

# Theatre of the Real and Public Space as a Platform for Social Engagement

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(Image from *Inventory*, 2018. Taken by John Kouskoutis)

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## Abstract

This thesis examines performances that use documents in public spaces as the main dramaturgical components in order to engage the audience in collective, social experiences. Taking as my main case study the performative protest *Inventory* that occurred in Eleusis, Greece in 2018, my research question is formulated as such: *How does Inventory as theatre of the real employ archival materials and public space in order to activate social engagement?*

In this thesis, I argue that an artistic re-interpretation and re-presentation of a fact can present a version of the truth, while at the same time it places the spectators in positions where they gain social awareness and they develop social engagement. To support this view, I conducted research thinking of theatre as one of the most vital aspects of life that intervenes in the personal and political and gives voice to the voiceless.

Initially, drawing from the field of theatre and performance studies, I use materials from Peggy Phelan, Diana Taylor, Rebecca Schneider, Myriam Van Imschoot and Jeroen Peeters. These authors approached the archival logic differently and created the framework for the relationship between the performance and the archive. My first chapter is dependent on Carol Martin, Jules Odendahl-James, Janelle Reinelt, Claire Bishop and Amelia Parenteau who discuss the characteristics of theatre of the real and documentary theatre, explaining the tendency of theatre-makers to compose factual materials with aesthetic imaginaries (Chapter 1). Next, I continue with texts from Sigrid Merx, Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink, and Christopher Balme who place the public space in the center of attention. These authors investigate how public space performances can transform the audiences and passers-by into dynamic compositional forces of artworks, how they provide them with visibility and how the space functions as a platform for the development of democracy (Chapter 2). Lastly, my collaboration with the choreographer Tzeni Argyriou and visual artist Vassilis Gerodimos in *Inventory* and the dramaturgical triad addressed by Merx and Groot Nibbelink; composition, spectator and context constitute the dramaturgical analysis of the performance, where the theories from the first two chapters are applied (Chapter 3).

In this thesis, I create a research method that unfolds the main aspects of *Inventory*. Starting by introducing theatre of the real and documentary theatre, I create a map of how theatre uses stories that have been forgotten, bringing them to the fore and activating them in the present. Starting the research from the function of archives in contemporary performances, I proceed to public space. Public space in this thesis is primarily associated with reality, sociability and politicization. In this research, I think of both archives and public spaces as pivotal and radical elements of theatre. Therefore, I suggest that when these two are combined, the result is a theatre of the streets, of reality, of the past that comes and touches the present and re-frames it with one single vision: social change.

"Remember, Body..."

Constantine P. Cavafy, 1916

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# Introduction

## 0.1 Content

In my current professional experience, I have collaborated with artists that orient themselves towards more “real” representation of events. At the same time, I have also become familiar with performances that occurred in urban space; I assisted performances designed primarily for the public sphere. This artistic approach derives from the urgency to engage experiencers<sup>1</sup> in active practices of participation. Facts, stories and memories that constitute the past become reframed, giving structure to artworks that seek to present a version of the truth. By observing the above several questions arise; What is theatre of the real? How does urban space provoke spectators’ participation? How do urban space and documents’ exposure contribute to the development of social, historical and communal knowledge?

Trying to answer these questions, I came across notions such as theatre of the real and documentary theatre in the research area of theatre and performance studies. These notions constitute theatrical types. A quick look at the recent academic literature, in particular the texts written by Carol Martin, reveals that these notions emerged when people realized that they need to fight for their basic human rights. Therefore, both theatrical types aim to create artworks with strong political statements.

Driven by my main case study, a multimedia protest- performance named *Inventory* (2018) and my professional involvement in it as a production assistant, I connected it with the notions of documentary theatre and theatre of the real. Concepts like ‘living archive’<sup>2</sup> and ‘double archive’<sup>3</sup> will play a central role in my first chapter and will also be applied in the final dramaturgical analysis.

*Inventory* is a protest that occurs in a central, symbolically charged square of a town in Greece, Eleusis. Therefore, public space is also central in my research. Theoretical notions such as ‘politics of scenography’<sup>4</sup>, ‘disrupting the stage’<sup>5</sup>, ‘participation and occupation of public space’<sup>6</sup> and ‘compositional forces’<sup>7</sup> are used as tools by selected performance scholars

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis I often use the term experiencer, as I prefer it instead of using the terms spectator and audience. Inspired by the book *Mapping Intermediality in Performance* (2010), experiencers are those who use all their body and senses to perceive and interpret something, and not just the eyes or the ears. Robin Nelson et al., *Mapping intermediality in performance*. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 45.

<sup>2</sup> Jeroen Peeters, "I am not a zombie. An exploration of the “living archive” as a conceptual landscape," SARMA, May, 2014, <http://sarma.be/docs/2995?fbclid=IwAR0Da7BmwCQvK6ScvjtEg2GLed73C7Xf0GnuG36VI4hneEfZyBpPRJXJ6Q>.

<sup>3</sup> Claire Bishop, *Artificial hells: Participatory art and the politics of spectatorship* (London, New York: Verso Books, 2012), 35.

<sup>4</sup> Sigrid Merx, "The politics of scenography: Disrupting the stage," *Performance Research* 18, no. 3 (September 2013): 54. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2013.818314>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Christopher Balme, "Democracy with a Toothbrush: Protest, Performance, and the Public Sphere", in *Intermedial Performance and Politics in the Public Sphere*, eds. Katia Arfara, Aneta Mancewicz, and Ralf Remshard (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.), 66.

to critically address the choice of creating and presenting performances in public, social spaces and the strong bond between space- performers- audience. This has to do with two things; on the one hand, public space creates the ground for spectators' participation, and on the other, public space and its memories are activated within performances, where the space itself adds meaning and a historical, socio-political and symbolic framework to the performance. Thus, I approach public space as having primarily these two characteristics.

The initial point of conception of *Inventory* was the labor movements in Eleusis. The artistic team stayed there for three months during which they engaged with the permanent residents and collected archives based on testimonies of the former factory workers. The result was a collage of past and present materials, filmed in constructed spaces. By creating a temporal space with containers, artists created a space for coming together. The result of this process was a protest simulation in the square of the town, where all the workers' marches took place 100 years before. In this protest, volunteers, members of the production, passers-by and visitors held white blank banners and placards with projected archival material on them. Considering that the most characteristic structural elements of this artwork are the archives and the public space in which it takes place, it confirms how powerful and dynamic *Inventory* will be as a tool for developing my research. By analysing this performance, I will answer my research question; *How does Inventory as theatre of the real employ archival materials and public space in order to activate social engagement?*

In this thesis, derived by the discourses I previously mentioned, I examine the roles of archives (both as actual materials from the past and as the archives that people host in their bodies) and public space as central components that fuel the social engagement of the experiencers. What I aim to show is that by using archives and urban spaces as the compositional elements of an artwork, spectators are asked to participate in certain actions that are part of the performance and physically move, thus playing an active role in the performance.

My research draws on theories regarding theatre of the real and documentary theatre. The central axes for both are the reality of the outside world and the archives which are edited and presented during the performance in transparent ways. In order to understand precisely these types of theatre, I begin my analysis with authors who used the archive to contextualize this debate and to realize that the body itself is an embodied archive. Next, to clearly explain theatre of the real and documentary theatre, I use texts written by Carol Martin. More specifically, I relate to her texts *Bodies of Evidence* (2006), *Theatre of the Real* (2012), "Our Reflection Talks Back" (2017). In her extensive works she analyses theatre of the real and documentary theatre without distinguishing them. Therefore, I start with the definition of theatre of the real as a more specific term and continue with the documentary theatre as a wider one, commenting on the way Martin uses these terms, in order to clarify the similarities and differences between them. Furthermore, focusing attention on the role that documents play in documentary theatre, I connect this exact concept with what Claire

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<sup>7</sup> Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink, "Bordering and shattering the stage", in *Staging Spectators in Immersive Performances*, eds. Doris Kolesch, Theresa Schütz, and Sophie Nikoleit (London: Routledge, 2019), 70.

Bishop calls 'double archive'<sup>8</sup> when she discusses a battle reenactment with performative means. This artwork was inspired by an actual battle in 1984 but was composed according to the artist's reinterpretation. I then compare Bishop and Martin's perspectives on the notion of reenactment, to examine how archival materials as valid and indisputable sources may be challenged, edited artistically and used as fuels for artistic creation.

Next, I also discuss some of the key sources from the academic debate on public space in order to underline the political implications of presenting artworks on the streets. As I have observed, examples of theatre of the real and documentary theatre have a stronger effect when presented in public spaces. Thus, I mainly focus on three performance scholars: Sigrid Merx (2013), Christopher Balme (2018), and Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink (2019). However, the introductory section of this chapter is based on the professor of Human Geography Paul Simpson and his analysis of everyday spaces in his publication "Street Performance and the City: Public Space, Sociality, and Intervening in the Everyday" (2011). His research helped me create the map of understanding the function of everyday spaces. Choosing as the introduction of the current chapter the analysis of a professor of Human Geography, I provide the reader with the characteristics of the public space and its political and social implications when artworks are presented in it. In this way, it is possible to perceive this significance in the subsections of the chapter.

In addition, Merx and Balme discuss specific case studies of performances that were presented to larger audiences as protests. Taking their analyses as my model, I investigate how public space as a central component of an artwork generates a political act and gives voice to the voiceless. Balme discusses the relationship between performance, protest and public space and how the use of performative means can create the ground for spectators to participate and occupy the public sphere. In these respects, this research enables me to introduce the relationship of performance with protest as an artistic expression, an element that has a significant role in *Inventory*. Moreover, the section based on Merx's line of thought is focused on the dramaturgical elements that use the public spaces as political, performative stages which can transform previously hidden and buried facts into visible. Respectively, the section which is driven by Groot Nibbelink's analysis on ambulatory performances discusses how emergent dramaturgies use spectators as compositional forces of the artworks.

Regarding Groot Nibbelink's research, I will focus attention on the ability of public space to create environments where people can become active and interact with each other. This ability is not based on public space's nature per se, but on the dramaturgies that are being used. In immersive and participatory performances, the spectators often become mobilized because of the dynamic space that is activated around them through emergent dramaturgies. However, to be more specific in my analysis regarding the dramaturgical strategies that are in play, I introduce the term 'dramaturgies of deterritorialisation'. Through Groot Nibbelink's analysis, and simultaneously inspired by her interview with artist Dries Verhoeven, I establish an understanding of how public space performances can activate the audience and transform them from passive observers into active participants.

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<sup>8</sup> Bishop, *Artificial hells: Participatory art and the politics of spectatorship*, 35.



## 0.2 Methodology and structure

In this thesis, I demonstrate how embedding archival material in performances in public space may work as fuel for social engagement, self-awareness and new ways of approaching reality. The main motivation for this thesis is the way artists and dramaturgs started working with the intersection of art and politics and using the former as a vehicle for raising social issues. As a central pillar, performances of the real depict something socio-political, just like public space itself does. I hence claim that the emergence of documentary theatre in public space can be seen as the catalyst for social justice and change. Moreover, it is undeniable that my professional involvement in *Inventory* constitutes a central component of my analysis. My experience, together with the notes, footage and collection of archives that I possess, allow me to get a complete and in-depth insight of the performance. After collecting and mapping my observations, I proceed to their connection with the theories I have studied. Therefore, to answer my research question, I use literature research, dramaturgical analysis and my professional observations, as qualitative research methods.

Chapter 1 is focused on the explanation of concepts of archive, theatre of the real and documentary theatre. In this chapter, I start with a brief introduction of the performance studies discourse on archives as addressed by Peggy Phelan, Diana Taylor, Myriam Van Imschoot, Rebecca Schneider and Jeroen Peeters and I proceed with the analysis of these two theatrical types addressed by Martin. I close this chapter by presenting the relation of the documentary theatre with historical accuracy, historiography and the notion of 'double archive'.

Chapter 2 zooms into performances that occur in the public sphere and how they activate dynamic landscapes which require active participation. In this chapter, I create a map with multiple references from performance scholars who discuss public space, and I present examples. With them, the chosen theories are put into practice. After this coherent theoretical base, I proceed to my case study and its dramaturgical analysis in Chapter 3, where I use all the above as theoretical tools to answer my questions.

This last chapter constitutes a dramaturgical analysis of *Inventory*. I base this analysis on two central components; the theoretical framework established in the first chapters and my involvement in the production. Combining these two, I conduct a dramaturgical analysis based on the article "Dramaturgical Analysis: A Relational Approach" (Groot Nibbelink and Merx 2021). Here, the authors propose how dramaturgical analysis can be written, based on three fundamental components: composition, spectator and context. The dramaturgical analysis starts with the description of the performance and its cultural and artistic context. Next, I refer to the reasons *Inventory* contains elements from both documentary theatre and theatre of the real, based on my first chapter. Then, I proceed to the composition of the work, analyzing all the materials that structure it. These are archival materials from the past, present materials filmed by the artists with protagonists the residents of Eleusis, protest in public space, containers' installation and dance. Next, regarding spectatorship, I draw on theories that think of spectators as the compositional forces, in examples of participatory art. Lastly, I close this chapter with the strong political statement this performance holds and the double way of using the archives.

## Chapter 1- Documentary Theatre and the Archive

The current chapter is concerned with notions of archive, theatre of the real and documentary theatre in order to present how these notions are articulated in performance studies. First, I briefly look at how the archive can be understood, based on Phelan, Taylor, Schneider, Van Imschoot and Peeters. By understanding the archival logic, it becomes easier for the reader to relate to my case study in the third chapter, where the bodies of the performers act as part of the archive. Next, I discuss what theatre of the real is and how it is laid out in Martin's extensive work. Although I start by defining this term, I continue with providing a definition of documentary theatre understanding it as a wider theatrical notion that includes theatre of the real. Elements of both theatrical types are apparent in *Inventory*. This chapter aims to answer what the primary aims of theatre of the real and documentary theatre are, by highlighting their power in performance studies and society in general. By introducing these notions, I will be able to argue why *Inventory* can be understood as an example of theatre of the real where the archives have a double role; the bodies of the performers function as the archives themselves and the collected archival materials are displayed in the performance.

### 1.1 Living Archive

To define the archive, I start with Phelan's position regarding the mutually exclusive relationship between the performance and the archive. As opposed to Phelan, Taylor, Schneider and Van Imschoot distance themselves from the idea that performance resists archiving and reproduction by illuminating other points of the archival logic. Next, a brief reference to Peeters and his notion of 'living archive' is given. These four authors refer in different ways to the archive, the history and the memory.

Phelan in *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (2003) describes performance as something that does not remain, refuses to remain and is unstable. Performance is ontologically unique and ephemeral, and this impermanence signifies the performance's refusal to become an object or a commodity, submitting to the capitalist system, as Phelan believes.<sup>9</sup> Performance's strength is that its life is limited to the present and "becomes itself through disappearance"<sup>10</sup>. Thus, Phelan argues, it cannot be saved, and its temporal condition signifies its exact "independence from mass reproduction"<sup>11</sup>.

In her book *Archive and the Repertoire* (2003), Taylor discusses the distinction between archive and repertoire. In this division "archival memory" consists of texts, documents, buildings, letters, videos and bones, while the repertoire consists of embodied practices, repetitions, sports, dances, songs, non-verbal expressions, gestures and spoken language, enacting embodied memories.<sup>12</sup> Thus, according to Taylor, the repertoire is ephemeral, opposite to the stable objects of the archive. It exceeds the archive because it requires

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<sup>9</sup> Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The politics of performance* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 149.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 146.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 149.

<sup>12</sup> Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2003), 19.

presence and liveness<sup>13</sup>, while the archives functions from distance; from recordings that are stable and presented throughout the years. However, both interact with each other and provide sources of information by transmitting social knowledge. The point of her argument which proves that she disagrees with Phelan is exactly the one in which she refers to the power of the repertoire. The repertoire, since it appears in performances, gestures and memories, it cannot be condensed in the archives. The archive, however, has a stronger privilege over the repertoire, because of its written nature. Because of this privilege, that archive exists only in written materials, the repertoire can exist in embodied performance-based practices and continue appearing, constantly interacting with the archive and the memories that constitute it. Therefore, the one feeds the other and they are inseparable.

Moving on with Van Imschoot's and Schneider's understandings of the archive, both influenced by Jacques Derrida and his book *Archive Fever. A Freudian Impression* (1996) in which he points at the dual structure of the archive, implying the performative aspects of it, two different etymological approaches to the word "archive" arise. Schneider states that:

the Greek root of the word archive refers to the Archon's *house*; by extension, the architecture of a social memory that demands visible or materially traceable remains is the architecture of a particular social power over memory.<sup>14</sup>

Schneider believes that we tend to understand ourselves as influenced by the remains we accumulate, "the material traces we acknowledge" and therefore, the archival logic is inherent to western culture.<sup>15</sup> She points out that because of this established image of the performance as something that does not remain, we may overlook different ways of accessing history.<sup>16</sup> According to her, in the 1990s performance was still antithetical to memories, history and archives, and considered as something that cannot represent history.<sup>17</sup> However, with the broadened range of documents that exists now because of technology, Schneider suggests that we have access to "lost histories"<sup>18</sup>. A new history has appeared that incorporates collective memory and performative practices that is dependent on archives.<sup>19</sup> Schneider advises that when we approach performance not as something that disappears but as the "act of remaining and a means of reappearance", we come to admit that remains are not isolated to documents and hence, that the body becomes the archive and the host of traumatic, collective memories.<sup>20</sup> This approach has similarities with Taylor's understanding of the repertoire. The repertoire in Taylor's text is the articulation of the memories and the archives that are embedded in bodies and gestures.

According to Van Imschoot, the archive has a dual meaning; commencement and commandment, and in this she includes the term "condemnation" since performance does

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 20.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 102.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 100.

<sup>16</sup> Rebecca Schneider, *Performing remains: Art and war in times of theatrical reenactment* (London: Routledge, 2011), 101.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 101.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 102.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 103.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid,

not remain thus, its main characteristic is “loss”<sup>21</sup>. As she asserts, following Phelan’s observations, performance happens only once, and then it enters “the mnemonic field of memory”<sup>22</sup>. However, Van Imschoot asserts that instead of thinking that performance seeks to thwart the logic of the archive, we need to think that it stays within the frame of the archival logic.<sup>23</sup> In the same way, instead of thinking that the archive is merely a type of reproduction, we can think of the performers as ‘mobile body archives’ with physical memories, who are “metabolic ecologies that compose the living traces of experience”<sup>24</sup>.

The Belgian dramaturg Jeroen Peeters provides yet another view on what the archive can mean in a performance. Inspired by his involvement in the performance *Anarchiv #1: I am not a zombie* (2009 and 2014) by Katrin Deufert and Thomas Plischke<sup>25</sup>, he wrote that an archive becomes alive either when a human being interacts with it and thus makes it “speak”, or when the archive is imposed on a human being. In this way, people carry embodied memories and hence become the living archive themselves.<sup>26</sup>

Peeters, for manifesting his broader thinking about archives, creates a triangle between archives, zombies, and humans. Zombies in his text are placed outside of societies and have a gap between their personal embodied histories and collective histories. Therefore, their bodily condition has a problematic relationship with memory. Moreover, zombies bring up issues of identity as they look for “a space for self-narration as a living archive, in order to move beyond its pathological state”<sup>27</sup>. In a similar way, humans need the presence of other people and public space to deal with unseen areas and acknowledge that their mental and bodily experiences will never be totally accessible to themselves.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, the notion of the ‘living archive’ will further assist *Inventory’s* dramaturgical analysis when analyzing the use of archival material in two ways. The first is the obvious one, where the archive is displayed in the performance and activated because people interact with it, and the second is the “hidden” one, where the bodies of the residents, function as archives themselves.

Once it is clear that performance can be inseparable from the archive, it is then possible to focus on documentary theatre and how it uses archival materials. Since Phelan’s theory of performance and its antithetical relation to the archive, other theories were developed that sought to bridge the relationship between the performing arts and the archive and more specifically, the role of the body in the archive. Schneider argued that historical reenactments can function as accurate historical representations and that through

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<sup>21</sup> Myriam van Imschoot, “Rests in pieces: On scores, notation and the trace in dance,” *Multitudes 2*, no.21 (Spring 2005): 107, <https://doi.org/10.3917/mult.021.0107>.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 111.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, 113.

<sup>25</sup> *Anarchiv#1* is a performance where the artistic twin Deufert and Plischke look back on their previous artworks through the documents they collected. In this performance and during the artistic research, Peeters states that instead of merely celebrating the past through the archive, the artistic team tried to transform the past into meaning via experience.

<sup>26</sup> Peeters, “I am not a zombie...”

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

technology and archives we can now reach new “readings” and have access to lost histories. Respectively, Taylor's theory of the archive and the repertoire, as two interdependent notions, assisted this research to complete the sub-chapter on the archive, having an overview of this debate.

## 1.2 Theatre of the Real

Since the archive plays a significant role in *Inventory*, I will continue with a discussion of the notions ‘theatre of the real’ and ‘documentary theatre’ and the relation of these notions to the archive based on Martin’s extensive research in *Theatre of the Real* (2012).

Martin introduced the term ‘theatre of the real’ as a “wide range of theatre practices and styles” that presents reality.<sup>29</sup> This theatre does exactly what its name implies; its most characteristic element of composition is the reality of the outside world. Moreover, it combines historical evidence with artistic practices. Archival materials work in theatre of the real as the dramaturgical elements that structure an artwork. To identify a performance or a play as an example of theatre of the real it must present reality, whether this is personal, social or political, within the theatrical, fictional environment.

In addition, Martin does not only rely on this function of this theatrical type; the use of archival materials. Rather, she expands this notion by referring to the here and now of the performance. By providing examples of theatrical plays where sudden snow appeared in the theatre’s window, or the actor’s microphone was destructed, she claims that in these cases it was very confusing for the audience to understand if the reality’s interventions in the theatre’s room constituted or not conscious and premeditated choices of the director. Therefore, it is understood that theatre of the real “plays” also with what is happening in the here and now of the event and thus, it has the ability to utilize external and unpredictable factors as part of its dramaturgy.

Martin provides a historical retrospective that maps the precursors of the theatre of the real. This theatre is much related to political and social issues; hence the first traces of its birth and the conditions of its growth are important to mention.

Although traces of theatre of the real can be found in the theatre of Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht who created theatre for the masses and reconsidered the connection between life and theatre<sup>30</sup>, it was only in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century that this type of theatre bloomed. The politics that governed everyday life resulted in an obvious change on stage. Theatre makers understood that the possibility of collective social justice is embedded in theatre and thus, they should use the experience of real-life in their practices. Gradually, this fact modified established theatrical approaches. According to Martin, the decisive factors for these shifts were the radical re-thinking of all the theatrical aspects, influenced by realistic epistemology and theatricalization of public and private life, and playwrights who started working with documents.<sup>31</sup> The intentions became quickly political, and theatre connected to utopian movements that wished to change the world. For instance, theatre in the U.S was

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<sup>29</sup> Carol Martin, *Theatre of the Real* (London: Springer, 2012), 5.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid,15.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 22.

interpreted as a political forum related to feminism, civil rights and anti-war movements. During that period, Martin observes that there was a connection between courtrooms and theatre rooms. Real-life trials were parallelized to rehearsed performances; "the real-life drama of the courtroom is no different, finally. In court, as in documentary theatre, the forensic evidence stored in the archive is as much constructed as it is found"<sup>32</sup>. Hence, belief, evidence and actions were not only parts of courtrooms but also of the renewed, experimental theatre.

In this theatrical revolution, the connection between theatre and life had a great impact also on the process of creating an artwork and thus, rehearsals. Artists firstly used personal experiences to point to societal problems regarding justice in social life. This openness to the public sphere enabled the theatre to discover innovative methods of working and simultaneously, enriched the political aspect of art. According to Martin, theatre-makers attempted to create artworks based on transparency.<sup>33</sup> The intention was not only to narrate the truth but to find new ways of staging the truth with transparency, presenting the archival materials to the audience. Everything previously hidden, concealed, or conventionally established as socially and politically accepted, was now questioned.

A performance example of theatre of the real will further clarify the meaning of this term. In 2005, the play *My Name Is Rachel Corrie* was created by the journalist Katharine Viner and the actor Alan Rickman. The play was based on the diaries and emails of activist Rachel Corrie, who was killed in 2003 by an Israeli soldier of the Israel Defense Forces when she was aged 23 in her attempt to protect the home of a Palestinian pharmacist. As Martin discusses, in this play, evidence from the past was brought to life after collection and editing. The result was a provocative play (in New York it was canceled because of its political content) that composed evidence from diaries (excerpts from which constituted the main script of the play) and media from a person that once existed with imaginaries, re-interpretations and artistic means.<sup>34</sup> According to Martin, all these elements classify this play as an example of theatre of the real, fulfilling its basic characteristics that rely on the presentation of reality, which in this case is a personal one.

According to Martin, theatre of the real claims a relationship to reality and as a wider umbrella it includes documentary theatre, verbatim theatre, reality-based theatre, theatre-of-fact, theatre of witness, tribunal theatre, nonfiction theatre, restored village performances, war and battle reenactments, and autobiographical theatre.<sup>35</sup> Martin observes that their common ground is this exact connection with reality, but their theatrical means and methods may vary, differ, overlap, and cross-fertilize. Thus, many different styles and forms can be applied, without specific importance on what kind of reality is presented.<sup>36</sup>

However, Martin in her texts does not describe carefully how documentary theatre and theatre of the real relate to or are differentiated from each other. While in performance

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<sup>32</sup> Carol Martin, "Bodies of evidence," *The Drama Review* 50, no. 3 (Autumn 2006): 11. <https://doi.org/10.1162/dram.2006.50.3.8>.

<sup>33</sup> Martin, *Theatre of the Real*, 57.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-13.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

studies documentary theatre includes verbatim theatre, theatre of fact, docudrama, reality-based theatre, etc., in Martin's text the opposite happens. In my view, what she means is that theatre of the real is a more poetic term, connected to immediacy, actuality and what is happening in the here and now of the performance, while documentary theatre is theatre that reflects on the history that is recorded in the archive. Since documentary theatre is broadly accepted to be a wider term that includes theatre of the real, usually I prefer to use this term. However, in the dramaturgical analysis I also employ the notion of theatre of the real since *Inventory* contains elements from both theatrical types.

Providing a more precise definition of documentary theatre I rely on Jules Odendahl- James and her text "A History of U.S. Documentary Theatre in Three Stages" (2017). According to her, documentary theatre is conceived as a theatrical genre that typically uses historical and archival materials such as trial transcripts, autobiographies, video footage, and newspaper recordings. She observes that it first appeared in America. Documentary theatre bloomed initially during the 1930s with the socio-political crises, and in the 1970s when unscripted events ('happenings') started using lived experiences and socio-political struggles of everyday people as the central subjects. Theatre practitioners of that genre started being concerned about how to shape reality, either prioritizing content or form.<sup>37</sup> Additional to this, for Janelle Reinelt the most promising characteristic that documentary theatre has, is that it provides access to reality through archives and creative mediations, without being merely a memoir but a truth that is not related to fiction.<sup>38</sup> Documentary theatre thus presents past realities through archives that are edited artistically.

Having now a clearer definition of documentary theatre, I continue with Martin's approach, in order to map completely her line of thought, which constitutes the base for my analysis. As she observes, in the digital "post-truth era" that we live in, theatre practitioners choose to create works using theatre's abilities to both represent and interpret events.<sup>39</sup> Because it is difficult to understand the truth, and since humankind prefers the easy way of "exegesis" (from the Greek word "εξήγηση" which means explanation), artists who practice documentary theatre do not seek to replicate the real or re-invent it but to understand it through their artworks.<sup>40</sup> In this respect, as Amelia Parenteau claims, documentary theatre is a "platform for social, political, and personal exploration"<sup>41</sup>.

Furthermore, according to Parenteau, practitioners of this genre, make discoveries by listening to communities and "challenge habitual ways of knowing"<sup>42</sup>. Documentary theatre often creates strong bonds with people and treats reality as much more complex than

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<sup>37</sup> Jules Odendahl-James, "A History of U.S. Documentary Theatre in Three Stages," *American Theatre*, August 22, 2017, <https://www.americantheatre.org/2017/08/22/a-history-of-u-s-documentary-theatre-in-three-stages/>.

<sup>38</sup> Janelle Reinelt, "The promise of documentary", in *Get Real: Documentary theatre past and present*, eds. Alison Forsyth and Christopher Megson (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 20-22.

<sup>39</sup> Carol Martin, "Our Reflection Talks Back," *American Theatre*, August 22, 2017, <https://www.americantheatre.org/2017/08/22/our-reflection-talks-back/>.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Amelia Parenteau, "How Do You Solve a Problem Like Documentary Theatre?," *American Theatre*, August 22, 2017, <https://www.americantheatre.org/2017/08/22/how-do-you-solve-a-problem-like-documentary-theatre/>.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

fiction. Instead of merely educating, it seeks to generate meaningful conversations and invite the audience to play a role in the performance by physically moving. Factual sources and past materials are transformed into the narration of an artwork. In that way, as Parenteau observes, artists create a dialogue with the past by making it visible, opening it in a way in which the public can reflect on it.<sup>43</sup>

From the moment that documentary theater composes reality with fiction, it is undeniable that it succumbs to difficulties. This kind of theatre has a moral responsibility, and its essential element is the difficulty to figure out the truth. According to Martin, documentary theatre makers struggle to shape the complexity of historical events.<sup>44</sup> As she suggests, history and artistic creation are both acts of imagination because they both try to accredit meaning to selected, actual events of the past.<sup>45</sup> Following her line of thought, artists claim authenticity for their artworks because of their initial source that “then is copied and simulated”<sup>46</sup>. Documentary theatre uses recycled materials from the past that interrupts the notions of authenticity and poses questions about the original. Parenteau similarly observes, that in a period of cultural appropriation and political correctness this moral responsibility frightens.<sup>47</sup> In the dramaturgical analysis, I reflect on these difficulties that we witness in *Inventory*.

Regarding the over-used term “documentary theatre”, Parenteau states that she uses this term to describe contemporary works that relate to reality, although she is doing so because of a “lack of a better encompassing word in a moment of shifting terminology”<sup>48</sup>. Martin also discusses that there is a big discourse regarding the nomenclatures that describe artworks that cite reality but still, there is not a universal agreement on individual terms.<sup>49</sup>

In this section, I have shown how theatre of the real and documentary theatre have been defined by performance scholars. Theatre of the real is a more specific term, related both to the use of archival materials and the here and now of the performance and its unpredictable nature. However, theatre of the real is addressed by Martin as the broad type of theatre which includes documentary theatre. In the second case, documentary theatre is broadly understood from performance scholars as a wider genre that includes the rest. Documentary theatre’s main concern and source of inspiration is the documents that constitute a past and their presentation on stage. In my research and more specifically in the dramaturgical analysis of *Inventory*, I use both terms to describe the performance’s dramaturgical components. In Chapter 3, documentary theatre is used as the base of the artwork, which uses archives to bring to the fore the history of a town and create connections with the present, while theatre of the real is applied in order to show the unpredictability of the external factors in a public space performance.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Martin, “Bodies of evidence”, 9.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>47</sup> Parenteau, “ How Do You Solve a Problem Like Documentary Theatre?”.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Martin, *Theatre of the Real*, 4.



### 1.3 Documentary theatre and the 'double archive'

As has been mentioned, documentary theatre uses archival material for artistic purposes while blurring the boundaries between the stage and the world. The relationship between documentary theatre and history is an integral part of the creation of this theatre. This current section will revolve around the unique way such theatre re-writes history.

To facilitate her argumentation, Martin in her analysis engages history with historiography, "because theatre of the real participates in how we come to know and understand what has happened" and various examples of this theatre try to intervene in history and change it.<sup>50</sup> This is connected to what was discussed before regarding the moral responsibility involved in this type of theatre, provoking questions of historical accuracy and respect paid. Documentary theatre poses questions relevant to both theatre-makers and historians because it challenges history in manners that require delicate handling.

Martin claims that when witnessing artworks of this type of theatre, it is important to keep in mind that artists are not historians, professors or researchers. In that way, they don't need to document reality with absolute historical accuracy. On the other hand, as Martin claims, performance artists "reinterpret history and represent it according to their fascination, proclivities, [and] imagination"<sup>51</sup>.

According to Martin, "documentary theatre creates its own aesthetic imaginaries while claiming a special factual legitimacy"<sup>52</sup>. This is associated with Bishop's notion of 'double archive' when she analyses a battle re-enactment as performance art.<sup>53</sup> On the one hand, there is a real document, a piece of evidence from the past and on the other hand, the artist's reinterpretation of this event.<sup>54</sup> Martin asserts that theatre, after all "combines the emotional weight of storytelling with truth-telling"<sup>55</sup>. The 'double archive' is constituted precisely of these two elements; the interpretation of the past and the historically accurate telling of the past. This condition is also evident in *Inventory* as I will explain in the last chapter of this thesis.

This chapter discussed that documentary theatre and theatre of the real do something more than merely enacting history. They both stage historiography in a parallel action; they make us think of complex subjects and disturbing contexts while they reveal "the virtues and flaws of its sources", as Martin states.<sup>56</sup> The creative work is located exactly in the process of selecting, editing, presenting and organizing the archives. Therefore, these types of theatre give meaning to the past in order to make it matter again in the present.<sup>57</sup> In this sense, I argue that a re-interpretation of a fact can provoke thoughts, educate, create comparisons, provoke associations with the present, and in general place us in a position where we realize what is happening in our societies.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Martin, "Bodies of evidence", 10.

<sup>53</sup> Bishop, *Artificial hells: Participatory art and the politics of spectatorship*, 35.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Martin, "Bodies of evidence", 14.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

## Conclusion

This chapter has shown how theatre of the real and documentary theatre emerged in the theatrical field and what their characteristics are. Because they both work with archival materials and the reframing of the real, I discussed authors that refer to the archive to show alternative ways of approaching the archival logic in the performance discourses. Moreover, I reflected on authors who argued that the bodies of the performers can act as embodied archives that carry memories and knowledge from the past and bring it to the present. More specifically, the notions of 'living archive' and 'mobile body archives' will help me with the analysis of *Inventory*, since performers' bodies function as archives themselves. Regarding theatre of the real and documentary theatre, I demonstrated their connection, considering that both notions' characteristics derive from reality. The notion of 'double archive' will also assist my dramaturgical analysis. Next, to further build a theoretical framework for my dramaturgical analysis, I will continue to the next chapter which analyzes performances in public space.

## Chapter 2- Public Space and Performance

The current chapter describes theatre's ability to occupy public space and to transform the function of everyday places into performative, communal, affective spaces. More specifically, it examines what happens when performances occur in public spaces and what this choice means about audience's participation. In the following pages, I start with a discussion of interventions of theatre in everyday life to map the effect performances in public space provoke on the audience, as addressed by Simpson. I continue with Balme's analysis on the triangle performance, protest and the public sphere, which will play a fundamental role in my dramaturgical analysis. I close this chapter with two different dramaturgical perspectives given by Merx and Groot Nibbelink. This choice aims to underline two elements in *Inventory*; the ways that dramaturgy can offer visibility to marginalized individuals and communities and secondly, how audiences can become a compositional force. Throughout this chapter examples from performances are used in order to demonstrate how these theories work.

### 2.1 Performance interventions in everyday life. An introduction to public space and street performance

Performances that take place in the public sphere use this choice as a structural and dramaturgical element of the work. Although public space is treated in many cases as facilitating performances' scenography, in this thesis it is not the case. In my view, scenography a priori involves the element of fake; a situation is pretended, made and fixed while on the other hand, everyday public spaces are synonymous with reality. Here, I briefly start with how public space is approached by a Human Geography scholar, in order to map the political aspects of the public sphere from a different point of view. Then, I continue with more specific perspectives on public space addressed exclusively by performance scholars. Although Simpson's paper examines particularly street performances drawing on ethnographic observations undertaken in Bath, UK<sup>58</sup>, his argumentation that everyday spaces contain a strong political aspect and that street performances can produce social relations between the members, will help create the basis for the further analysis on the public space debate in performance studies. However, street performances or buskings constitute a specific artistic genre because they rely on gratuities from spectators. Thus, my goal is to focus on the political nature of public space and the behaviours that are developed within it, and not on the street performances which are different from public space performances.

I claim that performances, as activities that often require embodied participation, can activate the cities and provoke changes in them and in the ways people perceive them. Public space performances intervene in the everyday and challenge audiences or passers-by, inviting them to question the social structure and order, resist the dominant authorities and gain awareness, both personal and socio-political. Performances, hence, are able to intervene spatial-temporally in the space and change routines and established patterns of

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<sup>58</sup> Paul Simpson, "Street performance and the city: Public space, sociality, and intervening in the everyday," *Space and Culture* 14, no. 4 (September 2011): 416.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1206331211412270>.

behaviours. As Simpson claims, moments of sociality in everyday places have the power to alter the experiences in them.<sup>59</sup> Public space can bring about debates and discussions and produce political and collective action. At the same time, according to Simpson it can produce sociability; it gives strangers with different backgrounds the possibility and openness to interact and relate to each other.<sup>60</sup> In this respect, performances affect the space and promote “spontaneous democratic intimate encounters”<sup>61</sup>. In Simpson’s text, everyday life and public space are conceived as a ground for alienation, modification and resistance that holds the potential for something different to emerge.

Moreover, following Simpson’s narration, street performances “inject some liminality into the everyday routines of these spaces”; people spend time during their daily activities standing and observing.<sup>62</sup> The liminality has much to do with the elimination of the performer-audience distance since there is no stage. At the same time, there is a kind of forced proximity in the often-crowded places where these performances take place which requires improvising skills and fluidity among the participants and the performers.<sup>63</sup> According to Simpson, all the elements in the environment constitute elements of the performance, “potential disruptions” that are transformed into “entertaining diversions”<sup>64</sup>. Therefore, the order of the space is for some minutes suspended and disrupted and temporal and partial interruption of the usual functioning occur.

After briefly introducing the political implications that the public sphere has per se, these characteristics will be seen in *Inventory’s* dramaturgical analysis in the next chapter. Although Simpson’s research is specifically oriented towards street performances, his analysis assists my last chapter, where public space functions as the ground for social engagement and participation.

## **2.2 A triangular relationship: protest- performance- public space**

In this section, I focus my attention on Balme’s analysis regarding the connection of performance with the public sphere and the protest. Driven by his analysis, I explain the impact public space performances have on social and political life, while holding possibilities for a democratic evolution. Based on the political theorist Chantal Mouffe, Balme defines public space as the foundation of democracy and in this way, he analyses the strong political implications these performances have. The book *Intermedial Performance and Politics in the Public Sphere* (2018) examines how interdisciplinary artistic practices contribute to new alternative arrangements regarding the dominant social order while making visible those who are marginalized.

Balme established a triangular relationship between protest, performance and the public sphere. He claims that protests -that carry possibilities of influencing democratic processes- are de facto performances where placards, slogans and rallies, constitute the performative

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 422.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 420.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 425.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

forms of a protest.<sup>65</sup> In his analysis he approaches the effective relationship between theatre, performance and democracy.

For Balme, public space is the realm where citizens can come together in a moment of collectivity and discuss issues of political interest.<sup>66</sup> Inspired by Mouffe who came up with the notion of an "agonistic" public sphere,<sup>67</sup> the public sphere in Balme's work is treated as a foundation for democracy, just as dance is treated as a mediator of freedom and a tool for potential social influence and democracy for André Lepecki, as is noted by Kéline Gotman.<sup>68</sup> According to Balme, Mouffe claims, that the aim of democracy is to transform antagonism (the struggle between implacable enemies bent on each other's destruction) into agonism (the struggle between adversaries who respect each other's argument) and according to her, the main enemy of artistic activism is capitalism.<sup>69</sup>

Having presented Balme's view of public space, I proceed to the dynamics that are created when a performance is created for and presented in the public sphere. According to Balme, the point where performance and the public sphere are related to one another resides precisely in the restrictions on freedom of expression and in the "participation and occupation of the public sphere by performance" which recruits all the performative means to intervene in the public sphere.<sup>70</sup> The way he analyses one protest performance created by two Romanian students in Munich in 2014 a day before the presidential elections in Romania, is significant in order to understand the correlation of performance with democracy. According to Balme, the huge impact this performance had is easy to be seen if we realize how many people were motivated to vote, influenced by the performance's exposure on social media<sup>71</sup>, when a conventional protest may not have had such an effect. The symbol that is used throughout the performance is a toothbrush, that is connected intertextually with Martin Luther King, signifying a genealogy of protest. Martin Luther King told the people involved in demonstrations to always carry with them a toothbrush in case they get arrested by the authorities.<sup>72</sup> Thus, the performance writes itself into "a genealogy and archive of protest and civil disobedience" where the symbolic meaning of the toothbrush in combination with the performer who waits to vote for the first time, frames the affective and emotional context of the protest.<sup>73</sup>

From the above, it is clear how theatre can intervene in the everyday. Theatre may not have the ability to change the world, but it can offer a constellation of images, sensations and ideas that intervene generatively and transform people's perspectives of reality and therefore, of democracy. Within this frame, it can occupy the public space raising important questions and challenging the limits of spatial understanding and social reality. The

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<sup>65</sup> Balme, "Democracy with a Toothbrush: Protest, Performance, and the Public Sphere.", 61.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 63.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 64.

<sup>68</sup> Kéline Gotman, *Choreomania: Dance and Disorder* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 15.

<sup>69</sup> Chantal Mouffe, "Deliberative democracy or agonistic pluralism", in *Political Science Series*, no. 72, ed. Christine Neuhold (Vienna: Institute for Advanced Studies, 2000): 16.

<sup>70</sup> Balme, "Democracy with a Toothbrush: Protest, Performance, and the Public Sphere" 66.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 69.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

construction of participatory, ephemeral and performative environments in public space blurs the borders between private and public life and invites the audience to test new forms of temporary inhabitation, behaviour and interaction. Balme believes that performance's connection with politics and the public sphere can establish a potentiality for equality, demonstration and democracy. Therefore, I will use Balme's arguments in my dramaturgical analysis and more specifically in the statement that *Inventory* holds, to search how through public space, audience and performers interact in a collective temporality which reveals democratic mechanisms.

### 2.3 Becoming visible

This section, aims to examine how public spaces can be transformed into political, performative stages, providing the performers with visibility and the opportunity to exist and claim their rights. Merx discusses the scenography of political performances by researching how urban landscapes are transformed into political stages. The reason I use her text as an analytical tool in my research has to do with the way she discusses a specific performance, taking its dramaturgical strategies one step further. In her own words, space and politics interact and scenography is a practice that activates "the shifting of positions" and highlights what is in a performance "to be seen and to be heard"<sup>74</sup>.

In "The politics of scenography. Disrupting the stage" (2013), Merx discusses a 2009 hunger strike- protest- performance created by Thomas Bellinck in Belgium. The Flemish theatre-maker and activist Bellinck participated in the protest with a group of nine undocumented immigrant hunger-strikers in Brussels. What started as a hunger strike in an underground parking lot, turned into a public protest at a historical square in the centre of the city. Bellinck decided not to re-enact the protest on a theatrical stage. Merx comments on the three selected spaces in which the performance happened and eventually functioned as political stages; the underground car park, the main square and the theatre stage; three totally different environments "that together make up the scenography of this political performance in three scenes"<sup>75</sup>.

According to Merx, the dramaturgy of Bellinck's work reveals "the disturbing connection between theatre and protest and the potential of the square as a place to claim an autonomous identity"<sup>76</sup>, highlighting the powerful ability of scenography to reactivate historical positions. The symbolic meaning of the square provokes a radical change in meaning and is presented as a place that offers people the opportunity to exist. As I observe, in Bellinck's performance the public space is activated and the space itself adds a historical, symbolic and socio-political frame to the performance. In addition, Merx observes that both the dramaturgy and the scenography of this performance make the complex story of a country's identity visible.<sup>77</sup> According to her, converting the public space into a theatrical and recharging it with symbolic meaning, offers the immigrants the possibility to play a part that they were not able to play before.<sup>78</sup> While in the everyday life the performers of

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<sup>74</sup> Merx, "The politics of scenography: Disrupting the stage", 54.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 57.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 56.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 57.

Bellinck's artwork are often invisible, not to say totally discriminated against and marginalized, through the transformation of the public sphere into a theatrical one, these people gain visibility and voice. For some moments, all the present citizens can listen to them and observe them. In this respect, Bellinck does not only seek to express his political position, but he challenges theatre's ability to intervene in real life.

Overall, I presented the way that Merx brings a specific dramaturgical perspective regarding the performances that occur in urban environments. Speaking about the politics of scenography and the function of different stages, she shows how the dramaturgy of a performance can make unnoticed or marginalized people, visible. Therefore, this approach will be central in my dramaturgical analysis when I discuss how the three different stages of *Inventory* function, and how through its dramaturgy, locals from Eleusis are given the possibility to be seen and heard.

## **2.4 Emergent dramaturgies and spectators as compositional forces**

In this section I discuss how immersive, street performances -which are often ambulatory- invite audiences to participate. These performances depend to a large degree on the interactivity between spectators and their willingness to participate. As Groot Nibbelink discusses in "Bordering and shattering the stage"(2019), when the audience actively participates, a vital relationship between spectators- performers- spaces can be developed, a dynamic that asks the spectators to be mobile.<sup>79</sup> Groot Nibbelink in her text, uses the term 'emergent dramaturgies'. Although I employ this term when analysing her text, I find it important to introduce the term 'dramaturgies of deterritorialisation', based on the way Groot Nibbelink's analyses the type of dramaturgical strategies that are in play in specific artworks in public space.

Inspired by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Groot Nibbelink speaks for a 'nomadic theatre', explaining that nomadism in theatre practice emerges when conventions and laws are interrupted and challenged.<sup>80</sup> In this way, she employs this term as an analytical concept to question the territories in the theatre, explaining territories as conceptual entities charged with theatrical conventions.<sup>81</sup> In contemporary theatre, physical territories (stage-auditorium) "are often subjected to a process of deterritorialization"<sup>82</sup>. This has much to do with the traditional ideas regarding the relationship between spectator and performer and their position in the space. According to Groot Nibbelink, performers, spectators and spaces interact and depend on each other in a constant reconfiguration of spatial relations, and hence, "they form flexible, variable constellations that in each performance are articulated in a particular way"<sup>83</sup>. In this respect, 'dramaturgies of deterritorialisation' can be applied as a term that will also facilitate my dramaturgical analysis when referring to *Inventory's* spectatorship. What I mean by this, is the dramaturgical strategies that are used in a play to engage, mobilize and activate the audience. For this to happen, or at least in order to facilitate this function in more distinct ways, traditional theatrical territories such as the

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<sup>79</sup> Groot Nibbelink, "Bordering and shattering the stage", 59.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 60.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

theatre-auditorium division must collapse, resulting in a deterritorialised stage where each individual constitutes a single, unified whole, making it hard to distinguish who is the performer and who is the spectator.

As Groot Nibbelink claims, in some performances mobile spectators become part of the artwork, they are transformed into the agents who are involved in processes in which performers and spaces "enter into a composition"<sup>84</sup>. Immersive theatre, focusing on the transparent way of showing the process-character of the artwork, came to ask the spectators to identify with the performers, rejecting the hierarchy and separation between them. She argues though that still, performers enter a performance fully prepared and rehearsed, whereas spectators follow instructions and feel often uneasy and awkward wondering if they act correctly.<sup>85</sup> Following her line of thought, she cites Bishop's four fundamental modalities of experience, with a focus on activated spectatorship. In these performances participants are a priori treated as political subjects who must act, make choices and acknowledge their confrontation with processes of inclusion and exclusion.<sup>86</sup> Immersive performances focus on dramaturgical strategies that address the audience and create individual personal experiences.

Referring to *No Man's Land*, a street performance by Dries Verhoeven created in 2008, Groot Nibbelink discusses in her interview with him, how this performance distributes performers and spectators into an open space without strict borders, in which theatrical territories – the stage and the auditorium – and the urban environment, all mount to a shattered, deterritorialised stage.<sup>87</sup> In his work, Verhoeven highlights common socio-political issues of the society in which we live. In the beginning, people stand next to each other at a railway station, waiting, holding paper sheets with names on them. Another group of an equal amount of people appears and the performance starts outside of the station. Both strangers to one another, the performer and the spectator walk around the city and the spectator is listening through their headphones to a narration, related to the immigrant they follow.

The emergent dramaturgy of *No Man's Land* creates an experience that focuses on the "experience of collaboratively traversing and engendering the work"<sup>88</sup>. Verhoeven believes that public space is the mirror of society and performances that occur in this sphere share both an artistic and a sociopolitical value with a provocative character.<sup>89</sup> Verhoeven observes that when an unsuspecting audience member enters a performance, a new kind of spectator is created; an active spectator who encounters art in daily life by chance.<sup>90</sup> For him, interventions in the public sphere create a different dynamic based on intimacy addressed directly to the spectators regarding how they use and think of the public space.

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, 62.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 63.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 65.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, 66.

<sup>89</sup> Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink, "Mirrors of Public Space: An Interview with Dries Verhoeven", in *Intermedial Performance and Politics in the Public Sphere*, eds. Katia Arfara, Aneta Mancewicz, and Ralf Remshard (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 44.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 46.



Accordingly, Verhoeven states that the overall experience signifies a spectator who becomes co-responsible for the experience and must choose how to move in space, a spectator who is overall an accomplice.

According to Groot Nibbelink, emergent dramaturgies have these elements; an ongoing composition, the composition of relationships, the composition of positionings in space, the composition of address and the response to address.<sup>91</sup> In Verhoeven's performance as in other similar contemporary immersive performances, spectators- performers- spaces have no fixed roles. On the contrary, Groot Nibbelink observes that they "evolve in relation to one another"; their roles are constantly in the state of "becoming" based on the Deleuzian and Guattarian "becoming-other"<sup>92</sup>. When a spectator enters a composition with activities such as listening, watching, sense-making and feeling, these are vital dramaturgical elements that eventually make the spectators become the compositional forces of the performance, as Groot Nibbelink claims.<sup>93</sup> Additionally, in ambulatory performances, performers and spectators interact with the space, as they enter into composition with space "by means of wayfinding, navigating, guiding, or by jointly maintaining the coordinates of a fluid theatre space"<sup>94</sup>. Spectators thus become compositional forces, gaining self-reflexivity and self-awareness while also developing affective bonds with the performance's subject matter and the societal environments in which the artwork occurs.

As in the case of Merx, the reason I chose Groot Nibbelink's analysis is because she provides us with a specific dramaturgical perspective by employing nomadic theatre as an analytical tool. Despite the plethora of academic literature regarding the performances that occur in public space, such as Bishop's extensive analysis of participatory art and its political dimension inspired by the French philosopher Jacques Rancière, I considered that Groot Nibbelink's approach is more oriented towards the dramaturgical extensions of this artistic choice. In order to be as specific as possible, I chose to use examples from particular performances and authors that show that performances in public spaces give people the opportunity to be visible, use spectators as the compositional elements who shape the work, challenge the patterns of behaviour and the perception of the daily function of public space and create possibilities for democratic development. Therefore, attention is drawn to these exact components of the function of public space in artworks, and these elements will structure the analysis in the following chapter.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I discussed the role that public space plays when used for a performance and the influence that performance has on the public space and on those who "inhabit" it and "walk" in it in various ways daily. First, I explained how performances in public space interfere with everyday life and what political elements this intervention carries between those present and the public space itself. Then, through Balme's lens, I observed that the correlation between performance-protest-public space can bring critical and promising

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<sup>91</sup> Groot Nibbelink, "Bordering and shattering the stage", 67.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 68.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 69.

results regarding the development of democracy. Lastly, I presented two different dramaturgical perspectives on performance in public space. The first is concerned with how to create political stages which give space for people to speak in the public domain. The second is concerned with the way the audience becomes a compositional force together with the performers and the space through a dramaturgy of deterritorialization. All of the above, combined with the elements from Chapter 1, contribute to the composition of the third and final chapter in which I present the dramaturgical analysis of the performance *Inventory*, a performative protest that occurs in public space and in particular spaces of a town that are charged with meaning, both historically and symbolically.

## Chapter 3- The dramaturgical strategies of the performance *Inventory*

In this third and final chapter, I apply the theoretical framework that I have built in the previous chapters in a dramaturgical analysis of the performance *Inventory*. Based on the two topics I raised in Chapter 1 and 2; documentary theatre and public space, I combine these with my professional involvement in *Inventory* aiming to analyze it dramaturgically. The current analysis is based on Merx's and Groot Nibbelink's text "Dramaturgical analysis. A relational approach" (2021) and particularly, by the triangle of dramaturgical analysis that is proposed in this article; composition, spectator and context. I start with a brief description of the project and the artistic and cultural context of it. Then, I focus on the composition of the artwork that consists of the archives and their composition in artistic creation. In that way, I will be able to focus on my research question regarding how *Inventory* as an example of theatre of the real employs archives and public space for the social engagement of the audience. Next, I will proceed to 'spectatorship' i.e.: the relationship between composition and spectator. This section derives from the second chapter and how *Inventory* designed for and presented in public space addresses issues of coexistence, democracy, interaction, awareness and social consciousness. At the same time, it uses the spectators as compositional, structural elements of the piece. This analysis also contains elements of 'situatedness': the relationship between spectator and context, according to Merx and Groot Nibbelink. Lastly, I reflect on the 'statement' of this performance, which is according to Merx and Groot Nibbelink, the relationship between composition and context.

### 3.1 The cultural and artistic context of *Inventory*

*Inventory* was created in 2018 in Eleusis, Greece by choreographer Tzeni Argyriou and visual artist Vassilis Gerodimos. This artistic twin, which has been collaborating for more than 7 years, generates choreographic work integrated with other artistic disciplines. One of their major interests over the years is the creation of projects that actively engage the audience. Their performances merge different technologies in an endeavor to return to the analogue, physical body, empowering the collective physical experience. In this performance I worked as a production assistant with the members of the creative team: Danae Giannakopoulou (production manager), Lampros Pigounis (composer), Erato Tzavara (video artist), Makis Faros (filmmaker and sound designer), and Nancy Stamatopoulou (dancer).

*Inventory* began with participatory archival research and eventually led to a digital, public performance protest on November 11th, 2018. The main motivation of the artists was to portray the development of the industrial city and the labor movement. The artists created a temporary social area at the port of Eleusis with five containers -one next to or on top of the other-, where they conducted archival research. Together with permanent residents, they collected materials and testimonies that were used in the performance and experimented with participatory workshops.

Initially, the creative team collected the material. During the three months we lived there, we managed to get in touch with local organizations, groups, and the municipality. Gradually they came to trust us, sharing their archival material. At the same time, we collected

material from the general archives of the state and the factories. The main concern of the artists was to collaborate with local volunteers because these people constituted the history of the town. However, their lack of exposure to art and the priority on surviving was a challenge. Initially, they were suspicious about the project and the way the artistic team would use the archives. The people we worked with and who eventually became a vital part of the performance, were elderly people whose memories were not merely a part of story-telling, but actually, their personal stories which created the mapping of that period.



Figure 1.<sup>95</sup>

The archival material consisted of audio testimonies, photographs of workers, newspaper articles from the mass workers' mobilizations and placards with slogans. Historical research on the massive immigration from Turkey in 1922 was needed to understand the history of the town. During this research period, we also pointed out the places where the most prominent street protests took place within the labor movement in the period from 1920 to 1930.

A democratic element of *Inventory*, associated also with Balme's analysis in the previous chapter, was that this research was conducted by all the members of the team. I coordinated this research, providing the team weekly with materials that I selected. Next, we collected them in the containers where we eventually discussed the key elements. There were also multiple times that the artists and volunteers were given "homework", to select different materials they wished to be projected in the final performance. The result of this whole process period was a map created by an interdisciplinary teamwork dynamic, where all the members' voices were equally included.

In addition to collecting and studying the archival material, we arranged daily appointments with locals who were associated with the factories. We videotaped them being interviewed and the ones who wanted to engage physically in the performance were invited to

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<sup>95</sup> Containers placed in the port of Eleusis, from *Inventory*, photograph, John Kouskoutis, [http://tzeniargyriou.com/?page\\_id=514](http://tzeniargyriou.com/?page_id=514).

participate once a week in workshops. In these workshops we discussed all the ongoing research and experimented with protest gestures and different speeds of walking. After this preparation process, the archive was edited digitally by artists so that it could be projected during the performance.

Having described the cultural and artistic context of the artwork, I will now proceed to its brief description.



Figure 2.<sup>96</sup>

### 3.2 Description of *Inventory*

A central square in Eleusis. Gathered people, guests, passers-by, local volunteers and members of the production. The only things that can be heard are the whispers between the groups of people who came from Athens to see the performance. Some look at what is happening with wonder, searching for signs to confirm that a performance will take place. Gradually, the ten volunteers start gathering in front of the square and picking up placards from the ground. Suddenly and without any announcement, a protest begins; a protest created by artistic tools in which unsuspecting passers-by and suspicious guests follow a horde of people without knowing where they are going.

Throughout the protest, black-and-white images and newspaper articles are displayed on the empty placards. While initially only the rehearsed volunteers hold the posters, gradually they spread some of them to the spectators. Sudden pauses, breathings in megaphones, projections, sounds and lighting, sirens, live drum music and gestures associated with protests charged with symbolic meaning, define that what is happening is a performance. Even the most unsuspected ones of the audience members, realize that they are watching a performance and not an actual protest.

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<sup>96</sup> Protest in the streets of Eleusis. Front row: volunteers, from *Inventory*, photograph, John Kouskoutis, [http://tzeniargyriou.com/?page\\_id=514](http://tzeniargyriou.com/?page_id=514) .



Figure 3.<sup>97</sup>

Thus, a procession begins on a central street of Eleusis. A group of people walk together, protest and finally end up in the constructed area with the containers in the port of Eleusis where they see the collected archival material. At the same time, a traditional dance takes place outside the containers by the volunteers; a dance that is inviting for the spectators' participation. This is how the performance ends or, this is how the protest ends, creating a sense of freedom, sociability and enjoyment.

### **3.3 *Inventory* as documentary theatre and as theatre of the real**

Here, I take a moment to reflect on the reasons why I argue that *Inventory* is understood in this research as an example of both documentary theatre and theatre of the real.

*Inventory* is both a performative event and an invitation to a protest. It is undeniable that the intervention in the time of a town takes place. The road really closes, the town lights are turned off and the mass's actions are unpredictable. *Inventory* is an example of documentary theatre because it uses archival, existing materials of the past as the central axis of inspiration and creation. These materials are collected, studied and then edited and used aesthetically as dramaturgical, constructive elements of the performance. This decision derives from the artists' desire to communicate and bring to life a history of a town, the history of protest, which is inherent in Greek culture.

At the same time, exactly because of the intersection in the spatiotemporal condition of the town, this artwork constitutes an example of theatre of the real because of its unpredictable nature and the risks when entering this kind of theatre. The unpredictability derives from the fact that the performance takes place in a public space. Thus, by referring to the unpredictable and unstable factors, I mean the external ones, such as the weather.

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<sup>97</sup> The central square in Eleusis, some minutes before the protest begins, from *Inventory*, photograph, John Kouskoutis, [http://tzeniargyriou.com/?page\\_id=514](http://tzeniargyriou.com/?page_id=514).

Simultaneously, another factor which is unpredictable in *Inventory* is the behaviour of the spectators. The uncertainty regarding spectators' behaviour arises from the fact that the artistic team did not know how the public would react to a performative protest. Consequently, if the spectators felt awkward, unsafe or insecure, it is possible that they would not move or prefer to leave the artwork without participating in it.

### **3.4 Composing a performative protest**

Regarding the composition of the artwork, I will start with the objects that have been used, and I will continue with the spaces and the compositional logic and analysis of all the actions that occur during this one-hour performance.

The objects of the performance are the only elements that signify that what is being held is a performative protest and not a real protest. The city lights, after consultation with the municipality have been turned off. The road is dark and at intervals, a strong, white followspot is lit. This light is placed on side streets so that it is not visible and reflects in combination with the sirens' sound, a state of war. This light is scanning the street and consequently, the protesters. Sporadically, an intense drumbeat is heard, which has been used by the members of the artistic team as an internal "code" for a change in the rhythm of the volunteers. However, for the unsuspected spectator it intensifies the feeling of anxiety and wonder. The placards, typical symbols of protests, instead of being written with slogans, are completely blank so that the digitally processed archives can be displayed on them. During the performance, members of the production are placed at the last line of the protest, holding small, covered boxes with beamers, to project the edited archives on the placards. Respectively, the bullhorn is another symbol of protests which in this case, is not used for slogans; instead, a performer is breathing with different rhythms. This fact constitutes proof that all the objects that usually accompany an actual protest, have undergone artistic editing. The aim was not to change the reality, but to create different layers of what is real and what is not, letting the theatrical intervene and adding another layer to it. If only one string of reality changes, then, the whole reality changes.

As it is mentioned above, the performance ends at the port of the town, where a space designed by the production team is filled with five containers that house archival material. The placement of containers was conscious. The artists, not treating the public space as a scenography setting, wanted to use something that could serve dramaturgically the artwork, without interfering with the natural environment. Faithful to the harmony of the space, they symbolically placed the containers, reminding of the products' import and export; a characteristic element of Eleusis, since for many years it was a major trading power. The containers functioned as archival "temples" in which all the materials were collected and the audience at the end of the protest could witness them. The first container contained newspapers from the 1930s that reported shocking incidents, outrageous factory conditions and accidents that had occurred in protests due to police brutality. The materials were piled as if they were ready to be transported for sale. The spectators were allowed to read them and take them home. Another -dark- container had placards; historical relics with slogans from the 1930s, placed on the floor, the one on top of the other with projections from the newspapers on them. The third one, had screenings of contemporary videos with protagonists the former factory workers or their families, recalling events from that period,

and the fourth had a soundscape of mixed siren sounds. This specific container was the bigger one and it was placed in the "entrance". Therefore, in order for the spectators to enter the other containers and the place where the dance occurred, they had first to pass through this container. After this unifying, ambulatory experience of the protest, it was consciously planned by the team to create an almost terrifying, dark, noisy space, which when spectators exit it, they could get some fresh air, visit the other rooms and witness the dance. Lastly, the fifth container was used only by the production members for storage purposes, however, videos from the hands of the workers were projected outside of it.

At the finale of the performance a traditional Greek dance occurred. The reason for this sudden and possibly for many spectators paradoxical ending, was of great importance for the artists but also for the local volunteers. With this choice, the artists deliberately chose to highlight another vital part of the life of all those people who lived in the area and worked in the factories. Through dance, the whole spectrum of everyday life was depicted. The Greek population is familiar with both protests and dances. Moreover, they both constitute embodied practices, which are not theatrical per se but constitute a repertory linked to Greek culture, spirit and knowledge, both signifying that these experiences are societal and have the power to connect and create something stronger. Traditionality and work were interrelated in *Inventory* because they are interrelated in real life. They both connect people, keeping them "alive" and holding promises of sociality.

In the previous chapter, I analysed Merx's text "The politics of scenography: Disrupting the stage" (2013) and her discussion about Bellinck's political performance which occurs in public space. Inspired by her observations, similarly, *Inventory* as a political protest performance, works with three spatial stages: the square, the street, and the port. These stages are at the same time temporal stages since they signify the passage of time and the passage from one action to the other. From waiting in the square and protesting in the street, to witnessing the dance and the archives in the port. Between them there is seriality, achieved with smooth transitions from one place to the other, through ambulatory processes. Starting from the square and proceeding to the street, those present are confronted with archival material projected on placards, something not common in actual protests. The destination is the port, the sea, where all the archival materials are located and thus the audience can gain an overview, while at the same time witnessing, without realizing it, the making process of the project, since the displayed archives are the printed products of the research period. The three selected spaces function as political stages, as in Bellinck's work.<sup>98</sup> The choice of the spaces that are transformed into performative spaces, charge the space with symbolic meaning, providing it with visibility and importance. Through the dramaturgy of *Inventory*, the residents of Eleusis, are given the opportunity to "speak" for themselves, a speaking that occurs just because they are "there", reactivating the town, the square, the road and the port, all places that after the destruction of the factories seem to have been forgotten.

Lastly, the composition of *Inventory* also implies the role and position of the spectators. Initially, from the spectators' perspective, it is impossible to distinguish who belongs to the

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<sup>98</sup> Merx, "The politics of scenography: Disrupting the stage", 54.



production, who is or who is not a performer. *Inventory* creates two kinds of spectators; the people who came to see the performance or the ones who are the passers-by and witness it by chance, and the volunteers who have previously rehearsed the performance and know exactly what is happening and which are the following actions. The nature of the performance itself, an ambulatory protest, proposes the transformation of the spectator into a performer. In fact, the spectators are linked to protesting, they must protest in order to witness the artwork. Each of their moves and their decisions, shift the dynamics of *Inventory* which is dependent exclusively on their participation. Therefore, the experiencers are the performers, thus in the further analysis I am using the term 'spectators-performers' when I refer to the volunteers, passers-by and visitors of the performance.

### **3.5 Spectator in *Inventory*: Becoming a compositional force**

Spectatorship, through the lens of Maaïke Bleeker in "What do Performances Do to Spectators?" (2019), is "the state of being a spectator" and the way with which performances put the spectators in this state.<sup>99</sup> Similarly, for Merx and Groot Nibbelink spectatorship has to do with the composition of the artwork and with how the experience is organized for the spectator.<sup>100</sup> Based on the previously analyzed composition of *Inventory* and the elements that have to do with the context of the work, in the current section I analyze the dramaturgical strategies that are in play and which invite the spectator to become a compositional force of the piece, while social engagement is being activated.

*Inventory* is an ambulatory immersive performance that transforms the audiences from passive observers into agents that are almost equally involved and co-responsible for creating the artwork.<sup>101</sup> Not having a stage or more precisely, having a deterritorialized stage where the conventional theatrical, physical territories (stage-auditorium division) collapse, as Groot Nibbelink wrote<sup>102</sup>, the spectators are invited to search for their position in space, identify with the performers and act.

The spectators enter an open space that has no clear borders. Many people with different backgrounds or expectations need to move, interact, hold the same objects and wonder together while walking. Strangers to one another, their behaviour and willingness to interact shift the dynamics of *Inventory*, which without their participation would be a non-sense play. In the case of *Inventory*, the spectators' participation is signifying the degree of social engagement that is achieved. In other words, in order to participate and be actively involved in *Inventory*, spectators need to develop a social engagement with the others. This social engagement has to do also with their interaction and their decision to move together. The forced proximity, fluidity, improvisation and intimacy that are created during the protest, are

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<sup>99</sup> Maaïke Bleeker, "What Do Performances Do to Spectators?", in *Thinking Through Theatre and Performance*, eds. Maaïke Bleeker, Adrian Kear, Joe Kelleher, and Heike Roms (London, New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019): 33.

<sup>100</sup> Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink, and Sigrid Merx, "Dramaturgical Analysis: A Relational Approach," *Forum+* 28, no. 3 (October 2021): <https://doi.org/10.5117/FORUM2021.3.002.GROO>.

<sup>101</sup> Here I state that spectators in *Inventory* are almost and not entirely equal to the performers. Based on Groot Nibbelink's analysis and her note that even if there is a sense of equality between the participants, performers are the privileged ones because they know exactly what is going on and they have already rehearsed the piece, I claim that this is also apparent in *Inventory*.

<sup>102</sup> Groot Nibbelink, "Bordering and shattering the stage", 60.

products of the emergent dramaturgies that are in play. These are the ongoing composition of the artwork, the composition of relationships between the performers- audience members, the composition of positionings in space and how the present bodies decide to be placed in the protest, the composition of the address of the audience related to the organizing of experience and the dramaturgical strategies addressed to the spectators, and lastly, the response to this address from the audience's side who must choose either to leave or to stay.<sup>103</sup> *Inventory's* main element of address then, is the collective participation and the temporal creation of an activated community.

According to Bishop, examples of participatory art and *Inventory* as such, have the capacity to release a "communal, collective space of shared social engagement" which seeks to forge a participatory social body.<sup>104</sup> Participation in *Inventory* is a foundational and constructive principle. Besides the archives that constitute the dramaturgical strategies of the performance, another important dramaturgical element is the people who are used as the compositional forces, the mediums and the materials of the work.

In *Inventory*, spectators-performers and spaces have no fixed roles. The one interferes with the other, affects the other and they all "evolve in relation to one another" being constantly in the stage of becoming.<sup>105</sup> A deterritorialized stage without physical territories (stage-auditorium) invites the experiencers to enter a composition where they have to walk, listen, watch, feel and make sense. Thus, with all these activities which are activated through the dramaturgical strategies, the spectator becomes a compositional force in a temporal, fully accessible and thus, unpredictable and democratic environment. In that way, I claim that in *Inventory's* 'dramaturgies of deterritorialisation' are in play, where without having clear divisions between performers- spectators/ stage-street, a unified mass is shaped without pre-defined roles or actions.

The compositional logic of *Inventory* reinforces the sense of collectivity and it raises possible questions regarding social engagement, collective action and basic human rights that tend to be forgotten. The spectator in *Inventory* is treated as a political subject and is staged both as a unity and an individual; each of them acts alone but keeps the same pace with the others in order to "get somewhere" and achieve the same goal. In fact, spectators in *Inventory* come to realize that with their participation they develop a total commitment to a cause: social change which can be achieved through their social engagement and collective action.

Overall, the communicative effects of *Inventory* contain elements of both 'absorption' and 'theatricality', two terms addressed as opposed to one another by Bleeker when discussing the modes of the audience address.<sup>106</sup> Regarding theatricality, Bleeker suggests that there is a clear understanding from the spectators' side of what is being shown and how they must respond to it in order to participate; therefore, it is visible how the performance addresses the audience and how the compositional elements are used to present an argument and

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 67.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, 275.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, 44

<sup>106</sup> Maaïke Bleeker, *Visuality in the theatre: the locus of looking* (New York: Springer, 2008), 21.

lead the audience in meaning-making.<sup>107</sup> Bleeker says that theatricality “refers to the awareness of oneself as a spectator”<sup>108</sup>. In *Inventory*, spectators understand immediately that they need to act and walk with the mass, while at the same time utilizing their social skills. In addition, the theatrical nature of *Inventory* is highlighted by all the elements that have undergone artistic editing. Breathing in megaphones, playing live drumbeats and projecting materials in white placards, make clear for the experiencer’s gaze that what is being witnessed is a performative event and not a protest. Simultaneously, absorption as the mode of the address where the strategies are unnoticed and the traces of mediation are erased and the audience is drawn into the world on the stage,<sup>109</sup> is also apparent in *Inventory*. Although spectators know what to do, after some minutes of participation they may find themselves absorbed, starting physically interacting with the artwork as if it was an actual political protest on the streets of a town. It is exactly the dramaturgical practices and the unpredictability of the real-life streets where *Inventory* occurs, that provokes this sense of absorption in the audience’s perception.

### **3.6 *Inventory*’s statement and the double use of the archive**

As it is mentioned in the introduction of the current chapter, a ‘statement’ of a performance is the product of the relationship between the context and the composition; two elements of *Inventory* that I referred to in the previous sections. In this respect, I present here the statement that this performance holds, combining all the previous components from my analysis.

*Inventory* holds a powerful, political statement that is given through many shapes and actions. It speaks a version of the truth. Socially and politically, in any part of the world and at any time, things can change, improve or stay the same. However, injustice in work environments and rights claims -that otherwise in 2022 should be unquestionable- continue to exist and emerge. The project thus is purely political without any partisan suspicion or implication. In this way, this performance is not an ode to the past in order merely to reproduce it, remember it or praise it. On the contrary, *Inventory* shows to the spectators that through the understanding of the history they can be awakened, learn how to claim collectively their rights and position themselves better in society. *Inventory* achieves this by bringing people together in public space and creating a temporal strong bond between them during the protest, while at the same time they witness the history edited and projected on placards. All the above are composed in *Inventory* with the interaction between people in public space. Based on Balme’s connection of politics, protest and public space in performances, I suggest that through this performance, by presenting real documents and inviting audiences to interact with each other in the public sphere, a potentiality for democratic processes is established and a window for a renewed, solidary future starts opening. During this performance, the spectators interact also with the documents since they do not only witness them in the protest, but they can study and collect them in the finale of the protest. The experiencers come to acknowledge potential future positions when participating in protests or the significance of participating in such political events, although

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 22.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 21.

in this case the event is primarily performative. Therefore, *Inventory* shapes an image of the future. It suggests that if people protest and claim their rights collectively, they can provoke radical changes in life. However, I acknowledge that this impact can be stronger on those who are already aware of the political situation of the country and know how crucial the act of protesting is.

Overall, *Inventory's* powerful impact is that it activates social engagement. As mentioned previously, this work mobilizes the experienter to interact with other people and participate in an artwork through the representation of a protest. However, the element that activates social engagement is not only based on their interaction. From the initial creation of *Inventory*, the community was placed in the center of attention. The local community was involved, providing information which was ultimately used by the artistic team and projected into the performance. This information was available for the audience in the containers. Through *Inventory*, the inhabitants of Eleusis came into contact after many years and created a social bond that was gradually developing within the workshops the artistic team held. Through their experiences and memories, Eleusis' citizens formed a re-approach to the history of the place. In that sense, *Inventory* affects the local community and activates social engagement because it refers to the history of a town in which it takes place. All the elements used during the performance were reflecting to the labor movement. Social engagement is therefore achieved and visible through a dual approach; the relationship that is created between the participants, and the re-reading of a forgotten history which is unknown to the visitors and reconstructed by the local volunteers who speak their own truth, recalling the beginning of the labor movement in Greece.

Dramaturgical analysis is much concerned with what is happening in the here and now of a performance. *Inventory* uses the representation of a protest in order to create a real protest; a protest that reminds Greek audiences of the history of protest, something inherent in Greek culture as I mentioned above. However, it has nothing to do with a mere representation but with an actual re-enactment of it, with people moving together and being stronger together. Thus, all the "real" characteristics and preconditions of a protest are met.

This statement is dependent on the dominant presence of the archival material. The intention of the artists was not only to work with the archive but to use it theatrically in transparent ways. Therefore, *Inventory* uses the archives in two ways; one visible and one conceptual, formulating an intense, societal experience that may trigger different memories in the people who are involved regarding the fighting for the workers' rights and the struggles for survival that are omnipresent.

The first way of using the archives is by visually presenting them in projections; an "extra-theatrical" element which according to Merx and Groot Nibbelink contains film, social media formats, mobile phones or webcams, etc., and is opposed to the "theatrical" element, which contains the acting, text, objects, music, etc.<sup>110</sup> In that way, the archive is activated exactly because people interact with it and witness it, as Peeters observed.<sup>111</sup> According to the

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<sup>110</sup> Groot Nibbelink and Merx, "Dramaturgical Analysis: A Relational Approach".

<sup>111</sup> Peeters, "I am not a zombie...".

artists, the projected images of the archives had a unifying element. They showed the passage of time by creating a by-play of confusion and co-existence of the past and the present. With bodies in analogue and bodies in digital images, the one intervened the other and created a mosaic image, a new body: an image above another image and an action above another action. Thus, what occurred were a protest in 1924 and a protest in 2018; an exhausted, "black and white" employee in the factory with dirty working clothes and tools in his hands, and a young boy with a polo shirt.

The second way of using archival material is not so obvious or transparent. Based on Taylor's analysis, repertoire may be conceived of as the gestures, the embodied practices and the physical memories<sup>112</sup> that are related to performance-based practices. In *Inventory*, the archives are not merely types of reproduction. Volunteers' bodies are the performers' bodies, which constitute the repertoire. Thus, the bodies of the performers are the archives themselves. These bodies move around the space, as they did when protesting many years ago, claiming their rights and seeking visibility and attention. These are the bodies that host memories and traumas, experiences and the entire history of the town. Inspired by Peeters and Van Imschoot, the bodies of the performers are the houses of the physical collective memories. Therefore, they are the 'mobile body archives'<sup>113</sup> that signify that the bodies are the archives themselves. The archives and memories are imposed on the human beings that participate in *Inventory* and constitute the exact evidence of the 'living archive'<sup>114</sup>. And this part of the archive, the non-obvious one, was the most powerful for the artistic team. Overall, *Inventory* incorporates collective memories and performative practices that depend precisely on the archive.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I sought to show that *Inventory*, a performance that occurs in public space and uses archival materials as dramaturgical choices (past, present, and volunteers' bodies as embodied archives) constitutes an example of documentary theatre and theatre of the real. In this performance, the dramaturgical strategies that are in play, along with the choice of presenting them in the public sphere, provoke a specific kind of spectatorship. *Inventory* invites the spectators to actively get involved in the project, not just because they are physically present following the demonstration, but because their actions and choices either to leave or to stay, determine the outcome of the performance. In that sense, spectators become the compositional forces of the piece. In this chapter, I discussed how dramaturgy employs the audience in unusual, political and social ways. *Inventory's* dramaturgy asks spectators to become involved in a demonstration, creating a bond with each other and also with the performance itself, validating the social engagement.

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<sup>112</sup> Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, 19.

<sup>113</sup> Van Imschoot, "Rests in pieces...", 113.

<sup>114</sup> Peeters, "I am not a zombie...".

## Conclusion

During the uprising of December 2008 and after Aleksandros Grigoropoulos, a 16-year-old boy was brutally murdered by a police officer, the National Greek Opera, among other public buildings, was occupied by hundreds of artists who tried to bring to the fore the squatting of public buildings. At the time, artists took over the streets to express their opposition to state repression, police brutality, terrorism and misinformation by the media, social exclusion, racism and the governmental plan that destroyed parks and public spaces. Using as a central slogan “the street is our theatre, the rebellion is our art”, students and artists created several performances in the form of rehearsed protests. What was happening was a protest and secondarily an artistic event. At the time, I was very young and I had the opportunity to attend this event only once, under my parents’ supervision. However, I remember feeling extremely moved as those artistic protests contained all those repressed voices calling for the emergence of change. It was then that I realized how powerful art can be, how it can intervene in life in a promising way.

From the beginning of this research, I wanted to explore how *Inventory* as an example of theatre of the real, employs archives and public space in order to activate the social engagement of the audience. In this thesis, driven by the organic relation between life and art and how the former inspires the latter and vice versa, I conducted research, critically thinking about theatre as one of the most vital aspects of life that gives voice to the voiceless, raising questions about societies, authorities, dominant politics and ourselves.

To answer my research question; *How does Inventory as theatre of the real employ archival materials and public space in order to activate social engagement?* I created a research method to unfold the main aspects of *Inventory*. I first consulted books and articles that I had read during my MA program and that helped me to understand notions such as theatre of the real. Next, I also used online sources that were related to my central topics. A challenge I faced throughout this research, was to constantly stay focused on my topic and not deviate from it in case I found something interesting in my references. In addition, my notes played a central role, as well as some past recordings of my conversations with the artists of *Inventory*. In this way, each theory could illuminate my personal observations from the time I was working as a production assistant on the project.

Starting by introducing the relationship between performing arts and archives addressed by performance scholars, I continued with the discussion on theatre of the real and documentary theatre. By introducing these notions, I created a map of how these theatrical types use archives, elements of reality and consequently of life to permeate life itself and raise social and political issues, keeping an ongoing dialogue with the past. Then, I proceeded to public space to research further the reflection of social reality. *Inventory* uses factual elements from the past presented in the public sphere. Considering these two pivotal and radical elements as the central characteristics of the artwork, the result is a theatre of the streets, of the real, of multiple versions of the truth. Consequently, the past comes to the fore, touching the present and re-framing it with one single vision: social change. For this social change to gradually occur, social engagement among the participants is necessary. In that sense, since *Inventory* occurs in public space and based on Balme’s analysis on the

connection between performance and politics in the public sphere, this project aims to develop democratic mechanisms between the participants who interact, bringing to the fore the spectators' commitment to a common, collective cause.

Next, I proceeded to the dramaturgical analysis of *Inventory* having applied all the acquired findings of the first two chapters. More specifically, notions such as 'double archive' and 'mobile body archives' regarding the nature of the archive in the performance, as well as 'compositional force' and 'politics of scenography' regarding the public space, gave me the tools to analyze my case study. The theories I used to explain the relationship between performance and the archive, helped to unlock how the archive can be treated differently within the theory of performance and mainly how the performers' bodies function as archives in *Inventory*. Finally, using the theories of Merx, Balme and Groot Nibbelink as analytical tools, I developed the relationship of performance with politics and public space, addressing two different dramaturgical approaches regarding the use of space in performances.

Throughout this thesis, I argued that artists are not historians nor do they need to take on this role to create a work based on archival material. An artist who experiments with theatre of the real is working with two elements: a real one; the material of the past, and a personal one; thoughts, perceptions and artistic imagination. The composition is the result of both elements. However, because *Inventory* is a performance that is based on specific social histories, the artist has a moral responsibility in the different ways and manners that these events are presented. Therefore, although it is undeniable that the archives that were part of the performance were aesthetically processed, I believe in the importance of the artist being respectful to the people and the communities of Eleusis. Indeed, in *Inventory* the materials have been used as given by the residents and the state: newspapers were displayed on the white banners or have been printed, interviews of people were displayed in the containers, and the protest took place in the streets where it happened in the 1920s. Remaining faithful to the materials and the testimonies., the artists have edited the archives (e.g. black and white images, editing to show as much material as possible during the protest, etc.), not proceeding with substantial changes that would lead to bias or misinterpretation.

*Inventory* is an example of documentary theatre and theatre of the real that takes place in the public space. It is a work of art that accentuates documents and stories from the past to make them matter again in the present, to give them a new meaning, to underline their timeless nature. It is, moreover, a work of art that uses inhabitants of Eleusis instead of professional actors to tell their stories, share their experiences and make their embodied archives accessible in order to understand the present and reshape the future. *Inventory* does not merely reactivate political and historical positions, but rather re-examines and exposes them in order for a wider audience to reread them and gain social awareness. During the protest, spectators, performers and passers-by are invited to act simultaneously and create a united social body that follows an unknown route and has a specific direction. Through their interaction, and as they end up in the containers where they come into close contact with the archival material projected during the protest, they witness hidden stories. Exactly because the performers are the inhabitants of Eleusis, their own memories are being

activated through the performance. *Inventory* is a protest which stays deliberately, consciously and confidently open to the uncertainty of reality and the unpredictability of the external factors of the open space. *Inventory* is a performance that undeniably gives voice to the voiceless because it allows Eleusis' citizens to tell their stories. Therefore, it offers visibility to the locals, while it raises hundreds of fists in the air marking that we are here, now. Driven from the above, I realize that this thesis could also have had the title "*the job of the artist is to remind people of what they have chosen to forget*"<sup>115</sup>, inspired by the playwright Arthur Miller.

*Inventory* leaves no room for non-participation. It transforms the audience into performers, and they altogether share common rhythms and a purpose. The spectators become the compositional force of the work, they are invited to think about how they will be placed, whether they will participate or leave. They are also invited to understand the co-responsibility for the execution of the project but also the coexistence with all the other members. Without being well acquainted, they empathize with each other. Thus, a new collective body based on solidarity is created, which is the initial goal of the performance. This work is an ode to how the past influences, shapes, complements and identifies with or differentiates from the present, an ode to democratic processes that elevate humans to the social and political beings they really are.

At the same time, bringing the work into the public sphere, displacing it from the dark, divided room of the theater, automatically provides the artwork with a new meaning. Artworks placed in the public sphere are democratic, free and open, they allow everyone to witness them. Thus, people gain sociability. Even when the initial feelings are awkwardness, discomfort or indecisiveness, spectators stand altogether and create a temporary collective "narrative", a heterogeneous social body. For an hour, participants shape a single, unified mass. With the contraction and expansion of time and place, the experimenter is distracted for a few minutes and called to figure out what to do and how to act, while losing the sense of the conventional functionality of the space.

Regarding the effect that *Inventory* had on those who were present intentionally or by chance, this has certain classifications. More specifically, it is a given that it would have a different impact on those who have attended multiple demonstrations in Greece or have unionized in their workplace, a different emotional burden on the performers who were unfolding their personal history in their hometown, and another on someone who was unaware of the history of the protest and the labor movement in Greece. This fact also has to do with the personal choice of each person either to stay or leave. Therefore, I argue that social engagement was activated for those who were curious enough to stay.

*Inventory* touches upon social issues that are ubiquitous and current in Greece. Whether someone is experienced with protests or not, I argue that this collective moment, the moment when a mass of individuals moves together with the same pulse, has a uniting element that can be preserved in the consciousness of everyone present. *Inventory* is relying

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<sup>115</sup> Christopher Bigsby, ed. *Routledge Revivals: Arthur Miller and Company (1990): Arthur Miller Talks About His Work in the Company of Actors, Designers, Directors, and Writers*. (London: Routledge, 2018).



on the movement of the participants and this exact movement provokes thoughts. Thoughts regarding lost histories and collective actions that bond people and create possibilities of change in societies. For all the people who have witnessed this artwork, I believe that the next time they will choose to participate in an actual protest or they will find themselves in the middle of a march, their predisposition and instinct would be primarily unitary, collective and based on the fundamental principles of solidarity.

In drawing to a close, what I recommend for future research is the notion of 're-enactment' embedded in performance studies, giving it certain properties as its basic coordinates: the archive and the public space. I would like to carry out this research both from a theoretical and analytical viewpoint, but also from the lens of a possible performance-maker who uses events and realities of the past, not to simply praise them, but to turn the spotlight on them and use them as weapons and critical axes for understanding the present. More specifically, I want to further research what it means to reproduce collective or personal histories, by making them reappear and matter again. By extension, I believe that through the notion of re-enactment I will be able to establish an understanding of how the embodied memories and embodied archives when presented by real people and not actors, come to the fore in socially engaged artworks that invite people to be involved in a re-reading of the past.

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