

SPORT AND NATIONALISM IN CELEBRATIONS OF MEGA EVENTS. DANCING VICTORY WITH ZORBA THE GREEK

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The present paper explores the negotiation of national identity in contemporary mega sporting events. The study focuses on certain performances of Greekness through Zorba's dance in national sporting victories, especially in basketball. The attention shifts onto wider nationalisation processes by highlighting the socio-political relations of sport. The fieldwork took place in the broader area of Athens (Attica) and Patras (Peloponnese), between September 2020 and September 2022. It was based on Visual Anthropology methods, working with interlocutors who are engaged with sports in various ways. Through endearing habits, athletes and fans can constitute different embodied performances inside and outside the stadiums, where sport as a performative place of collectivity and solidarity invites a continuous embodied creative action highlighting how complex, versatile, and political it can be.

Keywords: mega sporting events, sport, nationalism, dance, Greece, Zorba's dance, celebration, dance, basketball, fans, visual anthropology

To George Tzortzis, who left us too soon.

PERFORMING NATIONALISM IN THE FIELD OF SPORTS

Olympic Games, Rio, 2016. Medal ceremony for still rings. Olympic gold medalist Lefteris Petrounias.¹ While announcing the event, the commentator shouts, "The king of the

¹ Lefteris Petrounias, Greek Olympic Champion Athlete in Gymnastics (Rings).

rings is Greek”, and the crowd cheers. The stadium is shaking in rhythmic clapping to the sound of Zorba the Greek (Alkis, 62 years old).

Olympic Games, Athens, 2004. Nadia, 55 years old, a Physical Education teacher, highlights that Zorba’s song was played before any sporting event. “Of course, it was at the Greek Olympics, and of course most of the people inside the stadiums were Greeks, but overall, the crowds in the stadium tuned in immediately.” Stavros, a 57-year-old physical education teacher and basketball coach noted: “Zorba’s song was the new Olympic anthem in 2004!”. Nadia added that in the 2018 Artistic Gymnastics World Championships in Doha (Qatar), Petrounias was seriously injured. During his performance, the rhythmic clapping in Zorba’s tone was all over the place. Once again, despite his injury, Petrounias came in first and won the gold medal. After the event, as told by Nadia, the athlete talked to the press and mentioned that his strength came from Zorba’s dance, and from the warmth of the people in the stands. She laughs, and continues: in 1988, at the Seoul Olympics, a friend of mine, who participated in the conference held as part of the Games, told me that they woke up that morning to Zorba’s song, playing from the speakers of their hotel!

Although we do not know the people in the rows above us or below us in the stands, we tune in with them when our team’s anthem or the national anthem in mega events is played. Goals and victories find us all cheering. Andreas, a 26 years old agriculturalist, practices physical activities and trains every day with a group of friends. Sometimes they choose track running, sometimes walking, or endurance and strength exercises with weights. As we talk, he emails me various links online, and highlights:

“Do you remember Machlas?² When he was playing football in the Netherlands, every time he scored, the stadium followed Zorba’s rhythm. It was something like a trademark for the Greek footballer. I have also noticed it in national team games” (he is referring to football matches) (Andreas, 26 years old).

The present paper focuses on the study of certain performances of Greekness in mega sporting events in which Zorba’s cinematic dance plays a central role, adopted as an anthem of Greekness, carrying a strong embodied political discourse.³ I approach sports events as public cultural processes (public culture) determined historically and socially, subject to political manipulations and negotiations (Clifford 1986:18–19). I argue that

² Nikos Machlas is a well-known Greek football player active in the 1990s and 2000s with an international career, especially noted for playing in Europe.

³ Regarding the anthropological study of dance in Greece as an embodied political discourse, for example, see Cowan 1990; Zografou and Pipyrou 2008; Pateraki 2017. On dance as a tool of national identity in Greece see also Zografou 1989; Loutzaki 2001; Manos 2003; Margari 2004; Zografou 2007; Zografou and Pateraki 2007; Zografou and Pipyrou 2008; Cheilari 2009; Papakostas 2014; Pateraki and Karampampas 2014. Since the 1980s, the anthropological

dance⁴ performed in the context of sporting events can act as a performative place of collectivity and solidarity which invites a continuous embodied creative action highlighting how complex, versatile, and political it can be. More specifically, my attention turns to how mega sporting events contribute to wider nationalising processes by highlighting the socio-political relations in which sport is engaged.

Dunning's (1999) phrase "Sport matters" outlines the study of sport as a constituent element of everyday life. Sport takes place within a certain social and historical context (Tomlinson 2005:xiv) and can be used as a means of reflection on society (MacClancy 1996), broadening new horizons of understanding, of the world around us.⁵ Drawing upon the fact that sport can encapsulate even the embodiment of a nation into the performances of "eleven named people" (Hobsbawm 1992), this paper focuses on performances of Greek sport nationalism, bearing in mind that sport in Southern Europe is especially mutually related to identity, politics and culture in such way that, for instance, we can no longer think about or discuss modern Spain, Italy, Portugal or Greece without it (MacFarland 2017). In addition, we have recently seen a growing discussion about sport and nationalism in South East Europe and especially the Balkan countries. This orientation of study was not a research topic for a long time, not even as a peripheral one (see Sack and Suster 2000; Kotnik 2009; Parasovic Trost and Kovacevic 2013; Brentin 2019; Neofotistos 2019; Perica 2001; Testa 2022; Begović 2024).

In this context, I intend to examine the negotiation of national identity through sport. This question has been extensively discussed both in terms of its management by states (see Besnier and Brownell 2012) and in terms of its political dimensions, in the context of fan agency and national history (Spyros 2013:253). When discussing at length the relations between sport and nationalism, Brentin and Cooley (2015) underline that in contemporary mega sporting events, national delegations become places of passionate expression of national identity. This passion is expressed, among others, through songs and dances inside and outside the sports arena, causing moments of collectiveness and emotional affection (Long and Spracklen 2021:1), shaping a field of negotiation and contesting, as well as a field of production, but also reproduction of individual and collective identities (Bateman 2014:301). As the songs ferment in modern sports communities (Zaimakis

perspective of dance has developed rapidly and special importance has been placed on the political control of dance by nation-states in the context of their nationalist discourses and practices. See, for example, Handler 1988; Ramsey 1997; Reed 1998; Buckland 1999; Giurchescu 1999; Öztürkmen 2001; Rakočević 2015.

⁴ See also Kirtsoglou 2004 and Pateraki 2017.

⁵ Regarding this orientation in the study of sports in Greece, see Zaimakis and Kotaridis 2013; Zaimakis and Fournaraki 2015.

2013), they are part of the performances of national identity in the sporting events which are performed both for the nation and for the sport itself (Giannakopoulos 2005).

My fieldwork in the broader area of Athens (Attica) and Patras (Peloponnese) between September 2020 and September 2022 follows a certain cinematic dance and its relation to sports, focusing on the performance of certain national victories. My methodology is based on Visual Anthropology's perspective (Pink 2001), studying the way my interlocutors engage visual data and specifically data from mega sporting events in their lives (Banks 2001). I focused on what they say about sports, how they comment on them, as well as their lives. My interlocutors are engaged in sporting activities in various ways (athletes; coaches; teachers of physical education; people that practice sports for health benefits; people that like to watch sports on TV). I interviewed them by presenting certain visual data from mega sporting events. My intention in this paper is to illuminate certain aspects of sport involved in negotiating national identity. Looking at how Greek national sporting victories are celebrated, I shift focus on a globally well-known symbol of Greek national identity, i.e., Zorba's dance. In this paper, I showcase celebrations from certain basketball victories.

SPORT, DANCE, AND POLITICS

Sports and dance orchestrate the passions and dedication of countless athletes, dancers, and fans worldwide. I argue that these two embodied social practices, in agreement with Dyck and Archetti (2003), share a vital capacity to create and express identities through their performances—although conventionally thought to inhabit separate social spheres. Beyond entertainment, they also share celebration, while at the same time they articulate national identities and national gender body norms.⁶ Although one could agree with Dyck and Archetti (2003) that the way in which sports and dance meet is paradoxical, let us nevertheless keep in mind the connection between dance and sports on one side, and the body on the other. Both in Greece and in the exterior academic schools from which the formation of the Greek schools and departments of physical education and sports derives (Kraus 1980), dance is studied and taught alongside artistic or rhythmic gymnastics, instrumental music, and sports. This educational policy is widespread and has been applied for a long time. The presence of dance as an educational asset traces its roots back to Greek antiquity.⁷

⁶ See the ethnographic film about women's participation in hip-hop competitions (training; team relations; qualifying matches for international championships; technique and tactics for victory). *The Girls Are Here* (*Τα θηλυκά είναι εδώ*) (2015) Ναταλία Κουτσούγερα (Koutsougera 2015).

⁷ Opinions that the person who does not dance is equal to an uneducated one are drawn from ancient Greek literature (Plato's *Laws*, 654).

These concepts were antecedents to the gradual entry of dance into the international formal educational process at least since the beginning of the 19th century (Gartzonika 2013), as well as in Greek society,⁸ and they hold up well to this day (Karayanni 2004). Therefore, dance and sports, although they constitute different social practices, share their relationship with the body as well as with the negotiation of national identity,⁹ and this is what the present paper deals with.

As Dycand Archetti (2003) favorably comment, athletes build a world of performances and the public that follows them in turn builds many other worlds of interpretation of these performances. The productive movement of the body is the vehicle to enter these worlds and it allows us to think, to understand the social and political relations that bodies unfold through their performances. Drawing upon Cowan, author of the first ethnographic study that examined body politics in Greece through dance, I underline and agree that in a society where most people dance, to dance “is much more than knowing the steps, it involves both social knowledge and social power” (Cowan 1990:xii). To elaborate on this concept, I will add that in a world where people play sports or watch sporting events, sport is much more than knowing or recognising technique, or controlling the heartbeats.¹⁰ It concerns the understanding of this world, its different societies and, in particular, modern urban societies with which sport has an inherent relationship (Zaimakis and Fournaraki 2015:10).

Why does the cinematic Zorba move us when we hear him in stadiums? Why do athletes celebrate success while dancing to his beat? Why do crowds of fans cheer at the sound of it? Also known as sirtaki, this dance is used to stir up and mobilize Greek and foreign fans at major sporting events inside and outside Greece. At the same time, a multitude of Greek taverns and restaurants around the world bear the name Syrtaki, Zorba and/or Zorba the Greek, which highlights its enduring nature sixty years after its first release. Zorba's cinematic dance¹¹ highlights that certain performances are culturally

⁸ As Fournaraki notes, dance was utilized as one of the first forms of exercise for women in Greek schools of the 19th century. However, its presence was separate from any aspect of physical education. According to the author, dance was more related to the dominant view of the feminine, in the spirit of Romanticism (Fournaraki 1998:311).

⁹ The relationship between sports and the Greek national consciousness, as noted by Koulouri (1997:109–110), traces its roots back to the Olympic Games of 1896. For further details about the socio-political transformations and the processes that brought it to the center of the nationalisation processes of Greek state physical exercise during the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, see Tsoumas 2016.

¹⁰ In Greece, in physical education courses, dance is approached as a motor activity through which the physical condition of the body is cultivated and controlled by measuring heart beats after the dance performance. See Teacher's Guide for High School Physical Education 2015:101.

¹¹ My interest in the study of public cultural processes (public culture) in the modern urban environment through visual data such as in film (Pink 2001; Gray 2010) traces its roots back to

significant at critical moments (Pateraki 2017) and have the power to move the world and cultivate relationships that speak to the heart for many years (Sutton and Wogan 2009), cause re-signifiers of the past in the present (Knight 2012), and can transform individuals and collectivities, among others, in sports (Ottosson 2019).

The common ground in this relationship is the negotiation of national identity and, more specifically, the participation in the nationalisation processes to forge specific national norms (Hobsbawm 1992). Having already focused on the importance of dance in Greek society and its participation in shaping national identity¹² within the context of cinema (Pateraki 2017), I have underlined the emotional power of dance in Greek society and its decisive role in shaping the sense of common belonging (Anderson 1997) as well as its mass acceptance (Eriksen 2010). As the dance ferments socially and becomes culturally significant material, the “endearing”, the “ours”, and the “unforgettable” are transformed into one marker of embodied historicity, which sometimes follows irreconcilable paths (Pateraki 2014). However, it becomes the residue that is not filtered, but at critical moments penetrates the filters of social memory and brings together different – however important – time periods (Knight 2012).

Social recognition through familiar, culturally significant materials – national (Eriksen 2010), seems to be a constant challenge through a series of identity indicators which is always in relation to internal and external socio-political conditions (Macdonald 1997). Zorba's cinematic dance is chosen to celebrate Greek victory and opens a new path for discussion regarding the possibility that dance would stir up social relations. In the current phase, interest is focused on the path shared with sport, drawing attention to the dynamics of sport as an embodied social practice. The celebration is not only about the national sporting victory, but the transnational recognition of Greece, as it brings the country to the front pages of the international press, turning the sporting victory into a national one

the anthropological study of representation as a process of translation and interpretation (Clifford 1986), which took the points of discussion beyond the neutral images of visual documents and records and shed light on the study of the active interplay of visual systems and data and their mediation (Banks and Morphy 1997) in social life (for more, see Pateraki 2013). In this context, I borrow the concept of public culture and/or culture of publicity from Appadurai (1996), who raised the question of cultural transformations that take place in the urban space, the media and consumption, proposing the movement from culture (noun) in the cultural (adjective) process. According to Sahlins (1998), this movement does not offer anything significant, but rather enables fragmentation. He argues that the study of these processes should focus on the fact that people “share a culture to which they feel bound, share a way of being...” (Sahlins 1998:344). In the present text, this point is key.

¹² Already since the 1980s, studies on dancing have been rapidly developing and special importance has been given to the political control of dance by nation-states in the context of their nationalist discourses and practices (for more details, see Pateraki 2010, 2014).

(Tzanelli 2006:483) in the difficult European political arena.

The following text consists of two parts. In the first part, I will briefly present the historical context of Zorba's cinematic dance and the discussion surrounding its global acclaim. In the second part, I will discuss the ethnographic examples where the ways sport interacts with social life are revealed and orchestrate the senses, emotions, and rhetoric of the active subjects involved in the sports field.

A. ZORBA THE GREEK (1964): HISTORICAL CONTEXT & GLOBAL ACCLAIM

The film *Zorba the Greek* by Michalis Cacoyannis (1964) was filmed and first screened in the 1960s and was part of a dual national effort aimed at the international acclaim of Greek cinema and the promotion of Greece as a tourist destination¹³ (Pateraki and Mountakis 2013) in the wider context where the cinematic depiction of the Greekness of tourism and the nouveau-riche is formed (Papadimitriou 2009). The film was based on the well-known novel *The Life and Times of Alexis Zorbas* by Nikos Kazantzakis, authored about twenty years prior, during the German Occupation in 1943, one of the most translated Greek literary texts. The music was composed by Mikis Theodorakis, joining the general framework of his work, during a "musical period" that became known as a period of controversy for the rebetiko genre (Zaimakis 2009). Soon, the melody and the choreography of the last scene became a symbol of Greekness, gaining worldwide acclaim which lasts to this day, famous for their appeal, welcoming and authentic celebration of life. Although the film had many scenes that depicted a way of life in harsh and difficult social contexts such as those in 1940s Greece,¹⁴ overall, the film was considered to be an ethnographic representation of a genuine, old, authentic and "innocent" way of life, that if was found under the light of the Acropolis (Stefani 1997). In this context, a monolithic and stereotypical image of Greece was developed (Cowan 1990), where the cinematic Zorbas invited tourists to a separate "authentic" place of life, to a "holy journey"¹⁵ and to a world free from the constraints of work, time, and amenities (Pateraki and Mountakis 2013).

¹³ Regarding the 60s and its pivotal position for the visibility of Greece in the international public sphere as an accessible tourist destination, see Nikolakakis 2017:91–193.

¹⁴ According to Bien (2000), the novel studied the resilience of the Greeks during the German Occupation regardless of the multiple, repeated destruction. This emphasizes the spirit of Kazantzaki's work regarding the support of the people's language as well as his search for Greek consciousness in everyday life of the people promoting a progressive and dynamic rationale for Greekness.

¹⁵ Regarding the specific anthropological approach to tourism, see Boissevain 1992.

The fact that Zorbas was dancing away his pain rather than his joy was a detail glossed when using the embodiment of earthly appetites and frivolous living to sell holiday packages in Greece (Cowan 1990:xii). This detail has been discussed (Zografou and Pateraki 2007) when researchers argued that Zorba's cinematic dance, flirting between global fame and local claim, constitutes an invented choreography with political connotations, a hybrid construction, a "third place" (Bhabha 1994), dictated by the domestic and international historical context, which is "neither here nor there" (Turner 1974) and does not obey binary balancing schemes (Greek/Romeo) (Herzfeld 1998).

More specifically, we have argued that the cinematic dance was the result of combining a melody for a traditional Cretan dance called *syrtos chaniotikos* with the slow hassapikos dance, through a well-known song by Mikis Theodorakis based on rebetiko, *Make your Bed for Two* (Στρώσετε στρώμα σου για δυο).¹⁶ We found that on the surface there is an "oriental cloak" over the choreography, which connects local tradition with the oriental bourgeois-folk that is nevertheless deeply European oriented, offering a balanced movement between East and West.

It is symptomatic that Zorba's sirtaki or dance, or whatever it is, has been recorded in the discography, causing ambiguity as to what exactly it is. The performance is based on traditional folk music and dance motifs (Zografou and Pateraki 2007), according to the director's instructions, which are familiar to the Greek society, precisely for this reason, in order to be familiar. The confusion produced both by the names and by their choreographies and dance performances (none of which, however, follows the "original" choreography of the film) is based on the mutual relationship described by Herzfeld in the context of cultural intimacy, mainly expressed by a tug-of-war, that is cultivated to serve wider social-political relations. In his conceptualisation of cultural intimacy, Herzfeld emphasises the reciprocal relationship between the prevailing national ideology and intimacy.

Examining another space where personal feelings meet public events, Herzfeld defines cultural intimacy as a slow and steady process that cultivates the recognition of the national structure through a set of false indicators of everyday practice that serves to extend sociability so that "the private is transmuted" into the public, thus maintaining a reciprocal relationship with the dominant national ideology (Herzfeld 1997:3–6). In the current phase, the producers of the film choose the folk-dance practice without following the literary text on which the film's script is based. The fact that there was ambiguity regarding the definition of the musical dance scene draws from the fact that the name "sirtaki", according to the director, came up during the first screening of the film in Paris (Kakogiannis 2002): This

¹⁶ See further details in Zografou and Pateraki 2007.

would be the equivalent of rejecting both the local Cretan traditions (Armenochoriansyrtos by Koutsourelis) as well the musical motifs of the rebetiko genre, on which the composer relied to compose the particular melody, leaving the film material in ambiguity as well as the culturally familiar viewers in a perpetual bewilderment. This is where this mutual engagement appears according to Herzfeld, between the official state—in our case state choice—and the popular practice—dance—which he denies; although, ironically, its vitality forms a perpetual course.

This familiarity with social perception that is often varied and unstable and defined by Herzfeld as cultural intimacy, comes with its shortcomings in offering convincing explanations for cultural deviations from the public interest. The sirtaki is not included in the official national repertoire of traditional dances, nor in the corresponding local Cretan dance repertoire, nor in the rebetikas. It is a material of film production, where traditional and folk music and dance motifs co-exist, produce embarrassment, and yet are recognisable by nationally providing the reassurance of shared sociability (Herzfeld 1997:3). However, as Herzfeld very aptly notes “why should anyone so passionately deny something that is confirmed by all the senses?” As we will see below, the cinematic Zorbas constitutes a difficult area of cultural sensitivity (Herzfeld 1998:17) which, although it is perpetuated with extraordinary persistence, in a game of nationalising appropriation, it is nevertheless not officially recognised: opening up the limits of a creative disagreement that cultural intimacy allows us to discover behind the mask of national unanimity (Herzfeld 1997:2) which is performed every time it is chosen to perpetuate Greekness.

I have already discussed that cinema takes part in nationalisation processes through the unlimited recycling of its film screenings in time and space, highlighting specific events and cultural materials (Pateraki 2014:61). My research approach regarding the social mediation of embodied social practices starts from the study of dance and draws from the anthropological reasoning of the possibility of all kinds of artefacts—and the embodied—to mediate social action (Gell 1998:6, 16–21). In this context, I follow Pipyrrou's proposal in her study of Southern Italy where, among other things, she argues that the result of the “productive movement” constitutes a very important field of study for social knowledge (Pipyrrou 2016:158–184).

Drawing upon this discussion, I examine specific performances in the sports field where the mentioned processes of acquiring national content and importance intervene in sports. Moreover, they register in the collective mind as dominant, the Greekness that they derive from the cinematic Zorba. In this context, these nationalisation processes, according to several researchers, are complex and ambiguous, a recommended source of finding material capable of criticising and questioning this discourse itself, highlighting that its stable and solid characteristics, all kinds of naturalities and regularities that it includes

can be provoked and challenged by the thinking work of the political subjects it targets (Hobsbawm 1992; Smith 1997; Eriksen 2010; Knight 2012; Pateraki 2014:37). Below, we will see narratives of my interlocutors and other ethnographic descriptions that highlight the various nationalising processes that Zorbas sets in motion in the stadiums.



Figure 1: "Syrtaki" restaurant in the historic center of Tallinn, the capital of Estonia
(Photo: Mimina Pateraki, 2015)

B. ENTERING THE BATTLE WITH ZORBA'S DANCE

Anthi is a 47-year-old PE teacher. A former athlete and basketball coach, she lives and works in Patras. "I won't easily start dancing, but I do know Zorba from the movie and from sports events", Anthi stated while searching through her archive for visual material from those two days she spent in Belgrade.

"2005, September: Men's European Championship; basketball; national team; Belgrade. My friend and I attended two games, the semi-final against France and the final against Germany. Greece won the gold. We left Patras on Friday night by car without having tickets. We were following the progress of the championship and when Greece reached the semi-finals we decided to go up to Belgrade. It was the first event in Belgrade since the bombings in 1999¹⁷ and the Serbs had invested heavily in their team. It was very crowded: the stadium had a capacity of 20,000 fans and it was full. But the Serbs didn't even make

¹⁷ NATO's bombing of Serbia was a new hybrid type of bombing that attempted to cause civilian misery without targeting civilians directly but instead targeting dual-use infrastructure that can be argued to constitute military objectives but also performs vital functions for civilians. See further details in: Shue 2016.

it to the semi-final. We arrived after a twelve-hour journey and looked for tickets. We finally found two tickets by the organized Kozanites¹⁸ who had booked the same hotel as us. During these two days, we lived very intensely in the stands. The first match was against France. At the last seconds of the game, the Red Foxes (cheerleaders, known in basketball) were ready, dressed in a short ancient Greek cloak, and when the game ended and we won, they came out and danced Zorba. Everyone clapped rhythmically. Three large stands, 10,000 Greeks, a few French, Spanish and a lot of Serbs.



Figure 2: Greek national team in Belgrade, September 2005. European Men's Basketball Championship (Photo: Argyris Makris, 2005. Published under licence from INTIME sports&news photo agency, Greece)

The victory in the semi-final was intense because Greece was losing the game and we won after the last three-pointer by Diamantidis¹⁹. We were away from home and this was a difficult win. Before that shot, the result had disappointed us, so the joy was great and unexpected. The game could have gone by without such a game-changing moment, but in the end, he made it. But that's basketball, you can turn the game around with a three-pointer and win. The entire stadium was clapping rhythmically, the players were caught up in the celebrations while the girls danced around them.

In the final, we played against Germany. Before the teams came out for their warm-up and stepped onto the court, the Zorba theme played on the loudspeakers. The final was an easy win for Greece. Besides, the strongest team in the championship was Spain, but they

¹⁸ *Kozanites*, means people from Kozani, a city in the West Macedonia region in Northern Greece.

¹⁹ Diamantidis Dimitris is a (retired) Greek professional basketball player. Widely regarded as one of the greatest European players ever to grace the game, he marked an era by being the most versatile player in the EuroLeague, serving as an inspiration to a whole generation of young European stars. For more, see www.fibaeurope.com and Euroleague Basketball.

had been eliminated much earlier. So, the girls came out and danced again. At the awards, the atmosphere was lukewarm for both France and Germany. When the award was given to Greece, after the Greek national anthem, the Red Foxes came out and danced again. And, along with them, the whole stadium was in an uproar, while at the same time Serbs chanted 'Serbia'. The athletes also danced, along with the Red Foxes. The Red Foxes then surrounded them and the athletes danced in the middle. This also happened the following year, at the 2006 World championship. After the end of the game in which they defeated the US, they finished second. Spain was crowned champion, they have always had the best basketball players."

Anthi's description brings to the fore a series of different performances of national identity within the sports basketball community, on the occasion of the international tournament. Serbia, after a very difficult historical period, once again appears in international competitions and hosts the European championship. Although they are not overly successful when it comes to their sports performance, Serbs applaud the country's resurgence: not only in sports but also in financial and political terms. Zorbas stretches his arms to dance and celebrate and, in this celebration, he hits the three-pointer that "turned" the game. The stadium and, by extension, the city, both full, as if slowly healing the wounds after the war, including those that are still wide open. Wearing his ancient Greek mantle, he sets the whole field in motion. This national victory is a special one. It is a basketball victory which brings back the glorious past of 1987 in Athens; when basketball was founded in Greece. It is a victory that brings about the superiority of Greece in basketball, and at the same time follows the victory of Greece in the European football championship in 2004 and the successful management of the Olympic Games in the same year, in Athens. It is also a victory for the Balkan region of Southeast Europe. One could say that the group played at home by recognising the economic penetration of Greek companies in the Balkans, in the context of the neoliberal adjustments experienced by Eastern European societies in the post-socialist era (Angelidou 2023).

Anthi sent me some snapshots of the videos, and photos she took in Belgrade, and added:

"I vividly remember 2009, when the Women's National Team played in Riga, in the European Championship. Greece took the fifth place which was the best place ever for the women's team. In fact, although the most valuable player usually comes from the first two teams, that year Maltsi²⁰ came up front, from the fifth team. The team played a great match.

²⁰ Maltsi Evina is a Greek former professional basketball guard. In 2007, she played for Connecticut Sun in the WNBA, appearing in 29 games. A three-time Euroleague All-Star (2007–2009), Maltsi has a long career in European club basketball, having played in Spain, France, Czech Republic,

When this was over, they put on Zorba and the whole team danced, especially Maltzi, who continued to dance alone with great enthusiasm surrounded by the others and with the whole stadium joining in. I saw them on TV. Besides, five or six years ago in Crete and the very next year in Chalkida at the European Youth and Young Men Championship, the same celebration happened: athletes dancing the Zorba theme after their victory. As soon as the game was over, to the very first notes of Zorba, the athletes began to dance. It was the same bunch of kids and the intensity of the victory was even greater. They were all dancing together in a circle.”

For both athletes and the public, Zorba's dance is a choreography intertwined with an internationally recognised performance of Greekness. Even though, Zorba's dance model is a hybrid one, that is “neither here nor there”, borrowed from the Greek/Romeo dichotomy in order to highlight a third place (Zografou and Pateraki 2007). In this case, it is “both here and there”, at the time of its production (1964) but also at the critical moment of victory (2004, 2005, 2009). At the same time, it is inside the playing field and on the stands, setting in motion: athletes, trainers, cheerleaders, fans, Greeks, and foreigners. Bringing together the Greek sports communities and others around them. It is acknowledged by everybody as “the dance of victory”, the Greek victory. Inside its performance it carries various victories. From the first, the one where the constant struggle for life gives the stimulus to stand on one's feet and overcome difficulties, facing the pain with optimism, to every time a hard effort is completed in the sporting world, or an unexpected twist comes to crown the national delegation with the success of victory. It is a victory that goes hand in hand with the Greekness of courage, of achieving the impossible, just like that of Euro 2004 in Portugal (Tzanelli 2006). It carries the wider social recognition of a Greekness that stands on its own feet despite all the difficulties and gives priority to the joy of life. The embodied anthem of Greekness accompanies the feeling of “common belonging” by following various routes. Athletes, men and women, cheerleaders and fans danced to the victory of the Greek national team, as well as their own personal participation in it. Maltzi dances her own personal victory, reversing the tradition of awarding the best player title to the team that comes first. This win is making noise (Athanasopoulou 2023) and so do many other things, that require further research to come to light. At the same time, as a culturally

Poland and Turkey, besides her native Greece and has won numerous titles as a player of CJM Bourges, Ros Casares Valencia, USK Praha and Olympiacos. Until 2019, Maltzi was the captain of Greece women's national basketball team, having represented her country in several Women's EuroBasket, the 2004 Olympic Games and the 2010 FIBA World Championship. She led the Greek national team to the fifth place in 2009 FIBA EuroBasket, earning the EuroBasket MVP award, a remarkable feat considering that Maltzi was voted MVP despite the fact that Greece didn't enter the semi-finals. She was also the FIBA EuroBasket 2009 Top Scorer and steals leader (<https://www.wnba.com/>).

significant material, it illuminates the invisible established relationships between everything, and highlights the nationalisation of public cultural processes that take place by bringing the personal and the public together in the context of cultural intimacy (Herzfeld 1997). Although connected to entertainment, sports come to express many sorts of emotions and meanings. Like dance, a sport emerges as a performative place of collectivity and solidarity that invites a continuous embodied creative action, revealing at the same time how complex, fluid, and political it can be (for dance, see Kirtsoglou 2004; Pateraki 2017).

Both sports and dance as fields of pleasure and leisure display how they can be—although different embodied social practices—separate from everyday life but at the same time can be inextricably linked to everyday power relations and dominant perceptions of national identity, according to MacClancy, as well as open to various negotiations and contestations (MacClancy 1996:4). This established use of Zorba's cinematic dance as a national anthem and national dance brings out specific marks of acknowledgement: both among the athletes of national delegations and among the sports communities that follow the national delegations at transnational gatherings. At the same time, all of them interact within the transnational sports field as an imaginary national sports community, following the achievements of this specific Greekness which, without being official, are recognisable everywhere.

The cinematic dance of Zorbas as an embodied anthem of Greekness is perpetuated with extraordinary persistence following a game of nationalised appropriation both inside and outside, and above all outside: notably in international major sporting events where a specific performance of Greekness is perpetuated. Being a particular and difficult indicator of embodied historicity (Pateraki 2017), it allows us to discover a series of complex and ambiguous recognitions and confirmations behind the glossy facade. Moreover, it is culturally familiar material that sets these recognitions in motion and engages with them. Both the song's selection in the sports events we mentioned above, as well as its acceptance, but especially its recognition in transnational sports events highlights its vitality which constitutes continuation in the nationalising game of social recognition (Macdonald 1997). The alleged naturality and normality that it produces as a performance of Greekness is at the same time wide open for questioning. Besides, a dance is in the field. Talking to Alkis on this topic, he pointed out that "most foreigners probably don't know Greece too well, rather often they would answer when listening to the Zorba song, that Zorbas is equally related to Crete or Santorini than to Greece. Listening to it in the stadium evokes the necessary connection with Greece. Besides, what do you think other people know about us?" He asked me and I answered, "sirtaki, souvlaki, mousaka.". Bringing tourist promotion for the country to the discussion, Alkis confirmed in his own way the invisible routes that are recorded in social life and part of them are shaped by nationalisation processes, highlighting that sport is an important "social event" under Durkheim's terms (Zaimakis and Kotaridis 2013).

CONCLUSION

This paper focuses on the ways that sport can bring to light aspects of daily life that until today we simply pass by. I agree with those who advocate that social research can decisively contribute to this direction. The ephemeral but continuous social presence of sports, which we often put on the sidelines of daily life, seems to be at the center. The challenges that lie on the path of the interdisciplinary dialogue that takes place between social studies and sports are many, and can fruitfully become food for thought. The field of study that opens ahead of us is rich, complex, fluid, and full of challenges. Through beloved habits, multiple interpretations of athletes and viewers are constituted by various affirmations and negations. Sports can constitute different embodied performances inside and outside the stadiums.

Zorba's dance, being both "here and there", is inside the playing field and on the stands, setting in motion: athletes, trainers, cheerleaders, fans, Greeks, and foreigners, intertwined with an internationally recognised performance of Greekness. Bringing together the Greek sports communities and others around them, "the dance of victory" carries various victories and the wider social recognition of a Greekness that stands on its own two feet despite all the difficulties, and gives priority to the joy of life. The embodied anthem of Greekness accompanies the feeling of "common belonging" by following various routes. By making noise this culturally significant material, it illuminates the invisible established relationships, and highlights the nationalisation of public cultural processes expressing many sorts of emotions and meanings. This paper argues that both sports and dance as fields of pleasure and leisure display how—although different embodied social practices—are separate from everyday life but at the same time can be inextricably linked to everyday power relations and dominant perceptions of national identity, as well as open to various negotiations and contestations. This established use of Zorba's cinematic dance as a national anthem and national dance brings out specific marks of acknowledgement: both among the athletes of national delegations and among the sports communities that follow the national delegations at transnational gatherings. At the same time, all of them interact within the transnational sports field as an imaginary national sports community, following the achievements of this specific Greekness which, without being official, are recognisable everywhere. Like dance, a sport emerges as a performative place of collectivity and solidarity that invites a continuous embodied creative action, revealing at the same time how complex, fluid, and political the field of sports can be.

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Sport i nacionalizam u proslavama velikih događaja: pobjednički ples uz Grka Zorbu

Mimina Pateraki

Ovaj rad istražuje izražavanje nacionalnoga identiteta u okviru suvremenih velikih sportskih događaja. Studija se fokusira na određene iskaze grčkosti kroz Zorbin ples u nacionalnim sportskim pobjedama, posebice košarkaškim. Pozornost se usmjerava na šire procese nacionalizacije naglašavajući društveno-političke odnose u koje je uključen sport. Terensko istraživanje odvijalo se na širem području Atene (Atika) i Patrasa (Peloponez) (rujan 2020. – rujan 2022.) i temelji se na metodama vizualne antropologije, u suradnji sa sugovornicima koji su na razne načine uključeni u sport. Kroz svoje omiljene navike, sportaši i navijači mogu izvoditi različite izvedbe unutar i izvan stadiona, naglašujući koliko sport može biti složen, slojevit i politički angažiran.

Ključne riječi: *veliki događaji, sport, nacionalizam, ples, Grčka, Zorbin ples, slavlje, košarka, navijači, vizualna antropologija*



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