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A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS (CDA) AND REFLECTION.

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Never Again Thessaloniki-Auschwitz

The First Memory Walk for the Jews of Salonica and the reactions of the Local Press.

A Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and reflection.

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The poster for the Memory Walk in 19th March 2018, 5 years after the first Memory Walk.
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Abstract:

The end of the Second World War found the city of Thessaloniki devastated by the loss of nearly its total Jewish population in the concentration camps of the Third Reich. A few survivals return to their city just to realize that their fortunes have been confiscated either by the local authorities or by their Christian neighbors. Some Jews decide to leave their former homeland and some others take the decision to remain and start their life from scratch. For the following decades, the Jewish history of the city is being carefully and on purpose hidden and the collective memory erases the traces of Jews. In this part of the story, the Jews by themselves kept a low public profile and remained silent, struggling to survive and rebuild their fortunes. It was in 2013, when a heterogeneous group of people decided to launch the Memory Walk “Never Again” for the 50,000 Jews of Thessaloniki who lost their lives in the Shoa (Holocaust). The Memory walk had to deal with the barriers of the strong nationalist profile of the city and of its local population. However, the Memory walk came to be established as an institution which exists and grows until today. The current paper examines how local digital media approached the first Memory walk taking into consideration the Jewish history, the stereotypes regarding Jews, the antisemitism and the strong nationalist and deeply religious profile of the city. The first part describes the Jewish presence in Thessaloniki under the Ottoman Empire, the consequences of the Hellenization of the city in 1912, the national identity formation process and the mobilizing role of the Orthodox Church in the political and cultural homogenization. In the second part, digital media articles related to the first Memory Walk are being analyzed according to the CDA (critical discourse analysis) and a critical reflection on how media approached the Memory walk is finally presented. The analysis results will be finalized with the conclusions which derive from in person interviews with key stakeholders of the Memory Walk.

Key – words:

Jews-Thessaloniki-collective memory-national identity-Media-Orthodoxy-Never again-urban identity- Hellenization-social change - critical discourse analysis
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Introduction

Background:

Thessaloniki had been one of the Balkan cities with a majority of Jewish population. Before the World War II, the Jews citizens were around 70% of the total population of this multicultural city and Jews called it “Madre d’Israel” which means Mother of Israel. The presence of Jews was everywhere, in the markets, in the port, in the education where Alliance Israëlite Universelle made a huge work or in the Trade unionism where Avraam Benaroya was the leader of the Workers Union. In 1917 and five years after Thessaloniki was attached to Greece (as up to then, belonged to the Ottoman Empire), a huge fire destroyed many Jewish neighborhoods and properties. Many Jews left then for Palestine, France and USA.

The Second World War decimated the left Jewish population. In the 15th of March 1943, the first deportation train left for Auschwitz Birkenau. In the end of the World War II and the liberation of the concentration camps, only almost 2,000 Jews returned to their home city. They never found their houses which had been confiscated by the Nazi or local authorities or other Christian inhabitants. Many of them found a refuge to other countries where some relatives might have been immigrated before the War. Others preferred to remain in Thessaloniki and rebuild their community.

However, Thessaloniki had already created a new national identity to which Jews did not belong anymore: an identity where the Greek language, the Christian Orthodox religion and the geographical borders played a major role. Thessaloniki forgot its Jewish past and the contribution of Jews in the development of the city.
Some years ago, a Jew intellectual from Thessaloniki with the aid of a professor of Humanities in the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki imagined an initiative in order to commemorate the Jews of Thessaloniki who met the death between 1943-1945. After their proposal to the newly elected and progressive Mayor, Mr Yannis Boutaris, they found the institutional support by the side of the Municipality. Beside them, a team of other common citizens who would like to make the people of Thessaloniki remember again the past of their city and the multicultural character of this land which once fought against the xenophobia and the fear. Five years ago, a Memorial Walk/march took place. The Walk started from the Liberty Square and ended in the Thessaloniki train station where the first train mission for Auschwitz departed. Since then, the Memory Walk became an institution which makes the people of Thessaloniki remember their historical past.

Description: The first part of the essay is going to present the history of the Jews of Salonica during the Ottoman Empire and during the first years of the annexation to the Modern Greek state. It is essential however, to describe the national identity formation process in the Greek state which excluded the Jewish population from the full integration in the Greek polity. Additionally, the first part will refer to the significant role of the Orthodoxy and of the Church in the formation of the Greek national identity and its approach towards religious minorities. This analysis in the first chapter is absolutely necessary in order to render the reader able to fully understand the erosion of the collective memory in Thessaloniki and the resistance of the local majority population to learn, remember and correct the past mistakes.

In the second part, digital media articles and a sample of visual material related to the Memory walk of 2013 will be examined in order to analyze the stance of the local
media towards the initiative and the revival of the collective memory and of the urban past based on the critical discourse analysis (CDA). Additionally, interviews with key stakeholders take place aiming at identifying the roots of the movement as well as examining their views on the relation between the local media and their support towards “Never Again”. In the end, a detailed analysis of conclusions will be presented.

**Research Purpose & Questions:**

Before moving to the core analysis, it is important to describe analytically the history of Jews in the city of Thessaloniki, their prominent presence in the local growth and their exclusion from the new national identity after the annexation to the Greek state in 1912. This detailed description is necessary for the reader in order to understand the dynamics of the Critical Discourse Analysis and how power relations have been shaped in the last decades.

The purpose of the analysis is to find how local digital media approached the First Memory Walk and which the intentions behind their coverage are based on the existing power relations. Through my own analysis, I would like to discover the ethnoreligious superiority-inferiority relations and challenge them. The questions which led the material analysis are:

1) Which was the role and approach of local digital media towards the First Memory Walk?

2) Which power relations did the local digital media promote and how?
3) Did the local digital media deal with the Memory Walk as a political or social initiative?

Material (primary and secondary sources)

The first part of the Thesis has been based on secondary sources regarding the history of Jews in Thessaloniki, regarding the formation of a new Greek national identity and on the role of Greek Orthodox population in the loss of Jews of Thessaloniki. Also, secondary sources regarding the Critical Discourse Analysis and the tools used have been included.

Primary sources are being found in the digital media articles that I used for my own analysis. The links of articles can be found in the end of each analysis as well as in the bibliography.

Methodology & Difficulties

My initial intention was to analyze both digital media and mainstream media articles. However, a practical difficulty made me out limit my research to digital media. The mainstream media articles were available only to the Municipal Library and the Library had not a digitalized archive. Consequently, I had not access to this archive due to the kilometrical distance and the librarians could not find the articles that I had been looking for. Additionally, the digital era is in full explosion and digital media articles would reach far more recipients that a mainstream newspaper. So, web articles could contain much more interesting information and data for my own analysis. This information would be audiovisual material, comments of recipients and data regarding the sharing of news (posts or shares in social media).
During my web research, I would face many difficulties in finding press releases or blog articles devoted to the first Memory Walk. Local media would reproduce the official press release or just the press release from the National News Agency (Athinaiko Praktoreio Eidiseon – Makedoniko Praktoreio Eidiseon / APE-MPE). The majority of media\(^1\) had not made any reference to the first Memory Walk before or after the date of 16\(^{th}\) of March.

It is important to highlight the importance of the Critical Discourse Analysis in the current research and to briefly present the theoretical framework of this methodological tool.

The British professor of Linguistics and founder of Critical Discourse Analysis, Norman Fairclough defines critical discourse analysis as an approach which seeks to investigate systematically often opaque relationships of causality and determination between a) discursive practices, events and texts and b) broader social and cultural structures, relations and processes […] how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power […] how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony. The main aim of critical discourse analysis is to explore the links between language use and social practice. The focus is the role of discursive practices in the maintenance of the social order and in social change. Also, the aim of critical discourse analysis as explanatory critique is to promote more egalitarian and liberal discourses and thereby to further democratization. (Jorgensen & Philips: 2002: p. 60)

\(^1\) When I refer to media, I mean only digital local media and web articles.
The articles analyzed, will reveal how the social order takes place in the local society, how the political forces shape the local society and the social order and how an unexpected event such as the Memory Walk, awakens the memory and leads to a social change. Additionally, through the tools that Fairclough proposes, the reader will be able to see how collective identities are being formed and how ethno-religious minorities and histories are being involved in the social change.

Some of the tools that Fairclough suggests are:

1) Interactional control – the relationship between the speakers
2) Ethos – how identities are constructed through language and aspects
3) Metaphors
4) Wording
5) Grammar
6) Transitivity and Modality

On my own analysis, the tool of suppression proved of invaluable importance. What I found missing was far more significant that what was already mentioned in the text. The details missing tell us what should not be told in the local society. The analysis based on critical discourse analysis method will help us to unveil the dynamics under the Memory Walk and reach some conclusions regarding the contribution of political authorities, of the local society and of the Jewish community in the historical and urban memory revival.
First Part:

My own Memory Walk

I started walking towards the Liberty Square. I had already packed my things and I had checked out in the Vergina Hotel, just a five minutes’ walk from the starting point of the Memory Walk. My friend Eleftheria (which means Liberty in Greek) waited for me in the middle of the Square. I had been looking for her but the place was so heavily packed that I could not see her. Among the young boys and girls who distributed the leaflets of the Walk, I saw her talking with a young man with green eyes and black hair: “Georgia, here you are! Let me introduce you Jacko Levi, he is one of my friends in the youth club of the Jewish community and he is the owner of the most famous cooking school in Thessaloniki.”

It was a sunny Sunday, 19th March 2017 and I had traveled from Athens where I live permanently to Thessaloniki just for one day. I had booked my flight tickets a month ago and I had arranged every detail of my journey. I would like to be there and participate in the annual Memory Walk for the 50.000 Jews of Thessaloniki who were perished in the Second World War and in the Holocaust.

Some months ago, I had been acquainted with a woman who had the same academic interests as me, Eleftheria. We exchanged experiences, knowledge and interesting information for the Jewish element in the local history of the city of Thessaloniki or elsewhere in Greece. A night before the Memory Walk, we had attended the theatrical piece “I never forgot you” in a small room of the Macedonian Museum of Modern Art. The piece was written by Leon A. Naar, a local Jewish author and teacher.
Through the story of the unfulfilled love of the female protagonist, the author travels us to an old Thessaloniki where Jews had their homes, properties and families and where they consisted more than 70% of the total population. The actress made us burst into tears when remembering a glorious past which was buried under the ashes of the corpses in the gas chambers of Auschwitz, singing traditional Sephardi songs and lullabies.

‘Let’s begin.’ Eleftheria said and we started walking towards the center of the square. People of all ages: old men and women, young people and children, people in their wheelchairs or fathers who pushed strolls were there. I saw everyone holding a white balloon with a slogan written in black letters: NEVER AGAIN – ΠΟΤΕ ΞΑΝΑ. The Memory Walk started and the final destination was the old train station. The old train station was the place where Thessaloniki said the final goodbye to the majority of its Jewish population. On 15th March 1943, the first train, packed with Jews, departed for Auschwitz and then for other concentration camps.

First in the line, there were the Mayor of Thessaloniki, Mr Yannis Boutaris and other politicians from regional and national authorities. Mr Boutaris was one of the first who proposed and fought to establish this walk as an annual institution. Up to now, he has made several efforts to awaken the Jewish past of the city and to retrieve the individual and collective memory. However, the strong nationalistic profile of the city makes this effort very hard. It is not a rare phenomenon to accuse him of being a Jew due to his fervent support to the Jewish minority and to the Jews coming from Israel in order to visit their mother land before moving to the state of Israel or elsewhere in the world. Next to him, politicians from various political movements (including the right wing party “Nea Dimokratia”), except for the far right party Golden Dawn.
Reaching at the train station, the Mayor of Thessaloniki began his official speech. We could hardly hear anything as the sound system did not work properly and the crowd did not stop talking. I noticed the musicians who made their last rehearsal before starting playing their pieces: pieces which were played in the camp of Auschwitz and became the last notes of the Jews.

I remained silent and many thoughts tried to find an escape from my mind: *Who are all these people who came here? How do they remember Jews? Are they Jews or not? Do they have friends Jews or not? Would they like to have once again a multicultural city such as in the past? Are they here to pay honor to Jews, to remember their old city or to just to pay their duties to themselves? How strong is their own national identity? Which is their own national identity? Where is the media which should be here and cover this event? And finally: Why am I here? What would I like to see here today? What did I expect to live? Why most of the people I met in this city ignore the Jewish presence of the city? Why have they forgotten? Or why do not they try to learn and then remember? Remember for them and then make the next generations remember as well. Is this remembrance enough? Or should we celebrate the Jewish presence instead of remembering the Jewish absence? We left the place talking about the resemblances of Hebrew and Arabic language and discussing about the new talk of the town fusion restaurant in an alternative area of the city.*
1. The Jewish “Resurrection” of Salonica

Sephardi Jews in exile

It was in 1492 when the Jews of Spain and Portugal were pushed out of their countries and King Ferdinand II and Queen Isabella launched the “Inquisition”. Jews did not belong anymore to these countries and the profile of new Spanish or new Portuguese was exclusively of Catholic religion. This new Spanish Kingdom needed to create an innovative type of identity which was marked by religion distinctions. Under centuries of Muslim conquest, Christianity reclaimed its superiority in Spain by expelling all the other religious minorities which “threatened” the religious homogeneity.

Jews were the main victims who were compelled to abandon their countries or convert in Christianity (Marranos).

Perhaps some of the readers might remember the life story of the philosopher Baruch Spinoza who was a Portuguese Jew, living in Amsterdam, Netherlands, in a multicultural and tolerant to religious diversity, society. His ancestors had abandoned Portugal in fear of their lives and had found a safe haven in Netherlands where they could practice their faith freely and could establish and expand their commercial and civic activities. Netherlands had built its Empire and economic growth based on the diversity of its people, taking advantage of its unique features and skills. A similar paradigm could be identified in the Ottoman Empire and its mentality towards ethnic and religious minorities.
2. The path to the Ottoman Salonica:

Sephardi Jews found a safe haven to the Ottoman Empire which had been established in 1453. In particular, Jews from Spain, Portugal, Italy and Sicily escaping the Inquisition came in large numbers to the city (Lewkowicz:1994:p.27). Their rich experience in merchandise, their profound knowledge of foreign languages and their deeply rooted feeling of cosmopolitism rendered them a necessary tool and mechanism for the Ottoman Empire and its growth. During the centuries, until its total collapse in 1908 and the arrival of the secular and westernized Turkish Republic, Jews played a key and major role in the expansion, establishment and maintenance of the Empire.

The community in Thessaloniki grew so quickly that by the 1520’s, Jews outnumbered more than half of the city’s residents. This narrative is based on Michael Molho’s list and map of the synagogues that had existed before 1917, twenty – two of which were founded between 1492 and the end of sixteenth century (Aymard:2014: p.412). For a long time, it defined Salonica’s identity, in part because the French historian, Fernard Braudel believed that every town relied on “the indispensable immigrant” (Aymard:2014:415). The number of Jews in 1904 was up to 75,000 according to the Jewish Encyclopedia (New York 1925, VI, 84 & II, 387-88).

Braudel wrote for the Jews coming to Thessaloniki:

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2 The names Salonica and Salonika are being used interchangeably inside the text. The use of these names refers to the period where the city was under the Ottoman dominance.
“They were not always unskilled labourers or men of little aptitude...driven out by their religious beliefs nor by their poverty (and they) played an exceptional role in the transfers of technology. Jews expelled from Spain, at first retail merchants in Salonica and Constantinople, gradually built up their businesses until they were competing successfully with Armenians and Venetians.” (Aymard:2014:p.415)

Jews managed to render Thessaloniki one of the greatest ports of Europe and created commercial networks with other European cities and major ports all over the world.

The 75,000 Salonica Jews did not merely constitute the largest percentage of the city’s population; they were also the undisputed masters in almost all sectors of its economy. They represented all social classes and Jews were to be found in every profession. The Jews were not only responsible for the smooth running of the city’s economy, but to a large extent they also determined its social and political dynamics. (Molho:1988: p.252)

But how did Jews manage to blossom in a theocratic Empire where Jews and Christians were second class citizens with limited political and civic rights and liberties? The institution of millet helped the religious and ethnic minorities to regulate their own affairs without the direct involvement of the Ottoman authorities.

Historically, the Ottoman state recognized religious affiliation as the exclusive criterion of group membership - whether Muslim, Orthodox Christian, Armenian or Jewish. (Naar:2016: p.86 -87). As part of the Ottoman imperial reforms known as the Tanzimat (1839 -76), which sought to centralize the administration of the empire and transform the empire’s subjects into modern citizens, the Ottoman state codified the structures of its non – Muslim communities (millets).
As dhimmis (people of the book) Jews were allowed to maintain their separate religious and cultural identity, their language and their own juridical and educational system. Until the nineteenth century, the Ottoman state used a complex set of practices to manage its relationships with non-Muslims granted permission to reside in the empires. Jews, Armenians and Orthodox Christians benefited from privileges to organize and manage their own communities in exchange for a pledge of loyalty and a special tax (cizye). (Lewkowicz:1994:p.227)

The religious criterion played a significant role in the aftermath when the Greek state was formed and had to create a new national identity. The religion was the only measure that could count who is who and where he or she belongs when sometimes the individual could not speak any word of the ethnic language or had no idea of this new lifestyle.

Sefardi Jews in Salonica

Source: Yad Vashem Digital Archive
Some decades before the city’s annexation to the Greek state, the Jewish community had introduced modernization strategies including educational policies (such as the schools of Alliance Israélite Universelle) and the Worker Unions Movement, which tried to improve the potential of Jewish youth and the conditions of daily life for the Jewish community. It was the second great epoch of Jewish Salonika, that of the birth of our contemporary world. Starting in the second half of the nineteenth century, Salonika became the most dynamic center of a declining Ottoman Empire. […] the “reborn” Jews, thanks to a new educational system, dominated by the French language, are the principal contributors. (Aymard:2014:p.424)

Two turning points in 1912 and in 1917 showed that the Jewish community was ready to lose its future in their “Madre d’ Israel”.

**Thessaloniki: towards a Hellenized city**

Very few citizens of Thessaloniki\(^3\) would remember the Jewish past or the way that Thessaloniki was attached to the Greek state. There was no shadow of doubt that this political change would have consequences to the local Jewish population. The Eastern Question and the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire had caused instability, fear and anxiety to the ethno-religious minorities which were protected under the Ottoman rule. The future was not certain and many of them took proactive measures in order to

\(^3\) The name “Thessaloniki” is being used for the city when we refer to the period after 1912 and the annexation to the Greek state.
protect themselves and the Jewish community of Salonica. Additionally, the Greek
national identity which was still under formation would create many problems in the
Jewish community. The state consolidation process would leave in the near future the
Jews without belonging anywhere and with severe changes in their status quo.

After the First Balkan War in 1912, most of the previous Ottoman possessions in
Europe were lost. Salonica, after almost five centuries of Ottoman hegemony, entered
a new state when on October 24, 1912, the Greek army occupied the city. The
political and cultural Hellenization of the city began when Eleftherios Venizelos, at
that time Prime Minister, sent a new governor from his entourage to Salonica.
(Bugatti:2013:p.501)

The “Great Idea” (Megali Idea) of Eleftherios Venizelos unified the Greek Orthodox
population in order to reclaim the areas which were under the Ottoman conquest and
which had been key – areas to the glorious past of the Byzantine Empire. Byzantine
Empire and its Greek Christian character influenced at a large extent the modern
national – state identity of the Greeks.

The entry of the troops into the city was viewed by the Jews a major disaster. They
feared that the annexation of Salonika to a national state within defined borders would
cut off the city from the surrounding hinterland representing a market of 4.000.000
people (Molho:1988:p.255). Moreover, Jews were afraid that the nationalistic
approach of the Greek state would lead to a systematic settlement of Greek Orthodox
population in the city. Indeed, some years later and after the obligatory populations
exchange with Turkey in 1923, the Jewish population consisted only 30 % of the total
population. Many Jews left then their city in order to find new havens such as United
States of America, France (where religion had been replaced by a severe secularistic approach – the French laicite) and Palestine where Zionists envisioned the new state of Israel with still undiscovered opportunities.

As Rena Molho describes in her book “Jews of Thessaloniki (1896 – 1919)”, the fear of exile and of insecurity made Jews always obedient to their current king. In this way, Jews of Salonica preferred to stay loyal to the Ottoman Empire which treated them equally and provided them with great economic opportunities instead of supporting a poor state which was ready to offer these opportunities to its citizens.

As the current analysis focuses on the media approach, it is worth mentioning the following:

On 27 October 1912, the very day Greek troops entered the vicinity of Salonika, this small article appeared in a (Greek) newspaper (Molho:1988:p.255).

*The reason why most of our fellow – citizen Israelites have, due to the corruption of their souls, tried to sabotage our national aspirations and have diligently tried to poison our joy caused by the arrival of our Greek brothers is their self interest.*

*It is this consideration of personal interest which forced them to appear compassionate and encouraging to the defeated, since they are convinced that it is only possible to live with them, given that the Turks were tolerant of all their frauds and rewarded all their dishonesties. It is for this reason that we request our fellow Greek citizens not to seek revenge on account of the contemptible behavior of our fellow Israelite citizens. Instead, they should look down upon them, since they are only worthy of disdain.*
Greeks, known for their pride, should not belittle themselves in remembering these deceits by the Jews, who will undoubtedly become aware, under the new government that they have made a bad appraisal of the situation, having feared the subjugation of Salonika to the Greeks.

It is astonishing how the so–called features of the Greek national identity (pride, morality, superiority, lack of personal interest) are being shaped according to the “Other” and features attributed to them by the author of the article. For this reason, Jews were accused of fraud or even sometimes of murder. Based on these allegations, the new polity created the features of the national identity in total contrast with the “inferior” qualities of the Jews.

In the first days of the entrance of the army troops in Salonika, huge waves of violence against Jews and Jewish properties were exploded. Both army and local population took part in these actions, being afraid that Jews will be a serious obstacle to the establishment of the Greekness in the city. On the contrary, the policy state proved completely opposite. Knowing that Jews are necessary for the city’s growth and the transfer of know-how to the Greek local population, politicians adopted a favorable stance towards the Jewish community.

The city’s prefect (Periklis Argyropoulos), addressing a group of Jewish representatives, declared:

_I am trying with all my heart to prevent all anti-Semitic incidents that unfortunately blackened our glorious entry to Salonika. The Jews can rest reassured that in me they will find a firm protectors._"(Molho:1988:p.393-4)
However, the Greek state took legislative measures in favor of the Jewish community such as: voting rights and political participation in 1915-16, the preservation of Sabbath, the right to participate in the public administration, the freedom of press, the exemption from taxes for the imported unleavened bread used on Passover, etc.

The following years until the Great Fire of 1917, the Jewish community stayed reassured for the continuity of their survival in the city. In 1920, with the Law of 2456/1920 and with the Minorities Treaty of the League of the Nations, the Jewish communities were protected and were recognized as official legal entities of public law.

Rena Molho goes so far as to speak of “a rare reversal of roles, where the state power is attempting to win the friendship of the Jewish community”. This approach then contrasts the state’s inclusive attitude after 1913 with the interwar policies of forced assimilation, setting apart the periods before and after 1922 (Chronakis:2014:p.376).

In these first years, Jews of Salonica maintained their cultural paradigm, their religious freedom, their social cohesion and their community autonomy. Instead of it, they did not keep their economic hegemony as their economic activities started being replaced by Greek economic activities and they found themselves excluded from a locally created version of Greekness (Chronakis:2014:p.378).

Prejudice and enmity towards the Jews had been growing in Salonica since the late nineteenth century, partially fed by market antagonisms (Chronakis:2014: p.400). The most important sector of the Jews, the merchant sector passed in the hands of Greeks and Jews lost their comparative advantage. As Chronakis (2014:p.401) mentions “its outcome constituted a first, critical step towards the de-Judaization of the city’s most
important social group: its merchant community. From now on, Jews started being in an inferior position in almost all the sectors and the leadership of the city.

3. The Great Fire of 1917 and a new Urban Identity

“The new plan for Thessaloniki is ready. It will be implemented from now on. There are a few public buildings remaining and the post office is ready but there’s no money [...] Like the plan for Athens, the war is absorbing everything [...] I am fascinated by Thessaloniki and would like to stay involved,” wrote French architect Ernest Hebrard to his friend and colleague Henri Prost in July 1921. The architect Ernest Hebrard wrote these lines four years after the Great Fire of Thessaloniki which destroyed almost completely the main part of the city and the waterfront. Still today, citizens of Thessaloniki refer to the fire as the main contributor to the urban change of the city. Last year, in August 2017, the Municipality of Thessaloniki organized a commemorative event for the Great Fire and its consequences in the urban landscape but also in the lives of the inhabitants. The Great Fire is being faced as the incident which destroyed forever the multicultural and multietnic image of Thessaloniki and the end of the melting pot of religions in Balkans.

On 18-19 August 1917, a fire broke out in the northwest part of Salonika. Its results were: 73,448 people homeless (over 52,000 Jews homeless) and 9,500 buildings destroyed. The fire affected mainly the poor neighborhoods (such as Agua Nueva) in the city center where the majority of inhabitants were of Jews.

The impact is summarized by Joseph Nehama:
“Suddenly the hand of fate struck Saloniki. On the Sabbath of 18 August 1917 at 2 a.m. a terrible fire ignited which was fanned by a strong north wind, the infamous Vardar, and it encompassed the whole city. Within a few hours the destruction reached gigantic proportions: 4101 structures covering 227 hectares were razed, 15,000 families totaling 73,000 souls were homeless. The tragedy struck the Jews in particular: almost every school, 32 synagogues, some 50 small houses of prayer, every cultural center, clubs, libraries, all were destroyed. The glory of Jewish Saloniki, its flavor and atmosphere – the fruit of twenty generations there – disappeared.” (Bowman:1986: p.47).

Saloniki, Greece, Jews without a home, after the fire in 1917.

Source: Yad Vashem Digital Archive

The Fire and the destruction of the city proved an excellent opportunity for the Greek state to give birth to a new architectural and ethnic profile to the city according to their standards and beliefs. Jews would be marginalized and would not be the main face in the painting canvas of the city and the Ottoman architecture would be disappeared and give its place to a new architectural form which would be characterized and signified the city of Thessaloniki up to today.
Reconstruction plans had been thought to de-Ottomanize and remove the previous idea of the town and their multiplicity, interpreting new cultural and nationalistic feeling. In Salonica, urban planners used Roman – Byzantine building as the spatial foci of a new orthogonal urban layout to cut off Ottoman landmarks (Bugatti:2013: p.499). The reconstruction would lead to radical social changes through the constructions of the Greek national identity and through the approach towards the roles of religious and ethnic minorities. The Roman – Byzantine architectural style boosted the nationalistic profile of the city which combined elements of the Greek Ancient culture and the Christo – Byzantine heritage.

The rebuilding of the city made efforts to erase the traces of the multi-religious and multiethnic glorious past of Thessaloniki and provide the minorities with warning signs. They should either leave the city as there was no place for them (their history and past had been easily forgotten) or they should be totally assimilated, leaving their religion and cultural uniqueness. The political changes of the era were in total conformity with these developments. Only five days after the fire, a meeting was held in Athens, where Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos welcomed the fire “..as a gift of divine providence.”(Bugatti:2013:p.507) According to the Law 823 ( Burnt Zone Rebuilding Plan), the initial concept was to rebuild Salonika as a model European city. (Rozen:2017:p.78). Ernest Hebrard, the French architect was responsible for the reconstruction of Thessaloniki. Churches and monuments became central – joint elements of new squares and boulevards, according to the Haussmann plan in Paris (Bugatti:2013:p.508). The implementation of the Burnt Zone Rebuilding Plan changed the face of Jewish Salonika, with poor and middle – class Jews now pushed to the perimeters of the city (Rozen:2017:p.98). A new era of Hellenization,
homogenization and modernization had begun and the minorities would not play any significant role except for a very limited number of rich Jewish families which funded a part of the reconstruction process.

4. The new national identity - Jews: locals or foreigners?

*Thessaloniki, 22 January 2018:* According to the policy’s announcement, more than 90,000 people have been gathered to Thessaloniki in order to protest and march for a national matter. Greeks from every part of Northern Greece were there to protest for the name of FYROM and Macedonia, crying that “Macedonia is Greek.” Along with the protesters, there was a representation of the Greek Orthodox Church but also of the extremist right organization and political party “Golden Dawn”. It was surprising to find out that people from diverse educational and professional backgrounds could be unified in the name of their national identity and in the name of the protection of this identity from their ‘enemies’.

It is essential to understand why Jews became the plague for the newborn Greek nation – state. What made the Jewish population a huge enemy to the expectations of the Greeks? How did the national identity exclude and still excludes the Jews from being identified as original Greeks? In order to deeply understand these dynamics, we have to formulate a context and a framework which includes the definitions of: nation, national identity and “otherness”.

The Greek state has up to now many specialties in its national identity formation and its approach towards ethnic and religious minorities. Some of those minorities have been rooted in the Greek state since its birth or its national border finalization and some other have been recently to the Greek state such as the refugees coming from
the civil war in Syria. The debate among the Greeks regarding the acceptance and the integration of these “others” is constant, with many various voices and arguments. It is not a rare phenomenon for Greeks to define the patriotism according to the extent that someone does not want foreigners in their “pure” national space with original Greekness.

According to Smith, a nation is “a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members (Triandafyllidou: 1998:p.595). However, Anna Triandafyllidou mentions that the necessary element that leads to the empowerment of nation and nationalism is the psychological factor (Conor:1978:1993). This psychological bond is usually termed “a sense of belonging” (Conor:1978) or “a fellow feeling” (Geertz:1963). It is extremely important to understand that the sense of belonging is crucial when a national identity is being formulated. Individuals have the tendency to look for common characteristics and to look for the identification of common “enemies” aiming at being more unified and creating a shield of protection. For this reason, it is equally significant to mention how “cultural, ethnic and religious others” contribute enormously in the identity formation process. De Vos thinks that “

…the ethnic identity of a group of people consists of their subjective symbolic or emblematic use of any aspect of culture in order to differentiate themselves from other groups” (Lewkowicz:1994: p.226)

Identity is conceptualized as sameness (Smith:1991:p.75). People belonging to a nation share some same cultural traits or have the same expectations and goals from
the nation which stands at the door. Belonging to a nation does not only imply knowing who we are but also recognizing who are the others (Triantafyllidou:1998: p. 597). Identity is always constituted in interaction (Triantafyllidou:1998: p.599). Ethnic, religious or cultural others constitute a significant player in the formation of an identity. Usually, these others are ethnic, religious or cultural minorities with an important role in the society which might be treated as a potential threat or peril in the future. Significant Others help the nation define its own unique characteristics and put emphasis on the qualities that differentiate them by them. When a national identity is still under formation, Others can be identified as a potential risk or danger for their survival and their prevalence in their ethno-spatial environment.

The nationalism was in rise in the beginning of the nineteenth century. The ideas of geographical borders, common languages and citizenship were new in these areas of the Ottoman Empire. Deeply inspired by the ideals of the American and French Revolution, Balkans would be proved a less ready place for the implementation of these ideas. The only distinction that was known in these areas was the criterion of religion. Individuals could be identified only according to their religion (Jews, Christians, Armenians). Greek national consciousness was built through the nineteenth century with reference to the “Great Idea” of liberating the nation’s irredenta, namely the regions inhabited by the Greek – speaking Christian Orthodox populations that had not been included in the independent Greek state at the moment of the creation (1829) (Triantafyllidou & Paraskevopoulou:2002: p.79).

Religion and Orthodoxy proved to be the most solid connection between the Greeks due to the struggle against the Ottoman Empire. It could be the only unifying linkage based on the history and tradition of millets. Orthodoxy would be and still is one of
the strongest national identity markers even if language or racial characteristics are missing. Everyone who was apart from this religious group could be a potential threat for the unity and the growth of the nation. As Mavrogordatos points out “Religion provides a primordial line of demarcation, which may be far superior to any other. It is certainly more readily identifiable, clear – cut, exclusive and impermeable than language, ancestry or any other relevant criterion. (Mavrogordatos:2003: p. 117). Also, according to Dunkheim, religion serves as the “glue” that holds the society together through successive generations. Through time, it becomes a symbol of social cohesion and a symbol of the society itself (Halkiopoulou:2008:p.360. Finally, as Balibar argues, ethnic identity can incorporate religious consciousness and, to some extent, can succeed in replacing it. (Triantafyllidou&Paraskevopoulou:2002:p.91)

Consequently, Jews would have no place in the new nationalist era of the Greek state. Their religion along with their different linguistic roots would make them “persona non grata” in the new state and they had to be pushed away at any costs. However, their economic primacy in the commercial life of Thessaloniki contributed a lot to their exclusivity from their full citizenship and belonging. In any case, the economic superiority of Jews was a feature only of a small percentage of the Jewish community. The majority of Jews belonged to the working class and after 1917 the majority sunk into despair and unemployment.

This may lead us to the conclusion that it was far more important to exclude Jews as they did not match with the standards of the national profile.
5. The role of the Greek Orthodoxy in the formation of the new identity.

Church: defender, bystander or foe?

These lines are written just some days after the Greek Orthodox Easter of 2018. During the “Christ Risen” the Archbishop Ieronymos (Head of the Church of Greece, CoG) interrupted the psalm in order to sing the National Anthem of Greece and send strong unity signs to all the Greeks. For a foreigner, this could be a totally unrelated action or even abusive. Which could be the relation between religion (a spiritual and private matter) and the nation (which is a collective identity with no connection to religious affairs)? For the Greek reality, it is an expected action. The Church of Greece and its priest – representatives has a clear position in the political sphere of every day national or foreign policy matters. But how, has the CoG acquired such a great power in the policy making and in the preservation of the ethnic identity and how the State has developed this kind of relation until today?

In the case of Greece, ever since the time of the War of Independence (1820s), the nation had not been defined by language or common origin, but by the common composition of a specific population within a state based on Orthodox Christianity and the political revolution (Dimoulis:2000:p.52). Later on, Greece became the most nationally homogeneous state in the Balkans. According to 1928 census, barely 6.2% of the country’s population belonged to minorities (Skordylis:1994:p.43). Religion constituted the one and only valid standard which could be the basis for the formation of the collective and individual identity. From now on, the Church of Greece could be the central point where all the Greeks could meet each other.

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4 You can check it in the following audiovisual material: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qSSRPblgf4
Being aware that the Church could play a political and pivotal role in the mobilization of the new nation – state, the polity provided the Church with many privileges which are still in existence. The Church of Greece became autocephalous (independent) and took an official divorce with the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The Patriarchate was still under the Ottoman Empire and did not want to have any relation with the rebels who dared to doubt the authority of both the Empire and the Patriarchate.

The Church of Greece supported the War of Independence and later, the Great Idea “Megali Idea”, promoting the official dogma of national identity “Greek speaking and Eastern Orthodox”. Greek Orthodoxy, therefore, can be seen as the principal criterion for inclusion in the Greek nation state, setting the nation’s geographical and cultural borders within an ethno-religious framework, thus creating taxonomy of “insiders and outsiders” (Lycourinos:2017: p.25)

Nowadays, the striving majority of the Greek population belongs officially to the Greek Orthodox Church (97%). This number along with the support of the State deriving from the Constitution and the non separation of State – Church, leads us to the following conclusion, according to Chrysoloras:

*The Church consists itself as the only institution, which is eligible to speak in the name of the “people” and express such views, since it regards itself as representing 97% of the Greeks who are baptized Greek Orthodox. In this sense, it articulates an image of national identity that derives from the Byzantine theocratic culture. By linking Greekness with Orthodoxy, the Church has managed to convince a large part of the Greek population that secularization measures are irrelevant and illegitimate.* (Lykourinos:2017: p.27)
The state policies used the authority of the Church to serve their purposes regarding the elimination of ethno-religious minorities. Church influenced the Greek Orthodox inhabitants who under lack of secular education followed the instructions of the Church in order to protect the purity of their national identity. There are many cases where Jews were betrayed by Church leaders in the Second World War but there are also cases where representatives of the Church protected the Jewish communities with fear of death. An instance is the story of the Bishop Chrysostomos in the Greek Island of Zakynthos who hid the Jewish population in Christian houses all over the island. Today, these priests are honoured by the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial as Righteous among the Nations.

6. The end of the Jewish fairytale: The trains to Auschwitz

During the Second World War, 52,000 Jews of every age, gender and profession left for the concentration camps. Their systematic extermination took place with the aid of Greek conspirators. The weight of Nazi policy served only to intensify the deep-seated antagonism of the local population toward the Jewish community. This resulted first in a cultural destruction of their literary and religious heritage, and then in physical annihilation (Bowman:1986:p.57). In the 15th of March 1943 and until August 1943 trains packed with Jews had as destination the gas chambers. One year before their leaving, German occupation forces had asked every man of Jewish origin from 14 years of age and over, to be presented in the Liberty Square. It was in 11th July 1942 and hundreds of men should stand under the hot sun without water for many hours. Their torture and their persecutions later that year, clearly demonstrated the intentions of the Nazis.
Saloniki, Greece, 11/07/1942, A German soldier is beating Jews during "Black Sabbath".

Source: Yad Vashem Digital Archive

A small percentage of Jews managed to be rescued joining the partisan forces or leaving for Athens where they could easily be hidden in Christian houses.

After the liberation of the concentration camps, only 2,000 Jews returned to Thessaloniki. After the Shoa, they tried to restore their past and build a present and a future.

Saloniki, Greece, Wedding of nine couples who survived the Holocaust, Postwar.

Source: Yad Vashem Digital Archive
The collective memory of the city chose to forget both the presence and the absence of Jews. Additionally, the collective memory chose to forget the Christian citizens of Thessaloniki who betrayed their Jewish neighbors and collaborated with the Nazi forces. The city without its Jews would never be the same. Memory defines and differentiates itself in relation to history. Yet just as scholars of memory would state that forgetting is a socially constructed act, just as Jay Winter has recently argued for a similar concept of silence, so this collection contends that absences can be strategic and they can be found – and given shape-if we read certain presences as their fellow. (Kalman & Doron: 2017: p.207)

According to the theory of Jan Assmann, memory is the faculty that enables us to form an awareness of selfhood(identity), both on the personal and on the collective level (Assmann J.: 2008:p.109). But collective memory leads also to what Assmann calls Cultural Memory. Cultural memory is a form of collective memory, in a sense that it is shared by a number of people and that it conveys to these people a collective, that is a cultural identity(Assmann J.: 2008:p.110). The participation structure of cultural memory has an inherent tendency to elitism, it is never strictly egalitarian (Assmann J.: 2008:p.116)

However, it was not only the Greek Christian population of Thessaloniki that forgot. The remained Jewish community became less extrovert and made any possible effort to keep a low public profile and even hide its religious marker.

Bea Lewkovicz in 1988, made a field study visit to the Jewish community of Thessaloniki aiming at discovering the thoughts of its members about their ethnicity and sense of belonging. Lewkovicz mentioned that Jews feel anxiety when they have
to talk about their Jewish origins or religion in their Christian milieu. For this reason, they prefer to hide it or not talk about it and they cling to the notion of “Private Judaism”. They feel Greeks but as far as the expression of their religion is concerned, they prefer to practice it in close doors. (Lewkovicz: 1994)

Acts of forgetting are a necessary and constructive part of internal social transformations, they are however, violently destructive when directed at an alien culture or a persecuted minority (Assmann A.:2008:p.98). It was in 2013, when it was high time that collective memory should be reinvented. A group of people coming from municipality, academic world and civil society organized a Memory Walk to honor the victims of Holocaust. From my own point of view, the Memory Walk would have come to awaken the historical spirit of the city, to raise awareness about the history Jews but also to educate, to prevent and to create a new, multicultural and multiethnic environment where both prejudice and fear will be disappeared.
Second Part

The birth of “Never Again” Memory Walk

Many decades after the extermination of the local Jewish population, the society stayed silent and built its future in the remains of a bright Jewish past. The new national identity found a newly made fertile ground and conservative political and social views covered the social fabric. The ecclesiastical institutions and its representatives played a major role in the maintenance of a conservatism which excluded whoever is and will be differentiated from the features of the national identity. The society deeply influenced by the Church attitudes followed a more xenophobic and nationalist approach and the politicians followed the same path. But, in November 2010, the local population elects a new, progressive Mayor who decides to turn the local policies in favor of minorities and especially, in favor of the Jewish minority.

The basis of the favorable policies would be based on the “March of the Living”, an Israeli initiative which takes place on an annual basis in the concentration camp of Auschwitz. The goal of this concept is to walk in the footsteps of those who lost their lives there and feel as they felt. To fear as they feared. To think what they thought in the last moments of their precious life. And finally, to fight against the monster of racism and hate, all together.

A similar project looked almost ideal for the city of Thessaloniki which had to pay honor to its lost Jewish population and to revive its historical and urban memory as no one in the city had ever done before. The walk would follow the exact steps towards the railway station where the train missions departed. However this walk was not an
easy decision not only for its organizational structure but most for the involvement type of various factors and stakeholders and its possibilities for the final success or failure.

When reading the related literature material or when reading media articles, I had reached the conclusion that the Memory Walk was an initiative of the Municipality with a less powerful contribution of other stakeholders such as universities or the local Jewish community. Media had followed a rather strange but explicable approach towards the coverage of the Memory Walk.

I had already participated in a Memory Walk and I started wondering why this Memory Walk is so special and which are its really special aspects. Media and its approach towards the first Memory Walk attracted immediately my academic interest and I started a deep research into digital media articles and interviews. But before starting my own analysis and reaching my own conclusions, I should have the view of the “parents” of this initiative and of key stakeholders who support and give breath to this Walk. Through deep research, I contacted the following stakeholders:

- Dr Eleni Hontolidou who was one of the first members of the organizational committee,
- Dr Giorgos Antoniou who is the Director of the Chair of Jewish Studies in the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki,
- Mr David Saltiel, President of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki & President of the Central Board of the Jewish communities in Greece (KIS)
- Ms Zoe Koutalianou, Expert Advisor of the Mayor of Thessaloniki
The questions varied according to the extent of their involvement and their distinct personalities. A part of the questions list referred to the birth of the Memory Walk and the connections among the politics, the society and the implementation of this Initiative. Another part of the questions referred clearly to the relation between the local media and the Memory Walk.

However, both parts are closely related as local politics and local media have been going hand in hand for many decades now. It is important to note that media attitudes towards local politics have influenced as well its positive, neutral or negative approach towards the Memory Walk and the Municipality’s pro-Jewish policy.

“The first Memory Walk ended in a great and unexpected success. This is the main reason that went on in the following years and has finally become an institution.” Dr Antoniou said. We had a very first introductory discussion why I chose this specific subject. “It is very interesting and no one has done something similar before. What exactly do you want to find?” he asked me. During the past months, I had been involved in various methodological approaches and subjects. I had decided to combine my passion for history and my research interests. “I want to find how local media approached the Memory Walk and which the hidden political and social meanings and power relations are behind each word, using Critical Discourse Analysis” I told him.

“As you may know, local digital media are very limited in number. So, I had no surprise that finally journalists were not interested in covering this Walk.” Dr Antoniou mentioned.
According to both Dr Hodolidou and Dr Antoniou, the initial idea for the Memory Walk came from Jacob Simpi, an intellectual Jew from Thessaloniki who lives in Israel. He shared this thought with Ms Hodolidou and she carried out the message to the Mayor of Thessaloniki, Ms Yannis Boutaris.

The Mayor aimed at restoring the historical and urban memory after many decades of conservative and strictly nationalistic policies. Policies which were especially hostile towards religious and ethnic minorities. Consequently, he admitted immediately the idea and he started the implementation and the strategic partnerships.

“The Jewish community was a bit more introvert than today. When we proposed them the Memory Walk they were not that positive. When the Mayor intervened, the Jewish community was persuaded to participate and all these years has been very active. I can say that we have a very good collaboration with them.”

The president of the Jewish Community, Mr David Saltiel told me “When the Mayor proposed me this Memory Walk, I said no. I said that if you want the Jews to walk and watch them, then my reply is negative. If you want all of us to walk together, then I say yes!”

The first Memory Walk took place on 16th March 2013, Saturday. “Initially, we thought that the Walk should take place in the Egnatia Street. A part of the walk then took place in Egnatia street. But in the end, we decided to start the Memory Walk from the Liberty Square where the Jews in 1942 were humiliated.” Dr Hodolidou mentioned.

And when we talk about the media coverage, Ms Koutalianou said: “I believe that media had a neutral and indifferent approach. The Memory Walk was something new
and something that was not established as an institution. Everyone thought that it is not going to be repeated.”

“Indeed”, I said. From my own analysis, I could reach the same conclusion. »

Articles Analysis

1. The first of the articles belongs to one of the most well-known news portals of Thessaloniki. The site contains local news, national news and worldwide news. Starting with, I have to mention that the article has only 12 shares in social media, something which shows the limited reception on behalf of the local society. Additionally, the date when the article was published is just a day before the Memory Walk. This clearly shows that it is a last minute announcement and the editorial team did not want to pay any additional attention to publish it some days before the event and raise the awareness around the Memory Walk.

In the beginning of the article, the reader sees an image (in a low resolution and quality) which accompanies the article. The image derives from the Liberty Square when Jews were humiliated by the Nazis on July 11th 1942. However, what is missing is equally important with what exists in an article. The image has no caption and there is no related explanation in the article. So, the reader is not in a position to understand what he sees apart from a sense that people who are humiliated are probably Jews. The image creates a feeling of pity and superiority towards the inferior and “poor” Jews which clearly signifies the social relations and the social differentiation between the local
reader who is a typical Greek Orthodox citizen of Thessaloniki and the Jewish population which suffers.

The beginning of the article deals with the issue of memory. The author writes “In the memory of the first victims of the Holocaust from Thessaloniki….”. There is no reference to the Jewish identity marker of the victims and there is no reference to the victims as a whole as well. The reader may understand that the events will pay respect only to those who were perished first and not to the 97% of the Jewish population of the city. Moreover, the word “memory” comes to remind to the reader that these victims consist a past and there is no reference to the present or to their future presence in the city.

In the first paragraph, the author writes that the events are being organized by the Municipality of Thessaloniki. This provides to the reader a power and legitimacy feeling. There is a local institution behind the organization so there is a collective duty towards the Jews. Most of the articles refer to the Municipality of Thessaloniki as the main organization institution in order to present the Memory Walk as a legitimate event.

Indeed, in the consciousness of the local society, the Municipality of Thessaloniki would be the first organizing unit of this Memory Walk. Mr David Saltiel would refer to this fact as following:

“The Municipality proposed us this Walk. Initially, the Community was not positive but in the end, we decided to cooperate with the Mayor. You know, the Mayor is the first citizen of the area and he is able to influence all the others. He is the policy maker and this Mayor decided to support the Jewish community and raise awareness about the Jewish history of this place. But it
is not only this. He is here to bring a social change. It is the duty of the State not to forget. And it is the duty of the polity to teach our children not to forget.”

Looking at the selected words more carefully, the reader will see that there is no individual mentioned. The institutions consist of human beings and especially in this Memory Walk the individual personalities behind this played a key role. So, the impersonalization helps to keep a low profile of the event and not to make the reader connect the Memory Walk with someone specific.

This serves to conceal who actually believes what and who is responsible in each case. Also, the decision of the Mayor might have caused some worries and anxieties about the real intentions of the Walk. As the stereotypes of the bad Jew are still strong in the local society, a profound pro Jewish policy would cause anxiety and fear.
As Mr David Saltiel said to me during our in person interview, “Everything depends on the person. If a person insists and is a doer, then everything can change and everything can happen. So, there are no institutions. There are person. For example, if the Mayor did not insist, today we would not have the Memory Walk.”

The role of the Municipality and the presence of a new Mayor with strong adherence to the past of the city shadowed the role of the civil society. Dr Hodolidou and Dr Antoniou agreed that the Memory Walk jumped as a spontaneous grassroots movement. “I would say that the Walk came as an initiative of the civil society which was welcomed by the Mayor and the Municipality.” said Dr Antoniou. Dr Hodolidou would tell me that the Memory Walk was also a civil society’s initiative which surprised positively the Mayor. “The Mayor shows sensitivity towards all the ethno religious minorities of the city and he promotes a policy which unveils the urban past.” So, it would not be a surprise if the local media would not pay further attention to the Memory Walk as it might have been seen as a political move with specific political goals.

The author uses mainly speech reporting verbs and neutral structuring verbs which further away the reader from having any emotional upset. Van Leeuwen (2008: 56) points out that social roles, as reinforced in texts, prescribe no only actions and identities but also feelings. When refers to the extermination of Jews, the author uses the verb “were lost”, a much more moderate verb that the real way that Jews were murdered in the concentration camps. Moreover, there are no additional historical details regarding the history of Jews in
Thessaloniki or of the aftermath of their absence in the shaping of the local history. The article makes a collectivization and homogenization of the Jewish population. There are no details regarding their arithmetic presence or superiority or any details related to their urban presence. In the end of the article, there is a brief, without details description of their transport to the railway and to their deportation missions.

Also, the critical discourse analysis would focus on what is missing here. There are no references to the agents of these actions. So, Jews are being represented as passive agents who suffered by someone. The identity of someone is lacking here. The passive voice is dominant in the article. Who is the active agent of the verbs? Who made Jews suffer? The collective silence renders the author unable to state only Nazis as the main offender and to awaken the feeling of guilt. But also, Jews are being represented as a voiceless community which accepted its fate without acting.

The lack of descriptive verbs demonstrates the unwillingness of the author to provide a detailed and complete image of the history as well as the unwillingness of offering an emotional intensity or a self–doubt.

The analysis would also focus on the lack of data regarding the presence of the Jewish community today, except for the reference to the Jewish community in the organizational committee. The identity construction of the Jews of Thessaloniki today has been shaped as following: a community which probably exists and comes into the social surface as collaboration with Municipality for this Walk. Jews are being represented as voiceless and invisible in the social fabric. What is missing in the national narrative, is being
also represented here as a wider social practice. Which is the role of the Christian compatriots of Jews in their today absence?

According to Dr Antoniou, the relationships between Christians and Jews had been always tense. “After the World War II, the silence covered the whole city. Christians took the properties of the Jews who did not return, they stole actually these properties. So, in order to maintain this economic prosperity, the city preferred to silence and hides the history.” Indeed, the article prefers to maintain the social order without getting deeply in the matter.

Last, but not least there is not even one sentence which encourages the reader to take part in the Walk or to seek further details about the historical past. The author does not even use words or phrases which create an emotional environment.

According to my own analysis, the author did not see anything of significance in the Memory Walk, trying to maintain the social power relationships. The editorial team dealt with the Walk as with any other cultural event which would take place under the auspices of the Municipality. This confirms the view of Dr Antoniou, of Dr Hodolidou and Ms Koutalianou that both media and local society thought that the Memory Walk would not be repeated and would never guess that it is going to become an annual institution with huge political significance and important political and social messages.

2. The second article derives from the website www.star.gr which is a national website and TV Channel. However, there is a distinct section for the news of Northern Greece and of Thessaloniki. The website has been traditionally a
conservative channel which has supported the right wing and has promoted a more nationalist rhetoric and narrative throughout the years.

The website published the one and only article regarding the Memory Walk when the Walk was in progress. The heading of the article refers to “dead Jews of Thessaloniki”, leaving unmentioned the cause of death or murder of Jews and there is no profound reference to the Holocaust.

In the first paragraph, the author misleads the reader as refers to the Memory Walk as “Jews walk for the dead Jews.” It is not true as the members of the Walk were mainly citizens who did not belong to the Jewish religion. “ The volunteers who helped came from a background of Christian Orthodoxy and with no relation with Judaism.” Dr Hodolidou said whereas Dr Antoniou pointed out that the majority of participants consisted of sensitive citizens, politicians who had expressed openly their support in Jewish past and present, representative from NGOs and all the foreign diplomatic and consular missions.

The article refers to them as Jews and not as citizens of Thessaloniki who belong to Judaism and it is a clear representational strategy of Jews as a minority. The division among us and them is getting clear when the differentiation feature of religion is being prompted and is being the identity marker.

Additionally, when the article refers to the Jews and the Memory Walk is the only sentence where Jews become the active agent of the article. In the ears and eyes of the reader, the article provides an insight that Jews become agents of a movement related to their religion. The active agent policies provoke a
negative effect for the in-group members and cause a feeling of anxiety to the typical reader regarding the intentions of this Walk. The second phrase announces that the police have taken measures in order to avoid any incidents.” Immediately, the presence of the police and the way that the author points out the significance of this presence creates a feeling that this Walk entails dangers and threat and the police with its professional activity has to protect the city. Also, the police, a dominant institution, is widely known in Greece for the nationalist and a more xenophobic attitude by its staff. However, the author does not mention of which incidents is afraid and who might cause these incidents. “To be honest, we were very afraid because the Memory Walk passed in front of the headquarters of Golden Dawn, the far right extremist organization in Greece. Especially that period, Golden Dawn had a very strong impact.” Dr Antoniou said.

At the end of this sentence, the author adds that “many journalists have come from Israel to cover the Walk.” Through this sentence, the author connects the country of Israel with the local Jewish population as there is no other direct reference to the local Jewish population. Greece had been for many years a Palestine supporter in the Israeli –Palestine conflict and there has been an increase in anti-Israel behaviors. However, the distinction between Judaism and Israel is not always clear for the Greek reality. “In the last years, the Greek state has adopted a pro-Israel policy as it has been easily understood that Israel can be a supported in the national defense.”
The article contains a quote from Mose Aelion, the President of the Holocaust Survivors. It is highly interesting as it was the only article which included quotes and testimonials from a Jew Holocaust survivor. It is an effort on behalf of the author to highlight the Jewish presence and the Jewish ownership of the Walk. For this reason, there is no reference to any other institutional agent or any other testimonials.

In the end of the article, the author makes a mention to the number of the dead Jews “in the memory of thousands of Jews” without any other specific mention or data regarding the number of Jews. Also, the last sentence writes: “many people gathered in the Jewish monument in the Liberty Square.”

The author refers erroneously to the monument as “Jewish” but the monument is dedicated to the Jews citizens of Thessaloniki who were lost in the Holocaust.

“The story of monuments for the Jewish history in Thessaloniki is a long story. Before the leadership of the current Mayor, the monuments had no place in the center of Thessaloniki, thus in the areas where there was the Jewish commercial and family life. The previous Mayors did not want monuments to be seen by the local population. They want to erase and forget their sins. But I made a struggle and the monuments took their right place. Because the monuments are not for Jews. They are from Jews to the local population, to our children.”
The Mayor, Mr Yannis Boutaris wearing a kippa and paying honor in front of the Memorial for the Jews victims of the Holocaust. He pays respect a few minutes before the beginning of the Memory Walk. Source: Giorgos Konstantinidis/Motion Team

Not only the “Jewish” monument but also the reference to “many people” creates confusion. “Many people” is a collective and highly abstract term (aggregation) and the reader does not become able to understand who the person who participates is. Some of the CDA tools identified in this article are: collectivization (with no district and clear identity of the Jewish population), anonymization, aggregation, over lexicalization of the representational category of “Jew” (which enforces the difference between us and them) and suppression (as it suppresses the real history).

Two images cover the article and depict two (probably) Holocaust survivors in front of the monument in the Liberty Square keeping their flag of their group. The next and last photo shows the Mayor of Thessaloniki when he announces his speech. The last photo sends a well-hidden meaning: the Mayor is the only one who supports the Jews as there is no other verbal or visual reference to other institutional agents. One example is that the Prime Minister of Greece who was the leader of the right wing party “Nea Dimokratia” was also there but few photos were published.
However, there is no reference to his presence as it might cause anxiety to the right centered citizens of the city and of the whole country. Generally, the article does not provide the reader with any historical or important additional information and draws an image of indifference. National institutions such as the police are being represented in a way that they function professionally and legally for the protection of the society. Whereas they represent the Memorial Walk in a way that is out of the social order and is a “property” of the Jews.

3. Thessaloniki Press constitutes an important web portal for local news. During my web research, Thessaloniki press was the only digital media which dedicated a whole article in the First Memory Walk, based on the press conference which took place some days before the Walk. The heading of the article refers to all the events about the revival of the memory and not only to the Memory Walk. The article is based on the press
conference and the official press release and there is no other reference to historical facts or quotes which could escalate the emotional intensity.

Generally, the author uses neutral structuring verbs and the passive voice is dominant throughout the article. Mainly, the author points out the political dimension of the Memory Walk, putting emphasis on the role and the contribution of the Municipality and of the Mayor. However, the author puts also emphasis on the role of Jewish organizations as he referred to those as the main organizations which coordinate the events under the auspices of the Municipality.

Using honorifics, the author tried to offer legitimacy to the Memory Walk. An important feature of the article is that he has taken specific extracts – parts of the speeches in the press conference. The quote of the Mayor is related with the contribution of the Jewish presence in the local growth and development during the past centuries. The Mayor focuses on this economical aspect, as the city and the local market suffer from the financial crisis which shook the Greek development.

Based on this anxiety, the Mayor wants to reassure the local population that Jews have been key players in the local growth and that they still can be. Indeed, the pro Jewish policy that the Municipality adopted ended in a wave of Jews who return in order to find their roots and ancestry. “The Mayor has played in a very clever and profitable way. He has supported a Jewish friendly attitude and encourages Jews from all over the world to get back and find their past. What does this mean? Tourism. And tourism means money in the city.” Dr Antoniou confirmed.
Ms Koutalianou would tell me the same “The local tourism has been exploded. Large percentages of the tourism belong to Israeli and Jewish population. If you see the date that the Thessaloniki Hotels Association has published last month, visitors from Israel are 7% of the tourism industry.”

Additionally, the Mayor referred once again to the Jewish contribution in the urban growth and mentioned that Thessaloniki will participate in the March of the Living. It is a direct message towards the citizens of Thessaloniki that cities pay honor to the Jews victims and should not be afraid of doing so. It is a way to remind them that Thessaloniki belongs to Europe and has to accept its past and follows the European paradigm.

Moreover, the author presented a part of the speech of Mr David Saltiel, President of the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki. In this part, Mr Saltiel reaffirmed the role of the Jewish population in the local growth and commercial activity. Both parts look like searching for a solid basis which can support or make the local population tolerate the Memory Walk and this initiative.

In general, the author avoids the active agents and simply quotes speeches of the participants in the Press conference. The only moment when he decided to insert the active voice was when the politicians referred to the invitation towards the local population. In this way, there is a clear division among us and them and a sense of superiority towards the Jews and the events. He avoids providing the reader with further details such a brief history of the Jews in Thessaloniki or details regarding the Nazi occupation and their deportation. In addition to all these, there are no details which could provoke any
emotional temperature or intensity. Some of the tools of CDA used here are: over political representation, personification, neutral structuring verbs, aggregation, suppression and homogenization.

In a nutshell, the author has no intention of bringing into the light an important historical past or of encouraging the local population for a social change. It is rather possible for the author to cover the press conference and write an article aiming at giving the objectives of a political initiative. Jews are being represented as inferior, almost second class citizens who are being replaced in the text by the importance of the local institutions.

4. The last article belongs to a blog for Pontian Greeks. Pontian Greeks constitute an ethnic group coming from the Black sea region which was moved to Northern parts of Greece and parts of Russia after their systematic ethnic cleansing by the Ottoman Authorities in the beginning of the 20th century. Their Greek Orthodox religion was the crucial identity marker in order to be efficiently incorporated in the Greek Orthodox society.

“For many years, the antagonism between the Pontians and the Jews has been enormous. Pontians believe that due to their Orthodox religious identification and their language; belong automatically to the city of Thessaloniki. On the contrary, Jews are out of the system and of the national narrative,” Dr Antoniou declared.

The heading begins with mentioning the date of the Memory Walk, sending a clear message to the reader that the date should not be forgotten. Besides this,
the dates are very important for Pontians as they themselves are centered on the date of their genocide from the Turkish side.

Two important features can be recognized in the heading: First of all, the author refers to the murder of Jews as “genocide” and not as “Holocaust”. The first term is a term familiar to Pontians as it is the term commonly used for their own extermination by the Turks.

On the one hand, it is a way to encourage the Pontian reader to feel empathy and participate in the Memory Walk. The tool used is the claim to their personal experience. On the other hand, the author “steals” the term “Holocaust” which is closely connected with the Jewish population and in some way alters the local Jewish past and identity. Additionally, in the heading there is no reference that the Memory Walk is aiming at the memory of the Jews of Thessaloniki. The author implies that the Memory Walk is generally for the Jews and not for the Jews of Thessaloniki. The only reference is that the Memory Walk will be in Thessaloniki.

Generally, the author uses active voice and active social agents, especially when he points out the pride and the honor. For instance “the citizens of Thessaloniki pay tribute to...” In this way, the citizens become active and it seems that they do not forget the past.

Following, he points out that the Pontians and other “minorities” such as the Greek Orthodox refugees from Minor Asia (in 1922) or Greek Orthodox refugees from the East Thrace (belonging to Turkey) should participate massively in the Memory Walk. In this way, he highlights the unity of the Greek Orthodox minorities which have to support the Memory Walk as they
have felt the same experience. However, indirectly, he points out that these minorities are a genuine part of the city whereas the Jewish minority does not belong to this land.

Dr Antoniou would inform me that “Pontians feel a bit unfairly treated by the Mayor and the Municipality. They believe that they deserve more space and time about their own history of genocide and the Mayor pays more attention to the Jewish past. This can be depicted in their sorrow about monuments. All these policies reinforce the long-established antagonism between the two communities and the struggle for their vital space.”

Ending the article, the author tries to explain the common points of their extermination histories and tries to persuade the reader that both Nazis and Turks were the same enemies for these communities. He tries to make a historical connection between both. But in these lines, he emphasizes that the period between the two “genocides” are only 25 years. So, why does the Municipality pay tribute only to the murder of one minority and not to the other? In the end, the author points out the Greekness of the Pontian minority and why they have to support the Memory Walk.

The author uses mostly the Memory Walk in order to present the Pontian history and the way that the minority has been treated. He puts a lot of emphasis on the Greekness and the suffering of the minority and he tries to connect their history with the Jewish population. One missing important point is the reference to the Jewish extermination and the organization units of the Memory Walk. He presents that society in general is responsible for the Walk and not any local or academic institution.
Conclusions

My own conclusions were verified by the in person interviews will all the stakeholders involved in the organization of the Memory Walk. The role of the local media in the coverage of the first Memory Walk was almost insignificant and invisible. Local media dealt with the Memory Walk as an initiative which expresses the Mayor and not the whole local society. For this reason, the number of publications is limited and politically oriented. Some of these articles take advantage of the Memory Walk in order to promote their own political aims or political agenda such as the re-election of previous more conservative Mayors or the promotion of a strictly defined national identity which would maintain the balance among the society and the national religion.

Both local and national media barely covered the Memory Walk despite the fact that important political persons were present. Generally, both media and local society did not react negatively as both thought that the Memory Walk was not going to be repeated. Consequently, there was not a prominent danger in front of their solid social structure and their neutral approach is being reflected in the articles.

According to the Critical Discourse Analysis of the articles, the Memory Walk was not integrated in the social fabric. The local society was not ready to stand in front of its responsibilities and talk about it. The past was a heavy burden and the role of Christian citizens in the extermination of the Jews was a silent guilt which has been covering the sky of Thessaloniki for many decades now. In the articles, this approach is being reflected with the suppression and the absence of historical details regarding the history of Jews and the role of Christians. Also, the hesitation of uncovering the
past and admitting their culpability is being depicted in the following way. The citizens of Thessaloniki become active social agents only when the verbs reflects a positive meaning such as “remember” or “pay honor”.

Today, five years after the First Memory Walk, the Memory Walk has been established as a necessary annual institution. The Memory Walk and this remembrance policy had and still have enemies but lead also to local growth.

Hundreds of people, Jews and non-Jews travel to Thessaloniki in order to walk and remember. More and more institutions decide to participate such as universities, media or political authorities. Slight social changes have been occurred due to the Memory Walk and due to the awakening of the past. A small part of the local society seeks more for its urban past and the Jewish community has been more extrovert and seeks more public space and time. Media cover not only the Memorial Walk but try to publish the personal stories of Holocaust survivors. There is no doubt that all these are not adequate to lead to a radical social change but it is certain that we have the first seeds.
Postscriptum

These lines are being written some days after the vandalism of grave stone in the Jewish cemetery of Athens and some weeks after the severe attack to the Mayor Yannis Boutaris during the events for the Pontian Genocide in Thessaloniki. The
Mayor was seriously beaten by members of far right organizations who attended the events for the Pontian Genocide. These lines are also being written some days after two new Memorial Walks, one in the city of Arta and one in the city of Kastoria, in the northern part of Greece. Both cities had a long standing Jewish population which was completely decimated in the World War II. The participants in both Memorial Walks were almost exclusively non-Jews. Greeks can decide which animal they will feed: the animal of the hate or the animal of the humanity.

Ending with these lines, I will try to remember forever the words of Mr David Saltiel “Only with education, we will protect our children. Only with education, we will teach our children the love for the human being without discrimination. Only with education, our children will learn that every life deserves respect.”

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