RADICAL COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA–POLITICAL SLOGANS AND STREET ART IN THE TIME OF THE CRISIS

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ABSTRACT

Mainstream media typically reflect the values of the dominant culture, supporting the socio-economic stability that keeps the business running. On the other side, all kinds of alternative media have one thing in common: they break some rule of the mainstream media system and very often they stand in opposition to the conventional customs and institutions. In any case, there has been always an intense discourse between media scholars concerning the evolution of communication technologies in relation to their influence on society. This study elaborates the interactions between the new forms of media and the long-standing radical modes of communication in the framework of social activism. I will set the frames for a discourse to examine how contemporary Information and Communication Technologies can influence traditional forms of communication that express social discontent, based on practical examples concerning unauthorized outdoor graphics made by local grassroots activists and their connexion to social media in times of the Greek economic crisis.

Keywords: alternative media, social media, political slogans**,** street art, Athens

1. INTRODUCTION

People that participate in social movements are not operating as though they are mute pawns on a social chessboard, on the contrary they all play a part within a system of interconnected relationships. Although nowadays most people communicate basically via Information and Communication Technology (ICT) systems, they still live and interact with other people at real urban environments following the inevitable changes and transformations that everyday life brings. Park (1925: 1) argued that big cities are not just decisive physical mechanisms and artificial constructions, they also include all the vital processes of the people that compose them: 'they are products of nature and particularly of human nature'. In the same sense someone can argue that ICT systems are not just hardware, software and complementary networks, they are

also associated with the vital processes of those people that compose them and use them. Under the new technological horizons that emerge in connection to contemporary social movements online individuals interact and are sharing after all collective identities (Bakardjieva 2015).

At a first glance, the contemporary urban space of 'liquid-consumerist reality' (Bauman, 2000) seems neutral, common and free for all the citizens. Although the open areas of the cities are supposed to be common, they have been often used by few people with obscure purposes. As Lefebvre (1976: 31) pointed out, at times several social groups have been appropriating urban space 'in order to manage and exploit it'. By examining urban planning and its effects over life in the framework of 'biopolitics' Foucault (2007) argued that the state uses topography and architecture applying the technologies of governance, to control people. Additionally, according to Negri (2009) architecture in cooperation with the current industries of fashion and cinema contribute for the dissolution of any possible resistance against the establishment by spreading 'artificial light' to all the aspects of life.

In this respect, Harvey acclaimed that the urban world can be re-imagined and re-made in human conditions, because we are all architects, individually and collectively, so we can re- shape the city 'through our daily actions and our political, intellectual and economic engagements' (Harvey, 2003: 939).

Social activism sometimes employs unconventional and illegal methods for changing or even overturning the establishment. Tarrow called contentious politics in a broad sense any 'collective activity on the part of claimants -or those who claim to represent them- relying at least in part on non-institutional forms of interaction with elites, opponents, or the state' (Tarrow, 1996: 874). Thus, contentious politics can involve also the symbolic unauthorised and disruptive techniques that radical social groups use against the power-structures to achieve their political goals.

Alternative media argues Atton in his homonymous entitled book, are 'crucially about offering the means for democratic communication to people who are normally excluded from media production' (Atton, 2001: 4).

Additionally Downing, often address to 'radical media' as the media of social movements. He considers radical all the media that usually come in small-scale and in many different forms, expressing alternative visions to the hegemonic policies, priorities and perspectives. Further, he develops his theory about alternative media channels including also artistic production and cultural practices such as street theatre, clothing, tattoos, make-up and graffiti (Downing, 2001, 2008).

In the same framework Fuchs sets art murals, stickers, posters and graffiti under the heading of

'critical media' and notes that their content can reveal the suppressed possibilities of existence describing antagonisms of reality and potentialities for change by the oppressed groups arguing for the advancement of a co-operative society (Fuchs, 2010).

It can be considered that urban space in contemporary times sets a platform caring various types of visual articulations, communicating conventional and unconventional messages, commercial promotions, spatial instructions, public debates or personal statements etc. All those expressions very often draw the attention of the passengers and sometimes invite them for daydreaming. Under the title urban outdoor graphics, I can enlist many kinds of visual messages, legally or illegally constructed, sited openly at the urban environment, including roughly everything from state and municipal instructions to commercial and political advertising, as well as the unauthorized outdoor writings and drawings made by social activists, lovers, hooligans, neo-tribe youths and so on. This excessive usage of the urban space as communication board that takes place in most of the contemporary cities gradually increases the academic concern. Scholars have investigated this topic throughout multiple perspectives and diverse disciplines such as architecture, ecology, political science, communications studies, psychology, sociology, gender studies, history, fine arts, geography, anthropology, cultural studies, business administration etc. (Peteet, 1996, Halsey and Young, 2002, Lynn and Lea, 2005, Snyder, 2006, McGaw, 2008, Pursley, 2012, Schacter, 2013, Lombard, 2014, Toenjes, 2015).

Social media can be examined as computer mediated interactive communication technologies of *web 2.0* that are capable to host a variety of media forms such as text, sounds, photographs, moving images. They are mostly user-generated content communication services that can be used by anyone, for any kind of interaction or for sharing information locally and globally. The social media have changed the way typical mediated communications work. The conventional media ecology was disrupted as radical media could be embedded to mainstream communication platforms. The influence of social media in contemporary society is an argument that has been bothering intensively for the last decades both the academic community and the world of politics. Hence, platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr and so on, have been assumed to be in effect very important for the processes of individual and collective identities construction, for the genesis and maintenance of virtual communities as well as for the coordination of social movements.

While many scholars investigated the general symbolic or organizational influences of social media on social movements (Earl and Kimport, 2011, Aunio and Staggenborg, 2011, Bennett and Segerberg, 2012) others demonstrated their reflexions on collective identities formation (Milan, 2015, Monterde et al., 2015) and others examined social media and the conception of virtual scenes (Lee and Peterson, 2004, Waldron, 2013).

In this study I will examine the relations between mainstream communication channels based on the new ICT systems and the deep-rooted alternative media in the context of social protests. I will focus on the special condition in which conventional social media (Facebook, YouTube, etc) include local outdoor graphics originated from certain radical social groups and how this embedment may influence the communications codes of the activists.

Accordingly, by examining actual cases concerning local expressions of the protests in the time of the Greek crisis and their reproduction to the social media platforms I will present some parameters of the discourse on how ICTs can be responsible for changes in the social movement's symbolic expressions.

2. METHODOLOGY AND AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The complete schema of my study consists a multifaceted qualitative approach. It is based on my observation and research of the contemporary outdoor graphics that cover the walls of Athens. It also includes a brief historical perspective on the study of Greek unauthorised outdoor graphics development based on secondary sources such as illustrated history books and graffiti albums. In order to get personal views of the activists and the street performers I undertook three short interviews. Correspondingly I supported my assessments by the analysis of four practical examples of street expressions. Finally, I made a brief research exploring the dominant themes concerning unauthorised outdoor graphics on social media postings and more precisely on Facebook.

After several dèrives at the greater area of Athens[2] for a year collecting data that were documented by a digital camera I categorized the unauthorized outdoor graphics concerning type (slogans, graffiti, street art, tagging and other), content (straight political discourse, football statements, existential-personal expression and other) and text language (Greek, English and other).

However, the constant and rapid changing character of the data in such cases as the unauthorised outdoor graphics, that one day can appear on a wall and the next day may get wiped out or covered up by other messages, implies relative instability and complexity to the results. Thus, this condition can easily contain minor statistical fallacy.

Another aspect that can give dubious assumptions is that as I noticed there is high concentration of some special types of unauthorized graphics at certain neighborhoods and absence of the same types at other areas. Street art for example has a great concentration in the central districts of Athens and some explicit suburbs. In this sense I preferred to avoid conclusions based on discrete categorization of the statistical results by district. I preferred rather to shape a general

scheme using the trends of the data in an aggregate sense which links qualitative concerns to quantitative measures. Hence, my intention was to conceptualize loosely the fluidity of everyday social life as it was expressed in the greater area of Athens. The random sample that I used contains two thousand mixed outdoor graphics that come equivalent from diverse neighbourhoods.

My secondary sources were illustrated history books depicting the urban landscape of Athens since the second World War. Most of those books that document the Athenian history often contain street photographs with political slogans that are central to typical composition of the frame. I also used recent publications such as albums and collections on Greek graffiti. Consequently, the historical period of the selected data roughly covers the years from 1940 until recently.

I attempted to communicate with some of the most creative graffiti writers and street artists of Athens. However, it was difficult to approach them as unauthorised outdoor graphics considered to be illegal by the authorities. Finally, I managed to get three informal online interviews in respect that I would maintain the anonymity of the interviewees. I followed semi- structured interviews, with direct topic-centred questions on the influence of social media to their work, though seeking potentialities for flexibility and further discussion. However, the interviewees were laconic eliciting open and vague responses.

My general interest lies foremost in the way in which the content of local radical communications can be modified by the activists themselves when knowing that their messages will be embedded to social media. More precisely I investigated the possible changes that social media era brought to local political expressions of the *wall slogans* and the *street art*. Obviously, those changes can reflect some of the most contemporary trends concerning the alternative media research and the political studies that focus on social media, local activism and transnational collective action.

3. HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK

Athens seems to have a very interesting past concerning unauthorised writings and drawings on the street walls. In most of the cases, all those alternative modes of expression were performed occasionally by agitated individuals or social groups that were excluded from the conventional media channels. The partisans during the German occupation in the Second World War, the opponent armies during the Greek civil war, the resistance against the military junta of 1967–1974, the football hooligans, the desperate lovers, the profound existentialists, the neo-tribe youths or the anarchists appear to be the main actors in this long history (Dimaras, 1981, Glezos, 2006, Katsigeras, 2009).

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The American type of graffiti made its appearance in the streets of Athens during the eighties. Initially Athenian graffiti writers adapted the techniques and the conventions of the early generation graffiti. Gradually the classic old school graffiti style that they used was influenced by novel international trends and evolved to various aesthetic forms (wildstyle, blockbuster, comic-cartoon, 3D, sticker, etc). Later, with the collaboration of several fine art and graphic design college graduates, street drawings advanced to a great number of hybrid stylistic forms approaching street art (neo-classic Greek, photo-realistic, etc).

Although the use of stencil reproduction technique as a form of contentious political participation dates back many years[3] it was dynamically diffused in the streets of Athens only after the millennium.

Eventually, a great number of publications came up about Greek graffiti, stencil and slogans by Iosifidis (1997, 2000), Andriotakis (2005), Menegos (2007), Peponis (2008), Theodosis and Menegos (2007), Theodosis and Karathanasis (2008), Pagalos (2016) Avramidis and Tsilimpounidi (2016), etc.

After a closer look I distinguished three indicative periods of the Greek unauthorized outdoor graphics that were made during the twentieth and the early twenty-first centuries.

In the first long period that begins during the second world war and ends circa late seventies, wall writings were not so rare but also not so diffused. They were performed with paintbrushes usually in rough way. Most of the expressions were simple and direct, written on the walls in the Greek language with certain colors according to the political semantic codes of the period, denoting claims for independence or declaring the lines of the political parties. In this sense, patriotic slogans during the Second World War such as 'rebels do not kneel' were written in the Greek language and were clearly addressed to the local community with purpose to unite people against the oppressor, to give hope and to glorify the rebels. I came up to similar conclusions about the simplicity of the signification codes for slogans that were made the late sixties against the junta or during the seventies. Designs such as a red hammer and sickle, a green half sun or a black circle-A, represented correspondingly the Greek left (KKE, KKE Interior etc) the socialist party (PASOK) and the anarchists, while the Greek characters 'NΔ' in blue color represented the Greek conservative party (Nea Dimokratia), and so on. Correspondingly, the red color represented the left, the green represented the socialists, the black was used by the anarchists or the far-right, while blue color represented the right-wing formations.

During the eighties Greek paint firms settled the aerosol color production and someone could easily get at the market spray-cans in reasonable prices. I consider this move as a development stage for the Greek unauthorized outdoor graphics that also activated eventually the process of

recuperation[4].

The early years of the nineties graffiti was appropriated and celebrated by the mass media and the commercial mainstream youth fashion. This shift was amplified through certain events that took place such as graffiti festivals initialized by institutions including the Hellenic American Union or the Goethe Institute of Athens, etc. and the support of formal artistic graffiti groups such as the 'Crape Dien group'. Although in this period the political slogans were still written in simple Greek fonts, the classic American graffiti performers and some the football Ultras were using English language or at least Latin characters.

After the millennium Greek graffiti and street art got into another dimension as they reached an exponential growth, with vertex the Greek crisis around 2008. This period also took place the convergence of alternative and mainstream media forms by the introduction of web 2.0 technologies and the development of the social media platforms. These facilities allowed users to interact on a global level with comments, posts, links and taggings associating mainstream and alternative media environments. Further, media contents that were posted to the social media could be reproduced over again to the traditional mainstream media as we have often seen on the TV screens. For instance, videos uploaded to YouTube documenting events such as revolts and demonstrations of the 'Arab spring' the 'Indignados' in Spain or the 'Aganahtismenoi' in Greece were regularly reproduced by mainstream television channels.

During this last phase I estimated a great number (29,1%) of slogans in foreign languages (Table 1). This fact raises the question to whom are addressed all these foreign language messages. In addition, the proportions of graffiti (97,4), tagging (97,3) and street Art (93,4) in foreign languages are extremely high (Table 1).

Certainly, there are multicultural zones in the urban area of Athens due to the mass population displacements of our times (immigrants, refuges). However, I do not think that this is the case: I believe that those messages confirm a general globalized attitude that characterizes lately the grassroots activists.

Today, according my data roughly eighty nine percent point five of all the unauthorized outdo or graphics in Athens (Table 2) are written in foreign characters when in the seventies you cou ld hardly get only a few non-Greek characters in the wall slogans[5].

4. UNAUTHORISED OUTDOOR GRAPHICS OF ATHENS

Next, I will present four examples of unauthorized outdoor graphics that are performed apparently by the radical activists and the street artists of Athens[6].

Even though during the seventies the youth wings from all the political parties were potential political slogan writers, nowadays the most part of street graphics comes basically from the extreme left or right grassroots activists and the anarchists. According my data two of the most common expressions that regularly appear on the walls of Athens in English are the slogans: 'Smash Racism and Fascism' (figure 1) and 'Wake Up' (figure 2).

Beyond any doubt, the political signification of the first slogan is obvious for English language speakers and presumably for a great part of people in Greece.

On the contrary, there is a complicated legend related to the second one. It is believed to be a part of a conversation that started between the Spanish 'Indignados' of Puerta del Sol square and the 'Aganaktismenoi' of Syntagma square in Greece around the spring of 2011. This dialogue begun when the Spanish 'Indignados' on demonstration banners called people to keep quite because the economically suppressed Greeks will wake up and protest (Sotirakopoulos and Ntalakra, 2015: 84).

Figure 1

Figure 2

Accordingly, the 'Wake Up' slogan that appeared afterwards in the streets of Athens was mainly an anxious call for all the local people to act against the austerity measures that have been imposed to them. Inevitably, there is no dialogue without the use of a common code and assuming that the common code in this case was the English language, obviously the activists had the intention to extend the number of their addressees beyond the Greek boarders. They were planning to broaden the diffusion of the message by publishing photographs of the slogans on alternative internet sites. Most probably they intended to post images also to social media platforms, considering that this period was taking place an international discourse concerning the

role and the effectiveness of Facebook, YouTube and Twitter on collective action (Khondker 2011). In any case the message was also a response to the Spanish 'Indignados' tease.

To such a degree, I can conclude that the new forms ICT improve the coordination of activists between the nations although they violate some local communication codes. Undoubtedly, colloquial language is always in a process of change, sometimes adapting foreign words for the needs of its users but addressing for political motivation to the local community in a foreign language can always bring the risk of *'aberrant decoding'* during perception (Eco, 1965).

Certainly, the British colonization of the past centuries and the most recent cultural, economic, political and military supremacy of the USA have set the English as the language for international communications. Also, there is no doubt that the advertising industry and the mainstream media conglomerates, regularly use English words and phrases shaping the consumerist culture that generates ideological effects over the people (Marcuse, 1964, Herman and Chomsky, 1988). Reflecting on this formula the local activists started over the last decades to use foreign languages (mostly English and Spanish) as common codes to communicate their slogans through social media in order to acquire international involvement.

Figure 3

Figure 4

Street art belongs on the other hand to the art-worlds. According to Becker (1982) the idea of the art-world is based on a tautology. Therefore, art-worlds are networks of individuals and groups that are organized into collective activities based on their common knowledge of the conventional ways in doing and perceiving Art, always in accordance with the settlements of the world of Art. Thus, art-worlds are networks of social groups involved in all the necessary activities for the production and evaluation of certain formations that the same people define as

artworks.

However, this does not mean that the Art is static. On the contrary art-words are dynamic, conflicting and constantly in change. New art-worlds appear and the old ones faint. Although very often occur radical artistic innovations, their success depends on the extent to which their performers can mobilize the sufficient support by numerous art-world factors.

There is no doubt that revolutionary ideas and visions in art are very important, but their acceptance and success depend primarily on the social capital, the promotional capacities, the organizational power and the decisive positions of the people who support those innovations.

Initially, street drawings were ingenuous performances rather than artworks. They reflected true grassroots artistic activities as visual discourses that could elevate life to the promises of art. Notably, they were honest aesthetic praxis against the regime of commercialized Art galleries and the cultural alienation. Although street art begun as radical illegal performance of a new born art-world, most recently the entire movement is being under the process of recuperation. When local artistic activities are disconnected from their material environment and dispatched to social media platforms or to galleries, most of the times lose their actual meaning and obviously turn into simple assets or data. This does not mean that even in this recuperated form, the street art loses all its radicalism and becomes totally disassociated from activism and social protest.

'Land for the Poor' by WD (Figure 3) and 'Fight like a girl' by Sonke (Figure 4) are two of the hundreds excellent street art pieces that do not reproduce the hegemonic structures. Although they are both located at Exarcheia district, which is the core of the radical grassroots activists of Athens and the Mecca of unauthorized outdoor graphics, their sub-texts are written in English.

In fact, street art performers are radical activists as most of the times use public or private space without permission, aiming mostly to create social aesthetic experiences, social reaction and communal discourse.

Since the very early days of commercialized internet, the street performers aimed international appeal with the inclusion of their work to specialized internet-based projects such as Art Crimes, Fat Cap, Global Street Art, Street Art Utopia and many others. Meantime, many of these artists constructed their own web pages for the promotion of their names and works. Classic graffiti writers and street art performers were always unconventional, local and global, adapting naturally the universal aesthetic and organizational forms and codes[7] as transnational art cultures.

However, most of the street art performers conceive their artistic personalities and careers very important, so they wish their branded artworks and their names to be distinguished in contrast to

the anonymous, hunted and illegal political slogan writers that their aim is only to transmit objecting messages.

Inevitably, although art has always a political dimension[8], one can claim that art was always commercial too, as most of the great artworks were commissioned either by rich and aristocratic individuals or by the state. Art galleries as we know them now, were established in the urban centres around the nineteenth century and flourished during the twentieth. Contemporary galleries regularly support international art fairs, exhibition and Biennales for the promotion of their artworks.

However, nowadays this longstanding convention concerning modernist art galleries and art exhibitions as the exclusive channels for the promotion of artworks has been relatively redefined. The web 2.0 has given opportunities, not only to the traditional galleries, but also to the artists for direct line broad communication with the art collectors and the audience. Even art academies are encouraging these new modes of art marketing to the students (Cuffe, 2013). The social media have been measured to be essential instruments for advertising artworks in the contemporary art scenes.

In this sense the street art-world, that is already in a process of recuperation trying to get a secure place in the mainstream culture, is now becoming more adaptable even to the galleries convention (Urban Spree Galerie at Berlin, Stolen Space Gallery at London, INOPERAbLE at Vienna and many other) although street artists seek their way through social media channels also.

Even though street performers seem to cooperate through conventional routes, and repeatedly we see them exposing their work on canvas, they continue to keep the original activist spirit alive.

5. THE INTERVIEWS

Online interviews have the advantage of being convenient and attractive to people who do not like face-to-face interviews. Street artists consider themselves illegal and it was difficult to approach them. So, it was easier to work with short online structured interviews. However, technical limitations of computer-mediated-communication sometimes can introduce ambiguities.

In order to avoid uncertainties, I used a set of direct questions, such as:

Do you have online conversations or any other type of interaction with graffiti writers or street artists from foreign countries?

Does the idea that your work will be displayed globally effects on the language, the aesthetics, the size, the location etc. that you use?

Do you believe that the social media could have any minor influence on the work of a street artist?

Are you influenced by general artistic trends that you see on social media?

Are you influenced by the contemporary global social movements?

Are you influenced by contemporary artistic trends?

Although the street artists that I interview excessively promote their work through social media by updating regularly their work in their personal pages, they respond as social media have no importance for their work.

First, the interviewees were mostly laconic, eliciting open and vague responses. They all gave relatively the similar answers. They clearly claimed that their aesthetic practices are authentic and that they are not influenced by any artwork or artistic trend that is posted in social media. They did not give any explanation why they use the English language.

They affirmed that they keep contacts with street artists from other countries whom they have met previously in festivals, projects etc.

Finally, they admitted that they are influenced by the contemporary global social movements (anti-global, anti-crisis, etc).

Thus, according to the interviews, although social media platforms are challenging the way street art is being promoted and distributed there are no indications that the form and the aesthetic codes of the street artists is beeing influenced[9] significantly by this process.

Nevertheless, as the balances between the local and global politics are continually redefined according to the new technologies, it is inevitable to reject some effects on the subjects and the themes of the artists.

6. UNAUTHORISED OUTDOOR GRAPHICS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

There is a strange connection between social revolt and social media. This interrelation reflects the permanent ambiguity regarding activism and the internet structure that continually rotates between the concepts of 'centralised surveillance capitalism' and 'decentralized network

democracy'.

Someone could easily claim that social media have advanced a recuperation process that rearranges political slogans to appear like commercial advertising or funny captions- postcards[10].

Although social media platforms offer the opportunity for international communications between activists, unfortunately their user- and marketer-generated contents assemble an heterogeneous portfolio that stores up together the funny with the tragic, the significant with the trivial, the moral with the corrupt, the public with the domestic, the political with the commercial and so on, mixing everything to an 'eternal, illusory party' (Ludovico and Cirio, 2013).

Unfortunately, this condition does not often recall a decentralized and secure communication system that increases the opportunities for citizens to take interest in public affairs. As Morozov (2013) argues it rather brings about passive states of participation such as 'solutionism', 'slacktivism' and 'armchair activism'.

Unauthorised outdoor graphics are posted to social media by a great number of individuals that have different purposes and are connected to discrete social media groups. This means that people with different aims that are involved in diverse 'language-games' (Wittgenstein 1953) can use the same text of a slogan, graffiti or street art to express their thoughts, that may differ from the initial intentions of the activists.

The meanings of the unauthorised outdoor graphics in social media are flexible and can take many connotations depending on the profile and the social capital of the individual that makes them available publicly on the platform.

After an intent exploration on Facebook, I came up with the conclusion that individuals, groups and communities use posted slogans and street art in three different ways.

First there are pages of actual activists, street artists and relevant social groups and communities (Aganaktismenoi, Antifa etc), where unauthorised outdoor graphics within the cultural and historical contexts connote their intended meanings.

Next there are the expo-pages, that present and display mosaic selections of slogans, graffiti and street art (such as Συνθήματα στους τοίχους, Συνθηματα σε Τοιχους, Μηνύματα - Συνθήματα Graffiti, Stencils, Slogans from Athens and Salonica, etc) bringing together irrelevant concepts. This type of assemblage of slogans and street art in the form of data discharges the meanings of the messages and usually brings about false and sometimes comic interpretations.

Finally, there are individuals that pursue an aberrant decoding of the texts in a joking manner to

achieve caricature comedy and in this case, activism is fully overturned and recuperated.

Nevertheless, social media still can summarize and diffuse in general the objections of the local radicals and synchronize the global struggles. As Sklair (2002) had previously predicted the latest success of capitalism concerning globalised commercial networks may finally materialize the Marxian prophecy by cultivating the grounds of the capitalism's destruction through international activist movements that have appropriated these new capitalistic organisation technologies.

Eventually we must keep in mind that we are progressively going through an intense transformative phase concerning international communications and secondly that social media are not public organizations or open communal spaces designed to advance social discourse supporting the international community (Lovink, 2013, Seemann, 2014). Social media do have embedded politics but as private corporations of the 'platform capitalism' (Srnicek, 2016) and unquestionably their final objective is the sustenance of 'spectacle capitalism', thus in present-day terms, the endless accumulation of data by getting as many 'prosumers' (Toffler 1990) or 'produsers' (Bruns 2008) as possible, supporting once more the commercialised economy as the only basis of the human civilization.

7. CONCLUSIONS

It is very interesting investigating the interrelations, the interactions and the convergence between various media. Although the integration of new media technologies concerning hardware is obvious, changes that are related to the narrative and the symbolic codes of the media can be sometimes difficult to detect.

During the contemporary period of platform capitalism everyday life is shaped by a variety of shifting signs, ideas and activities that are drawn both from the local and the international environment.

Increasing interaction between local street activists from all over the world through social media has facilitated some similarities in their communication codes on a global framework that sometimes cover regional temperaments.

A retrospective review of unauthorized outdoor graphics that have covered the walls of Athens presents clearly how technologies have influenced gradually the local expressions and how these changes transformed the symbolic messages of the activists in a globalized world.
Since the beginning of the twentieth century Greek patriots, political extremists, anti-authoritarians, human rights advocates and many other radical local groups were using

spontaneously the typical native codes of expression at the wall slogans of Athens. After long period of exposition to the mainstream commercial media that included a variety of foreign phrases, the Greeks were familiarised to imported texts and slogans. When the graffiti culture arrived in Athens during the eighties and mostly after its recuperation by official institutions, English texts and foreign rhetorical tropes in general, begun to appear in the walls, so people started to get used to this situation.

Classic graffiti writers first used transnational cultural codes as members of various trans-local, neo-tribe scenes and then street artists followed the same tactic using mostly multicultural aesthetics styles.

After the millennium the new generation of radical political slogan writers as well begun increasingly to use foreign languages on the political street expressions.

Certainly diffusion, internationalization and localization (Della Porta and Tarrow, 2005) of the protesters in the grounds of physical interaction play a central role for the development of common codes.

Someone could claim that the idea of a unite radical discourse initiated in Seattle (1999), Prague (2000), Genoa (2001) and many other places, where activists from different places met and interacted face to face. All those events set the framework for a united international struggle that needs common channels and modes of communication.

In this respect the mainstream media and advertising had already played a significant role in legitimizing the adoption of international slogan phrases for commercial reasons. New technologies gave the opportunities to the activists to appropriate this policy of global slogans for global motivation against capitalism.

The illusory party of social media played a significant role for the involvement of the local activists to global struggles that inevitably used the same language in order to communicate.

However, the internationally diffused radical expressions through social media sometimes can initiate forms of slacktivism where people by liking and sharing photographs and graphics, glorify just the symbols of global justice without participating in the real street struggles. Further, sometimes popularized activist expressions can be degenerated and ridiculed when they are reintroduced as pleasant gags or urban jokes provided by pages used for purposes entirely unrelated to the intentions of the activists.

Anyway, as Hall (1980) pointed reception is a complex process that can be measured through

many modes of decoding as people are not just passive recipients. When the core message of a protest is carried out through social media, it can reflect for some people respectively important beliefs and visions.

As shown above the examination of the local unauthorised outdoor graphics is directly related to various concepts concerning mass culture and subcultures, local cultural identities, communications technologies, cultural commodification, art-words and social movements. In any respect, political wall slogans and street art are symbolic radical discourses and when they are mediated by the new ITC systems they can co-ordinate the global multitude because they reflect genuine grassroots intuitions concerning the emergence of a fair international community.

REFERENCES

[1] The word dérive refers to one of the most significant psychogeographic techniques of the Situationists International (Debord 1956). It is a quick passage through varied urban ambiances in a state of mind withdrawn from daily routine. During derive, participants must be driven from the perspectives of space and the attractions of the encounters, without any particular destination, forgetting all aspects concerning work, leisure or all the other conventional motives for movement and action.

[2] The field of my research covers the Athens city centre, Syntagma, Omonia, Monastiraki, Exarchia, Kolonaki, Psiri, Gazi, Kipseli, Patissia including the suburbs of Nea Ionia, Galatsi, Chalandri, and Agia Paraskevi for the period 01.03.2017-01.03.2018.

[3] The first forms of unauthorised stencils, that were practiced with paintbrushes, can be traced in the late thirties during the Spanish Civil War and at the same time in Italy under the fascist regime. In the late seventies British punk groups very often used the spray stencil reproduction technique to disseminate anti-establishment slogans. The mixing of political messages with band names on the walls or t-shirts was a regular practice of the punk culture. The Crass, a British punk group, in the late seventies initiated great stencil anti-establishment campaigns at the underground stations in such an extent that later in the nineties when personal computers diffused, a stencil type font for text editors was named after the band's name. During the eighties in Paris, the graffiti performer Blek le Rat was often using the stencil technique and so he has been characterized as the father of stencil graffiti (Manco, 2002, Adz, 2008, Berger, 2009).

[4] The Situationists International regarded recuperation as the general process that integrates subversions and any conception that opposes to the establishment into the general context of capitalism. It neutralizes radical protests and resistance not by conflict but by its assimilation, commodification and circulation in the society of the spectacle (Knabb 1981).

[5]This rate may seem excessive, but someone must consider that it includes taggings and all other single lone Latin characters written on the walls.

[6]Although intertextualities and associations of codes among all other groups of street writers including classic graffiti performers, football hooligans, dramatic existentialists, neo-tribe youths etc. can bring up very interesting analysis, I will concentrate mostly on the works of slogan writers and street artists that are related to political arguments in Athens at times of crisis.

[7]Most of the graffiti writers can be considered as wanderers and neo-tribe members, influenced by hip-hop, punk or other youth cultures and virtual communities that originated from western capitalistic countries. All these scenes, including their aesthetic forms were diffused evenly across the globe without confronting significant problems due to national boundaries, at least after the fall of the Eastern Bloc. Additionally, most of the street artists had always a cosmopolitan profile. As members of the art-world regularly work abroad, participating in international exhibitions and relative projects.

[8]Following Chantal Mouffe's reasoning and throughout a Gramscisan perspective, it is impossible to distinguish between political and non-political art, because every form of artistic practice either contributes or not to the reproduction of the hegemony and in this sense every form of art has a political dimension. (Mouffe. 2001)

[9]As we have noted earlier even before the appearance of web 2.0 local street artists were already promoted and influenced by global interactions (festivals, projects, etc) however social media as political discourse channel plays a significant and direct role for their political inspiration.

[10]The argument of unauthorised outdoor graphics recuperation recalls a comic incident that happened in the early sixties in Paris when a publishing company released a series of postcards presenting 'funny captions' that some of them included political slogans. The irony of the incident was that when afterwards Guy Debord reprinted in the 'Situationist International' journal a certain postcard that included his slogan 'ne travaillez jamais' (never work) written by him on the wall, he was accused for copyright infringement (Debord 1963).

TABLES

Type of Outdoor Graphics	%	Greek Language %	Foreign Language %
Slogans	11	70,9	29,1
Graffiti	23	2,6	97,4
Tagging	61	2,7	97,3
Street Art	3	6,6	93,4
other	2	12,5	87,5

Table 1: Rates by type and language of Athenian unauthorized outdoor graphics

	Greek Language %	Foreign Language %
Outdoor Graphics %	10.5	89.5

Table 2: Rates by language of the Athenian unauthorised outdoor graphics

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