narratives of the Greek Self often remind us of the 'racial scientific theories of the eighteenth and nineteenth century and the epistemic legacy they inherit to the world' (West 2002; Meisenhelder 2003 cited in Kompatsiaris 2017, 361). Consequently, comments about the incivility of migrant populations in public spaces reflected ideas deeply rooted in modern Greek racialism and were used to interpret ephemeral encounters (Meghji and Saini 2018).

Relatedly, I first met Pavlos, a lawyer educated to PhD level, when I posted information about my project on a Facebook group of the neighbourhood that consists of nearly 15,000 members. With a profile picture featuring a turtle, he reached out to me with the following message: 'Very interesting topic. I hope your results will be comprehended and heard to the organisation you are submitting them'. In the beginning, I was a bit concerned, as I could not identify this person, but my curiosity to know what he meant prevailed. Our meeting was at the Municipal Market of Kypseli, an important meeting point not only for me and my participants, but also for the locals generally. Pavlos referred to the everyday practice of waiting at the tax office with 'populations from Africa and Asia that were out of control' – to directly quote his words:

> I have encountered them at the tax office. They can't even line up. They can't be served at all. They are always in a rush and the only thing they care about is how to queue-jump. Even when there are 70 people and we are cramped for room. Because one of them could be from Nigeria, another one from Somalia, another one from Afghanistan, from Syria, from Ethiopia. These populations are completely out of control!

Pavlos brought his own evidence from his ephemeral encounters with migrants at the tax office to offer an interpretation on why people from Africa and Asia were 'uncivilised' and 'unable' to

conform with the Greek moral and public order. The practice of commenting about queue-jumping explicitly refers to the moral basis of culturally specific rules and interaction with emphasis on the condition where this order was disrupted and European or Western rules were broken. By linking the space of everyday life to ideology, this project borrows Erving Goffman's interpretation of queues, and phenomena such as noise from the African bar and allegedly inappropriate behaviour on the trolley bus, as types of 'interaction order': 'that which uniquely transpires in social situations…environments in which two or more individuals are physically in one another's response presence' (Goffman 1983, 2). Queuing does not necessarily connote strict obedience, but rather broader rules of 'patterned adaptations' which have to do with 'conformances, by-passings, secret deviations, excusable infractions, flagrant violations, and the like' (Goffman 1972, xii). The tax office might have seemed chaotic or perplexing, providing evidence of the breakdown of order. This leads me to the interpretation of the interaction order of human queues as a moral order: first come, first served 'produces a temporal ordering that totally blocks the influence of such differential social statuses and relationships as the candidates bring with them to the service situation' (Goffman 1983, 14).

In addition to his face-to-face interaction at the tax office, Pavlos referred to a Facebook video (see Figure 5.6) on the profile of Canadian alt-right activist Lauren Southern who was working undercover in the refugee camp in Lesbos – a video which Pavlos later shared with me on Messenger. The article that followed the video was entitled 'Lesbos: Big NGO teaches foreigners how to pretend that they are Christians and from Syria' (see Figure 5.5). 'That video portrayed how NGOs taught migrants in Lesbos how to trick EU border guards', Pavlos said. He explained to me that, 'NGOs instruct them to come here and pretend they are vulnerable, that they are in need'. Driven by the practice of accessing the video online, he later added: 'Smugglers that take them [migrants] here tell them, "you will go there and you will do this and that and that" and this is how they learn it, they parrot it. And they come here, in Europe, with the belief that they have only

rights without any obligations. But here, we have our own rules. We have the rules of Greece, European rules. You can't just parrot things and then be maladjusted'. As Kevin Smets and Çiğdem Bozdağ have argued, 'the representations of immigrants and refugees in social media debates do not necessarily diverge from these dominant stereotypical patterns in mainstream mass media' (2018, 295). Certain social groups, such as (racially) White middle-class individuals, take over the racialised 'interaction order' (Goffman 1983) to defend White supremacy and Western law that is assumed (though rarely defined in its specificities) as being superior (Choudhury 2014). For Pavlos and others, identification with Athens, Europe and the West amalgamated with a sense of inclusion into a superior White race that acquires social awareness, respectability and morality (Huq 2013; Papatzani 2020) – discourses that lead to the emergence of the identity discourses of Eurowhiteness and neoliberal nationalism. Thus, ideology turns these assumptions and moralities into a given political order. These anti-modern invocations are deeply grounded in histories and present trajectories of Greek national identity and nation-building through an overemphasis on Europeanism and the erasure of internal diversity and links to the Global South and the Middle East.

Figure 5.5

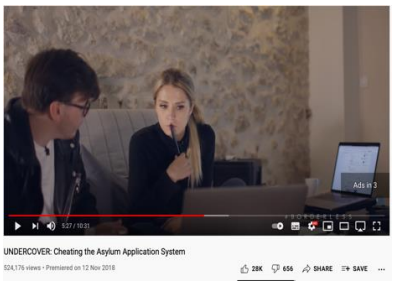


Figure 5.6

To conclude, my empirical findings suggest that ephemeral encounters in the material and digital streets of Kypseli mediated cultural erasure and everyday bordering practices that reaffirm non-

White inferiority while mobilising discourses of identity that are inherently associated with Eurocentric normativity and Whiteness (Ahmed 2006; Yuval-Davis, Wemyss, and Cassidy 2019) – according to which historically embedded knowledge and media discourses associated with Orientalism were mobilised to explain discontent in the neighbourhood and to deal with urban challenges (overcrowding, lack of space, noise pollution) in the context of everyday life. In the Greek popular imagination, the Orient was associated with impoverishment and inferiority (for example, in the way Faidon constructed the image of Africa and how people lived there) – elements that neither aligned with the colonial and European project nor with Western law that was assumed to be superior. The discursive articulation of Orientalism dominated, but was severely intensified through the affective experience with noncitizens outside the African bar, at the tax office or on the trolley bus. At the juncture of mediated and embodied encounters, practical Orientalism infiltrated citizens' accounts and media practices, which strongly relied on media discourse circulated on social media platforms but was reinforced by affective forces and expressed as everyday racism. Despite the fact that mediated communication and digital media tools did not directly reinforce hegemonic discourses, they were constitutive in the bordering process. The section showed the importance of understanding how everyday racism in the city informed citizen understanding of what it meant to belong in a 'Greek', 'European', 'Western' neighbourhood, as this construct emerged in the words of the non-White co-habitants.

Entrepreneurial and exceptionally good Other

Although embodied encounters in the digital and material streets of Kypseli mediated femonationalism and cultural erasure, they were also subject to the 'exceptional individual' narrative that was expressed within a neoliberal and national framework. The current section captures the seemingly positive consequences of ephemeral encounters between citizens and noncitizens. As explored in the field, such encounters occasionally and momentarily led to newly

formed positionalities, but were rarely able to alter citizens' stereotypes and fears of migrant populations in the long-term. The section that follows demonstrates how a National Basketball Association (NBA) athlete, Giannis Antetokounmpo, alongside a small number of migrants in the neighbourhood are viewed as *exceptional* (Heinkelmann-Wild, Beck, and Spencer 2019; Yuval-Davis, Wemyss, and Cassidy 2019), that is, entrepreneurial, resilient and capable of success. A number of the participants identified these *exceptional* cases in their narratives to justify their position towards migrants (either to explain why they are not racist or why only a few migrants deserve welcome). I call the discourse that emerges through their narratives '*neoliberal national* identity discourse' and discuss it in more detail in my concluding chapter. How does the mass of the Other become disrupted and what is the role of the media in constructing only exceptionally and on the basis of overachievement the recognition of the racialised migrant? What makes the Other accepted and tolerated even momentarily? There are questions I aim to answer in the analysis that follows.

The Greek miracle of the National Basketball Association

Despite participants' negative embodied, yet ephemeral, encounters with individuals from Sub-Saharan Africa discussed in the previous section, they made repeated comparisons in their narratives with the hyper-mediated super-human NBA player who could be allowed to be part of the nation – on the basis of overachievement and exceptionalism in a neoliberal framework. Even though he is Black, unlike the neighbour Blacks who were rejected because of their alleged bad behaviour in the area, Antetokounmpo gained my participants' respect. Juxtaposing the African co-habitants that did not deserve a place in the community of citizens with the exceptional ones who met their requirements, participants across classes and genders always directed the discussion to Giannis Antetokounmpo, a Greek-Black man, who was born in

Sepolia (a poor neighbourhood in the north of Athens) to Nigerian parents. Antetokounmpo is now considered one of the most popular contemporary basketball players of the NBA.

Filippos, a male participant and security guard who was not very welcoming towards migrant populations, referred to the act of watching NBA basketball matches because of Giannis. Anargyros, the middle-aged male notary mentioned in a previous section said, 'I go to bed and set my alarm clock for 3am to watch Milwaukee Bucks [the basketball team Giannis plays for]. It's not always easy to wake up in the morning, but it's…Giannis. We support the Greek freak'. Valeria, a primary school teacher, characterised Giannis as 'the Greek miracle', the person that made the whole of Greece proud with his achievements'.

During the time of the fieldwork, in the summer of 2019, an intensely mediated moment for participants was when the Greek-Black NBA player won the NBA Most Valuable Player Award (also known as MVP). As I was approaching the last month of my fieldwork, I had already befriended my participants on Facebook. The night the award was announced, posts and comments on articles, images or on other posts began to flood into my Facebook homepage. These practices were 'performed through media' (activity on social media platforms) and affordances of social media were a precondition for this activity (Couldry 2012, 57). The role of social media in constructing only exceptionally and on the basis of overachievement the recognition of the racialised migrant was prominent. All captions, descriptions and comments either included a Greek flag or there was somehow an emphasis on the fact that Giannis was (half) Greek – without any references to his Nigerian origins. Although this was outside the scope of my project, I had a quick look at the Milwaukee Bucks Facebook and Instagram pages and, from a first glance, a significant number of comments were written in Greek. Exceptionalism (on the basis of entrepreneurialism, resilience and success) was regularly reproduced both on mass and social media. Anargyros reposted a photo of Giannis in the Greek

Army with the following description: 'He was there. He was successful, but came back to do his duty. This image is dedicated to the alleged hotshot and patriots of Facebook'. He uploaded a second picture (see Figure 5.7) and wrote in the description: 'Giannis holding the Greek flag as a kid, at a school parade. Here's a Greek from a small flat in Sepolia to the top of the world'. The comment 'Greek citizen, Christian Orthodox and born and bred in Athens' followed by a picture of Giannis with this award trophy was one that sparked my interest – a comment that directly addressed his Greekness and Christian Orthodox religion, that, as aforementioned, constitutes an integral part of being Greek. 'The goat is Greek' and 'You made Greece proud. Go Giannis. A guy from Sepolia has conquered the world' were thoughts participants shared on their Facebook timelines to celebrate the moment. His escape from structural and everyday racism, a disadvantaged family background and neighbourhood was what a lot of participants (and many others) highlighted through his success. My participants referred to him as the 'miracle' when the discussion shifted to Sub-Saharan Africans populations in Kypseli – a characterisation that was circulated in news stories online (see Figure 5.10) and an achievement that was treated as 'transformative act which makes it more likely to become naturalised as part of the "self"' (Heinkelmann-Wild, Beck, and Spencer 2019, 230).

The case of Antetokounmpo conferred a level of international recognition and excellence on Greek basketball the country had never experienced before. In fact, Antetokounmpo seems to symbolise the archetypical neoliberal and thus deserving migrant who 'disavows vulnerability and instead manifests an intensified individualism' (Scharff 2016, 109). Artemis, a 32-year-old woman, reposted a picture of Giannis with his award on Facebook and added a comment that aligns with the neoliberal conception of the entrepreneurial Self (Georgiou 2019b; Turner 2020; Yuval-Davis, Wemyss, and Cassidy 2019): 'Congratulations Giannis. You are an *exemplary* self-made Greek of the last years. You make Greece proud. You deserve the best because you fought for it fairly and squarely'. In alignment with neoliberal discourses, the majority of statements

addressed his 'excellent' and 'exemplary' skills and achievements. Flamboyant comments such as 'You are the *King* of NBA and you are Greek' followed by a Greek flag dominated social media platforms. Despite his Blackness, the NBA player possessed an 'entrepreneurial agility' (Hall 2018) participants felt proud of when comparing him vis-à-vis their Black neighbours. The exceptional state of celebrity generated and circulated feelings of pride, satisfaction, honour and respect as the strength and the body of Black migrants became a symbol of success for the country (see Figure 5.10). However, the celebration of the 'good' and 'exceptional' migrant, is 'counterproductive' according to Heinkelmann-Wild, Beck, and Spenser (2019), because it not only legitimises the idea that the majority of non-White migrants are undeserving and unworthy of belonging to the community of citizens, but also constructs the citizen Self as superior and a Westerner. The basketball player was out of the ordinary, but remained within that frame of the familiar exception, of the familiar representation. Antetokounmpo was the agentless subject with ideal masculinity whose consensual relation with Greek nationalism and neoliberalism made him an acceptable subject – he had strength, but not agency; he is Greek on a conditional, pay-back basis that gives recognition to Greek citizens.

Giannis Antetokounmpo is a celebrity athlete who constituted an exceptional role model for the majority of participants following his successful career in NBA, but the exceptionalism was contained within a nationalist framework: when he was just a *normal* kid, he experienced intense racial discrimination in his childhood and youth with insults such as 'You are not Greek. You are Nigerian because you are Black' (Figure 5.8). Stimulated by people and politician's flamboyant posts on Giannis' success (Figure 5.9), Kimon, the 30-year-old actor mentioned in Chapter 4, wrote on his Facebook timeline: 'We all remember the "NO" vote New Democracy voted for granting citizenship to migrant children, we all remember your insults. Now, it's time for glorification as it serves the purpose. Complete hypocrisy that breaks bones.' Through the media practice of publicly posting on Facebook, the actor expressed his anger and dissatisfaction with

politicians from the New Democracy party (now the ruling Conservative party) who subsequently expressed their admiration for the athlete's achievement. The post called this act hypocritical, because in 2015 politician Kyriakos Mitsotakis (then leader of the New Democracy party, now Prime Minister) and his party colleagues voted against a bill to grant Greek nationality to children born in in Greece to migrant parents without Greek nationality. Kimon's outburst addressed similar views that gave approbation to 'worthy' migrant noncitizens that meet the 'requirements' by creating a sense of conditional openness and willingness to co-occupy the same space at a local and/or national level. By celebrating the exceptional migrant, Greek citizen identity becomes diluted as non-White co-habitants are devalued and relegated to the binary Other category.

Figure 5.7

Figure 5.8

Figure 5.9 Mitsotakis to Antetokounmpo: Bravo Giannis, Greece is very proud

Figure 5.10 Giannis Antetokounmpo: The Greek miracle of NBA

From this analysis, it is possible to say that there were signs of a *forced* reconsideration of the boundaries between 'Greek' and 'Black' in public discourse that was based on exceptionalism narratives which were always conditional to the nation-state orders and neoliberal regime. From watching NBA games late at night to uploading posts to celebrate the player's success, it was evident that media practices encouraged those participants to re-imagine their own position vis-à-vis talented and exceptional migrants. Are perceptions of a positive role model adequate to shift identities from the phase before the ephemeral encounter to a phase that produces an observable change to identity? Could Antetokounmpo become representative of half of Sub-Saharan Africans (from countries such as Nigeria, Ethiopia, Ghana, Somalia, Congo, Senegal and Guinea) that currently reside in Greece and are unemployed? Realistically, this reconsideration is highly unlikely to challenge the hegemonic narratives around nationalism and Sub-Saharan Africans. As the literature on mediated sport and celebrity culture (van Sterkenburg 2011; van Sterkenburg et.al. 2019) has shown, the mediated sports constitute a race-neutral meritocratic arena (Bradbury 2017) in which the condition of race-blindness takes place – when race and ethnic groups excel because of their exceptional 'natural physicality and athleticism' (van Sterkenburg 2020, 395).

The exceptional member of the migrant community

Alongside exceptionalism, the 'deservingness' theme which 'swings between orientalist figurations' and 'an idealized image of citizenship that needs to be earned' (Holzberg, Kolbe, and Zaborowski 2018, 545) leads to the emergence of the '*neoliberal national* identity discourse'. It was

interesting to observe that a few participants presented ephemeral moments of reflexivity as a result of an ephemeral, short-lived interaction with migrant noncitizens in the locale – on the bus, at the barber's or the off-licence. The 'exceptional' individual discourse that manifested its fragility by its applicability to just one particular occasion and ungeneralisability to members of the broader social group occurred many times during my in-depth interviews with the interlocutors.

As Greek citizens, they manifested conditional openness for the agency-less Black subject, the inferior Black body that was ephemerally encountered in the context of school, during the end-of-year school celebration. Due to my privileged position of being the neighbour of two primary school kids that went to a public school in Kypseli, I was aware of the multicultural character of that institution. When I arrived at the schoolyard, parents and relatives were already seated in chairs or standing in a circle, to leave space for the kids' performances. All seats were taken. Parents, relatives and friends were either seating or standing. I decided to stand next to individuals that visited the school for the first time. 'I came to see my niece', 'I came for my goddaughter', I heard people saying. This was the only way I could guarantee and capture individuals' brief encounters with noncitizen migrant kids in a planned celebration. Following an introduction and welcome from the head of the school, the event started with traditional Greek songs. As Figures 5.11 and 5.12 demonstrate, all the children across the different age groups were dressed in costumes that corresponded to an island, as each song belonged to a specific Greek island.

Figure 5.11

Figure 5.12

Out of the 18 kids, one of them was Black (i.e., visibly different). This sparked an interesting discussion amongst attendees, from a sociological point of view. Everyone was clapping as the kids were entering the dance floor. A kid's aunt who was standing behind me said, 'Look, there is a Black kid! [she was pointing with her finger]. Can you see the Black kid in the traditional costume? Look! She knows the steps! Isn't it great? Wow' She was speaking to the woman who came for her goddaughter. She replied, 'I see. That's weird. But it's very nice of her and her parents who allow her to learn Greek traditional dances. You see…they are willing to learn our customs and traditions. Unlike others…' Opposite and in the first row, the father of the Black kid was sitting and recording with his camera. The women behind me had not spotted him. After a while, I heard them talking about him:

> **Aunt**: There's the dad. The one in green hat and red-blue striped T-shirt. Can you see him in the first row? He's recording with his camera. He's sitting right next to an old man with a shirt.
>
> **Godmother**: Oh, yes! I can see him now. He's alone. Well done him. If they [i.e., migrants] learn the language and our traditions, no one will have any issue. Who cares if the kid is Black or White? No one! She's Greek. More Greek than kids who don't know how to dance these songs.

Starting with Ikariotiko (a song from the island of Ikaria), followed by Balos and Pentozali (dances from the island of Crete) and ending with Rouga (a dance from Corfu), I was given a lot of time to observe the faces around and opposite me. The majority of the attendees were staring at the Black girl, most of them with a smile on their faces. Others were staring with neutral faces and expressions, but it was clear that for them the image was an 'oxymoron': the one and only Black kid dancing Greek traditional songs, dressed in a Greek traditional costume, knowing the steps of every dance. They seemed impressed, confused and proud – all these affective reactions at the same time; impressed because of the girl knew the dance, confused because they probably did not know how to react to it and proud because a 'familiar Other' became a symbol that belonged to the Greek culture and attested to 'practical nationality' (Hage 2000). Despite relatives' desire to fully accept the Black girl as an assimilated subject, they still recognised her as Other/inferior – according to the classic trope of racial discrimination. The example above is related to the hypervisibility of Blackness (Ahmed 2006; Simonsen and Koefoed 2020) as recognised through representations that made it almost impossible for Greek citizens to recognise the experiential space outside those representations. The non-threatening Black girl solely existed as an assimilated and inferior subject that did not allow for negotiation of Greekness and added to the '*neoliberal national* identity discourse'.

In alignment with the above short-lived encounter, the distinction between an individual from an ethnic minority whom citizens met once and members of the minority group in general was evident in participants' narratives. 'It happened to me to meet a nice person' and 'this does not mean that everyone is like her' were phrases heard when citizens narrated their stories of ephemeral and in-person encounters with individual migrants. Antonis, a 45-year-old male locksmith, recounted his positive experience with a guy from Afghanistan who once requested his services:

> I met this guy from Afghanistan…He's been in Greece for almost ten years now. He told me he couldn't go back to his country. He didn't have the required documents. When we were chatting, he told me he had some assets and owned land back in Afghanistan. And I said, 'Come on then, since you didn't have a financial issue, why did you come to Greece?' He told me about the war, and how dangerous it was to stay there. He said that if he had stayed, he would have lost all of his belongings…He told me that it was not that simple. And, he was right. Some of them might be affluent, but not all of them are. The majority is illegal, without papers and stuff…

The locksmith listened to the Afghan's story and sympathised with the fact that he had to leave his country in one night. He emphasised the assets and land the Afghan guy owned back in his country. But he immediately distinguished between people like him, who were affluent and fled war, and others who were 'illegal' and 'without papers and stuff' (Anderson 2008). For Antonis, the young man constituted the exception: firstly, he was not an 'illegal migrant' and 'financially dependent on the state' (before coming to Greece). In the same vein, Panagiotis, the technician, went for the first time to a Pakistani barber, because his usual one was busy:

> **Panagiotis**: The other day, the usual barber I go to was very busy. I didn't want to wait. I was looking at the Pakistani barber and was thinking whether to go or not. 'Shall I go?, I asked myself. I just wanted to see how he does his job…I just wanted to know how he thinks…I was curious. I decided to enter. He explained to me an alternative way of doing my hair. He used another technique. I didn't expect from him to be that professional. I was surprised, because in general, they [i.e., Pakistanis] don't do a good job…There are a lot in the neighbourhood, and I know. How to say it? They don't have the expertise. But…there you go. He was a nice surprise.

'He was a nice surprise', Panagiotis said. He did not expect that a Pakistani barber could be a well-trained one. He acknowledged his alternative technique, but was very 'surprised', because according to him Pakistani people did not usually do a good job.

A characteristic example in which the affective, non-representational representation brought the Other closer to the Greek subject in an unexpected conversation with the migrant noncitizen was that of Danae (the 31-year-old flight attendant). She recalled an instance where a positive encounter with a woman from a different religion to her became a moment of reflexivity that made her feel very close to the veiled woman in the trolley bus, and that this was the one and only time she had ever an affective interaction someone of that religion:

> Once, I happened to be sitting right next to Muslim women in the trolley bus. They fled their country and tried to explain to me in fragmented English that they had migrated to Germany before coming to Greece. They felt honoured that I went and sat right next to them. She was 19-years-old with three kids. I then thought it would be very difficult for us to communicate, but apparently it was the first time ever I found someone very different to me to approach and meet my standards. I told her I have not become a mother myself because I concentrated on my studies. And she considered it great that I went to university. She seemed to be very open, while others think you shouldn't even go out on your own. She seemed to be very open, closer to the female European standards.

The migrant co-presence in the trolley bus imparted, momentarily, a different reality, disrupting the established rhythm of everyday life, and could possibly have challenged hegemonic narratives around the veiled woman. Danae felt different, affectively, when she encountered the migrant body physically. Has this encounter, though, necessarily changed Danae's view of veiled women and about 'the Orient' in general? Does this case attest that the affective encounter destabilises

hegemonic narratives, according to which veiled women belong to a primitive Oriental world? The physical and ordinary interaction between Danae and the migrant noncitizen in the trolley bus brought 'the West' and 'the Rest' together in a way my participant had never imagined before – and so did the encounters between the locksmith and his Afghan customer, as well as Panagiotis with the Pakistani barber. The participants opened up time and space for meeting another and reflecting on what the proximate Other represented, as the latter was inevitably proximate. The order of the assumed homogeneity of the nation was temporarily suspended, but not challenged in the long run. Following the (positive) affective reaction, an interpretative process takes place, according to which Danae's, Antonis' and Panagiotis' experiences could not be positioned within the (Greek/Western) popular imagination.

When their experiences shifted to the level of interpretation and representation, there was a contradiction: the 'veil' and the 'Muslim woman' cannot symbolise 'progressiveness'; an 'Afghan' cannot be 'legal' and 'wealthy'; and a 'Pakistani' cannot be a 'well-trained barber'. In the case of the veiled woman, nationalism and culturalism become disguised through religion and vice versa; religion as a point of reference for Greek citizens created an identity and a community that excluded Others from that respective community. Non-Christian populations usually constituted a threat and represented fear, terror, backwardness and uncivilised individuals that have no place in the community of Greek citizens. Orthodox Christianity, as I have demonstrated in earlier sections of this chapter, is an integral part of 'being Greek citizen'. While Danae the flight attendant felt that she was heard by the 19-year-old mother, the latter constituted the *exception* that was close to the 'European standards'. This resonates with Valentine (2008, 33) who is reluctant to embrace wholeheartedly the idea of 'the encounter' as a panacea to racial and socio-cultural antagonisms. In this case, the embodied encounter with the young Muslim woman might not have changed Danae's attitude, but it was momentarily opposed to mediated representations: the veil for that brief moment became a 'symbol to liberate' (Abu-Lughod 2013).

This section has shown how positive, yet ephemeral, encounters with proximate Others revealed the fragile nature of the exceptionalism narrative that seals the dichotomy between the good and the bad, the deserving and undeserving migrant (i.e., idealisation of fathers, sports masculinity, international recognition and entrepreneurial self) – a neoliberal discourse of the Self that appropriates Black Otherness within a nationalist framework that not only produces difference, but also superiority. Exceptionalism appeared a dominant (neoliberal) discourse of the Self that constituted the vehicle through which neoliberalism populates. Momentary openness was related to the 'exceptional' individual (against the homogeneity of the Other) that did not represent other members of the respective minority group. Instead, that individual overcompensated for the alleged failings that have to do with migrants' biological and racial 'limitations'. The mass of the Other was disrupted by the exceptional individual constituted by Giannis Antetokounmpo, the Black schoolgirl, the veiled woman, the Pakistani barber and the Afghan customer. According to the '*neoliberal national* identity discourse' and the 'exceptional individual' narrative, the Other was accepted and tolerated within the logic of neoliberal ideology that was exceptional. As Valentine (2008, 332) has shown, this is because minority individuals are not 'perceived to represent members of a wider social group'. However, the exceptionalism narrative was a fragile discourse of migrant appropriation as it was conditioned by and operated within an ethnonationalist framework. What happens when the entrepreneurial self *fails*? Relatedly, aren't they heroes when they *fail*? These are questions that flesh out the conditionality of the neoliberal discourse of the Self.

Conclusion: culturalist reflexivity

Chapter 5 has demonstrated that long histories and persistent reproductions of racial hierarchies in the media affirm citizens' entrapment within bounded identity narratives that rarely challenge fixed and pre-defined categories of Us/Them. Deploying the concept of 'practical orientalism',

the chapter has shown that the constitution of Otherness was integral to the constitution of citizen identity among my Kypseli interlocutors. On the one hand, practical Orientalism, with its discursive dimensions, was evident in narratives of femonationalism and cultural erasure that were mobilised to justify the misrecognition of migrants only ephemerally encountered in the neighbourhood. Even in cases where bodies touch other bodies, or sometimes precisely because of the urban inevitability of doing so, hostility and fear became the only responses to experiences beyond their own.

However, the practical negotiation of Orientalism, even with its fragility, took place through identity discourses of both neoliberal nationalism and Europeanist/White (with discourses of exceptionalism and that of the entrepreneurial migrant, who could earn a place in the community of citizens because of her/his distinct and individual achievements, dominating). In this case, ephemeral encounters do matter because of their affective dimensions; in some cases, the brief encounter becomes an opportunity moment for mutual understanding or co-operation. Yet, this did not guarantee mutual understanding in the long run, precisely because that transitory moment of ephemeral encounters was deeply colonised by persistent ideologies and moralities associated with neoliberal and Eurocentric nationalism.

Despite being a deeply racialised environment that repeatedly reproduced or affirmed identities of fear and refusal to recognise the Other, the city as space of encounters is more than an already bounded space of identity. As we will see in the next chapter, sustained encounters can open up spaces of imagination, communication and action that can challenge the rigid division between citizens and migrants. The final empirical chapter explores systematic citizen encounters with the migrant noncitizen and unpacks possibilities to move from identities of fear to identities of conviviality and affective co-existence in the urban space of the multicultural neighbourhood.

CHAPTER 6

Convivial reflexivity – a tale of hospitality or hostility?

All the way down Evvoias Street, two blocks away from my apartment building, the graffitied words 'Multinational Kypseli' were clearly legible, even at night. 'Multicultural', 'multinational' and 'culturally diverse' were terms used by all my interlocutors when the discussion shifted to the neighbourhood and its characteristics – either mentioned as one of the best qualities of the neighbourhood or an element that 'deforms' (their) Kypselian identity, as we saw in the previous chapter. This prominent graffiti written on top of an earlier nationalist message represents a powerful example of the symbolic struggles against fear and hostility towards the Other among and within the neighbourhood's various inhabitants in order to reclaim the city of solidarity.

It is in the multicultural neighbourhood of Kypseli and its busy streets that the constant meeting and mixing of different migrant populations with Greek citizens becomes inevitable. The distinctiveness of the current empirical chapter in relation to the previous ones on fear and bordering lies in its focus on *sustained* and *systematic* encounters. By examining how sustained encounters happen in the urban neighbourhood, the chapter shows how sometimes opportunities emerge for meaningful relationships to develop between citizens and migrant co-

habitants of Kypseli. How do different communities systematically co-occupy the same space and with what consequences? What brings them together and what forces them apart? Regarding togetherness-in-difference, Amin argues that meaningful contact can be achieved in the city's 'micro-publics' (2002, 959). He claims that embodied encounters 'can offer moments of cultural destabilisation' and give 'individuals the chance to break out of fixed relations and fixed notions' (2002, 970). The city might be 'the place, above all, of living with others' (Laurier and Philo 2006, 193), though Valentine (2008) cautions against the romanticisation of proximity, emphasising that spatial proximity does not guarantee cultural proximity and intercultural interactions. Valentine is reluctant to wholeheartedly embrace the concept of the encounter as a by-definition positive moment in tackling racial and socio-cultural antagonisms, a reluctance supported by the findings reported in the previous chapter. Under what circumstances do citizens and migrant co-habitants come together in the diverse neighbourhood where the encounter is practice? Relatedly, what happens in the multicultural neighbourhood where citizens are in geographical proximity with migrants and have to constantly negotiate their spatial and affective boundaries?

In this final chapter reporting my findings, I will show what a possible answer is when we go into the actual neighbourhood and examine questions of togetherness-in-difference inspired by literature on *conviviality* (Gilroy 2004) and *reflexivity* (Giddens 1991; Adams 2003, 2006; Archer 2010; Farrugia 2013). The fact that the neighbourhood has become a 'space of encounter' (Valentine and Harris 2016, 915), especially following substantial, or what were perceived as substantial, migrant arrivals in the city after the so-called 'migration crisis' in 2015, raises questions about the effects of systematic embodied interactions with migrants on the make-up of national subjects' identity. To address the question of togetherness-in-difference, I break the possible answer down into three subthemes that highlight how conviviality is actually expressed in the changing city.

In the first section, I discuss conviviality in the micro-publics of Kypseli through visual and affective solidarities. I demonstrate how such solidarities, which acquire class elements that relate to individuals' income, prospects and perception, are not necessarily pre-existing, but affectively and actively emerge in the digital and material streets of Kypseli. Class consciousness, which paves the way for the emergence of the '*class* identity discourse', is frequently observed among working-class participants who work in certain jobs and among neighbours of the same socio-economic background, whether citizens or noncitizens.

The second section explores convivial encounters that take place through the 'networked commons' (Chouliaraki and Georgiou 2022) – the material and digital public space of the city, which is shared horizontally and where co-creation of the city takes place (Amin and Howell 2016; Federici 2020); a space that challenges intensified racism and nationalism and leads to the emergence of the '*cosmopolitan* identity discourse' with citizens celebrating their global identity, multiculturalism and migrants' cultural heritage. As I demonstrate, learning about others is firstly realised in the Municipal Market of Kypseli – a material and digital space of performative conviviality.

In the last section of this chapter, I will discuss how, despite the fact that everyday encounters in the urban micro-publics mediate class solidarities and support the emergence of networked commons, they are nonetheless traversed by their own history and ideology. The section adds to the critique of existing literature that celebrates conviviality as being the endpoint in the politics of living with difference. I examine how conviviality often remains subordinated to ideological frames of assimilation and Whiteness (Fischer 2021) as well as how the '*Europeanist/White* identity discourse' emerges: citizens distinguish between the 'assimilable' and those that do not meet the prerequisites to belong in the community of citizens. I demonstrate the ambivalence of assimilation by referring to the juncture of *race* and *neoliberalism* and their importance in citizens'

reflexive accounts. I call the discourse that emerges through their narratives '*neoliberal national* identity discourse' and dedicate a section in my Conclusions to further unpack its dimensions.

The discussion that follows focuses on citizens' embodied encounters with noncitizens, the ways they are realised and negotiated, and the limits to adaptability within the politics of difference. The chapter paves the way for identifying the spectrum of identity discourses, almost all present and cross-cutting, that emerge when embodied encounters are sustained and systematic: neoliberal national, Europeanist/White, class, and cosmopolitan discourses of the Self.

Solidarities and convivialities in micro-publics

The current section explores how the solidarities and mutual understanding that intersect with urban life do not usually pre-exist, but affectively emerge through sustained encounters within the neighbourhood. How does mutual respect affectively emerge in the densely populated neighbourhood and even become possible through digital technologies? Starting with an analysis of the visual mediation of the citizen/noncitizen encounter and following with an examination of interpersonal and face-to-face contact, I will demonstrate how this solidarity visually and affectively reinforces imaginings of compatible difference as well as the '*cosmopolitan* and *class* discourses of identity' in the changing city.

Visualities as encounters

As mentioned in Chapter 2, one cannot enquire into embodied encounters without simultaneously enquiring into the mediated ones, because the encounter is no longer solely embodied or solely mediated – it is a convergence of both. In the same way that the notion of the mediated encounter refers to discourses and technologies of urban life, the current section

treats *visualities* as *discursive encounters* – as products of and within urban encounters. According to critical geographical accounts of visual culture and popular communication, the visual landscape of the city– offline and online – represents symbolic and mediated urban encounters (Hughes 2013) that effectively shape collective and individual imaginaries of the Self and the Other. Do visualities mediate face-to-face encounters? In this section I explore how such visualities negotiate and mediate between the neoliberal subject and the subaltern, the familiar and unfamiliar, and the identity of the citizen and noncitizens; I do so by dividing the exploration into two thematic categories: graffiti on street walls and youth film projects.

Solidaritarian graffiti

As the neighbourhood was relatively new to me, the first day of my fieldwork in April 2019 found me wandering the streets of Kypseli and being taken aback by the graffiti messages on the walls – an explosive abundance of them in a powerful cacophony of messaging expressing personal and urban experience, historical and political reflection on Greek politics and inequalities, and strong messages about migration. The street is always used 'to express messages of solidarity with migrants and political slogans denouncing migratory policies' (Mekdjian 2018, 3; Tulke 2015). I cannot omit to briefly outline messages about solidarities with class elements like the following, 'Class struggle' (see Figure 6.4), 'Documents to migrants, kicks to racists' (see Figure 6.5), 'The language of bosses divides workers, there are no refugees, just migrants' (see Figure 6.1) and 'Whipper-snapper to the migrant, chicken-livered at work' (see Figure 6.3) written on the walls. Especially at times of crisis and in the era of austerity, graffiti functions as a 'cultural tool' through which citizens and/or urban dwellers seek 'alternative modes to express dissatisfaction', 'existential despair' and 'conditions of precariousness' (Zaimakis 2016, 68). In particular, slogans such as 'Migrant workers are our brothers' (see Figure 6.6) and 'Our enemies

are the banks and the ministries' (see Figure 6.7), that criticised the domination of banks and the subordination of marginalised groups, expressed the sentiments of many who are deprived labour rights and job security. Specifically, in Athens the city of compounded crises, I observed the emergence of 'a class in-the-making' that consists of three categories: (a) a new precariat, deprived of their old working-class or lower middle-class status; (b) migrants and ethnic minorities; and (c) young educated individuals concerned about their children drifting into the precariat (Standing 2011, 2014). Despite many Greek citizens' comparative privilege in comparison to undocumented or temporary status migrants and refugees, many of the citizens in the neighbourhood themselves were and remain in a precarious condition as a result of the protracted crises and the impoverishment of their families and neighbourhoods and the subsequent rise of symbolic and material violence in everyday urban life.

Figure 6.1

Figure 6.2

Figure 6.3

Thus, it comes as no surprise to see a busy graffiti landscape, where the visuality of this semi-permanent form of wall communication expressed locals' frustration with their own socio-economic precarity, which they identified in solidarity with migrants'. As graffiti communication reminded the neighbourhood constantly, impoverished and exploited citizens and misrecognised and racialised migrants were fighting the same Other: the state, authorities, political elites and the media. Living in an urban environment of compounded crises, where opportunities and work security were limited, brought certain citizens closer to vulnerable and marginalised groups, such as migrants and refugees. The collective identities of protest emerged in Greece at a time where the country's youth was doomed to 'persistent unemployment or low-paid contingent jobs with fond hopes for upward social mobility' (Zaimakis 2016, 69) with few prospects of success.[31] The 'Migrants welcome, tourists fuck off' graffiti visible in the centre of the city represented angry voices of solidarity between the different and growing subalterns of the city, with citizens and noncitizens alike feeling that the city, inequalities and gentrification pushed them out, forcing them to reconceptualise their identities and their Others.

[31] As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, youth unemployment climbed to 58% in 2013 from a base level of 22% in 2008 (*The Hellenic Statistical Authority* 2021).

Figure 6.4

Figure 6.5

The majority of the graffiti included the global circle-A tag, where the letter A represented the Greek word *anarkhia* (anarchy). 'We want our neighbourhoods to be multinational and we want fascists [to be sent] in ICUs (intensive care units)' (see Figure 6.2), said a message on a wall. A few of them were written in English, such as the 'Stop EU deal. Open Borders', in an effort to communicate, spread the word to and create solidarities with English speaking migrants, as well as with locally located non-Greeks through transmediation – mobility from an online to offline context (Chouliaraki 2013). Collective or not, graffiti was used as a visual practice of resistance to fascist practices that made migrants feel unwelcome in public space. It marked the neighbourhood of Kypseli as an open and welcoming space for noncitizens, and visibly called out for solidarity. The practice of drawing graffiti constituted a reminder that marginal groups and individuals were also part of the city, despite the fact that their voices were not directly heard. Such messages can 'create inclusion in a nation where the political system has historically been, and to this day remains, exclusionary' (Sequeira 2016, 38). Support for the neighbourhood's multiculturalism created the ground and offered opportunities for new

identities, socialities and politics (Gill and Pratt 2008; Georgiou 2013). It manifested that the neighbourhood's multicultural identity was an incentive for citizens to remain citizens of the world. Urban dwellers were part of Kypseli's identity and the neighbourhood was part of theirs.

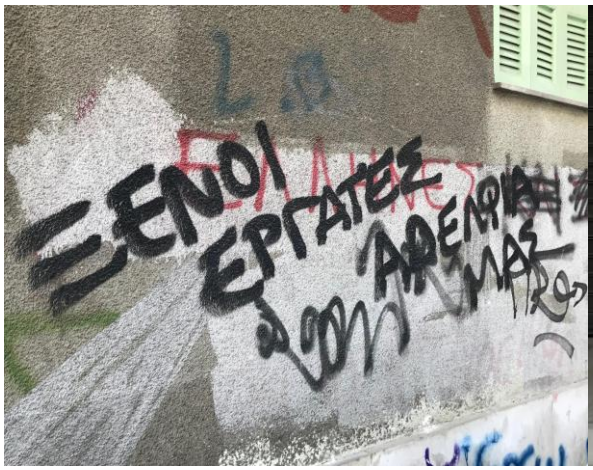


Figure 6.6

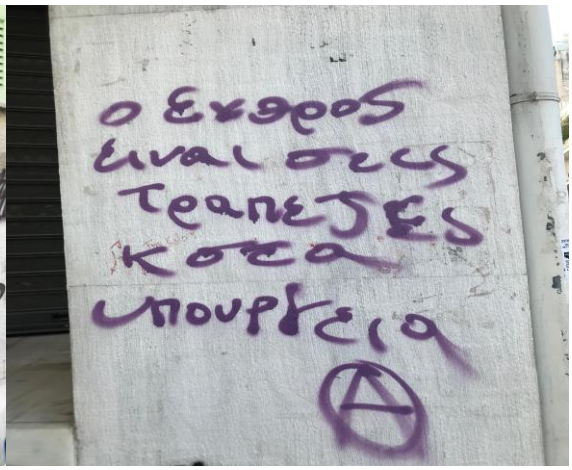


Figure 6.7

Youth film projects: speaking across ethnic divides

Given the Greek education system's ethnocentric character (Chalari and Georgas 2016), public schools have not yet embraced intercultural practices in their curriculum and functioning, instead reproducing systemic inequalities. My conversations with parents who sent their children to public schools in Kypseli revealed a high level of tension and anxiety, where neighbourly relations and friendships competed with concerns about intercultural conflicts and ghettoisation. The close and inevitable sharing of the urban education experiences and resources both reflected powerful opportunities for reflection on identity and also remained subject to the individuals' ideological traits and the deep entanglement of citizen identities in histories of nationalism and xenophobia.

The school constitutes a strong ideological mechanism that legitimises the socially unequal result it produces (Dubet, Duru-Bellat, and Vérétout 2010). The reproduction of inequality, especially when it comes to young people's access to education, emerges 'through the patterns of intergenerational reproduction of occupations' and educational background (Maloutas 2016). Despite the democratisation of education, it is clear that the intergenerational reproduction of class consciousness is still intense. Research has shown that the chances for youth from a middle-class background to secure a high occupational category job 'are three times higher than average, while for those from the broad group of Unskilled Workers, the chances are three times less than the average' (ibid).

Even intercultural schools lack curricular provision for teaching non-native students Greek as a second language. By bringing newcomers who do not speak Greek into a classroom without guidance and/or psychological support, alongside a persistently nationalist curriculum that assumes cultural homogeneity and only allows Greek national celebrations as worthy of recognition, the current model of teaching demands either assimilation or marginalisation. For instance, when a significant number of pupils in an intercultural school in Athens come from ex-Ottoman regions, the celebration of Greek Independence Day on 25 March – mediated as the day Greece was 'liberated' from the Ottoman Empire – is not significant to them; instead, events such as Nowruz, which is the Persian New Year, might be more relevant to Kurdish people.

Despite the racialised and deeply dividing educational system that reproduces similar patterns of divisions in the public sphere, expressions of solidarity managed to spill into the media – mainly film projects by young creators, on social media (and beyond). A recent example, *Blurred Future* (2020) is a short film created by three 17- and 18-year-old students in Athens that captures the story of two young male asylum seekers from Mali and Burkina Faso, who temporarily settled in Greece. The film addresses themes that vary from the struggle of Turkish political refugees to

the widespread effects of the financial crisis. Another film project approached the refugee issue as it intersected with the historical trajectory that Kaisariani (another area, located southeast of the city centre of Athens) still carries as a neighbourhood where refugees have settled throughout the years; it is entitled *Journey without Borders* (2018). The comments have been turned off on YouTube. The film was widely circulated among film networks and streamed during the 21st Olympia International Film Festival for Children and Young People.

Speaking of film projects that transcend ethnic divides, a teacher participant referred to the short film entitled *Friend(s)…Foreigners* [*Φίλο(ι)…Ξένοι* – meaning Hospitable/Welcoming in Greek] */Borders Everywhere* (Figure 6.8), which was created by high school students in the context of the Olympia International Film Festival for Children and Young People.[32] It tells the story of a sensitive boy, Christos, who when given the opportunity by his school, wanted to meet a peer from the nearby refugee centre of Schistos. The short film aims to show that the friendship that emerged and was sustained online (via Facebook Messenger) between the two sides (Greek and migrant youth) was challenged and tested in everyday life, as borders in society are invisible and everywhere.

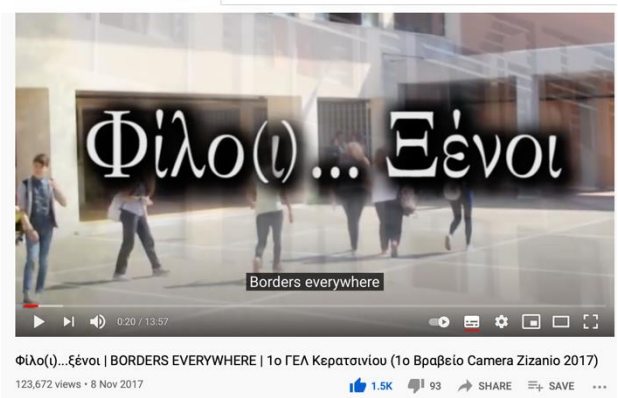


Figure 6.8

[32] The short film won the 1st prize in the 2nd category, in which 45 Greek films participated, made by young people aged between 13 and16 years old. https://www.youtube.com/

The video on YouTube has 136,231 views and is followed by very positive and encouraging comments, where discontentment is far from rare, as some examples below manifest:

Comment 1: Congratulations, great video!

Comment 2: I was crying so much.

Comment 3: Great effort.

Comment 4: This is the best story I've ever seen.

Comment 5: I like this film because it gives strength to people that feel alone.

Comment 6: It doesn't surprise me that this film won the first prize in camera zizanio…We didn't expect less from the Keratsini theater club! Always successful.

The teacher from the multicultural school who helped students create the short film said:

> Our school culture is very open. We have a remarkable sensitivity. The short film is an expression of solidarity. This is why we invited migrants and refugees in an event for the film's public presentation. Our students get along with their classmates of Arab origins, Indians or Pakistani.

The teacher emphasised the school's efforts to ensure convivial and respectful education and sociality. With the teachers' support, some of the students managed to create this short film to stand in solidarity with migrants and refugees in their area and school. The media practice of producing short film projects might address a small audience, but symbolically, especially for young people in the neighbourhood, they represent a powerful opportunity to develop their own narrative of a citizen identity beyond racial and national divisions. The project created the symbolic environment in which newcomers received a warm welcome against all odds and recognised through their difference. They were products of and within encounters that were

negotiated between citizens and noncitizens, by treating the latter as citizens-in-the-making instead.

Affective solidarities

Following on from the visuality of politics of difference, this section explores how micro-publics of Kypseli emerge around *affective solidarities* that give co-ownership of the landscape of the city to urban dwellers and minorities. Besides the graffiti messages on the walls that reflected a strong commitment to working-class consciousness and intercultural solidarity, similar discourses also circulated on social media platforms. Kimon, a male participant, wrote on his Facebook timeline under an image of the neighbourhood: 'Why is it so difficult for some Kypselians to understand that we [i.e., both citizens and noncitizens] are all working-class and have the same things to fight for?'. The area I walked through is clearly densely populated and overcrowded. The old block of flats consists of approximately 30 apartments and prices vary according to where the apartment is in the block, from the basement up to the upper floors, and whether it faces the street or not (Vaiou, Bacharopoulou, and Fotiou 2017). Although Kypseli still attracts residents from different socio-economic backgrounds, the majority are poor, working-class and a mixture of different ethnic groups. This section seeks to explore how citizens' reflexive accounts often emerge out of sustained encounters with noncitizens on the material and digital street that advance mutual understanding and socio-economic awareness of shared struggles.

Myself being Greek meant that it was easier to engage with locals, build rapport and have conversations with other Greeks who worked in grocery stores, beauty and nail salons, with plumbers, locksmiths, nannies, a butcher and a driver and had systematic interactions with migrants in different contexts. Antonis was a locksmith and collaborated with an Albanian colleague and very close friend, because he 'understood from customers' face expressions that

his colleague was not welcome' and supported him (through their professional collaboration). Nikitas, the butcher in my study, was in touch with a Syrian customer he got along well with, Farid, on WhatsApp. Anastasia and Petros, a couple who are parents, belonged to a school-related Viber group and had regular lunches with Kurdish parents every Saturday in the schoolyard while their children had extracurricular activities. Olympia, who worked as a nanny, had a Lebanese refugee neighbour, Yuri, with four kids, and was not afraid to stand up to unwelcoming residents in her building to make the young woman feel more supported. Dimitris, an employee of an off-licence stood in solidarity with a Syrian man, by giving him three or five euros credit and getting it back when the man received his stipend: 'I don't have money either, but I understand. This is the least I could do', he said.

Due to Kypseli's high population density, blocks of flats represent some of the most important spaces where mainly working-class citizens have unavoidable and constant interactions with migrants in everyday life. Existing studies on the gendered experiences of migration in city spaces have demonstrated that migrant women are the ones who mainly have sustained encounters with established residents that sometimes turn into meaningful relationships (Rzepnikowska 2018; Micha and Vaiou 2019). This was the case with Olympia, a working-class mother of two teenagers. She described how, once, she offered some olive oil, from the little she had, to Yuri, who in return bought her a brand-new bottle of olive oil. 'Can you imagine? This woman has nothing', Olympia said. 'Not that I've got anything', she continued, referring to her poor financial condition. Without sharing the same language, religion or history, the process of engaging in the same daily practices and undertaking similar responsibilities instigated reflexivity that mainly related to their socio-economic condition. Olympia was a woman, a mother, was poor and hard hit by Greece's economic crisis – the two women shared common everyday routines because of their gender (Micha and Vaiou 2019) and a common societal position that

was shaped through the specific embodied experience that significantly relied on a mobile application, as I demonstrate below.

Olympia had very limited media literacy. She did not own a laptop or a tablet. There was one computer in the house shared by her husband and their two children. Her mobile phone was not a smartphone. When she showed it to me, I realised it was a mobile phone just like the ones people used to have in the early 2000s. As the conversation unfolded, I realised also that my participant did not speak English or any other language to be able to communicate with her neighbour. At the same time, Yuri did not speak any Greek, but somehow Olympia knew a lot of information about her. As I was curious to find out how they communicated, I asked. In line with studies that explore refugees' use of social media to transcend borders (Georgiou and Leurs 2022; Leurs and Smets 2018; Rygiel 2011), Olympia described below how a 'translator' – a mobile app – sustained the three-year neighbourly relationship:

> She [Yuri] uses a 'translator'. She speaks on her phone, in her own language and the message appears in Greek on her screen; and vice versa. I dictate on her phone in Greek, and she received the message in Arabic. Also, one of her four children goes to school, so we communicate about the everyday things, like where to buy things. But mainly, we communicate through the 'translator' and I know things about her life. She told me her husband and her baby died because of a bomb explosion in Iraq. Yuri is from Lebanon and her husband was from Iraq, so she came all the way from Iraq while pregnant. Ali, her child cannot explain such things to me, he is very young to know. So, Yuri uses her phone.

'Living "in translation"' (Hall 2008, 347) was more relevant than ever, given the relationship between the two women was created and sustained through the use of 'translator' – a mobile

phone application to 'cope with everyday challenges' (Kauffman 2018, abstract). Olympia's case showed not only that the embodied encounter was far from pure, but also that technologies of everyday life were part of that embodiment – such that their relationship was not sustained due to the inevitable nature of the encounter, but due to devices and apps (Attwood, Hakim, and Winch 2017). Deploying practices of engagement, such as adapting to a way of communication Olympia was far from comfortable with, clearly manifests the possibility of her agency in managing and negotiating difference from a position of socio-economic inequality. Olympia's experience of (media) practice of interacting with her Lebanese neighbour manifested the transformative nature of reflexivity that was reinforced by a 'technologically mediated sociality' (Witteborn 2015). The willingness and agency to adapt everyday practices indicates reflexivity that stemmed from the sustained interaction.

While Olympia was affectively liberated from persistent divides between 'us' and 'them', with evidence of solidarity and non-discriminatory attitudes against her Lebanese neighbour, she relied on traditional media discourses of Islamophobia to focus on religious separation between Muslims and Christians. Although the veil itself was not construed as a marker of difference by the informant, Yuri's disclaimer of not being Muslim before her marriage seemed to be an important one. In a follow-up question about whether this disclaimer made my participant happy or indifferent, she mentioned that she was happy to know Yuri was Christian [before converting to Islam], even though nothing changed in practice. Their common struggles – that were gendered and classed in nature – fed into everyday acts of collaboration, which were integrated into the juxtaposed embodied and mediated encounter with the Muslim woman, and 'created possibilities of new practices, new relationships' with the Other in Kypseli (Butcher 2019, 1202; Rzepnikowska 2018).

As in the case of Olympia above, Nikitas, a 33-year-old man and local butcher, referred to the practice of serving Farid, a Syrian customer, who lived in an NGO flat down the road. Having an economics degree (at post-secondary education level), but hard hit by the Greek economic crisis and austerity measures, Nikitas found work in the local butcher shop. Nikitas saw his life change in a day because of the economic crisis in his country. Speaking from his disadvantaged position – having lost his job during the Greek crisis and feeling unprotected by the government – Nikitas saw the stranger as familiar (Amin 2012). Despite the fact Nikitas was not the owner of the butcher shop – he was just an employee – feelings of empathy led him to take the initiative not to charge Farid for meat, with a mutual understanding that they would arrange the payment whenever this was possible via WhatsApp:

> He came here and borrowed meat. He always brought the money whenever he could…We arranged that on WhatsApp. He was a car engineer back in Syria and he had some savings to survive. At some point, he was very ill. He was absolutely broke and wanted to go to Syria. I was trying to convince him not to go. I was telling him, there is a war in Syria, don't go there. He was saying 'Here I will die from hunger'. Even though I was not the owner of the butcher shop, I told him not to worry about the food. We still don't charge him for meat, with a mutual understanding that he would pay whenever this is possible. I didn't want to make him feel humiliated, that's why I always told him bring the money whenever you've got it. I was feeling very awkward. There was a communication issue as well. He spoke broken English, mine was not great, but we managed to communicate somehow in the shop and through WhatsApp. At some point, his English was significantly improved. I don't know how. He probably thought that as he was planning to go to Germany, he was obliged to learn something.

Besides not charging the Syrian man for meat to feed his family, Nikitas also offered emotional support when the man got very ill. Language was an issue for both, but did not create an

impenetrable boundary. Beyond regular face-to-face encounters, their relationship was mainly sustained through the practice of communicating on WhatsApp. Nikitas understood that he expected better living conditions for his children. When the discussion shifted to the influx of refugees in 2015, and in general, he got really upset that people like the Syrian man who wanted to get his papers done invested in others and was exploited in return. Speaking from his own experience – having lost his job during the Greek crisis – Nikitas acknowledged that there were no good living conditions for anyone in Greece and he explained that migrant populations could not get professional jobs because there are not any [neither for Greeks nor Syrians].

Rather than just being indifferent to the view that migrants were responsible for the alleged urban decay in Kypseli, a number of local citizens organised on social media networks to defend the multicultural character of their neighbourhood – they used social media groups (especially on Facebook) as a strategy of resistance to the hegemonic narratives that presented their neighbourhood as 'a space of criminality':

> We are very experienced with social media, because one of the main reasons we were set up was to be able to portray the reality of the neighbourhood. As a team, we engage on online platforms in order to control the situation and the message that is communicated. Social media has great power. We have hundreds of members. The media is targeted and no voice is independent. The most powerful medium, which still is television, only presented a negative picture of the Kypseli. Reporters from several TV channels used to come and say 'talk about your problems', until we started talking only about positive happenings in the area and they stopped coming. (Fieldwork conversation in the Municipal Market of Kypseli)

One of the administrators of a neighbourhood Facebook group clearly emphasised, during a casual conversation, that television and mass media in general only portrayed 'a negative picture of Kypseli'. The tension between the embodied and the mediated encounter with the proximate Others precipitated mistrust and scepticism towards institutions – especially towards the media (Dahlgren 2018). Thus, residents of Kypseli, who were themselves treated unfairly by hegemonic and elite media, mobilised at the level of the neighbourhood and linked next-door neighbours to one another, and always in solidarity with migrant communities in the area (Georgiou 2020). In line with the '*cosmopolitan* identity discourse', they identified the importance of solidarity and hospitality in their narratives to justify their position towards migrants.

Solidarity with migrants and anti-fascist sentiments were also expressed, on an individual level, in the symbolic space of the neighbourhood that was frequently dominated by hostile and racist imagery. Some citizens and residents of Kypseli organised on Facebook groups, such as *The Ant – Kypseli Solidarity Haunt* group, to stand in solidarity with communities. Nikitas, a member of *The Ant*, criticised the left-hand side picture that depicts Ilias Kasidiaris, the far-right candidate who ran for the position of mayor of Athens in 2019 and was an ousted member of the Golden Dawn, in his electoral campaign photo under the title 'For a clean Athens' – connoting 'clean' from migrants. My participant uploaded an image with the same slogan (For a clean Athens) on Facebook, but this time depicting Kasidiari's leaflets in a recycling bin – connoting 'clean' from far-right politicians (see Figure 6.9).

Figure 6.9

To support the image he uploaded, he wrote that in the multicultural, multinational neighbourhood of Kypseli, fascists had no place. For a clean Athens, it needed to be clean from fascists, hatred and racism. Kypseli – a neighbourhood of solidarity and anti-fascism.

The local butcher was not the only one who acted in solidarity with newcomers in the neighbourhood. The employee of the off-licence showed practical solidarity towards a Syrian man who lived in an old hotel (that housed refugees) on Skyrou Street in Kypseli:

> This guy has an amputated leg. I guess it's because of the war in Syria, but I'm embarrassed to ask what happened. You can't ask such questions. I give him three or five euros credit to him or those I know they are in need. This is how I try to contribute from my side. When they get paid or receive their stipend, they return the money. This happens again and again. All this helps. I offer my help to those that struggles to make the ends meet, those that have to pay their bills.

From graffiti on the streets to reflections recorded during in-depth interviews and online and offline participant observation, my empirical evidence suggests that affective experience and everyday solidarities facilitated reflexivity – a process that entails "'bending back" of some thought upon the self' (Archer 2010, 2). Indeed, the 'micro-publics of everyday social contact

and encounter' (Amin 2002, 959) mediated solidarities that acquired *class* elements which were connected to income and the position that both citizens and migrant co-habitants have in social hierarchy. The specific cognitive articulation of (working) class relations was vital, but solidarities were shaped through the embodied experience in the workspace and the block of flats, solidarities that did not exist outside their networks of mediation and sharing culture. From the practice of communicating via the translator to the one of exchanging WhatsApp messages, it is evident that communication practices both manifested the relationship dynamics between citizens and noncitizens, but also assisted in reconfiguring them. They were more a result of throwntogetherness (Massey 2005) that supported sustained affective solidarities than the result of disaffected rationality and choice. More specifically, I have shown how working-class individuals manifested a form of identification with migrants because they shared the same socio-economic background and struggles with the same hardship within a changing urban environment. Inspired by Werbner's (1999) 'working-class-cosmopolitanism' and Hall's (2008) 'cosmopolitanism from below', I have demonstrated how the category of class, which is heterogenous, affective and fluid in the Greek context, could function as a collective consciousness that shapes identities across ethnic difference and against rigid conceptions of exclusive nationalist identity. This type of consciousness connects the embodied encounter – the fluid but sustained encounter between citizens and noncitizens – and people's precarity within a market of multiple crises. I have witnessed the emergence of a working-class mutual understanding of what it means to lack the basics, to struggle in the city, not to have food on the table, but also to be humiliated for being poor and disadvantaged on the basis of a racialised conception of exclusive national citizenry. I call the discourse that emerges through these narratives '*class* identity discourse' and will come back to this in Chapter 7. The affective experiences of solidarities in the neighbourhood raises reflexive awareness among many of the dangers of racism, nationalism and/or culturalism.

Networked commons

Besides the urban micro-publics of the workspace and the block of flats that mediated solidarities, the Municipal Market of Kypseli seemed to be more than a vibrant public space and point of reference for the locals. This part of the chapter explores convivial encounters that took place through the 'networked commons' (Chouliaraki and Georgiou 2022) – the material and digital space of the city, which is shared horizontally and where co-creation of the city takes place (Amin and Howell 2016; Federici 2020), and challenges racism and/or culturalism.

The Municipal Market of Kypseli: a space of intercultural exchange

Figure 6.10

Located on Fokionos Negri, the Municipal Market of Kypseli (see Figure 6.10), proved to be an important meeting point not only for me and my participants, but also for the locals. As mentioned by many participants, the Municipal Market of Kypseli has long been an important building in the history of the neighbourhood – a place that connects locals no matter what passport they hold. The Market is the space where individuals and groups from different backgrounds have systematic encounters. For many years, the Market has been a meeting and reference point of Kypseli, inscribed in the collective memory of the inhabitants as such. From its establishment in 1935 and up until 2002, it operated as a food market – but during the years between 2002 and 2006 it was abandoned. Despite the municipal authorities' plans to demolish

the Market in 2004, the building was recognised as a monument of historical interest in 2005, and so saved from demolition. Then, the Municipality of Athens initiated procedures for its commercial exploitation. In 2006, the building was occupied and squatted by Kypseli residents who operated the space under the name 'Open Municipal Market Squat'. This was initiated following a petition that reached 5,000 signatures. For the next six years, school events, screenings, concerts, Greek lessons for immigrants and theatrical performances were just some of the activities that took place there. The Municipal Market was subsequently evacuated by riot police in 2012, under the mayor Giorgos Kaminis, and is now home to a local shop that promotes Greek products, a second-hand shop, a juice store, a repair and donate place, a gallery, a charitable organisation, Citizen's Service Centre (CSC), a humanitarian non-profit organisation (the Danish Refugee Council) and Code + Create, an organisation that aims to 'bring refugee and Greek youth to learn and work together'.[33]

Today, the Market follows 'a participatory model of management and revival' (as the website puts it)[34] of the public space. By participatory, the website refers to knowledge exchange that takes place between *old* and *new* residents through public initiatives that are planned and scheduled on social media platforms but realised in the physical space of the market: percussion lessons, stringed instruments lessons, music and dance, science events, arts labs for children and adults, children's choir, yoga class and world dance classes are among the activities experientially shared that, in the process, have the potential to reshape spaces from ethnically divided to culturally co-experienced and discovered together. The Market is a public space with free wi-fi connectivity that 'houses educational, cultural activities, as well as social economy initiatives, based on the strong agenda of development, social cohesion and participation'.[35]

[33] Read more about Code + Create at https://gfoss.eu/code-create/
[34] Read more about the Municipal Market of Kypseli https://agorakypselis.gr/
[35] Read about the vision of the Municipal Market of Kypseli at https://agorakypselis.gr/

Figure 6.11

Figure 6.12

As the etymological roots of the Greek word *agora* indicate, the market appears to indeed illustrate its original meaning – a 'gathering place' – with cultural representation and intercultural interaction between citizens and noncitizens. Going beyond the ephemeral but inevitable sharing of a public space, this section focuses on participants' practices of attending events in the market. The dynamics of the market's space mean that convivial encounters not only took place in a public space, but in the *commons* – the public space of the city, which was shared horizontally and where co-creation of the city took place (Amin and Howell 2016; Federici 2020; Chouliaraki and Georgiou 2022), which then challenged the neoliberal order and homogenisation of the urban space.

The practice of commoning also became evident during the World Refugee Day, on 20 June 2019 (see Figures 6.11 and 6.12). The events familiarised the audience of the Municipal Market of Kypseli with migrants' activity – with a particular focus on music. I got to know a 30-year-old man from Congo-Kinshasa. I listened to gospel and rumba by his band 'Perle Music', which was created in the Volvi reception centre (in the Thessaloniki regional unit) by Congolese refugees. I was introduced to Richard, an artist from Congo who that night was singing 'Our God' by Chris Tomlin. I met Teressa, a nurse with a dream to become a singer – she was also singing about that. I was introduced to Moria who said that 'music for Congo is what football for Brazil. It's in

our blood.' On that night, he was singing 'Fétiche' by Tabu Ley Rochereau. Later, I watched the 'The Crazy Fisherman and Other Stories', a short film based on one of the stories collected by Mhran, a Kurdish refugee from Syria. In an effort to give voice to all the people he met in Iraq and who were forced to flee their countries, he started writing their stories. Mhran asked everyone he met, while he was in Iraq and on his way to Western Europe, to share their personal stories with him – stories about their journeys. As an ambitious young man, his ultimate dream was to see these stories published. In 2018 one of them became the script for 'The Crazy Fisherman and Other Stories', which was shown to refugees, migrants and other local residents in Kypseli's Municipal Market. Beyond the face-to-face, the practice of commoning was also organised through networks of intermediation on Instagram's live function. As the World Refugee Day event was live-streamed, individuals left comments in many different languages (including Greek, French and Arabic, among those that I could recognise). Greeks reacted with 'hearts' or left comments such as 'I'll be there', 'Great song' or 'Sorry I'll miss this'. The ones I could read in French said 'I'm coming soon' and 'How long will the event last?'. I saw on the chat that two women who were planning to attend on their own, met online and decided to come to the event together. As demonstrated often during the fieldwork, digital connectivity was not only an important tool for promoting events and engaging users online, but also facilitated reflexivity and conviviality in the agora/market.

Figure 6.13 'The Crazy Fisherman and Other Stories' in the making

Figure 6.14 Mhran Abdo – short film creator

Both citizens and noncitizens were active agents in the (media) practice of 'commoning' of the Municipal Market of Kypseli (Harvey 2012). From the first to the second Ethiopian festival and the World Refugee Day, participants considered the Municipal Market of Kypseli a symbol of 'co-existence', 'revival' and 'regeneration' in the neighbourhood:

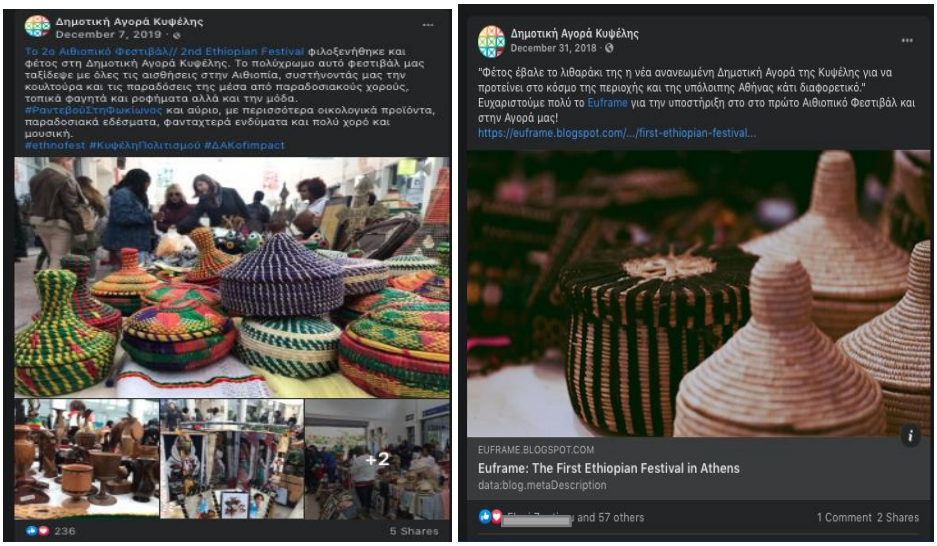
> **Aelia**: The market and, maybe the Kypseli square are the only spaces where you can hear people speaking in Greek and at the same time English, Albanian, Arabic or French. I like it that multiculturalism is now considered an interesting element of Kypseli. It's nice to see how different populations co-exist. Despite the fact that this multicultural model of Kypseli has become a trend or hipster, I like it. While Kypseli was neglected for many decades now, the new identity brings the neighbourhood in the public eye.

> **Valeria**: I feel that in the Municipal Market of Kypseli we come closer. It's a common space. We go to festivals and events, but we particularly like culinary events…we've been to the Nigerian food day. When we find something interesting, the Market is always a place to go. Greeks consider it 'folk', even though intercultural relations and interactions are not like this. But as a first introduction, it's so nice to familiarise yourself with and come closer to groups and populations that anyway want to approach you.

The informants quoted above considered the market as a material entity that has become a space that created an inclusive city for all – a space that values 'the many varieties of togetherness' (Amin and Howell 2016, 6) and is integral to citizens' imaginary of the commons. The Market is the space that offers the opportunity to explore *how* the encounter unfolds and to produce 'an intentional recasting of the self' (Valentine and Sadgrove 2014, 1981). Many of the participants I spoke to viewed it as the go-to place to hear several spoken languages, without considering this a matter of concern. 'It's nice to see how different populations co-exist', said Aelia, and explained how this identity brought Kypseli to life. Those that were more interested in cuisines attended food days as a way to 'familiarise' themselves with populations that were either there to stay or were transient in the neighbourhood. The adaptation of everyday practices, such as tasting food from different places or exploring unfamiliar dancing styles, demonstrated curiosity and mutual welcome – reflexive as well as affective processes in support of a shared commons. The space was horizontally shared and attracted the various ethnic communities in the area – it was typified by 'a quality of relations, a principle of cooperation and of responsibility to each other' (Federici 2018, 110).

Despite its material entity – as events, festivals, lessons and all sorts of activities took place in a physical space – organisers and materials from events gained recognition and received publicity through their digital mediation and citizens' media practices of sharing (live function on

Instagram, sharing events and pictures on Facebook pages and groups) on social media platforms and rarely on traditional media. A key media strategy of commoning was intermediation: with activities in the physical space being amplified through their circulation and discussion on Facebook and to a lesser extent on Instagram. Beyond the live event I have described above, participants frequently reposted the market's events on their timelines and/or used the RSVP function of the online event page to publicly announce their intention to attend. Valeria told me she always reviewed the list of attendees on Facebook to check whether familiar people from the neighbourhood were planning to attend. Relatedly, the media practice of posting on Instagram and Facebook showed that the commons of the Kypseli Market was mobilised through intermediation, which aimed to spread the word about Ethiopian, Nigerian and other events and encouraged social media users to interact. This shows that, as Federici (2018, 284) argues, 'not only has the common not vanished, but that new forms of social cooperation are constantly being produced'. Learning about others in the neighbourhood was a practice that acknowledged the labour of negotiating change (Valentine and Sadgrove 2014); it was mainly realised in the shared space of the Municipal Market of Kypseli, but heavily relied on infrastructures of intermediation, what Chouliaraki and Georgiou (2022) call 'a site of possibilities for the realisation of the *networked* commons' (emphasis added).



Figures 6.15 and 6.16

This section has shown that the urban micro-public of the Municipal Market of Kypseli has supported the emergence of a networked commons that contests national and racial hierarchies. This example reveals how commoning as a collective act of throwntogetherness gives rise to affective elements of reflexivity and identity discourses of cosmopolitanism and class. The Market is not only a place of *creating* events, but also for *creating citizen identity*. The Market is a space that promotes intercultural collaboration through culinary events (e.g., Ethiopian festival and Nigerian food day), music, events (e.g., World Refugee Day and 'Dialogues' from Africa), while also offering language lessons for refugees and migrants. Recognition of others thus becomes part of the social context of everyday life. This media practice of commoning treats both citizens and noncitizens as active agents in the co-creation of the city. At the juncture of mediated and embodied encounters, a networked commons fosters citizens' reflexivity (through media practices of communicating on social media platforms or learning about Others and adjusting daily practices such as eating and dancing), which relies on throwntogetherness and digital connectedness. While the commons may rely on networks of mediation, it is mainly when individuals come 'in close bodily experience' that they are given the opportunity to reflexively experience the Other and their culture as an affective presence (Simonsen and Koefoed 2020, 55). Such practices generate new ways of imagining the Self by portraying Others' difference as a way of managing a shared space and by mutually recognising others who are profoundly different (Fenton 2016; Georgiou 2017).

Conviviality with conditions: the primacy of neoliberal nationalism

Despite the fact that embodied encounters in urban micro-publics mediate solidarities and support the emergence of a networked commons, those encounters are at the same time subject to broader hierarchical conditions. Juxtaposing White and allegedly 'assimilable' migrants (from

Balkan and Eastern European countries) with non-White and 'non-assimilable' ones (recent arrivals from Middle Eastern and African countries), I demonstrate the ambivalence of assimilation (leading to the '*Europeanist/White* identity discourse') and the intersection of nationalism and neoliberalism (leading to the '*neoliberal national* identity discourse') in citizens' reflexive accounts. Who is the deserving subject that is worthy of citizenship and recognition?

Absorbed Otherness: 'becoming Greek'

When migrant populations found shelter in Greece following the dissolution of the Soviet Union (1988–1991), the country was characterised by economic prosperity because of its accession to the European Community in the early 1980s. Greece shifted from being a labour exporter to a labour importer (Lawrence 2005; Hantzaroula 2008). The arrivals of migrants from the Balkans and Eastern European countries did not constitute a particular burden, as the country was in need of cheap labour at that time. Participants in my study acknowledged that a significant percentage of Greek people rushed to hire them, either aiming to provide support or to take advantage of their cheap labour. Some newcomers were educated and equipped with skills that could be easily used in the Greek market; some of them found manual or low-paid jobs – jobs that encouraged a sustained co-existence and interaction between Greek citizens and noncitizens.

During my conversations with Greek citizens who had close relationships with individuals of Albanian origins, references were frequently made to media narratives that scapegoated migrant populations for the urban decay or the rise of criminality in the 1990s and early 2000s (Karydis 1996; Droukas 1998; Lawrence 2005; Papastergiou and Takou 2013). It was interesting to observe how some individuals who were more welcoming following a sustained encounter with Albanians became more intolerant towards the latest wave of migrants, especially when they

made references to their media practices to support their arguments. Petros, a plumber, and Lydia, spoke of contradictory realities they had to negotiate in their everyday lives:

> **Petros**: I was annoyed at some point. And you watched it [the news], it deceived you and it put the message across. Of course, all burglars were Albanians [he says ironically]! Whoever it was, they said it was an Albanian. TV puts the message across and makes you angry...I meet [foreigners] in my job as well. Almost on a daily basis, we are colleagues. Also in the 2004 construction [i.e., for the Olympic Games that Athens hosted], we collaborated with plumbing services of 14 Albanians and five Greeks. They were young guys. We chatted, we had beers, we laughed. I really don't know what the news stories wanted to achieve. After a while they were integrated. They have their jobs and their homes now. Nowadays, you cannot discern whether the second generation of children are Albanians or not. They've become Greeks. They've been integrated in society.

> **Lydia**: Now, it's become normal. They've become one of us. Back in the days, I was very racist towards them, because of what we heard about them. I was scared. This was when I was in primary school. Maybe I wasn't used to it.

Besides the stereotypical image of the Albanian burglar, the former prisoner and the criminal with the experience of communism (Lawrence 2005), the narrative of 'the one-who-came-to-take-our jobs' was constructed through citizens' engagement with the mainstream media, as Panagiotis described:

> **Panagiotis**: At the beginning, I was a bit cautious and was even hostile [i.e., towards migrant populations] because it was said that they came to take our jobs.

> Then, I realised that we [Greeks] didn't want to do the jobs they used to do. The young generation neither wanted to go to the olive groves to pick olives nor did they want to work in construction. Everyone wants to become a lawyer or doctor. So, no Albanian took our jobs. We didn't want to do these jobs. Now, migrants do certain jobs and we do others. There is a clear division of labour, especially in young generations.
>
> **Researcher**: Why were you more hostile towards them? How was this image created?
>
> **Panagiotis**: I got carried away by the news stories…this was the common-sense idea.

The participant got carried away 'by the news stories' that spread 'moral panics' (Baldwin-Edwards 2004, 59) on migration issues through 'exaggerated reports' about 'the imminent demise of Greek culture' (Lawrence 2005, 328). What was thought-provoking about observations such as those above was the representational gap between the emotions generated in response to media discourses circulated about Albanians, and participants' own experiences and related reflections about friendship and commonality. This representational gap was communicated through feelings of insecurity about people from the Balkans and Eastern European countries as a group, and ideas about the 'good' Albanians they personally interacted with. Despite Albanophobia (Kirtsoglou and Tsimouris 2018) that was widespread in mass media, especially in the first few years of Albanian migration (Papastergiou and Takou 2013), Albanian immigration was Greece's 'success story', as I demonstrate below.

Although still scapegoated, Albanians were mainly accepted by participants because, as many of them said, Albanians managed to assimilate and attest to 'practical nationality' – that is to say, they acquired or performed practices that signified a certain degree of national inclusion and attachment to the country of destination (Hage 2000). As also noted in relevant literature (Hage 2000; Pratsinakis 2014; Adamczyk 2016; Kirtsoglou and Tsimouris 2018), participants' reflections reproduced conceptions of Albanians as 'peaceful, hardworking' individuals 'who caused no problems' in Greek society (Pratsinakis 2014, 1303).

Anargyros had baptised the daughter of his family's Albanian cleaner. He said that 'Albanians knew how to approach Greek people. That's why they were baptised as Christian Orthodox. They had good awareness of the Greek society. Unlike Pakistanis that are not in the same [privileged] position'. Petros, a working-class male participant, said that 'you cannot discern whether the second generation of children are Albanians or not. They've become Greeks. They've been integrated in society'. Antonis, the locksmith, did not even think of his best friend (who was Albanian) when I first asked him about personal relationships with people of non-Greek origin. It was only when his friend and colleague came into to the locksmith shop that Antonis thought of his friend's roots. 'Oh, there you go. We are very close friends with this guy [he pointed with his finger]. But he's Greek now', Antonis said, and laughed. In line with the '*Europeanist/White* and *neoliberal national* identity discourses', my findings show that Albanian migrants were considered *assimilable* and *like Greeks* for the following reasons: they were (a) hard-working, (b) White; (c) spoke Greek and often were willing to adopt Greek names (Drydakis 2011); (d) had families and did not arrive as individuals; (e) had manual skills; (f) offered cheap labour; and (g) were willing to become like Greeks in every aspect. The ideas that 'Albanians became Greeks' and were 'not considered immigrants' were very popular amongst participants:

Daphne: I have colleagues who come from Albania. They are very nice people, very very nice people. Look...these people were born in Athens. They are of a younger generation. It's been many years that I work with people whose parents migrated here [Greece]. They were born and raised here. They are like us. There is no difference. I do not distinguish them. Actually, I have one colleague whose origin is from Albania and got married to one of our customers who comes from a Greek island.

Nikitas: Talking about Albanians…we can't consider them immigrants. In fact, these people have become very familiar with Greece. We have become one. That is, those who live in Greece consider Albania to be their village. It's as if they come to the city, to the capital. People are normal, they speak Greek, I have nothing to say. They are more than fine. It's just that the first wave of Albanians, as we experienced it in the 90s from the media, had a very bad reputation. That's what we heard. As we were informed, Albanians that arrived in Greece came straight from prison. And since you are from Thessaloniki [in Northern Greece], you might know a similar story. You were young back then, so you won't remember it. But, anyways, most of them, especially here in Kypseli, are families. They are quiet. They are fully integrated with us.

The two quotes above illustrate that Greeks and Albanians 'have become one' and 'there is no difference' between the two and thus add to the overarching theme of absorbed Otherness and the emphasis on being 'like us' within the national norm. The perceived Whiteness and Europeanness of Albanian migrants reaffirm and construct 'a social hierarchy granting differential access to economic and cultural capital and to symbolic resources' (Pratsinakis 2018, 7). Those construed as welcome were conceived as already 'people like us' who could be fully assimilated to what is considered as a stable, White, European Greek society. As many Albanian migrants consented to assimilate – or had no choice but to do so – speaking the Greek language,

adopting Greek names, being baptised as Christian Orthodox and offering cheap labour) made them more *acceptable* and *assimilable* in the eyes of some Greek citizens. My participants shifted from phobia to developing important relationships with these 'good migrants', who were accepted, as the section that follows shows, both for their 'willingness' to accept the historical national project as well as the neoliberal one of contemporary Greece.

Greek apartheid: the neoliberal logic of (the familiar and racial) exception

Whiteness and relatively swift assimilation into the nation and the market presented an important advantage for Albanian migrants compared to the non-European populations who came mainly from the Middle East. Participants' own perceptions of course do not appear in a vacuum. For years, racialisation of migrants has been prominent in media representations (Mai and Schwandner-Sievers 2003), while migration policies have created a Greek apartheid by minimising access to citizenship rights. Such divisions were somehow adopted and adapted to participants' own approaches. The majority of the participants distinguished between ('good') settled migrants (especially White migrants from the Balkans and Eastern European countries) and recent arrivals ('bad', mostly referring to non-White, non-Europeans from the Middle East and Africa) on the basis of a racial and market order, as I show below and in the discussion (see Chapter 7) of the '*Europeanist/White* and *neoliberal national* identity discourses' that emerge from such narratives. Participants drew a line between established migrants, who according to them 'have become one with Greeks', and the recent arrivals from the Middle East, who were criticised for keeping alive their own cultural, religious and linguistic traits – which rendered them non-assimilable. 'They cannot be Europeanised' and 'Islam is the religion of hatred' were some of the phrases I commonly heard when I asked participants about the possible inclusion of recent migrant populations within their society. The reification of their cultural/religious inferiority made individuals from the Middle East an Islamophobic signifier (Mirza and Meetoo

2018). Islamophobia was hyper mediated and circulated through contemporary systems of representation of Islam within the media as a religion that supposedly suppressed other religions in Europe, as the screenshot in Figure 6.17 with the title 'Muslim male migrant destroys a Holy Mary statue' exemplifies.

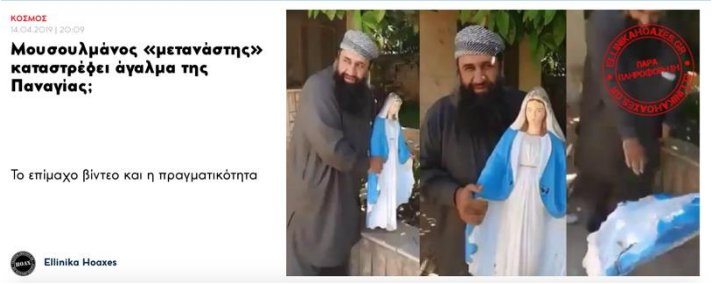


Figure 6.17

The racial ideologies of Whiteness and European superiority intersected with neoliberal arguments about the need for migrants to integrate into the market economy. Faidra, a middle-aged female participant, was angry because, she argued, refugees were being granted asylum and received official documents and stipends, while Mary, her friend from Georgia (who was present during this conversation), who met all the conditions (i.e., she worked and spent money on services and Greek products), had no rights to the city she lived in:

> This woman cannot be considered a migrant, she's Greek. When you contribute, you're not a migrant anymore. She's been here for 16 years now. What can I say about Mary? Let me tell you about the recent arrivals. I don't have any issue with migrants in general. The only thing that annoys me is the recent arrivals of refugees who come to Greece and don't contribute to the economy. The woman, you see in front you, works. There are others too. They own local shops in the area, they don't bother anyone. They are exactly the same as me. They work, they

> contribute. I am not a racist towards them. If you live here, you work and make money, I'm fine. I don't mind at all.

It is evident that, for participants such as Faidra and Mary, migration from countries of the Middle East and Africa is better explained through a combined emphasis on neoliberalism and racial discrimination. Labour migration, which has been a constitutive element of globalisation and emerged from 'neoliberal policies imposed on many less developed countries' (Lawrence 2005, 320) is accepted or tolerated when migrants are seen to meet the requirements of the market economy. Mary had not been granted a residence permit after 15 years' of trying, meaning that she was not allowed to work in the country. She was just given a document to show in case of a police 'stop and search'. The conversation became heated and both women seemed to be very angry with refugees that, according to them, made no contribution to society or the economy:

> When I went to the authorities and wanted to talk about refugees they told me that refugees had certain rights to claim. Because refugees can be granted asylum and it's such a pity that a war broke out. I'm sorry, but I don't really care what they have. I came here to work and offer my services to Greece. I only buy Greek products and send no money in my home country. I buy the best Greek products and don't have a permanent residence permit.

Mary stressed the fact that she lacked a residence permit. It is evident that the nation-state here plays a prominent role in the (re)production of racial discrimination, especially when assorting certain migrants on the basis of 'legality' or 'illegality'. Faidra agreed with what her friend said about the 'services she offered to Greece' and that she spent money that directly went to Greek businesses and shops:

> How can recent migrants get their papers while Mary has been struggling to get hers for so many years now? She works like a dog, like a dog, and the Greek state does not protect her. Mary goes on holidays in Greece, spends money, works. What else does she need to do to be accepted? I don't think she needs anything else.

My participant said that Mary 'worked like a dog' and did not need to do anything else 'to be accepted'. Similar to the public discourse of 'working like an Albanian' (an individual that works without a personal and public life), the criteria to be accepted or not accepted constitute part of the reproduction of the symbolic boundaries between 'us' and 'them'.

At the juncture of race and neoliberalism

Conditional conviviality was expressed by participants within a neoliberal nationalist framework that was twofold. Especially in the Greek context, the neoliberal framework was not solely associated with the economy (Hall 2011) – although it was mainly driven by citizens' own class position. On the one hand, citizens showed a commitment to the market-driven logic of the European project and 'construed migrants as a neoliberal subject' (Chouliaraki and Georgiou 2022). However, neoliberal discourse was mobilised by many who wanted to emphasise Greece's Europeanism and integration in the global economy. This often became an important identity trope, especially as many participants knew that after the country entered a deep financial crisis, many Western European governments and media questioned Greece's belonging to the Western economy and culture. Borrowing Lawrence's definition of neoliberalism in the Greek context, I recognise it as constituting 'an ideological and practical framework that emphasises the free movement of capital and goods across borders, gives primacy to social relations of consumption

rather than production, and recasts the role of the state as an external intrusion in social organisation rather than a constitutive element' (Lawrence 2005, 317). Although neoliberalism does not refer to a specific set of policies/actions and has different manifestations from place to place (Lawrence 2005), the neoliberal subject that has a place in Greece needs to assimilate and meet certain 'cultural, religious and (neo)liberal' requirements to deserve a place in the Greek community (Kirtsoglou and Tsimouris 2018). How can neoliberalism, assimilation and Whiteness co-exist?

There is an interesting juncture between race and neoliberalism or capitalism, according to which racism serves to exclude noncitizens socio-culturally and nationally (or simply to assimilate them) and at the same time it structures their economic inclusion. As seen from debates on racial capitalism, racial exploitation and capital accumulation are mutually constituting (Robinson 1990, 2000; Melamed 2015; Fraser 2016; Bhattacharyya 2018). Similarly, Mai and Schwandner-Sievers (2003) refer to the condition Albanians experience as 'differential inclusion' – a state in which noncitizens are integrated in the labour market, but are denied access to welfare benefits and/or citizenship rights. As seen from literature that discusses the interconnections between migration, labour and racism (King 2000; Kasimis and Papadopoulos 2005; Iosifides et al. 2007), racial discrimination in Greece – along with other Southern European countries such as Italy, Spain and Portugal – is not associated with competition over work because the majority of migrants were forced to work in informal (i.e., construction, housework, caring, agriculture) (Iosifides et al. 2007), invisible and/or irregular sectors of the economy to make ends meet (King, Lazaridis, and Tsardanidis 2000; Labrianidis et al. 2004). As a consequence, the 'ethnic specialisation' (construction work for Albanians) that emerged limited the opportunity for noncitizens to be exposed in a wider labour market (Tsaliki 2008) and rarely got to compete with Greek citizens over the same type of work. The 'deserving' migrant was the one that besides her indefinite contribution to the economy was doomed to disregard her cultural, religious and linguistic traits

in order to be accepted in a nation that strived for national homogeneity. As Jodi Melamed (2015, 77) writes on racial capitalism, 'Capital can only be capital when it is accumulating, and it can only accumulate by producing and moving through relations of severe inequality among human groups'.

After systematic analysis, my empirical findings challenge the theoretical opposition between identity discourses of neoliberalism and nationalism and instead demonstrate that the two should not be treated as irreconcilable alternatives. I am, thus, inspired by Brett and Moran's (2010) idea of 'cosmopolitan nationalism' to reflect on the process of Greek citizen identity-making: a concept that accounts for citizens' commitment, firstly to the nation-state's order and secondly to the neoliberal economy's order, by assimilating the White populations, further marginalising the non-White ones and emphasising entrepreneurialism as a prerequisite for belonging. My interviewees 'can be described as cosmopolitan in that they embrace cultural diversity for the most part, but they use the category of the nation to apprehend this increased diversity' (Brett and Moran 2010, 203). While nationalism continues to be prevalent in the continuation of citizen identity and in relationships that are constructed between citizens and noncitizens, systematic interaction between the two generates something more than mere acceptance of plurality (e.g., as seen in the case of Faidra and Mary's friendship). The project understands the concepts of neoliberal nationalism as lying at the heart of contemporary and conflicting pressures of modernity and the European project that promote cultural diversity and free movement, while also aiming to comply with the nation-state order of sovereignty, (assumed) homogeneity, economic development and assimilation. The (media) practice of being an informed citizen through mediated communication operates as a terrain of control over the level of worthiness of certain migrants over others. The emphasis on assimilation disregards and circumvents any constructive discussion that connects ideas of Greekness with the contested politics of race. The chapter has shown that acceptance relies on a White Eurocentric fantasy and produces the

'Europeanist/White identity discourse' that I will further unpack in the Conclusions of the thesis.

Conclusion: convivial reflexivity

As recorded in multicultural Kypseli, the diverging experiential and discursive spaces of *sustained* encounters enhances citizens' reflexivity on both migrants' and their own position in the local and national society. My research generated my conception of 'convivial reflexivity' (Koulaxi 2022). Convivial reflexivity refers to processes of citizen identity-making in the context of an urban everyday which is performed and conceived through the ordinary co-presence of the Other. Not surprisingly, my participants' encounters and interactions with noncitizens are profoundly marked by ambivalence: while communication technologies become constitutive of how they develop relationships with their noncitizen neighbours, they are also subject to the highly mediated and deep social and ideological order of neoliberal nationalism that assorts people on the basis of their 'assimilability' to the nation and to the market. This creates the fragile but important context of urban conviviality – one that generates and depends upon reflexivity about what unites and divides citizens and noncitizens.

Convivial reflexivity functions as a communicative process, that manifests itself at the juncture of practised face-to-face encounters with migrant noncitizens and discourse – that is both embodied and mediated. The concept of convivial reflexivity thus offers a conceptual tool to make sense of the complex and contradictory intercultural interactions in the city of difference and their role in shaping practices and ideologies of citizenry and Otherness. These practices and ideologies are, of course, historicised and socially situated. Depending on a participant's class, and their local and national position in an unequal system, convivial reflexivity is realised in different ways, through class solidarities, engagement with networked commons, and conditional

hospitality; each one of those ways lead to the emergence of identity discourses that are related to class, cosmopolitanism, neoliberal nationalism and Eurowhiteness. While the city remains divided, my research has brought together important evidence that shows how everyday urban encounters mediate class solidarities and support the emergence of a networked commons, contesting in the process hegemonic power regimes, even if not erasing the powerful currency of nationalist and neoliberal hegemonies that discursively still mediate the meaning of citizens' encounters with noncitizens.

Amongst other reflections with regards to the historical, social, cultural and temporal situatedness of citizen identity in the Athenian locale, the closing chapter identifies the five identity discourses that asymmetrically emerge from the three forms of reflexive subjectivities that find applicability beyond Greece's context: (i) *neoliberal national*; (ii) *Europeanist/White*; (iii) *class*; (iv) *nationalist populist*; and, (v) *cosmopolitan*.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusions

Through the kaleidoscope: encounters with the familiar stranger and the construction of citizen identities in the context of crisis

In this doctoral thesis, and through the case study of the multicultural neighbourhood of Kypseli in Athens, I have demonstrated how Greek citizens' identities are shaped in the context of their everyday life and through ordinary encounters with migrants in the context of crisis. The city of Athens and the area of Kypseli in particular were chosen for this ethnographic study for three key reasons. Firstly, Athens has the most intense experience of Greece's economic crisis and regime of austerity in the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis. Secondly, and in the midst of this crisis, the city has received approximately 18,000 newcomers since the so-called 2015 'migration crisis'. Thirdly, while Athens and Kypseli in particular found themselves at the epicentre of the narratives and experiences of crisis, neither economic strains nor migration are new to them. A neighbourhood which has long struggled with poverty and class inequalities, Kypseli has often been the destination of migrants, and especially within the past three decades.

The chosen focus for the study deliberately moved away from media-centric conceptions of the relationship between identity and migration as fundamentally (or solely) framed through screens. Instead, by locating this interrogation in a crisis-ridden multicultural neighbourhood, I explored how meanings of migration for citizens are shaped in the context of urban throwntogetherness (Massey 2005) and the ways these meanings are shaped and contested on the urban streets as

much as on the screen. Driven by a deep interest in the urban condition of life in the crisis-ridden multicultural neighbourhood, the thesis delved into an interrogation of meanings of We-ness and Otherness, finding out that Otherness is not only a frame for understanding migrants within Western urban societies, but also how it is mobilised to shape identities of the Self in the context of crisis.

The study adopted an interdisciplinary approach to investigate citizens' identities through the concept of the 'encounter' – examining how the encounter, embodied and mediated – dialectically shapes perceptions of both the Self and the Other in the context of crisis. Exploring the dialectic of citizen identity construction in the context of crisis, I drew on an interdisciplinary framework and the cross-fertilisation of sociology and urban studies with media and communications. This interdisciplinary approach allowed me to address both the material and symbolic conditions of citizen identity construction which are not separate but *mutually* and *dialectically* reinforcing in identity make-up. While urban studies emphasise materiality of space and practice, media and communications studies examine the mediation of symbols and practices that shape identities. Learning from both approaches, I delved into the exploration of the hybrid space of encounter that is not only embodied, but also mediated. Examining the material and symbolic situatedness of citizens' everyday life in the context of crisis, I also learned from the sociological articulation of reflexivity and specifically the reflexive subject. That means that I adopted a culturally, historically and spatially situated understanding of citizens who construct their identities within established regimes of knowledge (i.e., Orientalism, Whiteness and assumed normative Europeanism), but also problematised the rigidness of 'We-ness' and 'Otherness'; adopting the lens of reflexive subjectivities allowed me to record cognitive processes of locating the Self and the Other within a relationally constituted urban world, but also to show how affective experiences with the Other inform citizens' own identities in the context of crisis.

In my investigation of the relationship between media and identity in the context of crisis, this thesis aimed to contribute to both the study of citizen identity construction, especially in the Greek context, and to the literature of identity, migration and the media, more widely. Therefore, this approach (i) theorised citizen identity construction through intercultural embodied and mediated encounters with the Other in the context of crisis; (ii) demonstrated why the Greek case reveals particular and more universal dimensions of citizen identity construction in contexts of compounded crises; (iii) explored how this case study's theorisation in terms of the encounter can relate and/or partially apply to other crisis-ridden urban and national multicultural contexts. To engage with the complexity of the media-identity relationship in a crisis context, my theorisation creates a dialogue between the embodied and the mediated encounter – two discussions that, in scholarly terms, have taken place largely, if not completely, independently of each other.

Conceptual contribution and discussion

Aiming to contribute to understandings of the role of media in citizen identity construction, I developed an interdisciplinary working model that cross-fertilises theories from media and communications, sociology and urban studies. The distinct contribution of my interdisciplinary approach manifests itself at two levels. First and foremost, I advance existing theorisations of citizen identity at a time that this is constituted through embodied and mediated encounters with migrants in the city of compounded crises. Driven by the urban condition of life where citizen identities are constantly confronted on the street and on the screen with questions about who the Other is and what makes them different, the process of citizen identity-making takes place within this complex context of encounters (that are both embodied and technologically mediated). Secondly, the materiality of the encounter coincides with the spatio-temporality of perceived and experienced crises – a context that positions migration as a topic at the core of citizens' anxieties and insecurities over other cultural and structural process in the nation.

My theorisation of the encounter has complicated the primary understanding of *spatialised* encounters by integrating the mediated encounter into the process of how citizens make sense of and experience living-together-in-difference. The complexity of the dual nature of the encounter emphasised the value of an intersectional analysis, of how technologies of urban life and the circulation of discourses are entangled with citizens' embodied interactions with migrants in the context of crisis. My empirical investigation of the encounter in the crisis-ridden city has demonstrated how each of *three* forms of reflexivity (*crisis*, *culturalist* and *convivial*) helps us understand processes of citizen Self-making:

1) *Crisis reflexivity*. The predominance of imaginings of citizen identity through and during crisis becomes most apparent when citizens have few or no embodied encounters with migrants and mainly rely on the media to encounter migrants on screens and to understand wider migration issues through media narratives. The crisis as a temporal and discursive framework of everyday life shapes polarised identities. This was most likely to be the case when citizen participants had minimal or even a total absence of encounters (positive or negative) with Others in the neighbourhood. They mostly, or fully, depend on news media and social media to understand migration; within these media spaces, narratives of victimhood of citizens, subjected to decisions made for them and not by them that increase their suffering through poverty, unemployment, health deprivation, are dominant. Consequently, they are regularly exposed to narratives of the victimised citizens vis-à-vis the migrant, considered in this framework as a threat. In many of those cases, media disinformation on migration-related news confirmed the narrowly perceived figure of the migrant as someone who came to disrupt the homogeneity of the community. In this case, the simple visibility of the Other in the Kypselian reality tended to generate populist narratives that conceived the migrant cohabitant of the

neighbourhood as fundamentally different to the citizen/White/European perceived Self. Among people who experience migrants mostly through the media, there are differential positions. For example, for the more progressive participants, online interactions and progressive media constituted a retreat from mainstream media narratives of migration.

2) *Culturalist reflexivity*. Citizens' ephemeral encounters with migrants on the material street created opportunities for the former to consider what unites them with or divides them from those who do not formally belong. The constitution of 'citizen' within narratives of cultural distinctiveness emerges through everyday mobilisation of Orientalist and Eurocentrist narratives, as well as media discourses of exceptionalism (as in the case of the mediated superstar NBA player, who many argued that should be allowed to be part of the nation even though he is Black, unlike the neighbour Blacks at the African bar who are rejected and blamed for all urban problems). On some cases, communication on social media platforms operated as a terrain of control over who can belong and with what conditions; on others, mediated communication encouraged citizens to re-imagine their position in the locale and the nation. At the same time, the embodiment of the encounter reminds us why the encounter matters: when mediated narratives on social and traditional media represent the veiled woman as in need of liberation from the West, the ephemeral conversation between a female citizen and a Muslim woman demonstrated that, even momentarily, hegemonic narratives can be challenged. However, ephemeral encounters rarely appeared to challenge pre-existing conceptions of a bounded, and often superior to migrants, sense of the citizen Self.

3) *Convivial reflexivity*. Conviviality and sustained engagement with the noncitizen appeared to work more ambivalently: one the one hand, processes of solidarity supported by

networks of mediation and ordinary cultural encounters online (mainly on Facebook and partially on Instagram), and networked commons, such as the Municipal Market of Kypseli, connected migrant and citizen voices. Yet, it was the embodied interactions amongst urban dwellers that more effectively appeared to create spaces of imagination and action. I have recorded how when those encounters were sustained, they often became filtering mechanisms for making sense of the dominant media representations that repeatedly divide Us/Them. Everyday practices in the locale did not only shape the relationship dynamics between citizens and noncitizens, but also contributed to the (positive or negative) perceptions among citizens for their migrant neighbours: these perceptions often appear to be more positive among those digitally engaging with migrants and more negative among those who were mainstream media consumers. Given these findings, embodied and affective encounters showed how they can support spaces of reflexivity where the sense of Self is considered in relation and through the Other. Saying that, the embodied encounter is not 'pure' and in itself it is always mediated and conditioned to hegemonic narratives of nation, race and the market. This is evident as racial and neoliberal discourses that were circulated in mass and social media remained influential among many citizens' narratives and judgements of the Other.

Embodied imagination: the 'encounter' at the juncture of imagination and action

How can we best explore citizen identity at the juncture of imagination and action in the crisis-ridden multicultural city? What is the concept that links urban studies (the material dimension) and media and communications (the symbolic dimension)? The encounter. Assembled through in-depth interviews as well as offline and online observations, my analysis provided the following theorisation of the 'encounter'.

While the current project was inspired by critical urban studies and media and communications scholarship, in Chapter 2 I nonetheless demonstrated two limitations to existing conceptualisations of the 'encounter'. First and foremost, existing literature focuses either on the geographical dimension of the encounter (Gilroy 2004; Vertovec 2007) – and thus overemphasises the material space and practices in the locale – or on the symbolic environment within which migration-related discourses are produced and circulated within popular imagination (Chouliaraki and Georgiou 2022). Secondly, and as a result, exclusive attention to either the symbolic or the material dimension of the encounter precludes an opportunity to comprehend the encounter in its totality. At a time of intense mediated communication and migrant mobility, 'the practice of everyday practice' is related to media practice – the direct and indirect ways in which people related to each other through the media (Couldry 2004, 2012). Therefore, one cannot enquire about embodied (experienced) encounters without simultaneously enquiring into mediated ones because the encounter is no longer solely embodied or solely mediated – it is both. In my project, the mediated encounter constituted a complex symbolic process: on the one hand, it encapsulated the discursive dimension of the encounter (as news and comments on migration circulate through and by digital and mass media) and, on the other, the construction of meanings, as digital technologies ordinarily mediate everyday life (as citizens use digital tools to navigate the city and their relationship with Others). The embodied encounter thus referred to the bodily proximity and affective interaction between citizens and noncitizens which takes place in the multicultural neighbourhood and city more widely and which regularly feeds into citizens' reflections on what it means to live-together-in-difference. Thinking of the two kinds of encounters together, and in their converging and distinct meanings, conceptually challenged the binaries dividing the material and the symbolic and created a dialogical approach (dialogue between the mediated and embodied encounters) by grasping the ways in which the spatial and physical presence of Others is actually experienced, lived but also and always mediated.

In my thesis, the encounter is an amalgam of material and symbolic contestations where solidarity, nationalism, neoliberalism, cosmopolitanism and populism co-exist in different combinations and expressions depending on spatialities and temporalities (i.e., whether the encounter is primarily imagined or, if embodied, whether it is ephemeral or sustained, and depending on participants' position in the unequal society). My approach to the encounter complicated the ways in which citizen identities are constructed by integrating materiality into what was previously representation on the screen and on text, and vice versa. By thinking through the concept of mediation, as understood by Silverstone (1999, 2005) and Livingstone (2007), I recognised media as an integral element of citizen identity construction, as they ordinarily communicate what the Self and the Other are. I did so by theorising the encounter at the crossroads of mediations where the symbolic power of the media is prominent and has a catalytic role in (re)constructing an *embodied imagination* that goes beyond the co-occupation of the same space.

The encounter's performative boundary work that expands across time and space enabled me to analyse the encounter's mediations not as a primarily material condition, but as an assemblage of narratives, embodiments and affects. The encounter, in its different formulations, mediates two co-existing kinds of citizen identities in the crisis-ridden city: on the one hand, global and cosmopolitan identities, and on the other, nationalist, parochial ones that seek to either reject or fully assimilate the migrant noncitizen.

Reflexivity: a mediated, affective and embodied process

What can be said in conclusion about the relationship between citizen identity and reflexivity in the crisis-ridden city that changes through migration? My study has attempted to provide what

was missing from both the classic (Giddens 1991; Beck 1992) and critical approaches (Archer 2010, 2012; Adams 2003, 2006; Farrugia 2013) to reflexivity and explicated how the concept works on different levels. Taking its starting point in reflexivity – as a property of humans that links cognitive processes with affective interactions (Seyfert 2012), my vocabulary was grounded in people and their capacities for constructing meanings of the Self and the Other in the context of crisis. As recorded through the case study of an Athenian multicultural neighbourhood, the diverging experiential and discursive dimensions of encounters show that reflexive Selves are constituted differently, but always both through discourse and affect alike. It is at the juncture of the macro processes of globalisation and intense mediated communication and micro-processes of everyday life that reflexive identities are constituted (Giddens 1991, 1992; Georgiou 2019a), though, as we saw, reflexive identities are not by definition open or welcoming to difference. Consequently, reflexivity can be both transformative (Chapter 6) and reproductive (Chapter 4 and 5). I demonstrated the constant interplay in which cognitive conceptions of the Self do not pre-exist the encounter with the Other, but are in fact shaped through the discourse and practice that brings the Other within citizens' symbolic and material space of Self-making. In Chapter 6, Olympia, a working-class nanny, was affectively liberated from boundaries between 'us' and 'them' by her sustained encounter with Yuri, with whom she interacted by means of a translator app (which was an integral part of the embodiment). Nevertheless, citizens' historicised and highly mediated conceptions of the Self/Other binary dominated in cases where encounters were ephemeral and/or ideologies were polarised. The embodied experience with customers at the African bar was guided by the cognitive articulation of what it means for someone to come from Sub-Saharan Africa, as this articulation is largely mediated in the media, history books and popular discourse.

Instead of taking a media-centric approach to citizen identity in the context of crisis, in this study it was more important to explore how that identity is shaped through the interaction of the

narrative, affective and embodied dimensions of the encounter. The thesis contributes to media and communications studies by revealing the distinct role of media and communications in identity constructions in contexts of crisis and urban multiculturalism. Specifically, it highlights the importance of understanding media and communications in the spatio-temporality of crisis, and their powerful and complex role in shaping citizen identities. The thesis demonstrates how media narratives persistently mediate citizens' sense of identity (and conceptions of the Self and the Other), but also how the meanings of these narratives are situated in the context of everyday life and made sense of through the differential encounters with the Other. Thus, the thesis challenges media-centric approaches which exclusively or disproportionately focus on technologised spaces of communication; instead, it proposes a multi-levelled analysis of mediated identities that recognise their constitution through the interactions between embodied and mediated encounters. Using an interdisciplinary framework, this project has embraced the task of uncovering the mutual role that embodied and mediated encounters with Others play in the constitution of situated identities: it recognises embodied encounters as inherently relational and seeks to explore participants' agency to react to and negotiate their mediated encounters with those on the material street. If, as Gill Valentine has claimed, the constitution of a space involves a symbolic dimension when it comes to 'how we imagine space and its boundaries, how we imagine whose space it is, and how we construct "self" and "other" (Valentine 1999, 48), then participants' appropriation of or resistance towards media narratives on migration are clearly catalytic in the construction of imagined identities and geographies (Appadurai 1996; Georgiou 2017, 2019a).

To investigate how citizen identities are shaped only in relation to the embodied aspect of the encounter would mean ignoring the discourses and technologies through which the meanings of citizen identity are constructed. To only account for mediated encounters when the spatio-temporal context of the multicultural city creates conditions of constant encounters with the

Other would ignore the entanglement of the physical with the symbolic. Reflexivity thus emerges within the entanglement of the embodied and the mediated, but always within relations of history and power (Hall 1996). The concept of *affective, embodied and mediated reflexivity* that this thesis has introduced refers to the ways in which such historical mediations of identity and power (Ahmed 2000) are always already embedded in societal and individual systems of making sense of the encounter. This means that affective, embodied and mediated reflexivity is the result of historical processes of mediation in the sense that *both* everyday action *and* media representations are anchored onto histories and relations of power that have shaped meanings of nationality, race, class, gender and so on.

The affective, embodied and mediated space of reflexivity points to the affective, symbolic and material conditions that shape citizens' identities, as these relate to the experience of urban life. By definition, affective, embodied and mediated reflexivity is a communicative process of citizen identity-making that is rooted in the context of everyday life and emerges at the juncture of embodied encounters with Others as well as the intense mediation of migration in the context of crisis. The synergy between experience and imagination in the context of everyday life and of crisis leads to an affective, embodied and mediated reflexivity that understands the encounter as an accumulation of narratives, affect and embodiment.

Epistemological contribution to navigating citizen identity in the field

To explore the media and citizen identity relationship – a dialogical framework that is always shaped through interactions with the Other – requires a multi-method approach that reflects the multi-levelled process of citizen identity-making in the context of crisis. My ethnographic approach (including in-depth interviews, offline and online participant observation) led the practice and ethos of this multi-method approach to the study of media and citizen identity. The

innovative epistemology of citizen identity construction that I developed in this project is informed by existing ethnographic urban and media scholarship on encounters in the multicultural city (Leurs 2015; Lane 2019; Pink et al. 2016), with an ultimate goal to contribute methodologically to the agenda of media and citizen identity in the context of the changing city.

Empirically approaching the tripartite nature of citizen identity – as *practised*, *discursive* and *changing* – requires a methodological design that fully captures and reflects each one of its three facets. Firstly, to address the practised dimension of citizen identity, I employed offline participant observation and treated everyday life as a dynamic political space within which citizen identities are negotiated and (re)constructed. Coupled with its practised dimension, the methodological enquiry extended to the discursive dimension of citizen identity firstly to reveal the embeddedness of the media in participants' own narratives (through in-depth interviews), and secondly to explore how the participants negotiated their mediated encounters with Others through embodied ones in the city of difference. As migrants enter the material urban space, the innovative element of my epistemology lies in the exploration of the dual nature of the encounter to capture the changing nature of citizen identity – one that emerged within a dialogical framework that was defined through embodied and mediated encounters with noncitizens and through intense research across the material and digital spaces of the locale (through offline and online participant observation). Locating the experience in the context of its intense mediation is not new in the study of identity, as other ethnographic and media research illustrates (Livingstone 2002; Moore 2000; Madianou 2005b; Georgiou 2006); the originality in my epistemological decisions concerning methodology is attributed to (a) the constant interconnections between the symbolic and material spaces of encounter, (b) the relational nature of citizen identity, and (c) the theorisation of citizen identity at the juncture of imagination and experience in the context of crisis.

Driven by an ethnographic sensibility, the study exercised and demonstrated the viability of this methodological approach to the study of citizen identity beyond the particularity of the present project, which has implications for the study of identity more broadly, especially within multicultural spaces where segregation is evident and individuals have to constantly negotiate their spatial and ideological boundaries.

Three subjectivities of reflexivity

In my attempt to explore *how Greek citizens' identities are shaped when embodied and mediated encounters in proximity occur in the crisis-ridden multicultural neighbourhood of Kypseli*, three research sub-questions emerged:

1. How does the temporal context of proximity – that of crisis – construct the Self in relation to the migrant noncitizen? And what is the media's role in enhancing or containing crisis?

2. How does the city's throwntogetherness confirm or challenge media representations of the migrant Other?

3. How are sustained and embodied encounters with established and recent migrant populations experienced, beyond the spatial co-existence in the locale, and what are their consequences for citizens' identity?

The empirical chapters explain how they respectively address the question of Self-making through the migrant Other in the context of crisis in distinct ways. I developed a complex

conceptualisation of citizen identity as reflexively shaped in the context of everyday embodied encounters. Each of my empirical chapters speaks to a different subjectivity of reflexivity – crisis, culturalist and convivial.

To start with, Chapter 4 showed how it is not only the spatial context of proximity, but also the temporal context of it – that of crisis – which shapes the sense of Self's position in crisis through the Other (a *crisis reflexivity*). Chapter 5 demonstrated how citizens' co-occupation of local space with migrants brings the Other close, but when the encounter remains ephemeral, the latter only becomes a springboard to reaffirm pre-existing conceptions of the Self – as this is constructed through the media and other institutional systems that delimit national identity (a *culturalist reflexivity*). Finally, Chapter 6 went beyond the ephemerality of the encounter contained in co-occupying space, to examine the consequences of the sustained encounter and the more systematic engagement with migrants; this is the case where I most often observed a reflexive negotiation of the boundary between 'us' and 'them' (a *convivial reflexivity*). Thus, sustained encounters opened up spaces of imagination and action where the notion of Self as superior and fully different from the Other was challenged.

In Chapter 4, the communicative process of *crisis reflexivity* offered a conceptual tool to understand the consequences of limited or absent encounters with noncitizen Others for the citizens' construction of identity. Employing the concept of 'crisis imaginary' – referring to the symbolic space of Westernised narratives and migrant representations – the chapter showed how reflexivity challenges populist discourses that stem from the mediated encounter with the Other. It was evident that *media disinformation* in migration-related news constituted the symbolic environment and a platform for victimised citizens; their unwelcoming attitude towards refugees was more a result of disinformation and social media populist discourses than of interpersonal, even ephemeral, interaction. Their insecurities were exacerbated when they made references to

media discourses about the Orientalisation of the Greek welfare system, showing a dependence on and referring to the media to seek ontological security and legitimise their views (Koulaxi 2019). The condition of *victimhood* was enacted in citizens' reflexive accounts through affective forces of anger and indignation to further grant legitimacy to the materiality of crisis they experienced. The socio-cognitive articulation of the citizen Self as a victim is vital – and justified through the materiality of crisis in everyday life – but the condition of victimhood is constructed and intensified both through its embeddedness in social media platforms and discourses and the simple visibility of the Other. Although embodied encounters mediate the citizen Self as a victim in response to structural inequalities and the ontological insecurity that is linked to media disinformation, for progressively thinking participants, migration was presented as a phenomenon that diversified the city and was thus welcome. Citizens' *cosmopolitan* identity clearly showed that discourse (i.e., ideological positions) dominated over practice in their reflexive accounts. In those cases, embodied encounters were conditioned to the moral and political frames of ideology and mediated a 'migration crisis' that was seen as an opportunity instead of a burden.

In Chapter 5, the concept of *culturalist reflexivity* was proposed to clarify the obfuscated spatialised, yet ephemeral, encounters as moments that affirm Greek citizens' moral and cultural superiority vis-à-vis non-White migrants, through valorising Eurocentrism. Exploring the affective and symbolic nature of 'practical orientalism' (Haldrup, Koefoed, and Simonsen 2006) addresses whether spatial proximity with Others reaffirms or challenges boundaries between Us and Them, by demonstrating the various ways through which culturalist reflexivity is expressed. *Femonationalism* is a process that materialises at the juncture of mediated (pre-existing ideology of femonationalism and socio-historical construction of Islam in popular imagination), embodied (veiled women in the locale) and affective (reaction when encountering the Muslim woman on the material street) elements of reflexivity. The cognitive articulation of popular feminism that

was subjected to socio-cultural and racial hierarchies was significant, but the embodied encounter was also affectively (re)constructed in the locale. *Erasure of culture* demonstrates the synergies between cognitive (historically mediated knowledge and values associated with the meaning of being from the Middle East or Sub-Saharan Africa) and affective (discontent in the locale because of urban challenges, such as noise, close proximity and overpopulation) dimensions of reflexivity in the form of denial of cultural diversity as an ordinary condition of urban life. At the juncture of mediated and embodied encounters with noncitizen Others, it was evident that widely circulated Orientalist narratives in the media were dominant in citizens' accounts, but the affective practices of everyday bordering in the locale reaffirmed non-White inferiority while generating an assumed Eurocentric normativity. There is evidence that ephemeral encounters mediate femonationalism and cultural erasure, but culturalist reflexivity was limited to migrants' exceptionalism: citizens valorised norms of exception and entrepreneurialism that were not necessarily associated with money (or the economy as neoliberalism suggests), but with the nation state.

In Chapter 6, the communicative process of *convivial reflexivity* offered a conceptual tool to make sense of the sustained and systematic embodied interactions in the city and their role in shaping practices and ideologies of citizenry and Otherness. These practices and ideologies are, of course, historicised and socially situated – depending on participants' class, and local and national position in an unequal system, the intersections and divergences between questions of conviviality and reflexivity manifest themselves in different ways. *Affective solidarities*, which intersect with urban life, constitute a process that is related to the interaction of cognitive and affective elements of reflexivity. Despite the racialised public sphere, mutual respect affectively emerges in the densely populated block of flats and even becomes possible through digital technologies. Being a working-class citizen and belonging to a precarious socio-economic background intersected with the embodied experience of sharing everyday life struggles with

noncitizens. A *networked commons* was empirically observed mainly in the Municipal Market of Kypseli. This is a place that has a material entity but whose performative conviviality expands to the digital world of social media (its activities are publicised by means of the sharing culture on social media platforms). This was a powerful case allowing me to observe how a networked commons fosters citizens' convivial reflexivity, which relies on embodied encounters in the material space and digital connectedness. There is evidence that sustained and spatialised encounters mediate affective solidarities and support the emergence of networked commons that contest hegemonic power regimes, but convivial reflexivity is also subject to discourses of Whiteness and assimilation that are related to a neoliberal nationalist order: an order where racism serves to exclude noncitizens socio-culturally and nationally, while at the same time it structures their economic inclusion for the betterment of the economy.

Following the extensive presentation of reflexive subjectivities in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, I here pose the crucial question that requires an answer in my Conclusions: What do we learn about Greek citizens' identity and migration by examining crisis, culturalist, and convivial reflexivity and what is the wider relevance of this analysis to other crisis-ridden urban contexts? The current thesis set out to explore and reveal how embodied and mediated encounters shape Greek citizens' identities in a crisis-ridden multicultural city. After my empirical analysis in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, it has become evident that the three forms of reflexivity that emerge through embodied and mediated encounters with the noncitizen are neither stable nor fully bounded. Instead, and as it emerges from the findings, there are certain crossing and patterns that my doctoral thesis identifies. The respective patterns are constituted intersectionally and in relation to certain *identity discourses* that are asymmetrical, non-universal and cut across these subject positions which are situated within more persistent/hegemonic systems of power and knowledge within and beyond the Greek context. The cross-cutting identity discourses of (i) **Neoliberal nationalism** (ii) **Europeanism/Whiteness** (iii) **Classed** (iv) **Cosmopolitanism** and (v) **Nationalist populism**

are neither pure nor always appear in the same way and/or acquire the same characteristics but, instead they become differentially prominent in the context of the city of compounded crises and as individuals reflect on what they know (or do not know) about migration.

Neoliberal national identity discourse

The intersection between nationalism and neoliberalism emerged as a prominent discourse within my empirical findings, in line with recent literature that does not treat the two as antithetical and competing ontological approaches but as compatible (Joppke 2021; Harmes 2012; Lawrence 2005). There is an interesting interaction between nationalism and neoliberalism, according to which, on the one hand, migrant noncitizens are encouraged to recognise and assimilate to the neoliberal, nationalist Greek order – by speaking the language, being baptised as Christian Orthodox, attending Greek school to become socio-culturally compatible and 'do everything like us', including fully integrating into the labour market, as many middle- and working-class participants suggested in Chapter 6. The neoliberal-nationalist juncture was expressed in narratives offline and on social media, for example in Facebook posts about the 'exceptional individual' and the 'entrepreneurial migrant' (Heinkelmann-Wild, Beck, and Spencer 2019; Yuval-Davis, Wemyss, and Cassidy 2019), a discourse that overcompensates for a minority group's alleged cultural and racial limitations. In Chapter 5, the binary between Greekness and Blackness became blurred on an individual and exceptional basis. Even those participants that expressed Orientalist views made significant steps to perform Greekness in relation to skin colour on social media posts, especially when referring to the exceptional and self-made Greek-Black NBA player Giannis Antetokounmpo. The question, now, is whether this exemplary case could become an opportunity for a further configuration of Greek identity.

The '*neoliberal nationalist* identity discourse' valorises norms of exceptionalism (for instance, the Black child during the school celebration that wore the Greek traditional uniform in Chapter 5), the 'good Albanian migrant' (Albanian immigration that was considered as Greece's success story in Chapter 6) and/or the talented even if racialised exceptional individual (as in the case of the NBA player – see Chapter 5). Similarly, in France, a migrant from Mali was granted formal citizenship and recognised as a *hero* after saving the life of a young boy dangling from a Paris balcony.[36] However, those values were not solely associated with neoliberal economics and the market. Besides discourses on the exceptional good and entrepreneurial migrant (Chapters 5 and 6), citizens were staunch defenders of the national order. Especially when drawing the distinction between 'worthy' and 'unworthy' migrants, assimilation, Whiteness and the assumed homogeneity of Greece were prerequisites for conditional acceptance – thus excluding the majority of individuals from the minority/disadvantaged group that have not met the requirements of belonging to the community of citizens. Neoliberal nationalism constitutes an integral component of Euroscepticism in Greece, which emerges as a conscious reaction both to the state/European migration policies and neoliberal agendas (See Chapter 4). The current project understands neoliberal nationalism as lying at the heart of the many paradoxes of modernity that valorises individualism, exceptionalism and talent, while also requiring the noncitizens to comply with the national order of assimilation, homogenisation and cultural erasure. The aim to recuperate nationalism serves to exclude noncitizens formally (i.e., without granting them formal citizenship rights) and socio-culturally, and, at the same time, to include the 'deserving' migrant on certain conditions and a pay-back basis (exceptional/entrepreneurial migrant).

[36] See more about the story of the Malian migrant who became a French citizen https://www.bbc.co.uk/

Europeanist/White identity discourse

The '*Europeanist/White* identity discourse' that emerged from my findings valorised the principles of the European project as a beacon of superior culture against the continent's past and present diversity. The reoccurring appearance of Whiteness in many participants' narratives remind us that race is a 'floating signifier' (Hall 1996). As Hall remind us, race and racial order take their meanings within the socio-historical and cultural context through which hierarchies are produced, reproduced and constructed anew. In the case of Greece, and as I have repeatedly recorded during my fieldwork, many participants mobilised racial narratives of Whiteness and Eurocentrism to situate themselves vis-à-vis the migrant Others (who were often racialised and conceived as not belonging or ever being able to belong to Europe). In many cases, such narratives ultimately converged nationalism with the effects of the economic crisis (de Genova 2016) and 'an ideology of entitlement in times of downward mobility' (Davidson and Saul 2017, 712). Across Chapters 5 and 6, and irrespective of the nature of the encounter – whether ephemeral or sustained – I have observed how a number of participants embraced ideas of cultural and moral superiority as well as of White supremacy. Without always defining the parameters of Greek and European values, participants who mobilised these narratives assumed a universal acceptance that European culture and values as superior to those of migrants', a conception usually justified as 'common-sense' and 'ordinary'. Participants' 'Eurowhiteness' (Böröcz 2021) was also expressed as 'fear of downward geographical and therefore social mobility entailed by a crisis-induced move' of Greece '*away* from Europe' (Fischer 2021, 231; Panayiotou 2006). Social media played a key role in transposing the ideological frames of migration that circulate online to urban challenges in the neighbourhood. For example, Faidon and Danae, amongst others, as seen in Chapter 6, excluded customers (at the bar) of colour in terms of 'social awareness', 'inferior (African) culture' and 'common-sense' practices. Fomenting an imagined position of pan-European superiority, many participants, both female and male,

projected these values as the result of their judgements arrived at as independent agents who make free choices without any prejudices (as seen in Chapter 5 with citizens' attitudes towards the Muslim veil that, according to them, was incompatible with Greek/European values that valorised gender equality). Rather than making explicit references to individual attributes (i.e., skin tone), my interlocutors made references to 'underdeveloped' urban dwellers from the Middle East or Sub-Saharan Africa – in contrast to themselves as perpetually more superior Westerners and Europeans (as was the case with Pavlos' encounters with some migrants in the tax office and the inappropriate, in his eyes, queue jumping in Chapter 5). Thus, the White enlightened citizen becomes the standard against which to evaluate populations outside the imagined European public – a standard that moralises and justifies superiority vis-à-vis those that make efforts to approach the European prototype. In the same vein, participants usually neglected Europe's Islamic histories and associated the continent and European identity with (Orthodox) Christianity (Delanty 2002). I demonstrated how a conversation, which took place in the trolley bus (see Chapter 5) between a female citizen and a female migrant, enabled the two affectively to realise their mutual respect for studies and education, thus unsettling the clear boundaries between the presumed civilised West/uncivilised East, that many participants ordinarily reproduced. Despite a positive ephemeral encounter on the street, I repeatedly heard and observed that the veiled woman cannot be perceived outside the colonising narratives of Muslim feminine inferiority, which persistently circulates within the Greek public sphere. Such interpretations have their roots in the idea that Europeans and Western subjects shoulder the responsibility to enlighten 'inferior' subjects (who live in allegedly primitive conditions) and set the parameters of 'what 'progress' is, who follows and who lags behind (Kompatsiaris 2017, 372).

Class identity discourse

Class identity discourse, which intersects with the city, constitutes a space of common struggles that operationalises alternative citizen identities online and offline – citizen identities that are not defined by a sense of belonging to the nation and contained within territorial borders, but ones that are determined by their socio-economic position in an unequal society, like so many within the precariat (Standing 2011) beyond Greece that have been affected by the Eurozone crisis within the broader financial crisis (that affected populations world-wide). Expressions of solidarity in the neighbourhood had a class dimension and were supported offline (as seen in Solidaritarian graffiti on Kypseli walls in Chapter 6) or by networks of mediation and a sharing culture online (for example, through the use of a translator app, also in Chapter 6). There was a deeper understanding of the struggles that had a common denominator, despite citizens' position of relative privilege due to their formal citizenship rights. Despite their symbolic and cultural capital, many working-class participants contested racialist discourses as presented on the screen, and specifically on TV that still constitutes a very popular and influential medium within Greek society and other countries across the four continents (Podara et al. 2021; Vamvakas 2018; Papathanassopoulos et al. 2013). Because of their embodied collaboration in the workspace or the micro-publics of Kypseli, these participants hardly ever expressed essentialist discourses of national superiority when referring to migrants and minorities.

A nationalist understanding of citizen identity might have emerged as central for other citizens, but for many working-class Kypselians it was not the driving force behind their decision to oppose the rigidness of 'us' and 'them'. The pressures resulting from the Greek economic crisis have led to intense pauperisation where working-class individuals find themselves in a position that grants precedence to class solidarities and consciousness over criteria that might relate to the

country of origin, religion and others. For example, in Chapter 6, Nikitas, who saw his life change drastically because of the financial crisis, empathised with Farid who left his country to seek a better future in Europe. Despite the racialised public sphere, I pointed out that mutual respect affectively emerges in the crowded block of flats and even becomes possible through digital technologies (in the case of the mobile app that acted as a mediator for a Greek middle-aged woman and a refugee mother, or Nikitas and Farid's communication on WhatsApp). In the aforementioned cases, digital media revealed the relevance of '*class* identity discourse' not only as a pattern to express mutual understanding and respect, but also as one that manifests the never-ending struggles of working-class individuals in an unequal society. The performative enactment of conviviality spilled onto social media platforms (mainly on Facebook) and formed the basis for solidarities across difference. Being a working-class citizen, sharing the same socio-economic background and experiencing similar everyday life struggles with noncitizens brought migrant humanity closer to certain Kypselians, as the case with Olympia and her Lebanese refugee neighbour, Yuri, showed. These affective solidarities that converge with class positions do not necessarily pre-exist, but emerge at the intersection of the embodied encounters in the shared spaces of the city and individual's precarity.

Cosmopolitan identity discourse

In this identity discourse, cosmopolitanism's narrative tools – celebration of multiculturalism and migrants' cultural heritage, global identity and hospitality – were mobilised to defend the arrival of asylum seekers and migrants in the locale. Cosmopolitan imagination, which operates within a nationalist order in Kypseli, demonstrates that citizens' openness is not fully absorbed or lost in cases where citizens lack a systematic and consistent encounter with noncitizens. This was the case with the 'Migrants Welcome' marches in European cities in September 2015 where citizens' cosmopolitan feelings emerged primarily from mediated encounters with migrant populations.

Unlike Chapter 6 that highlighted the importance of conviviality for meaningful relationships, Chapter 4 pointed out that the simple visibility of the familiar stranger in the material streets of the neighbourhood was sufficient for participants with cosmopolitan vision to perform feelings of openness and recognition of difference offline and online. For instance, Nefeli and her two friends created the 'Kypseli is wonderful' group on Facebook Messenger to symbolically react to news stories that scapegoated the noncitizen in the neighbourhood. The values of welcoming attitudes towards newcomers in Kypseli were frequently expressed in my conversations with Greek citizens, but they remained conditional on the latter's political ideology and beliefs. It was those participants that declared their political orientation, as in Aelia's phrase 'I want to clarify that I am a leftist', Kimon's 'I don't have an ounce of racism. I am progressive' and Nefeli's 'I only read left-leaning news'. Confessional discourses that appear on social media platforms, mostly on Facebook and YouTube, are performative and 'powerful reflections of experimental articulations of the self' (Georgiou 2019a, 285), demonstrating attempts to engage with various communities in the Greek capital. Despite those citizens' limited interpersonal interaction with migrant noncitizens – as a result of the racialised and deeply divided public sphere – the narrative of 'alternative imaginary' (Zehfuss 2020) triumphed over practice (the actual embodied encounter in the material street), by contesting the neoliberal order of closed borders and control. Unlike other identities, for those projecting a cosmopolitan identity, such as Valeria who celebrated the migrants' cultural heritage and attended events in the Municipal Market of Kypseli (as seen in Chapter 6), migration was not seen as 'crisis' or as a bothersome responsibility that Greece should not shoulder. Instead it was seen as an opportunity to liberalise the city of Athens and resist nationalist and divisive politics. The story of the open city that was always built and culturally flourished on long histories of migration was a common theme amongst participants who were aware of difference, but treated it with respect (see Chapter 4).

Performative cosmopolitanism was not only mobilised as a narrative during my in-depth interviews, but it also expanded to the digital world of social media through its mediation and intermediation – the sharing culture on Facebook. I witnessed how Nikitas re-posted an image showing the leaflets of an ousted member of the fascist party Golden Dawn in the bin to express his support for a multicultural and multinational Kypseli (see Chapter 6), and how Aelia demonstrated performative resistance to widely circulated racialist discourse (Cammaerts 2012) by uploading an article on everyday faces of Kypseli to celebrate the multicultural character of the area.

Nationalist populist identity discourse

Populism, that has taken different expressions across the globe since its recent resurrection post-2008, meets nationalism (Eatwell and Goodwin 2018; Rodi, Karavasilis, and Puleo 2021) and emerges as the result of intensified structural inequalities, the systemic values' moral bankruptcy and the heightened mediation of post-truth (O'Connor 2017; Stoetzer, Giesecke, and Klüver 2021). At the juncture of crisis and intense mediated communication, the '*nationalist populist* identity discourse' emerges in my study as centred on nation-building and national belonging as counterpoints to the country's economic collapse. More specifically, nationalist populism takes a particular expression that is centred to the national identity through that particularity of the crisis – which is mediated through migration and the narrative fantasy that the noncitizen will take something from us (Žižek 1993). The way individuals in my study perceived their ontological insecurities and their sense of a threat to their identities was not necessarily determined by their socio-economic position, but by the collapse of the whole economy and the country's standing internationally. For instance, I demonstrated how individuals across classes (working- and middle-class) adopted and reproduced discourses in which migrants were the main threat that determined how their (national) interests were imagined. As the Other is now situated in the

Athenian locale, the national identity that is reconfigured is more centred on the Other than on the Self – compared to the US, for instance, where the Other is more imagined. Despite the material entity of the encounter, affective antagonisms between citizens and migrants were more the result of media disinformation and the reproduction of fake news that circulated on social media platforms. Lydia and Markos in Chapter 4, among other Greek citizens who have the 'lived experience of injustice' (Demertzis 2006, 111), justified their unwelcoming attitudes towards migrants and refugees by claiming that the newcomers benefited from PPC's Public Utility Services charge. According to my empirical findings, the '*nationalist populist* discourse of identity' was expressed in the narrative of victimhood within which the making of the Greek citizen and anti-migrant rhetoric increasingly converge, decontextualising the recent influx of migrants and refugees from events that take place in other parts of the world. The story of the migrant-scapegoat who did not belong revealed the fragility of 'the people' and their moral values (i.e., ontological/economic insecurities of a victimised citizen). The newcomer and the non-White subjects were perceived as the threat to the individual and the collective Self, the subject who undeservingly claimed access to the Greek welfare system, allowances, benefits and resources. For instance, several female participants blamed newly arrived migrants (who are mostly imagined rather than encountered directly) for the political and economic crisis and as directly responsible for their inability to have children (due to their poor financial circumstances – see Chapter 5). Competitive claims over who deserves more, that lead to nationalist populist identities, are emotionally authenticated and morally justified in the evolving media ecosystem and by the different individuals that inhabit it.

Citizens' kaleidoscopic identity discourses

Despite the mapping of identity discourses in the section above, such positions and patterns are not 'one size fits all', but kaleidoscopic and fluid. Citizen identity has many different labels and is

expressed in various forms depending on the temporal and spatial context. It is constructed through regimes of power and knowledge (Hall 1990), education, political narratives and everyday experience in the locale. Citizen identity is historicised and socially situated, varying according to individuals' economic, cultural and social capital; it depends on informants' age, gender and class, as well as their local and national position in an unequal system (Georgiou 2006; Madianou 2005b; Siapera 2006; Nightingale 2014).

The contradictory and conflicting identity discourses, as shaped through the complex intersectionalities of life in the multicultural city in crisis do not allow for generalising logics or rigid interpretations of identities bounded within stable positions that fully determine groups and individuals. The need for intersectional and systematic analysis of identity that takes into account its temporal and spatial situatedness became apparent when findings challenged assumptions often reproduced in the literature. For instance, and in contrast to what is commonly assumed, it was not the case that middle-class individuals (Morley 1980; Wood 2009; Skeggs and Wood 2012; Kellner 2019), because of their cultural capital, were better able to identify media disinformation and misinformation regarding migration-related news; or relatedly, that young individuals were more cosmopolitan and open to difference than older citizens. Taking a more productive approach to citizen identity, without positioning individuals within the fixed categories and boundaries (Robins and Aksoy 2001) that critical scholarship has historically aimed to avoid, it is important to remind ourselves that when the modern city itself is changing demographically and economically, citizen identity is changing too. In context of crisis and uncertainty, identity becomes a fragile project (Giddens 1990, 1991) that is unstable and constantly under negotiation. Nevertheless, one thing is certain: citizen identity is always shaped in dialogue with the constitutive outside (Isin 2002; Ahmed 2000; Triadafyllidou 2010), who in the case of Kypseli, is mainly embodied and mediated as the migrant Other (Georgiou 2017) – both the established and newcomer migrant. The Other is always a point of reference for the

urban dweller that seeks to acquire their symbolic and spatial positioning within the community of citizens. The different contextualisations (i.e., limited/absent, ephemeral/sustained) of encounters inform us precisely about the political meaning of citizen identity in a certain socio-historical moment that coincides with intense mediation. Consequently, it is more meaningful to explore the 'mediated reproduction of identity hierarchies' (Georgiou 2019a, 284) – the ways in which these citizen identities change, especially in the context of a constantly evolving media landscape. In particular, it is vital to explore how popular notions of the Self and the Other shift, and how some imaginaries that manifest specific particularities within a defined context might differ in nature amongst other groups or in other contexts. For example, populism in Greece might take a particular expression that is centred in national identity through the particularity of the crisis – i.e., one that is mediated through migration; while in India, the United States or Brazil, populism might be expressed in an alternative way with a different focus (Chakravartty and Roy 2015). With this in mind, the current project has taken, firstly, an anti-essentialist approach to citizen identity (Hall 1996; Ang 2003) and secondly, one that valorises the prominent role of media and communications within existing systems of knowledge and power beyond the Greek context.

Concluding remarks and recommendations

The main contribution of my doctoral thesis is to the literature on media and citizen identity – especially at a time that the hybrid media ecology both 'reflects and constructs identity in its performative and imagined dimensions' (Georgiou 2019a, 285). I have argued for a dialectical and dialogical framework within which to theorise the relationship between citizen identity and the media by means of embodied encounters in the crisis-ridden multicultural city. My interest in citizen identity through the constitutive Other (in this case the migrant noncitizen) has been inspired by social theory, especially theories of reflexivity, and urban studies, especially theories

of spatialised encounters, but has always been grounded in media and communications studies, especially through its recognition of different forms of mediated constructions of the sense of Self and the Other. This interdisciplinary approach was outlined in Chapter 2 and informed my analysis across Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

My exploration of citizen identity through the Other – who in the crisis-ridden multicultural city is mainly embodied and mediated as the noncitizen migrant – had a strong contextual dimension. The study focused on an Athenian neighbourhood and made no generalising claims about how all Greek, or all national identities, for that matter, are constructed. There were temporal and local dynamics that determined the scope of my project, but at the same time, these logics helped me produce an analytical approach that speaks to the processual construction of citizen identity through mediated and embodied encounters. There is a particular need to reflect on the relational constitution of identities in cities that are changing through migration. Migration destabilises imaginaries of belonging and assumptions of homogenous national communities, thus opening up spaces of citizen identity construction in more complex and contradictory ways. The project is especially relevant to multicultural cities living through compounded crises that exacerbate existing structural inequalities and vulnerabilities. Beyond the relational constitution of identities, it is vital to explore the situatedness of conviviality and interrogate how relationships between citizens and noncitizens interact with pre-existing inequalities in the crisis-ridden multicultural city. With the spatiality of convivial relations in mind, future research on embodied encounters with Others could further explore gendered relations, especially as these might reflect different kinds of female solidarities that challenge the hegemony of femonationalist discourses. Since migrant women are primarily the ones (compared to men) who engage in meaningful encounters with citizens (and mainly female citizens) by sharing daily practices and routines (i.e., childcare, grocery shopping and others), 'neighbouring relations gradually lead to processes of familiarization, co-existence, and ultimately perhaps inclusion'

(Micha and Vaiou 2019, 73-74). Consequently, an intersectional framework that examines more systematically gender alongside and in dialogue with other markers of differences (i.e., race, ethnicity, class) has the potential to enlighten underexplored dimensions of collaboration and understandings of belonging and identity as well as further contribute to studies that explore gendered experiences of migration in city spaces (Bailey 2011; Christensen 2012; Micha and Vaiou 2019).

The study has contributed to the growing body of scholarly work that explores the interconnections between identity and the media, by closely examining the entanglement of material and symbolic processes that constitute meanings of the Self, particularly, the citizen self. As recorded in my empirical analysis, the role of media (both social media and mass media) emerges as central in the symbolic constitution of the citizen Self through the Other, opening or closing avenues for co-existence, recognition, mutual respect and solidarity. Therefore, as an extension to my findings, arguments and questions put forward in this doctoral thesis could be further explored in the future after decades of co-existence with non-European migrants. Will the deeply racialised binary of Us/Them remain or will Muslims from the Middle East, Afghans and Sub-Saharan Africans be reconfigured as the proximal, accepted, even if always recognised as Other, migrant? Or, given Russia's war in Ukraine and the number of Ukrainian refugees seeking shelter in European cities, how will citizens react to the White Christian migrant fleeing the war that takes place in the European borders? Will Ukrainian refugees be treated as worthy of protection and welcomed in European cities vis-à-vis those in the same position coming from Syria, Afghanistan or Iraq?

Future research could also adopt a comparative lens, comparing working-class neighbourhoods – like the one I focused on – with more affluent neighbourhoods that have not been impacted by the relocation of new migrants and where the mediated encounter is the only source of

information. One might argue that this comparison is tenuous, as citizens in Athens cannot be insulated, no matter where they live. I am fully aware that living in certain areas does not connote one's isolation from the nation, the city or from impoverished areas where migrants reside. My argument relies on the distinction between (a) contingent and momentary, and (b) permanent and inevitable encounters with Others as they occur in a multicultural neighbourhood - Kypseli. Such a project should take into account the fact that citizens with solely mediated experience of migrant populations may not have neighbours from the Middle East, but they may already have encountered earlier migrant arrivals such as the Albanians and other Eastern Europeans who migrated to Greece following the collapse of their state-socialist regimes (as described in Chapter 6). Another important comparative approach could contrast the multicultural city with parts of Greece where segregation and divisions between majority and minority populations is rigid (i.e., Western Thrace where boundaries are abundant despite close proximity between Muslim/Turkish minorities and majority ethnically Greek populations). This kind of comparative research could shed some light on comparative explorations of the construction of Us/Them and Self/Other identities in urban and rural contexts.

Writing this thesis in the midst of COVID-19 pandemic, the concept of citizen identity, and thus the sense of belonging, became more pertinent than ever. Undoubtedly, the pandemic has intensified processes of bordering in the name of national health and wellbeing. The new conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic add to pre-existing inequalities, exacerbate old divisions and further destabilise meanings around identity and belonging, as discussed in the context of this thesis. What are the significant changes that the pandemic introduced – as a health crisis and as governmental processes of population mobility control – for the present and future of migration? Or relatedly, what does the pandemic mean for established and recently arrived populations in a country that is already hit by crisis? 'Six new COVID-19 cases, 150 in Kranidi [a migrant/refugee detention site]' announced Professor Sotiris Tsiodras, Greece's health ministry

spokesperson and infectious diseases expert, on 21 April 2020. Such formal announcements have set strict discursive parameters that treat migrant populations in a refugee camp as clearly unwanted by reproducing and normalising the binary between the Greek citizen in need of protection from outside threats, and the infectious and dangerous noncitizen. Relatedly, what is the role of digital media and communication technologies in advancing or hindering populist narratives as well as solidarities between citizens and noncitizens at times of heightened mobility controls and COVID-related restrictions? Similarly, in what ways do digital media contest or reaffirm hegemonic regimes on the ground but also online? These are important questions to further explore given the whole world is challenged by a global pandemic which has made the role of media (both mass media and social media) and ideas of connectivity, interactivity, community-building and solidarities more necessary and important than ever.

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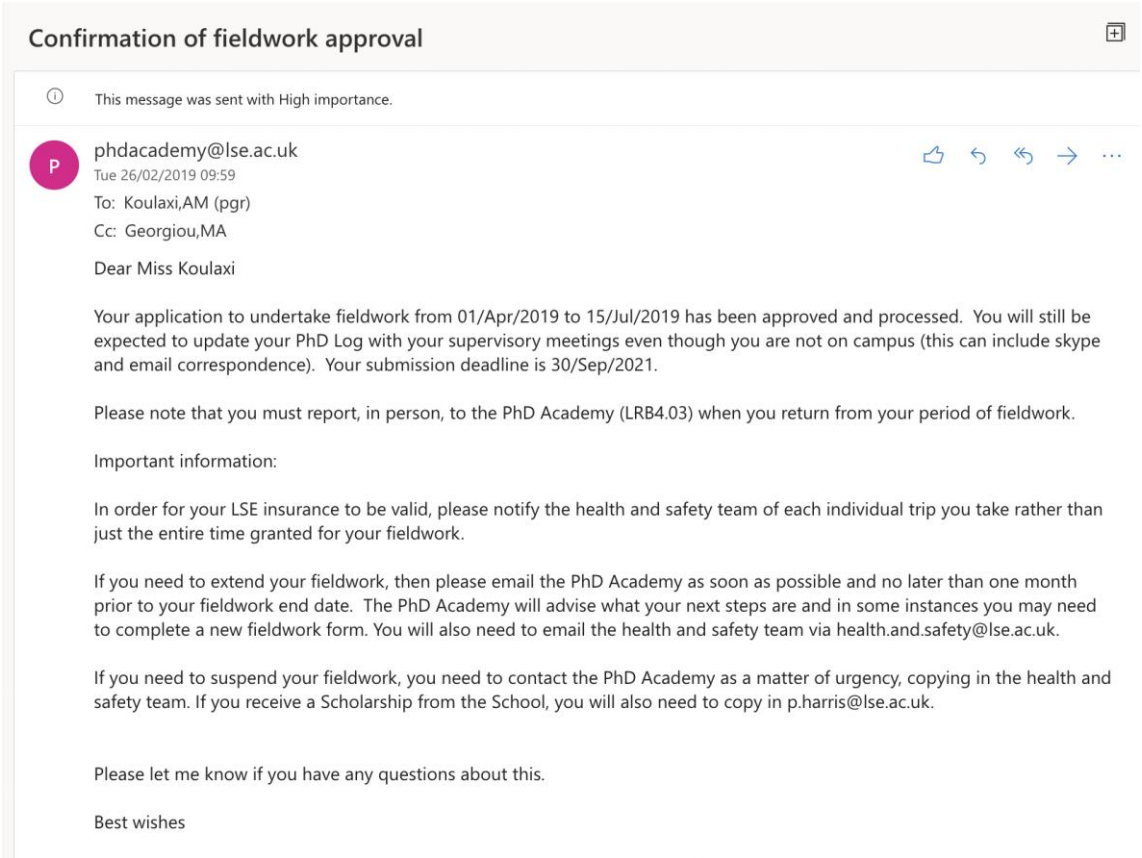
Appendices

Appendix A: Confirmation of fieldwork approval



Confirmation of fieldwork approval

This message was sent with High importance.

P

phdacademy@lse.ac.uk
Tue 26/02/2019 09:59

To: Koulaxi,AM (pgr)
Cc: Georgiou,MA

Dear Miss Koulaxi

Your application to undertake fieldwork from 01/Apr/2019 to 15/Jul/2019 has been approved and processed. You will still be expected to update your PhD Log with your supervisory meetings even though you are not on campus (this can include skype and email correspondence). Your submission deadline is 30/Sep/2021.

Please note that you must report, in person, to the PhD Academy (LRB4.03) when you return from your period of fieldwork.

Important information:

In order for your LSE insurance to be valid, please notify the health and safety team of each individual trip you take rather than just the entire time granted for your fieldwork.

If you need to extend your fieldwork, then please email the PhD Academy as soon as possible and no later than one month prior to your fieldwork end date. The PhD Academy will advise what your next steps are and in some instances you may need to complete a new fieldwork form. You will also need to email the health and safety team via health.and.safety@lse.ac.uk.

If you need to suspend your fieldwork, you need to contact the PhD Academy as a matter of urgency, copying in the health and safety team. If you receive a Scholarship from the School, you will also need to copy in p.harris@lse.ac.uk.

Please let me know if you have any questions about this.

Best wishes

Appendix B: Interview guide (English version)

Briefing

- Self-Introduction
- Aims and nature of the study
- Disclaimer: no right/wrong answers, no need to answer
- Consent: confidentiality, anonymity, the right to withdraw at any time
- Any questions before we start?

<u>Part A</u>: Life in the neighbourhood

1) How many years have you been living in Kypseli?
2) Why do you live this neighbourhood (close to the city centre, affordable accommodation, "forced" choice etc.)?
3) How would you characterise your area in one word?
4) How do you feel about living in Kypseli?

<u>Part B:</u> Personal contacts/relationships with migrants

1) As we just mentioned, Kypseli is a diverse neighbourhood. Do you happen to know any migrants in person? (If yes, go to 6. If no, go to 7).
2) You said "yes"…
   -Could you give me some more information on how you met this person, when, and what brings you two close?
   -Do you recall examples where you supported migrants in your neighbourhood? What happened?
   -Do you know any more people from her community?
3) You said you don't know any people from the new migrant populations. Is it a coincidence or a choice? (Language barrier, perceived/real cultural differences, etc.)

I want to take you back and reflect on the case of Albanian immigration to Greece in the 90s.

1) Do you have any Albanian neighbour or any Albanian friend?
2) How different/similar is the situation now? What new element do the new migrant populations bring to Kypseli and the city of Athens?
3) Is it about the situation (leave it undefined and don't call it crisis until it comes up) in Greece?
4) How would you describe Greece and municipality's response to the influx of new migrant populations?
5) Can/should the recent arrival of migrant populations stay in Kypseli? Can/should they belong here? Should there be places in other areas of Athens? Why? Why not?

<u>Part C:</u> New migrant populations

1) How do you describe these populations?
2) What, in your opinion, are the main reasons they migrated?
3) How do you know this is the case?
4) What are the feelings that come to mind when thinking of the arrivals of migrant populations in your neighbourhood?

5) What does migration to European countries, and especially to Athens, mean to you?

Part D: **Experience with "crisis"**

1) Have your living conditions changed in the last couple of years?
2) What kind of "crisis" are you referring to?
3) How has your neighbourhood changed in the last years?
4) You seem to be very pessimistic/optimistic about your future and the future of the neighbourhood. Why is that?

Part F: **Media practices**

1) Where do you get information on current affairs? (newspaper, neighbour, TV)
2) Tell me first about TV. Which channel(s) do you watch? Which is the most reliable? Is there a news coverage on migration you can recall watching? What did you learn you might not have learnt otherwise? Did it make you think in a particular way?
3) Do you think migration is covered a lot on the news? Would you prefer more, less? Why?
4) Do you use Facebook? How often do you use it?
5) What kind of needs does it cover? (Information, communication, interpersonal)
6) If you communicate with friends ... Do you remember something you exchanged with them? What did you discuss about it?
7) Does she also live here in the neighbourhood? If so, why do you communicate via Facebook? What does Facebook offer?
8) Do you know the Facebook group "Our Kypseli"? Are you a member? Yes? No? Why?
9) Do you think it's a good idea?
10) How would you characterise the Greek media? Are they reliable? Do you believe you have sufficient access to information?
11) What do the media usually say about migrants/refugees in your area?
12) The "migration crisis" has now disappeared from our screens. Is it the same in your neighbourhood?
13) In which period do you situate the "migration crisis"?

Appendix C: Consent form (English version)

THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

Everyday encounters with migrants

Participant consent form (English version)

Thank you for letting me give you information about my research on how you experience migrants and refugees in Kypseli.

If I ask something you don't understand, just ask me to explain. If there's anything you don't want to answer, that is fine. And if you want to stop and leave the discussion at any point, just let me know.

I have had the research explained to me and have had the opportunity to ask questions.	☐ (please tick)
I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study and understand that I can refuse to answer questions and I can withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason.	☐ (please tick)
I agree to the interview being audio recorded and I understand that my real name will not be used in possible academic publications.	☐ (please tick)
I understand that my responses will be kept confidential and anonymous and that my personal data (consent form) will be kept securely and destroyed after 10 years.	☐ (please tick)
If information posted on social media is used, I agree to joint copyright of the online material to Afroditi-Maria Koulaxi	☐ (please tick)

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

For information please contact: Afroditi-Maria Koulaxi – A.M.Koulaxi@lse.ac.uk |T: