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Greece, the modern margin in the classical centre: seven points for critical regionalism as historiography

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Abstract

This article adopts a long-term historical perspective to explicate the emergence and significance of critical regionalism as the most celebrated moment of Greek architecture in the history of twentieth-century modernism. It argues that Greek architectural historiography echoes the double bind that conditions the centuries-long relationship between Europe and modern Greece. This bind supports a dual self-image of Greece as the founding classical centre of modern Europe, and as a peripheral site whose endeavours are only validated by their adherence to modern European developments. Starting from Western Europe, the article explores the intertwined historical construction of the margin/centre duality from the seventeenth to the twentieth century, and from geopolitics to architectural historiography. It argues that it was local architects' adoption of this dual margin/centre vision that historically led to the development of critical regionalism.

Critical regionalism has been criticised as a colonialist discourse that actively marginalises the regions it addresses. But in the Greek case it also restored the already marginalised modern architectural production of the country. A close reading of Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre's first theorisation of critical regionalism and its eventual recuperation by Kenneth Frampton shows how a discourse that allegedly promoted the focused return to the region ignored local nuances to answer only to the Western European and North American architectural concerns of the time. As such, critical regionalism remains an unfulfilled project. No longer viewed as a manifesto for a humanistic architecture of the future, it can now develop as a historiographical agenda for the twenty-first century, moving beyond existing dualities of modern margins and classical centres.

Introduction

A visually powerful spread from William J. R. Curtis's *Modern Architecture since 1900* (1982) provides the most memorable juxtaposition of the Villa Savoye and the Parthenon in the canonical historiography of twentieth-century modernism. As the British historian noted in the main body of his text,

> A 'classic' moment of modern architecture, [the Villa Savoye] also has affinities with the great architecture of the past. […] In the Villa Savoye one recognises echoes of old Classical themes: repose, proportion, clarity, a simple language of trabeation. Perhaps one may even go so far as to suggest a reminiscence of the Parthenon, which had so obsessed Le Corbusier twenty years before [in his *voyage d'Orient*]. […] In its tense mathematical relationships and tight contours, in its radiating power to the setting, the Villa Savoye also invoked qualities Le Corbusier had admired in the great Classical prototype. […] Its individual elements – the *piloti*, the strip-window, etc. – were elevated, like the columns and triglyphs of a Greek temple, to the level of timeless solutions: the abstraction of its forms implied a lofty and spiritual role for architecture. Above all, though, the architectural language of the Villa Savoye was the result of a radical quest, a returning to roots, a rethinking of the fundamentals of the art […] an architecture supposedly reflecting natural law.[1]

Serving both as an origin myth and a gold standard, the 2500-year-old Parthenon of classical Athens is paradoxically the Greek building that features most prominently in Western European and North American histories of twentieth-century modern architecture, from Reyner Banham to Colin Davies.[2] By contrast, architecture in modern Greece is predominantly absent from these books. This strong presence of the classical past in the place of a modern present suggests that the history of architecture in Greece has developed in terms of a modern margin in the very centre of classical civilisation.

In this article, I explore the intertwined history of the cultural construction of the classical centre alongside its modern margin to elucidate the emergence and significance of critical regionalism, the most celebrated moment of Greek architecture in the twentieth-century historiography of modernism. I start from northwestern European countries such as Britain, France, and Germany to illuminate the deep historical and cultural roots of this margin/centre duality, and explore its repercussions in modern Greek architectural historiography before the emergence of the critical regionalist discourse in 1981. Despite its celebrated global reception as 'one of the most influential academic propositions since the 1980s' because of its alleged inclusiveness,[3] my long-term historiographical perspective enables me to argue that the critical regionalist discourse proves less contextually sensitive than its authors had suggested. This in turn leads me to propose an updated formulation of critical regionalism's main points, showing how an architectural theory of the 1980s can turn into a twenty-first-

century agenda for architectural historiography. As it is directed forward to the future, this long-term cross-cultural historiographical purview of a single region introduces a longer historical perspective to recent attempts to revisit critical regionalism today.[4]

The geopolitical foundation of the classical centre

Greece is customarily regarded as the 'classical centre' or 'the cradle' of western civilisation. From politics and philosophy to architecture, histories of western culture start from Greece.[5] They refer to figures of classical antiquity such as Pericles and Aristotle, and buildings such as the Parthenon as founding figures and exemplars for the subsequent development of western civilisation. But regarding Greece as the 'classical centre' of the west is a modern thesis. For more than two millennia, the Athenian democratic polity of the fifth century BCE was not the positive exemplar the modern world now takes for granted. For feudal Europe, classical Athens served as a negative example. Successive critics of Athenian democracy from the Roman period onwards portrayed it as irrational, unstable, and ineffective.[6] For instance, Plutarch and Cicero argued that the Athenian polity failed to acknowledge the feats of great political figures, because it was often seduced by hyperbolic rhetoric and hedonist pursuits. These authors invariably attributed the eventual fall of the classical Athenian empire to the failures of democracy as a system of governance.[7]

As a child of the late eighteenth century, the revered conception of classical Athens is therefore relatively recent. It is no coincidence that two of the three main pillars of the French Revolution, 'liberty' and 'equality', were also foregrounded in Thucydides's encomium of democracy (in his reconstruction of Pericles's funeral oration).[8] It forms part of a wider cultural movement to associate ancient democracies with the seismic repercussions of the North American and French Revolutions of 1776 and 1789 across Europe.[9] Later in the twentieth century, strong supporters of ancient Athenian democracy, such as the French historian Gustave Glotz and the American-born British classicist Sir Moses Isaac Finley, filled the remaining gaps that reinforced the French Revolution's links with its classical forerunner. These authors presented the missing third pillar of 'fraternity' as an integral part of the ancient democratic project. Funded by the profits of the Athenian empire, they argued, the public projects of the classical age were constructed to serve both upper- and lower-class citizens.[10] In so doing, these scholars completed a long historical circle of reappraising classical Athens as a model for modern democracies.

In her book *Europe through Greece* (2006), historian Nassia Yakovaki has illuminated the spatial and geopolitical registers of this long history.[11] Classical Athens was only 'rediscovered' as part of the process of the historical construction of a distinctly modern 'European consciousness' and territory. As this secular 'Europe' gradually took the place of the older world of 'Christianity', both Athens and democracy became more relevant than earlier references to ancient Jewish and Egyptian cultures. From the late-seventeenth to the early-nineteenth century, Greece was effectively invoked to redefine the relation of modernity to antiquity. Roman civilisation, the undisputed cradle of the classical in the predominantly Latin-speaking and Italo-centric Renaissance,[12] was gradually demoted to a degenerate copy of the refined Greek original.

Hence, when architectural historians such as Curtis assert that the Parthenon gave Charles-Édouard Jeanneret 'a glimpse of an elusive absolute which continued to haunt him', they do not refer to an exclusively affective personal experience of the young Swiss architect.[13] When European architects travelled to Greece to draw inspiration for their modern buildings in the twentieth century,[14] they also perceived themselves as the latest addition to a longer historical chain. This perception started with a shift in the itinerary of late seventeenth-century travellers,[15] such as Jacob Spon and George Wheler, to include Athens alongside Rome in the European Grand Tour as the joint 'classic grounds' of modern culture.[16] Starting from Athens, Spon reaffirmed, modified, or disproved modern and ancient sources to reconstruct the topography of ancient Greece in its entirety. It was within this territory that the remnants of ancient civilisation could be empirically studied in their contemporary state.

Modern Greece became a major political project for Europe in the following decades. With Athens as its capital city, it was geographically established as a distinct European territory, a novel division within the united Ottoman Empire.[17] Greece became an ideal mirror for a European civilisation that aimed to be established as uniquely original and 'genius' to affirm its supremacy over existing and recently colonised cultures of the Old and New Worlds. Greece enabled Europeans to recognise their new superior face in their major historical precedent as the most advanced state of humanity of their time. In the eighteenth century, the celebrated works of Montesquieu and Johann Gottfried Herder, among others, promoted geographically determinist 'theories of climate' that tied nations and their respective cultural and political character to their land.[18] Hence, when the emerging nation-state legitimised its founding on the

ancient city-state model, the territory of ancient Greece as the birthplace of democracy became increasingly significant. It was the oldest layer in the long history of the cultural and geographic unity of modern European civilisation that was also first established in the eighteenth century. The Grand Turc, a figure idolised by sixteenth-century European travellers to the Levant, gradually transformed into an orientalised despotic ruler that acted as the nemesis of the democratic west. For the philhellenes of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, the tragedy of the modern European world was that the birthland of democracy was under authoritarian rule.

The classical centre of art and architecture

Within this broader geopolitical context, the art and architecture of ancient Greece played a significant role of their own. When Johann Joachim Winckelmann established the aesthetic superiority of the original Greek artworks over their Roman copies in the mid eighteenth century, he significantly added that their simplicity and grandeur was not only owing to the close ties of Greek civilisation with nature, but also to their development within the free *polis*.[19] Polity, art, and the land that nourished them were deterministically inseparable. In addition, Winckelmann promoted the classicist mimesis of the unsurpassed Greek art as a way forward for modern art.[20] At the same time, James Stuart and Nicholas Revett surveyed the antiquities of Athens to further legitimise the supremacy of Greek over Roman art through their allegedly superior and scientifically precise measurements (Fig. 1).[21] As the cultural significance of the monumental remains of ancient Greece rose for Europeans, the rule of the city of Athens by 'such professed Enemies of the Arts as the Turks are', Stuart argued in 1762, threatened these ancient models of artistic perfection.

> The reason indeed, why those Antiquities have hitherto been thus neglected, is obvious. Greece, since the revival of the Arts, has been in the possession of Barbarians […] The ignorance and jealousy of that uncultivated people may, perhaps, render an undertaking of this sort, still somewhat dangerous.[22]

Owing to these authors, by the end of the eighteenth century, Greek revivalism and neoclassicism had become the international styles of modern European architecture. In the early nineteenth century, Western European and North American architects used the eighteenth-century depictions of antique monuments as templates to reproduce parts of the Parthenon. Among others, such buildings include Giovanni Antonio Selva's

Mausoleum of Antonio Caneva in Possagno, Italy (1819); Leo von Klenze's Walhalla in Regensburg, Germany (1821–1842); and Alexander Jackson Davis and Ithiel Town's United States Custom House in New York (1831–1842).[23] Built between the 1820s and the 1840s, these projects coincided with the rise of the modern Greek state. Established on the ruins of its ancient democratic past, modern Greece was, in the final instance, a grand political project for modern Europe. British, French, and Russian imperial powers envisioned the modern state of the classical cradle of democracy as a 'model kingdom' for nineteenth-century Europe.[24] In the decade of the Greek Revolution of 1821, the realisation of this grand vision involved large-scale expeditions and campaigns, such as that of Guillaume-Abel Blouet. These included architects, historians, and archaeologists, escorted by military forces. Orchestrated by the French government, their mission was to locate, reconstruct, and excavate, if necessary, ancient sites of classical Greece in Attica, Peloponnese, and the Cyclades.[25]

The 'classical centre' thesis also owes its longevity to successive historical and theoretical reinterpretations that have repeatedly been generated around it. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the same classical ruins were constantly revisited to instigate novel debates about the past and future of architecture in modern Europe. Well-known figures and instances of this long history include Gottfried Semper who reconstructed the colourful Greek temple to react to Winkelmann's earlier 'white' history of ancient art;[26] Eugène Viollet le-Duc and Auguste Choisy who included reconstructions of the Parthenon as the perfect example of ancient architecture in their influential histories;[27] and Le Corbusier who juxtaposed Greek temples with automobiles to suggest that modern architecture needed to establish its own refined exemplar of the new machine-age standard in *Vers une Architecture* (1928).[28] In the same way that ancient architecture went from unrefined Paestum to sophisticated Athens, and just like Citroën went from the early carriage-like models to the streamlined *chassis* of the Delage Grand Sport, Le Corbusier argued, so did architecture need its own modern Parthenon. Since then, modern architects such as Ludwig Mies van der Rohe have either aspired to build the 'Parthenon of the twentieth century', as in the New National Gallery in Berlin (1961–1968), or referred to it when they undertook projects in Greece as in the case of Walter Gropius and the US Embassy building in Athens (1959–1961).[29] Greek architects, such as Patroklos Karantinos (1903–1976), whose projects in Athens were also photographed in direct association with the Parthenon (Fig. 2), are no exception to this modernist rule.

The marginalisation of modern architecture in Greece

Karantinos's Primary School on Kalisperi Street under the Acropolis in Athens (1931–1932) showcases how the canonical historiography of modernism continues to construct Greece as the modern margin in the classical centre. As Sigfried Giedion's photographs from the same project document (Fig. 3), in August 1933 delegates of the fourth International Congress of Modern Architecture (CIAM) visited this and other modernist buildings in Athens, including Karantinos's Primary School on Charokopou Street in Kallithea (1931) and Stamo Papadaki's Villa Fakidis in Glyfada (1932–1933). But although they approvingly witnessed Greece's modern architecture (Fig. 4), these modernist architects and scholars did not refer to it in subsequent publications. When they published their modern architectural projects in relation to Greece, they only associated them with the country's timeless spirit.[30] They either referred to the classical Parthenon and other pre-classical temples in the proximity of Athens, or to the pre-classical anonymous island vernacular that had already achieved an 'unconscious' modernism of 'perfect match between form and function'.[31] The eleven pages on modern Greek architecture in Alberto Sartoris's *Elements of Functionalist Architecture* (1935) that featured only projects by Papadaki, Karantinos, and Ioannis Despotopoulos (Jan Despo) are the rare exception to this rule.[32] Whenever canonical histories of the modern movement foreground Greece, it is again because of its past. Their consistent reference to the classical centre legitimises modernism as a timeless aesthetic. This in turn restores a sense of continuity in the history of architecture.[33] At the same time, however, modern architecture in Greece is pushed to the margins as a 'peripheral' satellite of the international avant-garde. It therefore seems that modern Europe is only interested to discuss its own self-image in the mirror of classical Greece. The rest is out of sight. With the European spotlight on its revered past and its present state in the shadows, Greece finds itself in a dual position, simultaneously at the centre and at the periphery of modern architectural historiography.

From the age of Stuart and Revett, the Western European gaze on architecture in Greece was selective and remained so. It isolated objects of interest that informed contemporary architectural developments, and marginalised the surroundings of these objects (Figs 5 and 6). Treated as the cradle of western civilisation, classical Greece continues to overshadow its modern version in the eyes of the western observer. As Yakovaki has also noted, Athens is gradually 'summarised in the Parthenon', as 'the description of [the city] equals the description of its antiquities'.[34] From the eighteenth

to the twentieth century, this centralisation of the classical at the expense of the modern is consistently reproduced. In historical surveys such as David Watkin's *A History of Western Architecture* (1986), Greece is only relevant as the cradle of the classical.[35] Even when North American scholars such as Vincent Scully critiqued the reading of ancient Greek temples as 'isolated objects', yet again they did not mean to study them in their modern, but their ancient context and landscape. They aimed to understand these temples as 'formal expressions of their deities [and] in relation to their specific sanctuaries and settings'.[36] No modern examples are of interest in twentieth-century Western European and North American studies of architecture in Greece.

National(ist) historiography

Conversely, from the other side of the mirror, Greece looks at the west to see only itself refracted through the European gaze. Because modern Europe defines itself through ancient Greece, modern Greece is in turn defined by this European gaze to its classical past. Through its glorified past, Greece understands itself as ever relevant to modern European developments. But Greece can also only reclaim its own classical legacy through its refraction in modern Europe.

Completed in 1966, François Loyer's (b. 1941) two-volume PhD thesis stood out as the first comprehensive history of architecture in modern Greece from the early nineteenth century to the mid 1960s.[37] In many ways, the unprecedented and original work of this young French scholar served as a point of reference that paved the way for similarly ambitious studies by Greek historians such as Dimitris Philippidis (b. 1938). But Loyer's work remained untranslated, unpublished, and rather inaccessible for five decades.[38] Its potentially wider impact on Greek architectural historiography was rather curtailed before the publication of Philippidis's history of *Modern Greek Architecture* (1984), which has since been established as a definitive milestone in the historiography of architecture in Greece.[39] Instead, a limited number of short articles and books in the 1960s and 1970s attempted to offer brief historical surveys of architecture in twentieth-century Greece. Taken together, these texts both reproduce and develop along the same dual self-image of Greek architecture as the 'glorified centre' or the 'periphery' lagging behind the western avant-gardes. Anthony C. Antoniades's history of *Contemporary Greek Architecture* (1979) and Dimitris Fatouros's brief survey of postwar architecture and art (1967) exemplify these main approaches in the early historiography of modern architecture in Greece, before the first theorisation of critical regionalism in 1981.[40]

Anthony C. Antoniades (b. 1941), a Greek architect with graduate studies in the UK and the USA who also taught in British and North American universities, represents the 'glorified centre' thesis here. His writing is that of an informed insider who is exposed to the Western European and North American architectural developments of the late 1970s. Antoniades internalises the western 'classical centre' conception that European civilisation starts in Greece to reproduce it on various occasions throughout his history of *Contemporary Greek Architecture* (1979). In his book, Greek architecture seems always already *avant la lettre*, showing the way forward to western architecture. For Antoniades, the modern international style had Greek roots, owing to the cubism of the Mediterranean (*cadaqués*), and Le Corbusier's lessons from his travels in the country.[41] Antoniades additionally argued that from the mid 1930s the work of Dimitris Pikionis (1887–1968) already defied the principles of the international style to explore themes of the postmodern problematic, such as the inclusivist concern for the 'user', 'meaning', 'signs and symbols', and 'collages' of traditional and modern elements, three decades before these issues attracted the attention of Brent C. Brolin, Charles Jencks, and Peter Blake.[42] 'The post-modern essentially starts with the Greek Pikionis', claims Antoniades.[43] But this 'glorified centre' thesis, I would argue, can also lead to an uncritical nationalist tone.

A decade earlier, Dimitris Fatouros (1928–2020) presented a more nuanced picture. He also highlighted Greek architects who drew modern design principles from their studies of traditional architecture. In this sense, he worked within a weaker 'glorified centre' thesis that was rooted in the reappraisal of the Cycladic vernacular settlements by the international delegates of the fourth CIAM of 1933.[44] Finding the modern in the traditional, strongly believing in the legitimising validity of this connection, fuelled the work of this generation of Greek architects. But Fatouros also acknowledged the 'peripheral' side of the story – a 'good number of other artists' whose work is derivative, as they 'merely follow in their own ways the major [Western European and North American] artistic currents of our time, adapting them […] to Greek conditions and the Greek reality'.[45] A dual picture emerges more clearly here: although Greece finds its traditional architectural principles aligned with modernism, it also needs to adapt these international developments to the regional context. Greek architects internalise modern European developments as inseparable parts of their own regional legacy. By becoming modern, they stay Greek.

This is not another case of Greek exceptionalism. As Barry Bergdoll has also noted, in the course of the twentieth century the Mediterranean vernacular 'sustained both discourses of transcendent timelessness and of nationalist specificity, of both rootedness and regionalism and of innocence or freedom from learned and cultured symbolism, of a quest for abstraction and of the search for meaning'. In the final instance, it 'continually oscillated between its role as Modernism's other and its foundation myth'.[46] It is this dual oscillation between 'alternative margin' and 'founding centre' that led to the development of critical regionalism.

Critical regionalism in history

Antoniades's and Fatouros's studies summarise the late-1970s state of architectural historiography in modern Greece, which is presented as an unjustly marginalised but certainly glorious centre of modern and postmodern architectural developments in Western Europe and North America. This is the context in which Alexander Tzonis (b. 1937) and Liane Lefaivre's (b. 1949) seminal article, 'The Grid and the Pathway', the first theorisation of critical regionalism, appeared in 1981. Focused on the architecture of Suzana Antonakaki (1935–2020) and Dimitris Antonakakis (b. 1933) in Greece, the article effectively explores the historically established dynamics of the alternative modern periphery to act as a founding centre for the future of architecture. Published at a moment of uncertainty after a prolonged crisis of Western European and North American modernism, it forms part of a wider trend to reconsider the 'centre' from the viewpoint of its 'margins'. As such, the article also enabled the two critics to develop their earlier study of the 'question of regionalism' (co-authored with Anthony Alofsin, and published in the same year)[47] in culturally specific and historically informed, rather than abstract and general, terms.

Tzonis and Lefaivre identified two major design patterns in the work of the Antonakakis that they connected with two different historic phases of Greek regionalism: the 'grid' and the 'pathway'. Following a longer historical trail from eighteenth-century German architects such as Karl Friedrich Schinkel to twentieth-century Greek architects such as Aris Konstantinidis (1913–1993), the 'grid' was defined as 'the discipline which is imposed on every space element'. Representing a more recent phase of Greek regionalism, dating back to the late nineteenth century and exemplified in the work of Pikionis, the 'pathway' was defined as 'the location of place elements in relation to a movement'.[48] More significantly, these two 'major patterns'

were not just discussed in formal design terms, but contextualised within the sociopolitical history of modern Greece from the nineteenth to the twentieth century.

Tzonis and Lefaivre asserted that the first phase of regionalism could be traced to eighteenth-century European movements which were rooted outside of Greece. The artistic ideals of these romantic movements such as 'uniqueness, particularity, distinctiveness, variety […] emerge in the eighteenth century in opposition to what is then perceived as the exaggerated uniformity' and alleged universality of classical architecture.[49] But while the German romantics such as Goethe rebelled against the imposition of the rule of neoclassicism, Tzonis and Lefaivre argued, in Greece it was the perceived return of classicism to its native land that informed this first phase of 'historicist regionalism'. Foreign scholars such as Henry-Russell Hitchcock noted the 'somewhat ironical' character of nineteenth-century buildings such as Christian and Theophile Hansen's neoclassical trilogy of the National Library, the University, and the Academy of Athens because their '[c]onventional […] international Greek Revival mode' paled in comparison as it stood in direct 'proximity to the great fifth-century ruins'.[50] But modern Greeks tended to embrace nineteenth-century neoclassicism. It was not received as a foreign imposition, but as an appropriate regional architectural expression with emancipatory democratic connotations. In Tzonis and Lefaivre's words, the neoclassical grid was a carrier of 'autochthonous values and aspirations of freedom' for nineteenth-century modern Greeks. In their eyes, the spirit of the place *was* classicism. In addition, its perceived contrast to the 'Oriental' ruler rendered neoclassicism anti-despotic, and reinforced its legitimacy for the 'reawakened' modern nation-state.[51] Such dissonances between Greece and Europe are the products of the 'modern margin'/'classical centre' duality. They are owing to the refracted self-perception of Greece via the European gaze. This in turn explains the positive reception of the 'grid' pattern in the work of German architects, such as Leo von Klenze (1784–1864) and Ernst Ziller (1837–1923) who effectively built modern neoclassical Athens in the nineteenth century, and their modernist successors in the twentieth century, including Mies, Konstantinidis, and the two Antonakakis. With the conviction that one can still build in a modern way with locally available materials and technological means,[52] Konstantinidis became famous for projects that combined stonewall structures with concrete slabs to blend with the Greek landscape (Fig. 7). But behind these unique buildings lay Konstantinidis's pursuit of the most effective modular span of structural grids in relation to his desired spatial configurations. The modernist ideal of

standardising construction was the ultimate aim of his systematic research on grid spans that concluded that 2.50 m was ideal for his architecture (Fig. 8).

In its preoccupation with 'the spirit of the place', romanticism, this first European thread of historicist regionalism, was adversarial: anti-imperialist, anti-authoritarian, and anti-formalist. The neoclassical 'grid' and its implications of ideal harmony and democratic order could often express a detached and overly utopian push forward. By contrast, Tzonis and Lefaivre's favoured second phase of Greek regionalism, which they designated as *critical* regionalism, was more self-reflective. This was exemplified in Pikionis's landscaping project around the Acropolis (1954–1957) and, more generally, by the design principle of 'the pathway' (Fig. 9). In Greece, critical regionalism succeeded where the second wave of European regionalism of populist historicism failed.[53] Pikionis's work did not always avoid the same pitfall of populist historicist nostalgia; in the decades that followed, it was easily recuperated by traditionalist Greek circles. But Pikionis's regionalism retained its critical edge, as it was not similarly absorbed by the vested interests against the progressive aspects of the welfare state. Tzonis and Lefaivre argued that despite the nostalgic undertone of some of his projects, in his best work Pikionis enabled the 'tragic' and 'conflicting' aspects of Greek culture, which were previously muted and rounded by the ideal order of the neoclassical 'grid', to return to the fore. Composed of repurposed *spolia* spanning millennia of Greek culture, from Hellenist tombstones to balconies and debris from the rapidly demolished neoclassical residences of 1950s Athens, his landscaping project around the classical Acropolis is self-reflective. It does not attempt to impose a predetermined order to its diverse source material. It rather forms a wide-ranging collage of post-classical Greek culture that historically developed around the same grounds. Combined with occasional allusions to Japanese structures, this simultaneous and non-hierarchical coexistence of fragments of Greek culture across the centuries, from Hellenist antiquity through the Byzantine period to the modern age, invites the visitors' contemplative response. Following Pikionis's 'pathway', visitors need to sense, meet, and discuss the specific contribution of Greek culture to the 'cosmic Spirit', the grand collective project of human civilisation whose different aspects are destined to be illuminated by individual cultural traditions.[54] This ecumenic vision behind Pikionis's project also renders it 'pioneering' in its dissent from universalising modernism. By adopting Pikionis's 'pathway' approach to public space and introducing it in their

private residential projects in the 1970s, Suzana and Dimitris Antonakakis critically contributed to Greek domestic architecture (Fig. 10).[55]

Combining Konstantinidis's rationalist 'grids' with the topographical sensibility of Pikionis's 'pathways', the two Antonakakis also transgressed their forebears (Figs 10 and 11). When employing these patterns as the main design principles of their residential projects, they also emancipated these 'grids' and 'pathways' from their potentially utopian and nostalgic projections. This critical embeddedness of the Antonakakis' design principles within the specific historical and social context of their time rendered their work uniquely significant for the further development of a 'critical' variant of regionalism in Greece.

Tzonis and Lefaivre's main points became significant contributions to the Western European and North American debates of the 1980s. The concluding lines of 'The Grid and the Pathway' rendered critical regionalism as the 'bridge over which any humanistic architecture of the future must pass'. The authors acknowledged the 'unique significance' of the Antonakakis' work 'not only to Greek architecture but also to contemporary architecture in general'.[56] In Tzonis and Lefaivre's eyes, the unfinished project of modernity could be saved by the unfulfilled pledge of a 'realist' regional architecture that would be emancipated from its nationalistic connotations.

In the decades that followed, critical regionalism was also criticised as a colonialist discourse that actively marginalised the regions it addressed. In the early twenty-first century, Keith L. Eggener and Mark Crinson developed this critique by respectively focusing on Mexico and Singapore.[57] But in the case of Greece, the dual 'modern margin'/'classical centre' schema adds further complications. In this context, and owing to modern Greeks' internalisation of the ever-relevant 'glorified centre' thesis, critical regionalism more emphatically restores an already marginalised modern architectural production, at least in the eyes of Western European and North American observers.

Twentieth-century Greek architects received critical regionalism in more or less the same way their nineteenth-century ancestors had received the historicist neoclassical regionalism before it: like a homecoming of modernism to its founding roots. But this also shows how local twentieth-century architects had themselves internalised the marginalisation of Greek modernism. As I discussed earlier, this was a long-standing process already at work since the founding of the modern Greek state, and certainly long before the advent of critical regionalism. In this light, critical regionalism is

especially significant in the Greek context. Its advent signals that the work of modern Greek architects is no longer celebrated as significant, yet peripheral (as in Sartoris's encyclopaedic purview of functionalist architecture in the 1930s). In the 1980s, it becomes globally significant, precisely because it is regional.

This was especially emphasised when Kenneth Frampton incorporated Tzonis and Lefaivre's account in the second revised edition of his *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (1985). In an added final chapter, the British historian posited that the crisis of canonical modern architecture could be resolved from what had until then been excluded from the picture.[58] It is only through Frampton's critical history and its celebrated global reception that the regional modernisms of the margins became suddenly relevant for the centre of the canon. Closing this last chapter, and effectively concluding Frampton's history, the Athenian apartment building on 118 Benaki Street by Suzana and Dimitris Antonakakis (Fig. 12) offered an alternative way forward, and out of the crisis of modernism. This was the first time that the regional modern projects in Greece were deemed at least as significant as their classical forebears for Western European and North American architects. For, rather significantly, the critical regionalist discourse emerged at the heyday of postmodern classicism, another high point for international interest in classical Greece.[59] In its modern and ancient variants, architecture in Greece is then at once a source of regional modern alternatives to, and one of the focal points of, the postmodern classical centre. In the mid 1980s, both the modern Greek periphery and the classical Greek centre share the international spotlight to promote opposing agendas for the future of architecture.

Through the globally celebrated reception of critical regionalism, modern Greek architects such as Pikionis found their place in Western European and North American architectural histories. This is especially evident in Curtis's successive editions of *Modern Architecture since 1900*. Sharing Frampton's intention to extend the earlier canon, Curtis contributed to the debates around regionalism and modernism in the 1990s. After having overlooked modern Greek architects in its two first editions, Curtis's revised third edition of 1996 praised Pikionis's 'acute sensitivity to the genius loci'.[60] Nowadays, Pikionis is established as 'one of the leaders of […] "Mediterranean Modernism"'.[61] Heralded as 'the country's most talented architect', his award-winning landscaping project around the Acropolis is also celebrated as 'one of the twentieth century's most important architectural achievements, not just in Greece, but globally'.[62] Such remarks by European scholars are owing to the positive reception of critical

regionalism that is in turn cemented as the 'major contribution' of modern Greece to 'global architectural thinking' of the twentieth century.[63]

Critical regionalism as historiography

This globally positive reception of critical regionalism in relation to Greece is not as well founded as it might initially seem. When celebrating critical regionalism, international scholars tend to take for granted a historical accuracy and contextual sensitivity that was often missing from Tzonis and Lefaivre's account. When they were writing in the 1980s, the two critics put a stronger emphasis on the regional side of their argument. Their main intention was to cement the 'realist' connection of the architecture of Suzana and Dimitris Antonakakis with its regional context, and the most established figures of architecture in modern Greece. This is why the Pikionis-Konstantinidis influence on the work of the architectural couple was stressed. But on closer inspection, their original and insightful analysis proves rather intuitive. It is not based on solid historical evidence.

Stressing the regional connection, the two critics disregarded the actual history and the richer cross-cultural genealogy that shaped the Antonakakis' architectural outlook in the late 1950s. Although these two architects' 'pathway' certainly comes from Pikionis, their respected mentor at the National Technical University of Athens, the Antonakakis' use of the 'grid' does not directly stem from the work of Konstantinidis. More specifically, it was the systematic but also open-ended modernist teaching of A. James Speyer (1913–1986), a former student of Mies and Fulbright visiting professor in Athens from 1957 to 1960, that shaped the Antonakakis' use of the 'grid'.[64] Learning from Speyer, the couple started using the grid not as a straitjacket, but as an ordering device that allowed for multiple design experimentations. The two architects' cosmopolitan mentors in Athens, such as Panayotis Michelis (1903–1969) and Nikos Hadjikyriakos-Ghika (1906–1994), also enabled the Antonakakis to rethink the local architectural tradition in modern terms, i.e. in the way that ended up rendering their work significant in the critical regionalist framework. But the combined influence of these local – but also international and cosmopolitan – figures shows that Suzana and Dimitris Anatonakakis' architecture of critical regionalism was only possible through a set of cross-cultural, and not strictly regional, references.[65]

When it comes to built projects such as the apartment building on 118 Benaki Street, Tzonis and Lefaivre were also misleading in siding the two Antonakakis with the

opponents of the 'despotic aspects of the Welfare State'.[66] While the building could indeed be successfully described as a product of 'the household economy', its critical edge is not aimed at the 'alienating' architectures of other European countries. Unlike their European peers, the Greek architects were not up against the bureaucratic modernism of welfare-state grand projects. This was practically non-existent in a country where social housing accounted for less than 3% of the national total of residential space.[67] Suzana and Dimitris Antonakakis' Benaki Street project was instead opposed to the commodified design and construction model, and the standard Athenian apartment building typology that was promoted by the small-scale private building industry in Greece (Fig. 13). Resisting the generically anonymous postwar development of the Greek capital, the two architects pursued both an alternative set of architectural qualities (Fig. 14), and a design method based on cultivating relations with the future tenants of the bespoke apartments. Their approach outlined a mode of production that was in principle opposed to the commodification of the built environment. The future tenants of the building effectively formed a collective of families that wanted to share a communal life in an apartment building. Each of them contributed their land, capital, or labour to the common project, according to their individual skills and capacities. Exemplifying this process, the Benaki Street project did not only resist and subvert existing design hierarchies and standard modes of production. It also challenged everyday practices of sharing a collective life within an Athenian apartment building (Fig. 15). It is only a return to the lived history of the project, from the moment of its initial conception to the social world as the architects wanted to see it transformed, that helps foreground the political core of what Frampton routinely described as 'an architecture of resistance'. In the final instance, the two Antonakakis' struggle was certainly not against any 'aspects of the Welfare State', as posited by Tzonis and Lefaivre.

When Frampton incorporated Tzonis and Lefaivre's account in his later writings, he also reproduced and further magnified these distortions as he promoted critical regionalism to wider global audiences. With his theoretical ambition to advance a broader critical design practice across cultures, Frampton generalised Tzonis and Lefaivre's ideas beyond the specific historical context that gave rise to them.[68] Instead of advancing a focused return to the region, his mediated outsider's account of critical regionalism in Greece reflected the broader concerns of Western European and North American architectural discourses of the 1980s. In Frampton's introduction to the Greek

edition of his critical history in 1987, he described Athens in the glorifying terms of 'the modern city par excellence'. His reappraisal of the urban modern Greek vernacular, especially in terms of an 'unselfconscious achievement' of a decentralised small-scale private construction industry,[69] echoes the revalorisation of the Greek island vernacular by the delegates of the fourth CIAM five decades earlier. But, as I already showed, the apartment building on Benaki Street, the same project that Frampton used to conclude his critical history and illustrate a way forward for modern architecture after 1985, was in principle opposed to the system that had 'unselfconsciously' produced Athens, his idealised 'modern city par excellence'. Suzana and Dimitris Antonakakis were specifically opposed to this popular mode of production which gave Athens the modern face that seduced Frampton.

This is how a discourse that allegedly promoted the focused return to the region ended up ignoring local nuances. It answered only to the Western European and North American architectural concerns of its time: a critical defiance of the 'international style' and top-down bureaucratic modernism of the welfare state. In the mid 1980s, architecture in Greece still serves as a means for the west to look at itself in the mirror. Once again in its long history, Europe is only interested to discuss its own self-image. Although Greek modernism is now out of the margins, the context that conditions and illuminates it is effectively omitted. Ironically for a theory that attempts to counter the reduction of architecture to scenography, critical regionalism utilises projects as contextless images that answer to the general aims of Western European theorists. Unlike the case earlier, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this time it is not the architecture itself that has been omitted from the picture, but the Greek context in which this architecture is situated. In this sense, critical regionalism canonically 'classicises' Greek modernism in the same way that the eighteenth century had 'classicised' Athens. Despite the sincere efforts of individual authors, some of whom enjoy the insider's 'cultural intimacy'[70] with this specific region, the nuanced specificities of the Greek context are effectively absent from their discourses. From this vantage, the postcolonial critiques of critical regionalism resurface as valid. But even before Frampton incorporated Tzonis and Lefaivre's discourse in his later writings, Greek historians such as Dimitris Philippidis remained sceptical of the potential generalisation of critical regionalism, with its emphasis on establishing connections with specific places and traditions. He argued that if 'grids' and 'pathways' were to turn into general rules for Greek architectures of place-creation, they would degenerate into superficial platitudes.

Devoid of their deeper original philosophical and social meaning in the writings of Pikionis and Konstantinidis, they would again lead to allegedly place-bound but essentially iconographic, contentless forms.[71]

From the eighteenth century to the present: critical regionalism as historiography for the twenty-first century

At the end of a centuries-long trajectory, literary theorist Jonathan D. Culler's formula can be appropriately modified to assert that architecture is also 'context-bound but context is boundless'.[72] Yet, despite the apparently limitless expanse of architecture's context, the historian of the twenty-first century needs to constantly return to it in a consistent attempt to illuminate more of its dark areas. The modern method of omitting context to measure isolated scientific objects that can then be reproduced elsewhere, as exemplified in Stuart and Revett's studies of Athens' antiquities in the mid eighteenth century, needs to be inverted. As twenty-first century historians encounter disparate replications of classical architecture across the globe, they need to refer to their specific contexts to illuminate their significance. And these variegated contexts in turn shed a different light on the Greek temple of the classical centre. The classicism of the Third Reich differs from the allusions to the Parthenon in the neoclassical porticos of twentieth-century villas in North America and Australia, or the neoclassical buildings in nineteenth-century colonies. The Ottoman Parthenon that is bombarded by the Venetians in 1687 is different from the purified Parthenon of the eighteenth-century 'classical centre' of modern Europe.[73] Tzonis and Lefaivre's texts from the 1980s include similar observations that apply almost interchangeably to both regionalism and classicism across the ages.[74] These alternative histories of classicism have been left out of the canonical historiography of twentieth-century modernism that isolates and reinforces the glorification of the 'classical centre' Parthenon. But contemporary architectural historians have started to develop such insights further through their recent work.[75]

Western European architectural history itself offers important recontextualising precedents in this respect. In 1828 for example, Henri Labrouste explored the colonialist aspect of classical architecture.[76] His reconstructions suggested that the buildings in Paestum were not used as temples, but as places of public gathering. Labrouste's section drawings depicted inscriptions and banners attached to the walls of these buildings to facilitate public debate. Through his interest in regional context, he wrote a different

history of classicism. Labrouste revised the accepted chronology to argue that the ancient Greek colonies did not aspire to approximate an idealised architectural style. Although they may have started from that, they ended up developing an architecture adapted to locally available materials and regional social norms, values, and functions. What was until then regarded in architectural discourse as a primitive attempt to emulate the Greek style was, in Labrouste's eyes, a refined adaptation to the local conditions. His example shows how an emphasis on context can invert existing historical understandings.

The reintroduction of suppressed contexts in studies of modern peripheries or classical centres does not have only historical or theoretical implications. It crucially informs cultural practices and political decisions on the conservation or demolition of the existing built environment. In Athens, the rise of the eighteenth-century 'classical centre' was effectively responsible for the archaeological erasure of the Ottoman and Byzantine layers of the Acropolis and the Agora. More recently, a New Museum of the Acropolis was erected to host the Parthenon's Elgin marbles.[77] An architectural materialisation of the Greeks' political case against the British Museum, the building still stands effectively 'empty' for more than a decade.

In the nineteenth century, Labrouste's approach was contested by architects, travellers, and engineers such as Auguste Aurés. Such critiques of Labrouste's ideas were founded on the grounds of a stronger scientific methodology that produced more accurate measurements.[78] But whether Labrouste's ideas were also accurate is a question unrelated with the alleged superiority of Aurés's, Stuart and Revett's, and others' modern scientific approach. In the modernising European cultures of the nineteenth century, the line that can be drawn between the revalorisation of the past and the reinvention of the present is usually thin. Despite existing material traces to the contrary, Stuart and Revett also insisted on the Winckelmannian 'whiteness' of Athenian antiquities. Even their celebrated scientifically precise measurements were challenged when Francis Cammer Penrose's survey of the same antiquities was established as the standard reference in the late nineteenth century.[79] By contrast, Labrouste poses a more pressing question about the identification of historicity first in Stuart and Revett's and then in Penrose's precisely measured, albeit artificially isolated archetypes. The validity of Labrouste's response rests less on the accuracy of his measurements. It redirects historians' attention to drawing evidence from different sources to support specific cultural recontextualisations of the same buildings.

In this historiographical light, critical regionalism emerges as an unfulfilled project. What has now exceeded its 'sell-by date' as a theory for architectural design[80] can still survive as a historiographical project. Its past shortcomings invite scholars to write the more historically aware and contextually sensitive accounts that Tzonis, Lefaivre, and Frampton did not deliver. I indicated how one can work in this direction by focusing on the Benaki Street apartment building and recontextualising it within its original modes of production in 1970s Greece. No longer limited by the concerns of the 1980s or viewed as a manifesto for a humanistic architecture of the future, critical regionalism can now become a cross-cultural historiographical agenda in Europe and beyond. It offers a viewpoint that can promote the multiple and interconnected modern margins that still exist to a contemporary historiography without a clearly defined centre. The general outlook of critical regionalism that partially critiqued the modern project without regressing into chauvinist nationalisms also seems to be especially pertinent in an age of resurgent isolationisms and the rise of new walls across the globe.

Frampton successively attempted to summarise critical regionalism in a series of points. These focused on: (1) qualifying the 'naïve utopianism' of the modern project to focus on 'the small rather than the big plan', without abandoning its 'emancipatory and progressive aspects'; (2) the capacity of buildings to define a specific place and territory, meaning that they should not be conceived as 'free-standing objects'; (3) rejecting the scenographic in favour of the tectonic approach to architecture; (4) responding to 'specific conditions imposed by the site, the climate and the light'; (5) reemphasising tactility in the perception of architecture to resist the hegemony of the visual 'in an age dominated by media to the replacement of experience by information'; (6) assimilating elements from the regional vernacular as 'disjunctive episodes' within the architectural structure to avoid their treatment as hermetic contentless forms, and leading to 'the paradoxical creation of a regionally based "world culture"'; (7) unsettling the hierarchy between 'dominant cultural centres' of architectural production and 'dependent dominated satellite' peripheries that passively assimilate it.[81]

Appropriately revised to address the critiques of the recent past, I propose that these points can now transform critical regionalism from an architectural theory of the 1980s into a manifesto for architectural historiography in the twenty-first century:
(1) Critical regionalism invariably foregrounded the work of the 'talented individual' that produced the best moment, and exemplified the essence, of a collective culture.[82] This effectively meant that individual figures became tokens for entire countries such as

Greece, whose national territory is home to multifarious cultural expressions. Today, stronger emphasis on a 'small-plan' historiography enables a nuanced focus on the specificities of interlocking contexts that produce regional architectures.

(2) Critical regionalism suggested equations of architectural regions with modern countries. But the postwar world witnessed the historical emergence of a large number of decolonised or postcolonial nation-states that did not register in the discourse of critical regionalism.[83] For Tzonis, Lefaivre, and Frampton, context invariably coincided with the confines of free-standing national histories. This was already insufficient in a world that was increasingly studied in terms of interactions, intersections, and overlaps during the parallel rise of postcolonial scholarship in the 1980s. Subtle interconnections and cross-cultural exchanges that critical regionalism tended to gloss over demand further scrutiny by architectural historians in the twenty-first century.

(3) Discarding earlier idealised essentialisms (such as critical regionalism's favoured juxtaposition of place and production) would also promote the study of more historically complex modalities. These do not produce pure but hybrid regional architectures. In the final instance, the nineteenth-century static idea of identity is itself the trademark and footprint of European imperialist history on colonised cultures. That the multiple postcolonial identities of the twentieth century are never pure, but hybrid, is partly owing to the earlier history of imperialism.

(4) In the 1980s, critical regionalism was one of the first mainstream architectural discourses to promote design principles of environmental sustainability. Working with the site, and the specificities of its context, climate, and topography also meant favouring architectures of natural light, and cross-ventilated spaces built from locally-sourced materials. As a historiographical agenda for the twenty-first century, critical regionalism remains sensitive to the exigencies of the current climate emergency.[84] Its critical distance from idealised essentialisms also enables it to address the fluid material and cultural conditions of sites as part of the climatic shifts on a planetary scale.[85]

(5) Focusing on the two Antonakakis, Tzonis and Lefaivre's first theorisation of critical regionalism developed in the 'home scholar'[86] terms of the informed insiders' view of Greek culture from the vantage of powerful Euro-American institutions. But they also extended their joint theorisation beyond the standard circle of architectural developments forging links with modern painting and poetry in Greece, and longer-standing European currents. Today, such briefly highlighted links can lead to fully-fledged 'interdisciplinary' understandings of transversal cultural developments in

specific regions, spanning from the arts to critical archaeologies.[87] Historians' intention to acknowledge and historicise the degree to which they themselves consciously comply with and resist the established cultural luggage they bring to the analysis of diverse regions is also key here.

(6) As an architectural theory, critical regionalism historically favoured the Western European and North American conceptions of modernity. Originally envisaged as a '"revisionist" variant of Modernism',[88] it established its own hierarchies in the use of specific architectural languages. The more closely architectural examples followed modernist abstractions (as opposed to regionalist figurations), the more legitimate they were to be added to the critical regionalist canon. This was the hard 'imperialist' and 'colonialist' core of critical regionalism. Other architectures and design cultures were only allowed to be inserted to the overarching modernist design language as 'disjunctive episodes' or 'regional adaptations'.[89] Non-hierarchical conceptions of architectural cultures in the historiography of the twenty-first century also means moving beyond studies of western-educated architects in non-western contexts.[90]

(7) Colonial approaches to architecture and its history need to be further uprooted, but they are often subtle and hard to identify.[91] Elucidating them calls for further research in the deeper links between nationalism, imperialism, and colonialism in architecture. This includes challenging established concepts, starting from the 'non-west' itself, and readdressing questions of provinciality, or narrative structures that do not follow western ideals of resolution and closure, but remain open to ambiguity and contradiction.[92] Leading to the slow emergence of not readily familiar hybrid modernities, such studies can break the 'different' as a mirror of the west.

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Figure captions

Figure 1. James Stuart surveying the west end of the Erechteion on the Athenian Acropolis, in James Stuart and Nicolas Revett, *The Antiquities of Athens Measured and Delineated*, 3 vols (London, 1762–94), II (1787), chapter II, plate II, Aikaterini Laskaridis Foundation Library

Figure 2. Patroklos Karantinos, School on Kalisperi Street under the Acropolis in Athens, 1931–1932, south elevation, unknown photographer, Andreas Giacumacatos's private archive

Figure 3. Patroklos Karantinos, School on Kalisperi Street under the Acropolis in Athens, 1931–1932, photographed by Sigfried Giedion in August 1933, © gta Archives/ETH Zürich, CIAM

Figure 4. Stamo Papadaki, Villa Fakidis in Glyfada, Athens, 1932–1933, photographed by Sigfried Giedion in August 1933, © gta Archives/ETH Zürich, CIAM

Figure 5. A view of the eastern portico of the Parthenon, with the mosque built after the 1687 explosion in the interior, in James Stuart and Nicolas Revett, *The Antiquities of Athens Measured and Delineated*, 3 vols (London, 1762–94), II (1787), chapter I, plate I, Aikaterini Laskaridis Foundation Library

Figure 6. The plan of the Parthenon measured by James Stuart, in James Stuart and Nicolas Revett, *The Antiquities of Athens Measured and Delineated*, 3 vols (London, 1762–94), II (1787), chapter I, plate II, Aikaterini Laskaridis Foundation Library

Figure 7. Aris Konstantinidis, Weekend House in Anavyssos, 1962–1964, photographed by Dimitris Philippidis, Dimitris Philippidis's private archive

Figure 8. Aris Konstantinidis, 'Standardisation in construction', in Aris Konstantinidis, *Projects + Buildings* (Athens: Agra, 1981), pp. 220–21, Aris Konstantinidis's private archive

Figure 9. Dimitris Pikionis, Acropolis-Philopappou, pathway to the Acropolis, 1954–1957, photographed by Alexandros Papageorgiou from the Andiron of Philopappou, © Modern Greek Architecture Archives of the Benaki Museum, ANA_67_55_145

Figure 10. Dimitris Antonakakis's interpretation of Pikionis's landscaping project around the Acropolis in 1958 (top left) exemplifies the 'pathway' pattern that is echoed in the two Antonakakis' House at Spata, 1973–1974 (top right). The 'pathway' is used as a principle of design that organises movement from the exterior to the interior as a series of intermediate meeting points with varying degrees of privacy and publicity (bottom), Suzana and Dimitris Antonakakis' private archive

Figure 11. The 'grid' pattern in Aris Konstantinidis's Archaeological Museum at Ioannina, 1964 (left), echoed in Suzana and Dimitris Antonakakis' Archaeological Museum on Chios, 1965 (right), Aris Konstantinidis's and Suzana and Dimitris Antonakakis' private archives

Figure 12. Suzana and Dimitris Antonakakis, 118 Benaki Street apartment building, main elevation, Athens, 1975, Suzana and Dimitris Antonakakis' private archive

Figure 13. Suzana and Dimitris Antonakakis, 118 Benaki Street apartment building as a critique to the Athenian apartment building typology in five points, Suzana and Dimitris Antonakakis' private archive

Figure 14. The 'grid' and the 'pathway' combined in the 118 Benaki Street apartment building, Suzana and Dimitris Antonakakis' private archive

Figure 15. New Year's dinner in Suzana and Dimitris Antonakakis' apartment with Atelier 66 architects and Benaki Street tenants, 1991, Lucy Tzafou-Triantafyllou's private archive

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