7 Feelings in crisis

The emotional and affective
dimension of neoliberal economics
in Greek crisis prone society

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1 Introduction: when in crisis

While the outbreak of the long-lasting Greek economic crisis paved the way to political projects and techniques of governance inspired by neoliberal doctrine, economic experts advocating the primacy of the economy were gaining more and more ground in public debate and policy-making, as well as in governmental positions. In the meantime, like-minded politicians, journalists, public intellectuals and academics drew more and more on economic discourse to ground their arguments in favour of rapidly imposed policies of austerity. This orchestrated argumentation constituted a certain type of neoliberal governmentality that has been accurately described as a regime of post-political biopower (Kioupkiolis, 2013) and extensively analysed as relying, among others, on mediated practices of emergency, exception, and (re-)inventing identities (e.g. Athanasiou, 2012; Butler & Athanasiou, 2013; Mylonas, 2014, 2017; Stavrakakis, 2014). In this turmoil, and as several counter-discourses started to emerge, emotional and affective failings operated as a key to the imposition of the new political project. In their insightful research on the emotional responses of the Greek citizens to the financial crisis, Davou and Demertzis (2013) observe that media interpretations and representations of crisis have been consistently using “negative emotional discourse” that “includes conditions of anger, rage, wrath, anxiety, fear, threat, distrust and depression”, linking the crisis to “trauma” and “shock” and leading to a sense of “numbness” and “inaction” (2013, pp. 93–105). On his part, commenting on discursive repertoires and strategies in the Greek crisis, Stavrakakis notices a process “of creating and sustaining shame and guilt” that is then used to legitimise austerity as a means of “punishment” (2014, p. 35).

However, the encounter of neoliberal economics and mainstream media at the time has been triggering more kinds of emotional articulations. Far from a structural distress, these discursive encounters have been systematically building on a new, productive and emotionally fulfilling “normality”. Moving from “crisis” to “life goes on”, the turn to entrepreneurship, market and individual action, that are the “taken for granted” socio-political and cultural implications of the neoliberal doctrine (e.g. Dardot & Naval, 2014; Dean, 2009), is portrayed

in familiar emotional and affective practices which, as argued here, are transferred to the economic field. By bringing such stories to the foreground, this chapter is intended to map the emotional and affective articulations of this new “normality” in discursive encounters between economics and the media. Greek bank advertising is taken as an exemplary source in this respect. The analysis takes a comparative conceptual framework that explores the question of “emotion” both in the early philosophical background of neoliberalism(s), as elaborated mainly by Hayek, and in recent critical work on the emotional and affective implications of neoliberal governance. In doing so, it stresses the specificities of the emotional and affective normality of neoliberal economic discourse as constructed against the background of “exception”. It further argues that between the philosophical understanding of neoliberal rationality as non-emotional and the critical dualistic perception of emotional governmentality as positive/negative lies a sphere of engaging emotional fluidity that is constitutive of “actually existing neoliberalism(s)”.

2 Any room for emotions? On the philosophical background of neoliberalism(s)

In the aftermath of the Great Depression and World War II and in the wake of the Cold War, a group of “individual” scholars defining themselves as “liberals” were breaking new ground in an open-ended battle of ideas. After a decade at least of publications, meetings, correspondence and discussions, the initiative to meet at Mont Pelerin signified the establishment of a liberal thought collective that was as much academic as it was political (Bjerre-Poulsen, 2014; Burgin, 2012; Mirowski & Plehwe, 2009; Peck, 2008; Plehwe & Walpen, 2006). The meeting took place in April 1947 and led to the formation of the Mont Pelerin Society (MPS), which up until today signifies the ideological core of neoliberal policies.

Hayek’s opening address set the frame of the discussion (Hayek, 1947/1967). Even though most of the attendees were economists, the aim was to involve as widely as possible historians, lawyers, political philosophers and more who would share their “individual” knowledge for one purpose: to rediscover the basic principles of liberalism, to reconstruct liberal philosophy and lastly to formulate a “complete programme of liberal economic policy” that would be “generally accepted” (Hayek, 1947/1967, pp. 149–153). Their work would be both transnational and interdisciplinary, and their nascent society would be both open and closed, made of people who share “certain common convictions” (Hayek, 1947/1967, p. 158). A few days later their Statement of Aims marked the beginning of an “ideological movement” which would defend a free society relying on private property and competitive market (Bjerre-Poulsen, 2014, pp. 205–209; Statement of Aims as cited in Montpelerin.org). Vague as it may have been, Hayek’s opening address together with the Statement of Aims are revealing of an initial effort – yet not necessarily shared by all MPS members (e.g. Burgin, 2012, p. 9; Bjerre-Poulsen, 2014, p. 202; Peck, 2008, p. 25) – to

contextualise in political and cultural terms a series of economic policies that were to be planned and introduced in different political and cultural contexts.

In the following years, “neoliberal” economic theory increasingly shifted beyond “technical economics” towards questions of politics and everyday life. What is of interest for this analysis is how this brought forward reconceptualisations of freedom, knowledge, human action as selfish or altruistic, and “unconscious habits”. Therefore, drawing mostly on the work of Hayek, Friedman and Becker, “neoliberal” thought suggested an understanding of economic freedom as a means to political freedom (Friedman, 1962/2002, pp. 7–8; Hayek, 1960/1978, pp. 1–21); decentralised utilisations of knowledge “which is not given to anyone in its totality” and the significance of a “man on the spot” who is aware of the particular circumstances of time and place (Hayek, 1945; Hayek 1960/1978, pp. 22–31); individual responsibility for the full use of knowledge to the achievement of certain ends (Hayek, 1960/1978, pp. 85–87); practices of selfishness and altruism in families organised around a leading figure and their reflection in the market place (Becker, 1974, 1981); disengagement of a person’s sex from labour and household activities (Becker, 1985); allocation of non-working time to the benefit of economic welfare (Becker, 1965); the importance of “firmly established habits and traditions” in “gradual and experimental change” (Hayek 1960/1978, pp. 62–64); a “common sense” on progress (Friedman, 1962/2002; Hayek, 1960/1978); and a clear distinction between the “irrational” and the “non-rational”, suggesting that the latter describes more appropriately the “unconscious features” such as “mere habits” or “meaningless institutions” which penetrate the individual’s action towards the achievement of his/hers goals (Hayek, 1960/1978, p. 34).

Putting together these “neoliberal” frames of socio-political and cultural practices, what is striking – yet not surprising – is the absence of “emotions”, “feelings”, “sentiments” or “affects”. It is striking if we consider on the one hand that certain perceptions of emotional and/or affective states have been granted a significant position in classical liberal ideas (e.g. Mill, 1909/2009; Smith, 1759/1984) and on the other that in the post-World War II period psychological and psychoanalytical discourses proliferated and gradually penetrated different spheres of economic production and labour activities (e.g. Hardt, 1999; Illouz, 2007). In the aforementioned theoretical frames, emotions are incidentally mentioned by Hayek when he admits the insufficiency of a strictly intellectual approach, claiming that the cause of liberty may not prevail “unless emotions are aroused”. However, he immediately confines them to an “indispensable aid” which is “neither a safe guide nor a certain protection against error” (Hayek, 1960/1978, p. 6). He then takes it a step further equating emotions with “moral or intellectual weakness”, and most importantly placing emotions at the exact opposite of “inner-freedom” (Hayek, 1960/1978, p. 21). This more or less brings his discussion to an end. It seems that whatever lies in the sphere of the “unconscious”, the “habit”, the “meaningless” or the “non-rational” could be of some use for the “rational” realisation of the “neoliberal” project so long as they stay “non-emotional”.

If we take Hayek's perception of emotions as typical of a "neoliberal" approach, then the exclusion and negation of emotions as well as the identification of feeling with being "unfree", combined with the persistence on the primacy of rationality, safety and certainty and a dualistic "right or wrong", become crucial for understanding neoliberalism as a regime of emotional governance. On the other hand, critical academic work on neoliberalism(s) observes that there is a growing interest in a so-called emotional and affective performance as a prerequisite for neoliberal policies (Coleman, 2016; Hanley, 2015; Richard & Rudnyckyj, 2009). Adding to this, Slobodian debunks many common myths about "neoliberal" thought, such as perceiving self-regulating markets as autonomous entities, understanding democracy as synonymous to capitalism, pursuing the disappearance of the state, supporting the primacy of the individual and economic rationality, and even the idea of *homo economicus* since neoliberal imaginaries seemed more interested in a *homo regularis* that aims not at maximizing profit but the chances of survival (2018, pp. 2, 224–235). Having stressed a significant shift in the perception of 'neoliberalism(s)', this chapter will now focus on how emotions become after all a constitutive part of neoliberal governmentality.

3 Feeling e(a)ffectively

In recent decades, critical work on localised manifestations of the neoliberal doctrine has been growing fast, adding pieces to a theory of neoliberal governmentality which is to a large extent inspired by the Foucauldian work on power and biopolitics (e.g. Foucault, 1978, 1978–1979/2008). In this frame, neoliberal economics cannot be seen independently from re-inventing a certain type of subjectivity based on entrepreneurship, free trade and individual action. Of course, the story is a bit more complicated. While aiming at the primacy of market economy, power apparatuses of neoliberal governmentality are affected not only by local conditions but also by individuality itself. Dean's argument is crucial in this respect. In her work on neoliberal fantasies she explores how neoliberal ideology does not rely on "symbolically anchored identities" such as "worker", "student" or "housewife", but on "converged imaginary identities" that in multiple and variable ways build on personal creative potential and individuality (Dean, 2009, pp. 49–73). In this sense, any aspect of human life could be engaged in the neoliberal purpose and any individual state works, even when emotional or affective (cf. Binkley, 2011; D'Aoust, 2014).

That said, the question of how different emotional and affective strategies can become means of neoliberal power should first deal with their modes of operation, which are the focus of this section. Even though this chapter does not explore the conceptual resources of emotions, feelings and the recent "affective turn" in social sciences (e.g. Hoggett & Thompson, 2012; Oatley, Keltner, & Jenkins, 2006; Leys, 2011; Wetherell, 2014; Willis & Cromby, 2019), it does recognise that they reflect separate social, material and bodily conditions and therefore they should be seen as separate categories of analysis, yet not irrelevant to each other. Drawing on Massumi's perception of affect as

“pre-personal intensity” (1987/2005), Shouse in his account suggests a helpful theorisation according to which “feelings are personal and biographical, emotions are social, and affects are prepersonal” (2005). Moreover, while emotions and feelings are considered as important factors for decision-making by triggering certain ideas, modes of cognition as well as perceptions and memories of what our bodies do or have done during “emoting” (Damasio, 2010; Menon, 2014; Payne, Levine, & Crane-Godreau, 2015), affect is “something indefinable, something that escapes discourse and conceptualisation” (Avramopoulou, 2018).

Interestingly enough, recent approaches, that differentiate between emotions and affects and emphasise the latter’s autonomy, intensity, embodiment, and ability to produce meanings, make some room for a perception of affect as producing economic effects. In his popular paper “The Autonomy of Affect” (1995) Massumi mentions how “faith”, certain “mindsets” and “feelings about the future” are considered by economists (in specific by Robert L. Heilbroner and Lester Thurow) as capable of changing “real” economic conditions as well as economy itself does (1995, p. 106). In this context, he suggests three prominent traits that this chapter takes into consideration when exploring affective strategies: they are “transversal”, “meta-factorial” and “ubiquitous” (Massumi, 1995, pp. 106–107). One more trait could be added here, probably implied in Massumi’s approach (see also Massumi, 2010) but clearly articulated in Ahmed’s work: affects operate by their effect of circulation “as a form of capital”, as “the accumulation of affective value over time” that is attributed to certain signs, objects and subjects, while affects are produced by circulating among them (2004a, pp. 120–121). Hence feelings appear in objects as they are shaped through processes of production, circulation, exchange and so on. Bridging the gap between emotions and affects, Ahmed coins also the notion of “affective economies” to describe how emotions “do things . . . through the very intensity of their attachments”, establishing alignments between individuals and communities or bodies and social spaces (2004a, p. 119). Despite their differences both Massumi and Ahmed seem to recognise that when it comes to affective states, there is always something that escapes, something that cannot be articulated, and that places affects on the edge of meaning. This makes the question of emotional and affective neoliberal strategies even more intriguing.

Elaborating on the emergence of affective cultural politics, Anderson raises the clear-cut question of how affects, in their current perception, can become objects of neoliberal power. Attunement and spatiality receive here a prominent analytical function. Dealing with this question, Anderson speaks of a “transitive excess of affect” that is “targeted”, “intensified” and finally “attuned” by accordingly excessive power apparatuses, constituting a so-called “logistics of affect” (2010). These processes develop in an “affective present” that is “multiple”, “differentially related to and lived” as well as shared through “structures of feeling” and “affective atmospheres” (Anderson, 2014, 2015). The former implies the existence of collective moods, while the latter comes to unsettle the distinction between “emotions” and “affects” by suggesting an attunement

of the “pre-prepersonal” to the “transpersonal” and vice versa that operates in moments of neoliberal emergence (Anderson, 2009, 2014, 2015).

While dealing with “neoliberal” emotional and affective strategies as highly complex, geographically, historically and culturally contextualised and to a certain extent escaping, we should not ignore approaches that detect a generic “emotional logic” of neoliberalism. Binkley’s work makes a contribution in this direction, suggesting that this emotional logic relies on reflexivity, instrumentality and the government of intimacy. Drawing on subject constructions of late modernity, he examines how encouraging people to talk about their emotions resulted in “re-inventing” the self as an “emotionally enterprising subject” (2018, p. 581). He argues that while governing intimate life has increasingly been turning “interiority” into a project of self-interested action (Binkley, 2012, 2018), the organisation of production in neoliberal contexts relies on emotionality “through the rendering of emotional life as a medium of self-reflection and instrumental action” (2018, p. 581). While the former encourages the interpretation of emotional experience, the latter interferes to orientate this interpretation towards the “affective assets” of “optimism”, “resolve” and “emotional resilience” – especially in contexts of risk and uncertainty (2018, p. 585). Paraphrasing Ahmed’s comment on how former hierarchy between reason and emotions tends to be displaced by a hierarchy between emotions (Ahmed, 2004b, pp. 3–4), we could argue that this pursuit of specific affective assets, while others are excluded or thought of as non-instrumental, implies a certain kind of “neoliberal cultivation” towards a state of being emotionally performative and effective (see also Ahmed, 2010a, 2010b, on the promise of happiness and how it offers a “hopeful performative”; Hardt & Negri, 2009, pp. 376–383 on the state of happiness).

Contrary to an exclusion or negation of emotions implied in early “neoliberal” philosophical thought, these approaches show how neoliberal techniques of governance are actually interrelated with emotional and affective strategies. What is further argued in this chapter is that these strategies are articulated so much on representations of emotional responses as on narrative affective fluidity (see also Keen, 2003). Taking bank advertising as economic discourse in media apparatus, the next section illustrates such strategies in advertising storytelling, and explores how they comprise the affective present of a neoliberal fantasy in the making. The emphasis will be on the narrative use of structures of feeling and affective atmospheres, emotional and affective assets, emotional and affective charges, as well as self-reflexivity, instrumentality and intimacy as they penetrate aspects of economics of everyday life through processes of attunement and transference.

4 Structuring feeling: the case of bank advertising

In a media ecosystem that interprets and reconstructs aspects of the economic crisis using “negative” emotional discourse, bank advertising, considered as a distinct discursive genre of mass communication, is a bright exception. Of

course, this is partly explained by the obvious purpose of reaching consumers and selling bank services. However, the interesting part for this discussion lies in their storytelling and how it specifically rearticulates popular interpretations of the economic and social effects of the Greek crisis using emotional and affective strategies. This case is mostly evident in the advertising campaigns launched by Piraeus Bank, which comprise the material of this analysis. Piraeus Bank was not only a leading financial company in the restructuring of the Greek banking system during the crisis (e.g. Kyriazopoulos & Logotheti, 2019) but also a significant source of advertising income for the majority of the mainstream media (press, TV, and Internet) (Piraeus Bank Group, 2015, 2016). Advertising videos that were shown between 2009 and 2016 for TV and Internet promotion of the bank's services and products were analysed using a methodological framework of Foucauldian approaches to discourse analysis (Foucault, 1969/1982; Keller, 2013) combined with critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 2003; Forchtner & Wodak, 2017; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; Wodak, 1989) and the Essex School (see for example, Howarth, Norval, & Stavarakis, 2000). This section provides a critical illustration and analysis of the main findings against the backdrop of the aforementioned conceptual framework on the emotional and affective strategies of neoliberal power.

I can!

At a time when Greek society was facing a steep reduction in total income per capita of up to 25% and while unemployment and poverty were rising at equivalent rates (e.g. Mavridis, 2018), seeking to promote a savings account surely sounds out of place and it probably is. But when presented as a self-reflexive “I can do it” challenge, it acquires an instrumental affective charge that is expected to engage and motivate the audience to carry out a certain action: check any place possible for forgotten loose coins and use them for a savings account. This strategy is employed in an advertisement published in around 2011 for the promotion of the bank's savings account “Boro [I can]” (Piraeus Bank, 2011a). Besides the inventive use of the first-person singular that identifies the bank's service with a possible client, the most interesting part is how it replaces “affordability” with “consciousness” and “potential”. The storytelling consists in successive images of everyday life with hints of forgotten or misplaced loose coins: in the lining of a bag, between sofa pillows, under the car seats, in a jean's pocket, in a pencil box and so on. At the same time, the voice-over performer describes how one, two or five euros “may not make a difference for everyday life” – although they did at the time – but they could make a difference for a savings account. Calling for an adjustment of economic thinking to small amounts of money, this story fosters the confidence of economic potential when it was consistently disputed in several other rearticulations of the economic crisis.

Together with the “I can” challenge, the same advertisement relates a “savings” activity with a reward – in this case a special interest rate. This motivating notion becomes central in two following advertisements, but with intensified emotional and affective charges. The first appears at around the same period of time, again for the promotion of a savings account that was called “Aksizei [It is worth it]” (Piraeus Bank, 2011b). Reward is perceived as the motive to act but also as a response to certain actions. The critical part is how this storytelling places the raising of deposits by one euro per month for special interest rate in the intimate space of home and the affective atmospheres of companionship, motherhood and caring: a young man anxiously makes a surprise cake for his girlfriend; an excited child shows his mother a plant in a handmade pot; a dog fetches the newspaper for his/her owner. The common ground of these intimate moments is that they portray efforts which, irrespective of the outcome, deserve some kind of reward. The rewarding response is also performed with affectively charged expressions – a smile, a kiss, a hug, a head pat and so on. Moreover, the practical value given again to euro coins and the slogan “start with what you can” seems to rebuild a sense of “economic potential”, this time attributing to the effort the affective charges that flow from intimate moments to bank services consumption. It could be argued that if taken together these two advertisements can also be thought of as re-conceptualising the value of money and therefore naturalising the effects of austerity politics. At the same time, the emphasis on “effort” and “reward” builds interdiscursive connections with relatively frequently encountered metaphors in media discourse where the acceptance of austerity was articulated as “sacrifice” (Davou & Demertzis, 2013, pp. 114–120; Kountouri & Nikolaidou, 2019), raising expectations for a return to economic stability as a kind of “reward”.

The second storytelling that revolves around the notion of “reward” is not so much encouraging action but rather self-reflexivity and individuality. It was 2015, and Piraeus Bank had already launched the slogan “Bank in your own sense”, initiating the strategy of individual meaning. In this context, the advertisement of a term deposit service builds on individual understandings of “reward”. Men and women, most of them between 35 and 45 years old in an office dress code, are supposedly asked to explain what “reward” means for them, while their smiling, thinking and nostalgic faces succeed one another on screen (Piraeus Bank, 2015a). It is observed that all given meanings are signified by bodily expressions, positive and encouraging words of others as well as a feeling of fulfilment in occasions related to companionship, marriage, family, work and so on. Then this primacy of individual meaning with all its emotional and affective impacts is transferred to the bank as the voice-over performer explains that “in Piraeus Bank” reward “takes the form you give to it” (Piraeus Bank, 2015a). A similar strategy employs individual understandings of “will” and “freedom” but this time aiming less at instrumental action and more at the re-invention of individuality in common structures of feeling.

Your measures, your life

It was in around 2012 that Piraeus Bank's advertisements started to discursively relate economic activities with images of being free. First appears a story of a soldier who in a humorous way is acting against all rules and norms when he asks for permission to go in and out of the camp at his own will: to do some personal chores, then have a coffee and maybe meet a partner later in the evening. Of course, he gets a negative answer from the obviously irritated commander (Piraeus Bank, 2012). Since the military service is mandatory for men in Greece, the place and context of the story reflect very common and popular storytellings, many of which indeed share elements of bittersweet humour. Yet the immediate impact of a mandatory military service is of course confinement and lack of free movement. Taking this confinement as undisputable, the advertisement transfers this rule-breaking wish to act "at one's own will" in the economic field and more specifically in one of the bank's services, using the slogan "in some cases you cannot do what you wish to do. In Piraeus Bank's term deposit +Plus –Minus you can" (Piraeus Bank, 2012). Adding to this, while the military is a place of collective training that minimises individuality, the bank appears as the exact opposite: a place of limitless individuality that is united with others by the common wish to act freely.

A similar slightly different storyline of "acting at one's own will" appears in a following advertisement, in 2014, which promoted the term deposit "Tailored to you" (Piraeus Bank, 2014a). In this case, restrictions imposed on "one's will" are not institutional as in the military camp case but contingent and they are basically everywhere. Using retro-vintage effects, the advertisement tells the story of a young man from his childhood until his joining the navy, capturing moments when something – a wall, a girl, a bicycle, a sun umbrella, a bedcover, a uniform – is well over his size. This size issue seems to be causing different kinds of emotional reactions such as frustration, embarrassment or happiness. These emotional fragments together with the visual effects and the linearity of the narration form a nostalgic biography. Then comes the ascertainment that "in life not everything is tailored to you" and therefore the bank emerges again as a place of exception where all services can be "tailored" to each individual customer.

In the meantime, around 2013, this wish to "act at one's own will" or measurements is complemented by a wish to be "free". Promoting the term deposit "Return and Freedom" two consecutive advertisements build on the affective charge of facial expressions and body movements that reflect happiness and carelessness: waking up out in nature, stretching bodies somewhere in the mountains, doing yoga, hanging from trees, dancing in the house, playing games in open spaces, moving playfully, biking in the city, watching the sunrise, traveling by car, being by the sea and so on (Piraeus Bank, 2013a, 2013b). It may be of some importance to mention that in each of these images there is mainly one character/body. The voice-over performer defines these visual moments as individual meanings of freedom. However, in this case the bank

does not rearticulate itself as a place of exception that secures the customer's freedom but rather, using the voice-over, it presents its service as if it is the outcome of the bank's own perception of freedom – namely, the customers' freedom to use their capital and receive high returns (Piraeus Bank, 2013a, 2013b). Claiming for the bank a certain individual meaning of freedom, which is, however, profitable for the customer, the advertisement aligns the bank with the characters shown, and it establishes common structures of feeling free, and affective atmospheres related to senses of freedom as the latter are transferred from any aspect of life to the economic field.

Even though these advertisements do not relate explicitly with the economic crisis context, they do refer to one of its major effects, namely lack of economic freedom both in policy-making and everyday life or in other words lack of possibility to freely determine it (e.g. Kioupkiolis, 2013). If the former advertisements deal with the issue of having an economic potential, the latter deal with the ability to use this potential in the first place, and more accurately to use it freely. While establishing itself as space of economic motivation, reward and freedom of action for others, the bank uses advertising to rearticulate its part in the Greek economic crisis, claiming for itself practices of contribution, support, community and even a driving force to the future. These advertising storytellings could be seen as an effort on behalf of the company to regain people's trust (Davou & Demertzis, 2013). What is of interest for this discussion is how it also moves from emotional and affective strategies of re-inventing individuality to structures of feeling that foster collective moods, mostly related to production and consumption.

Living indicators/indicated life

Since 2010, still the early days of economic crisis, at least four advertising videos present the bank as a key agent of a socially, culturally and environmentally informed economic practice, or the other way around. The advertisements build on the slogan “we give life to economic indicators” and use the symbol of a paper bird made out of a business paper which flies around Greece, showing various aspects of everyday life. In one of these videos, the voice-over performer relates “giving life to indicators” with development and progress and most of all with the people, since indicators are thus brought “closer” to them. Indeed, they seemingly “support start-ups and protect on a daily basis thousands of jobs”, they help people consider their “ideas” and “knowledge”, and they take initiatives for culture, heritage and the environment (Piraeus Bank, 2010a). As the paper bird flies around parks with children playing, construction sites, offices, university sites, museums, wind parks, the sea and so on, everything seems to be working or, as argued here, seems to be in a state – both physical and emotional – of “functional normality”. However, the paper bird is not there only to observe but also to act “supportively” and “helpfully” in people's lives, implying that they are in need. A following advertisement using the same symbol and the same narrative resources portrays a society that needs “protection of jobs”, “family aid” for “income” and the “future of the

children”, as well as “services in isolated areas” (Piraeus Bank, 2010b). Against a strong sense of abandonment that emerged at the time (e.g. Frangos et al., 2012), people should not feel alone.

Bearing this self-imposed, emotionally charged duty of preserving “normality” and orchestrating life (see also Piraeus Bank, 2015b), health, jobs and production become the main sectors of the bank’s salutary intervention – if not intrusion. Around 2009, it launches the deposit account “Health and Family”, relating this initiative with a monthly compensation “in case of job loss” (Piraeus Bank, 2009a). The advertisement begins with an emotionally ambiguous body position of a married man around 40, closing his eyes with his hands, while the voice-over performer, speaking on behalf of the bank, appeals to men like him, saying, “In Piraeus Bank we know that when you have a family, you may have a lot on your mind. You are more worried. Or maybe not?” (Piraeus Bank, 2009a). And then the tones of expressiveness change and it is revealed that he is just playing a game with his daughter and wife which becomes increasingly fun. More than relating this emotional outcome with “buying” this bank service, this storytelling minimises the effects of a job loss by placing one’s health in the safe hands of the banking system, which then takes all the worries away.

In the same vein, but using unusually dramatic tones, the bank advertises “aid and financing programs” for small and medium-sized enterprises, aiming at “the protection of 50,000 jobs” (Piraeus Bank, 2009b). When the real effect on employment was just starting to show, this specific storytelling consists in signs of a possible loss: empty chair in an office, in a restaurant, in a shoe shop and finally an empty sunbed. Unemployment was of course a major social problem at the time, and it was articulated in narrations of anxiety and suffering. But the story tells us more than a practice of corporeal responsibility. Besides relating a job position with a certain lifestyle, this narrative sequence transfers the feeling of a job loss in different aspects of life, making the bank’s presence vital for preserving the state of things. With the leading slogan “So as no position is left empty” (Piraeus Bank, 2009b), the bank services are articulated not only as a guarantee of job positions but of a life without losses.

The strategy of “living indicators” as a condition for preserving a worry-less and loss-less functional normality would be of less interest if it did not strengthen people’s attachment to production and consumption. While launching special services for agriculture and stock-farming as well as business investment, more storytellings were giving life to the land (Piraeus Bank, 2014b), a childhood to production (Piraeus Bank, 2014c), and a voice to business (Piraeus Bank, 2016a). The affective and emotional charges of a relationship of care, even the intimacies developed between parents and children, are transferred to a relationship between the producer and the process of production, while a company acquires all the traits attributed to its owner: “ideas, vision, knowledge and talents, strains and sleepless nights, his/her people that give their best, his/her partners and clients, a part of the economy that tries to get

back to the forefront, jobs, productivity, innovation, the basis for development” (Piraeus Bank, 2016a).

To these engaging stories of how to feel secure, act normally and attach to objects of production, stories of consuming come to be added. In 2016, a humorous campaign named “budget stories” promoted pre-paid cards for “budget control and freedom of movement”. These stories have one thing in common: they aim at restoring popular practices of “spending” which were affected by the economic crisis – Christmas presents, marriage ceremony, clothes, hobbies, summer vacation, student life, an unexpected second baby and so on (Piraeus Bank, 2016b). In teaser videos they are characterised in a cinematic mode as “based on true stories . . . life stories . . . dramatically real” (Piraeus Bank, 2016b). And in fact they are, but the point lies again in the bank’s intervention. Besides taking for granted that the wish to spend exceeds one’s economic potential, these stories naturalise a limitless wish to consume, where the object of spending is irrelevant and the feelings range between anxiety, shame and acceptance of the fact that some dreams of spending may be hard to fulfil. In this interdiscursive framework shared by these stories, the bank that promotes the wish to spend also raises the possible risks and appears once again as a saviour.

Move on

If the emotional and affective strategies that emerged so far appeal to self-reflexive instrumental actions, the primacy of individuality, energies that are transferred from different aspects of everyday life to economy and also structures of “in need/protection” and “precarity/security” that are resolved through trust to a leading entity, a sole advertisement that was released in 2013 sets in motion the affective economic effect of the expectation of the future. Launching the main slogan “stable because it moves”, the discursive environment of the advertisement brings both the bank and the people into a self-reflexive position that considers the past and leads to an unavoidable “moving on”. Using exceptionally two voice-over performers, the first part raises a self-reflection on time and experience, and how “the future becomes the past”, and how “the new becomes old” and “something new takes its place” and how in this, if you stop moving, you will miss the future, what comes next which is “always more important than what preceded” (Piraeus Bank, 2013c). Leaving no room for the present, this narration encourages the audience to follow the example of the bank, forget the past and move on to the future. The second narrative voice presents how the bank has “taken safe steps forward” in favour of business, agricultural economy and so on and therefore how it became a leader in the new banking reality. It is “stable” because it “moves”, or to be precise it reclaims for itself one of the most intense and influential structural lacks caused by any crisis: the lack of stability. Against the background of Greek cities and Greek nature, a runner, old couples, babies, shopkeepers, athletes, cleaners, farmers and working women become the moving bodies of what is

stable. It is worth mentioning that this future is not described as better, but only as other and more importantly other than the past. Moving is the only thing that takes place in the present.

5 Conclusion: feeling works

While mediatised rearticulations of the economic crisis were aiming at people's numb resilience and acceptance of neoliberal policy-making, these advertisements were aiming at the re-attachment of people to the established economic institutions and to economic practices. And to a certain extent they, indeed, evoked fragments of early "neoliberal" philosophical thought. The reconfiguration of economic potential, the creation of a space of economic freedom, the establishment of instrumental links between the bank and society as well as between the individual and his/her means and resources of production, the presentation of the bank as a driving force to the future proved to be key strategies of a localised neoliberal economic discourse; one that aims at maximising economic activity even when the resources are hardly available; one that advocates the primacy of economy in culture, society and everyday life in a time of floating meanings and identities; one that highlights freedom.

However, in these structural contradictions, the use of emotions and affective strategies proved to be a meaningful bridge, lying in the emotional engagement of affective fluidity and in the attunement of the individual to the collective and vice versa. Personal challenge and reward, a strong sense of individuality developed in collective spaces of work and everyday life, a common need for security and protection, and the common expectation of something other comprise the emotional strategies of a functional normality in the making. At the same time, the narrative resources relied to a large extent on the effect of circulation of affects and intimacies, together with their intensities and embodiments, from different spheres of everyday life to economic activity, multiplying the meanings of the latter. Of course, the exploration of the effects of these strategies on the perceptions of everyday people would add significantly to this discussion. Even though this lies beyond the range of this approach, it could still be assumed that what flows creates space not only for power but also for resistance.

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