HIV/AIDS campaigns and queer activism in Athens and their transnational context, ca. 1985–ca. 1997

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Abstract: This article explores the significant but complex impact of transnational flows of ideas in the West on the emotional vocabulary and safer sex perceptions of queer activists in Athens between ca. 1985 and ca. 1997. It shows that the increasing engagement of several queer activists in Athens with HIV/AIDS campaigns, and the diversification of their safer sex perceptions, were catalyzed by a selective reception of emotion-laden ideas from HIV/AIDS campaigns in the USA and Western Europe. The Athens-based queer activists in question developed an affective solidarity deeply inspired by HIV/AIDS activism elsewhere in the West without necessarily being directly involved in it. In this vein, this article helps diversify the emerging research on cross-border transfers between HIV/AIDS activists in Europe and North America in two ways: it recalibrates the geographical focus on northwestern Europe and, crucially, it nuances its emphasis on the transnational coordination, in-person contact, and synchronicity of HIV/AIDS campaigns in northwestern Europe and North America. My analysis also helps refine a still powerful in public health scholarship narrative focusing on biomedical progress regarding HIV/AIDS: it shows the complex involvement of transgender activists in HIV/AIDS activism in Athens, namely their participation, which was more substantial compared to some other ACT UP chapters in the West. Simultaneously, the article demonstrates the lack of references to trans bodies in those campaigns. Recent multidisciplinary research illuminates the experiences and exclusions in HIV/AIDS activism of individuals from diverse social backgrounds but has largely neglected transgender HIV/AIDS campaigners.

Keywords: HIV/AIDS, safer sex, queer, transgender, Greece, West

"I had the opportunity to travel to America and Europe. I … encountered ACT UP [AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power] when it was created in New York," narrated Grigoris Vallianatos, a prominent cisgender gay and HIV/AIDS activist in Greece,[1] highlighting the main question around which this article revolves: What was the link between queer activism and HIV/AIDS campaigns in Greece, and how were such potential synergies affected by local, national, and transnational developments?[2] In focusing on queer[3] activists, the article does not seek to reinforce the perception that there is an indelible link between gay men and HIV as well as AIDS. This idea has been at the heart of the stigmatization of gay men as superspreaders of HIV in Greece in the 1980s and 1990s, as the article shows. By contrast, I turn the tables and explore how queer activists discussed HIV/AIDS and their sexuality and, crucially, whether they also engaged with heterosexual individuals in their safer sex campaigns.[4] However, the reception of such mobilizations and, more broadly, the popularity of safer sex in Greece are beyond the scope of this article.

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[1] Interview with author.

[2] By "campaigners" I denote moderate and radical subjects engaging in HIV/AIDS collective action, whereas "activists" refers to radical ones only.

[3] By "queer" I refer to subjects challenging heteronormativity while either opting for alternative gender or sexual identities, or enacting queer practices without embracing such identities. I try to make clear whether the queer subjects I mention employed a particular gender or sexual identity. On "queer", see Janet R. Jakobsen, "Queer Is? Queer Does? Normativity and the Problem of Resistance," GLQ 4, no. 4 (1998): 511–36. On the study of queerness in modern Greece, see Dimitris Papanikolaou, "Critically Queer and Haunted: Greek Identity, Crisiscapes and Doing Queer History in the Present," Journal of Greek Media & Culture 4, no. 2 (2018): 167–86.

[4] The subjects in question mostly employed the term "safe sex". Instead, I use "safer sex" as my analytical category, since the consensus among researchers is that no sexual activity can be totally safe.

The article's main argument is that cross-border transfers of ideas from North America and other parts of Western Europe had a complex, but tangible impact on queer activists engaged in HIV/AIDS campaigns in Athens in the 1980s and 1990s. While Athens-based campaigners had occasional face-to-face interaction with their counterparts elsewhere in the West, they kept abreast with and recontextualized HIV prevention concepts developed by the latter. The increasing involvement of queer activists in Athens in safer sex campaigns and the diversification of their conceptions of safer sex echoed the intensifying transnational flows across the North Atlantic and in Western Europe from the mid-to-late 1980s. From 1985, an emotional vocabulary centering on "boldness" and "sexual pleasure", which was manifested in expanding gay scenes and some HIV/AIDS campaigns in the US and northwestern Europe, increasingly mobilized queer activists in Athens, cisgender and transgender, to get involved in HIV/AIDS campaigns. The promotion of safer sex for all sexually active individuals as a means of decoupling male same-sex sexualities from HIV/AIDS figured prominently in the activities of these queer campaigners. Their mobilization escalated in the early 1990s: galvanized by the emotional language of "outrage" used in the expanding confrontational HIV/AIDS campaigns elsewhere in the West, they created ACT UP Athens.[5] The latter was the first HIV/AIDS initiative to be co-initiated by openly queer activists in Greece, and run in collaboration with heterosexual campaigners. Simultaneously, ACT UP Athens' members followed the heightened emphasis of HIV/AIDS campaigns in other Western countries on safer sex for women in the 1990s, and increasingly promoted safer sex for lesbians as a component of their outrage-driven activities. Yet, ACT UP Athens was selective in what it borrowed from other ACT UP chapters: its activists rarely participated in transnational ACT

[5] In addressing ACT UP in Athens, and to distinguish it from ACT UP chapters elsewhere in the West, I refer to it as "ACT UP Athens", although the group's official title was "ACT UP". ACT UP did not establish branches in other parts of Greece.

UP coordination gatherings in Europe. ACT UP Athens filtered the notions of outrage and safer sex through the influence of domestic anarchist networks, as well as domestic and transnational punk cultures on them, and the particularities of the coalitions of local queer activists. Thus, transgender activists were more visible in ACT UP Athens compared to some influential ACT UP chapters in northwestern Europe, such as Act Up-Paris, in designing safer sex campaigns. The article's analysis extends until ca. 1997, when the selective reception of ideas from campaigns elsewhere in the West diversified the ways in which ACT UP Athens and other HIV/AIDS campaigners in the city promoted safer sex.

The article takes a transnational history approach that focuses on developments in Greece and Athens, helping to nuance histories of HIV/AIDS activism in Greece and, more broadly, Western Europe. Thus, building on Canaday's approach, the analysis follows its questions "wherever they go".[6] Safer sex campaigns in Athens in the 1980s-1990s have been under-researched, and their study reveals transnational interactions of HIV/AIDS activists in Athens and elsewhere in the West. Such interconnections have also been largely neglected in relevant recent scholarship, which includes social/cultural anthropology and interdisciplinary works.[7]

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[6] Margot Canaday, "Thinking Sex in the Transnational Turn: An Introduction," American Historical Review 114, no. 5 (December 2009): 1256.

[7] Fotini Tsalicoglou, "A New Disease in Greek Society: AIDS and the Representation of 'Otherness'," Journal of Modern Greek Studies 13 (1995): 83–97; Effie Plexousaki and Kotsas Yannakopoulos, "Le mal purifié: Manipulation du sida en Grèce," L'homme 139 (1996), 125–35; Kostas Yannakopoulos, "Politikes sexoualikotitas kai ygeias tin epochi tou AIDS," Synchrona Themata 66 (1998): 76–86; Demosthenis Agrafiotis, Elisavet Ioannidi, and Panagiota Manti, "HIV Prevention in Europe: Policy and Practice: The Greek Case" (Research Monograph 18, Department of Sociology, National School of Public Health, 1999); Effie Plexousaki, "I diacheirisi tis eterotitas: Afigiseis gia to AIDS," in Roxane Caftantzoglou and Marina Petronoti (eds.), Oria kai perithoria: Entaxeis kai apokleismoi (Athens: EKKE, 2000), 109–29; Chrysanthi Sivri, "To AIDS os koinoniki nosos: I periptosi tis Elladas" (PhD diss., Panteion University, 2001); Brian Riedel, "Elsewheres:

While such research does not neglect the transnational flow of ideas and their impact in Athens, it tends to focus on what it regards as conditions specific to the city and, more broadly, Greece. In this vein, it underlines the lack of memorialization of people who died of HIV-related causes in Greece, in contrast to relevant initiatives in other countries in the West, such as the US and UK.[8] However, important as it is, this body of literature does not consider the significance of transnational flows of ideas within the West for safer sex campaigns in Greece. Simultaneously, my focus on Athens helps nuance the emerging transnational histories of HIV/AIDS campaigning in Europe in general. Historical and sociological research on transnational flows between HIV/AIDS activists in Europe mostly focuses on the synchronous activities and, often, face-to-face interaction between campaigners in northwestern Europe and the US.[9] By contrast, this article helps recalibrate this geographical

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Greek LGBT Activists and the Imagination of a Movement" (PhD diss., Rice University, 2005); Brian Riedel, "The Movement That Was Not? Gay Men and AIDS in Urban Greece, 1950–1993," in Douglas A. Feldman (ed.), AIDS, Culture, and Gay Men (Gainesville: University of Florida, 2010), 231–49; Kostas Yannakopoulos, "Zoes choris martyria: AIDS, mnimi kai syggeneia," in Kostas Kanakis (ed.), Glossa kai sexoualikotita: Glossologikes kai anthropologikes proseggiseis (Athens: Ekdoseis tou Eikostou Protou, 2011); Theodosis Gkeltis, "I proslipsi tou HIV/AIDS apo tous omofylofilous aktivistes tis dekaetias tou 1980" (conference paper, Athens 2017); Dimitris Papanikolaou, Kati trechei me tin oikogeneia: Ethnos, pothos kai syggeneia tin epochi tis krisis (Athens: Patakis, 2018); Dimitris Papanikolaou and George Sampatakakis, "I logokrisia os politismiki istoria: To HIV/AIDS stin Ellada (1982–2000)," Archeiotaxio 22 (2020): 163–82. For a comprehensive volume on the history of sexuality in Greece, also in the AIDS era, see Dimitra Vassiliadou and Glafki Gotsi, Istories gia ti sexoualikotita (Athens: Themelio, 2020).

[8] Especially Papanikolaou, Kati, 194–265.

[9] For example: Claire E. Ernst, "Activisme à l'américaine? The Case of Act Up-Paris", French Politics and Society 15.4 (1997), 22-31; Kevin-Niklas Breu, "Schwule Lebensweisen auf dem Prüfstand: Gesundheitsförderung des bundesdeutschen AIDS-Aktivismus im Spiegel transnationaler Einflüsse," Revue d'Allemagne et des pays de langue allemande 53, no. 2 (2021): 441–64; Agata Dziuban, Eugen Januschke,

focus and shows the limited in-person interaction and the asynchronicity of cross-border transfers between northwestern Europe and Athens. It is, thus, in sync with Sébastien Tremblay's suggestion that a transregional queer history on a global scale can nuances the study of HIV/AIDS activism in Europe.[10] My analysis, however, demonstrates simultaneously that a more careful consideration of such cross-border transfers within Europe is also necessary. Hearne reaches a similar conclusion in her article for this special issue, arguing that Soviet HIV/AIDS campaigners corresponded with their counterparts in the West already in the 1980s but not through face-to-face encounters until the 1990s.[11]

A transnational history perspective in the study of sexuality, however, according to Margot Canaday, needs to be complemented by that of social history to illuminate the variety of the social backgrounds of the individuals influenced by cross-border transfers, but also the social hierarchies the latter reinforced.[12] Building on this premise, the article explores the intersection of sexuality and gender in the study of emotions in HIV/AIDS campaigns. It focuses on Athens to show the close interaction between cisgender gay men and women and transgender people in selectively receiving transnational emotives, or "statements about how

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Urike Klöppel, Todd Sekuler, and Justyna Struzik, "The European HIV/AIDS Archive: Building a Queer Counter-Memory," in Janet Weston and Hannah J. Elizabeth (eds.), Histories of HIV/AIDS in Western Europe (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2022): 192–214, esp. 208; Christopher Ewing, The Color of Desire: The Queer Politics of Race in the Federal Republic of Germany after 1970 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2023); Sébastien Tremblay, A Badge of Injury. The Pink Triangle as Global Symbol of Memory (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2024). See also the introduction to this special issue.

[10] Tremblay, Badge, 6–8.

[11] Hearne, in this special issue.

[12] Canaday, "Thinking Sex."

we feel", of HIV/AIDS campaigns. William Reddy, who introduced the term,[13] argues that "communities systematically seek to train emotions, to idealize some, to condemn others".[14] Moreover, and crucially, he defines emotives as "do[ing] things to the world. Emotives are themselves instruments for directly changing, building, hiding, intensifying emotions, instruments that may be more or less successful."[15] Thus, this article analyzes how emotional vocabularies shaped the public interventions and activist patterns of queer activists. The concept of the emotive informs some of the studies of reactions to HIV and AIDS through the lens of emotions, which has been rich in history, anthropology, gender, and gay/queer studies.[16]

Investigating how HIV/AIDS activists in Athens from various social backgrounds recontextualized cross-border transfers of emotives helps nuance further a powerful linear narrative, especially in public health scholarship and policy, focusing on biomedical progress regarding HIV and AIDS. A key tenet of this narrative is that biomedical solutions have

[13] William M. Reddy, The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[14] Reddy, Navigation, 322–23.

[15] Reddy, Navigation, 105.

[16] Ann Cvetkovich, An Archive of Feelings. Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Deborah B. Gould, Moving Politics. Emotion and ACT UP's Fight Against AIDS (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Papanikolaou, Kati; Magdalena Beljan, Rosa Zeiten? Eine Geschichte der Subjektivierung männlicher Homosexualität in den 1970er und 1980er Jahren der BRD (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2014); Matt Cook, "'Archives of Feeling': The AIDS Crisis in Britain 1987," History Workshop Journal, 83, no. 1, (2017): 51–78; Benno Gammerl, Anders fühlen: Gay and Lesbian Life in the Federal Republic. A History of Emotions (Munich: Carl Hanser, 2021). Gould employs the notion of the emotive.

transformed HIV and AIDS from a "death sentence" to a manageable "chronic" disease.[17] Simultaneously, public health research demonstrates the degree to which social, cultural, economic, and political barriers, has limited such progress.[18] Recent research in the humanities and social sciences has further refined this progress-centered argument by showing the challenges and exclusions facing people from diverse social groups in policies and public discussions on HIV/AIDS.[19] Such scholarship on Athens has so far addressed various subjects involved in HIV/AIDS campaigns, primarily gay cisgender men and secondarily transgender women selling sex.[20] Furthermore, it posits that campaigners aimed to keep HIV/AIDS and gay activism largely separate, in contrast to what transpired elsewhere in the West.[21] By contrast, this analysis shows the interfaces between HIV/AIDS and queer activism more broadly, paying particular attention to the engagement of transgender campaigners in the former. Crucially, it builds on the work of scholars like Aren Aizura, Susan Stryker, and Ben Vincent, who nuance Transgender Studies by exploring the underresearched transgender masculinities and nonbinary identities.[22] Therefore, it highlights the understudied significance of a transgender man and a gender-fluid lesbian activist in HIV/AIDS campaigns in Athens but also the complexities of their relevant involvement, resulting in the lack of references to trans bodies in those campaigns. Simultaneously, in

[17] For instance: Srdan Matic, Jeffrey Z. Lazarus, and Martin C. Donoghoe (eds.), HIV/AIDS in Europe: moving from death sentence to chronic disease management (Copenhagen: World Health Organization Europe, 2006).

[18] Matic, Lazarus, Donoghoe, HIV/AIDS in Europe.

[19] See the introduction to this special issue.

[20] See n. 7. On transgender women activists and HIV/AIDS in Greece, see Papanikolaou, Kati, 194–265.

[21] Riedel, "Movement."

[22] Susan Stryker and Aren Z. Aizura, "Introduction. Transgender Studies 2.0," in Susan Stryker and Aren Z. Aizura (eds.), The Transgender Studies Reader 2 (New York: Routledge, 2013), 1–12; Ben Vincent, Non-Binary Genders: Navigating Communities, Identities, and Healthcare (Bristol: Policy Press, 2020).

choosing to focus on Athens and highlight transgender HIV/AIDS activists there, the article enriches the emerging multidisciplinary scholarship on Europe more broadly. Such research challenges the above-mentioned biomedical progress narrative, and studies a wide range of HIV/AIDS activists regarding their sexual orientation, profession, gender, and race. While earlier research concentrated on gay cisgender men, recent scholarship has highlighted the contribution of activists from a wide array of backgrounds, like sex workers and lesbians of color.[23] Meanwhile, recent historical research has also paid attention to the erasure of lesbian women and people of color from the emotional vocabulary of some national and transnational HIV/AIDS campaigns in Europe and North America in the 1980s and 1990s.[24] Nevertheless, the position of transgender activists in collective action on HIV/AIDS across Europe warrants further investigation.[25] Crucially, the role transgender activists played in HIV/AIDS campaigns was not necessarily an Athenian particularity, but may have also occurred in other parts of the continent, given that transgender associations were strong, for instance, in Italy.[26] This analysis is based on HIV/AIDS activist group publications in Greece and across the West, 15 interviews I have conducted, written autobiographies, and articles in the mainstream Greek press.[27] As will be shown below, the available material on the history of AIDS in

[23] For example, Weston and Elizabeth, Histories; Ewing, Color, 85–119. See also the introduction to this special issue.

[24] Tremblay, Badge.

[25] On the need for research on HIV/AIDS activism in West Germany and England to address transgender campaigners more, see Tremblay, Badge; George Severs, Radical Acts: HIV/AIDS Activism in Late Twentieth-Century England (New York: Bloomsbury, 2024), 15.

[26] For instance, Stefania Voli, "Broadening the Gendered Polis: Italian Feminist and Transsexual Movements, 1979–1982," TSQ 3, no. 1–2 (2016): 235–45.

[27] My interviews rest on the principles of informed consent and confidentiality and relevant research was approved by the ethics committees of the universities where I was employed when conducting it (St Andrews,

Greece is fragmented in a few cases. Panagiotis Damaskos's generous offer to give me access to his personal collection has helped rectify this issue.[28] This initiative complements the ongoing effort of Dimitris Papanikolaou and the HIV/AIDS charity Positive Voice to create a history of the AIDS archive in Greece.[29]

The article proceeds in three steps. After investigating HIV-related stigma in Greece and the first stirrings of safer sex campaigns in the 1980s, it addresses developments in HIV/AIDS campaigns in Greece and across the West in the early-to-mid 1990s. The following three sections examine the emergence and activity of one of the main coalitions involved in HIV/AIDS campaigns in Greece, ACT UP Athens.

The first stirrings

Greece had no documented cases of AIDS before 1983, but, still, witnessed what Demosthenis Agrafiotis, Elisavet Ioannidi, and Panagiota Manti label as an "epidemic of information".[30] Media coverage of the disease identified HIV transmission with "high-risk

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Stirling). Most of my interviewees were queer (transgender and/or gay/lesbian). Despite my status as an "outsider" (cisgender heterosexual man), they were happy to discuss with me in depth their HIV/AIDS activist experiences, an attitude possibly drawing on the openness of ACT UP Athens to collaborating with heterosexual people. On being an insider/outsider in queer oral history, see Amy Tooth Murphy, "Listening in, listening out: intersubjectivity and the impact of insider and outsider status in oral history interviews", Oral History 48, no. 1 (2020), 35-44.

[28] Damaskos donated this material to the Contemporary Social History Archives (ASKI). This outcome was part of the project "Transnational Sexual Health Activism and Aids in Western Europe, 1980s–1990s" (TAA), led by the author. The project website is available at https://taa.st-andrews.ac.uk, accessed 24 June 2024.

[29] On this project, see https://www.torch.ox.ac.uk/hiv-aids-in-greece-a-political-archive, accessed 24 June 2024.

[30] Agrafiotis, Ioannidi, and Manti, HIV Prevention.

groups", including homosexual and bisexual men, hemophilia patients, and intravenous drug users.[31] This trend continued as AIDS cases emerged. In 1983, a 25-year-old student from Zambia was the first person to die of HIV-related causes in Greece.[32] AIDS cases in Greece surged from 123 in 1987 to 589 in 1990.[33] According to an official report, 106 out of 205 cases in 1989 involved "homosexual or bisexual men", and 42 transmissions resulted from "heterosexual normal [sic] contact".[34] Fifteen cases involved women.[35] The manner in which these cases were recorded and "high-risk groups" were identified stigmatized same-sex males by contrasting them with "normal" heterosexual contact. To make matters worse, the mainstream media ignored HIV transmission beyond same-sex contact.[36] Exaggerating the link between same-sex sexual activities and HIV/AIDS exacerbated homophobia and biphobia. A key dimension of such stigma was a communicative silence in the mourning rituals of people who died because of HIV-related causes. According to Kostas Yannakopoulos and Efi Plexousaki, AIDS victims' families often requested that death certificates not state the cause of death.[37] Breaches of this silence were rare. Art was one of the few avenues through which, according to Papanikolaou and George Sampatakakis, the stigmatization of people with HIV was challenged from the mid-1980s.[38] Another exception was three books published in the mid-to-late 1980s containing the autobiographies of some

[31] Agrafiotis, Ioannidi, and Manti, HIV Prevention.

[32] Riedel, "Movement," 239–40.

[33] Riedel, "Movement," 241.

[34] EEMAA, "Krousmata stin Ellada," Diminiaio Enimerotiko Deltio, May–June 1989, 16–17.

[35] EEMAA, "Krousmata stin Ellada," 16.

[36] Riedel, "Movement," 240–241.

[37] Yannakopoulos, "Zoes"; Yannakopoulos, "Politikes"; Plexousaki, Yannakopoulos, "Le mal."

[38] Papanikolaou and Sampatakakis, "I logokrisia."

people who died of HIV-related causes or the voices of individuals who were in close contact with them.[39]

In the mid-1980s, the rising number of cases also prompted disease containment efforts, which only partially challenged the stigmatization of men who had sex with men. The socialist PASOK government, which had assumed power in 1981, mandated AIDS case reporting in 1983 and HIV antibody testing in blood transfusions in 1985.[40] In the same year, the first state-sponsored HIV prevention campaign began.[41] Meanwhile, HIV prevention activities were boosted by grassroots initiatives, especially in Athens. Civil society groups dealing with HIV/AIDS in Greece first emerged in 1985, when Prostasia (Protection), a collective of doctors, was founded.[42] Shortly afterward, in 1987, the creation of the Athens-based Hellenic Association for the Study and Control of AIDS (EEMAA) marked a systematic effort to build a scientific discourse on HIV prevention and treatment.[43] Made up of doctors, psychologists, and sociologists, the EEMAA recommended condom use to reduce HIV risk from sexual activity.[44] Nevertheless, Giorgos Papaevangelou, a social medicine professor who was the secretary general of the EEMAA in the late 1980s, opined in 1986, already before joining the association, that safer sex should be complemented by the reduction of one's sexual partners.[45] His approach to HIV prevention was ambivalent

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[39] Frida Bioubi, Dekatria Feggaria Meta (Athens: Exantas, 1987); Frida Bioubi, Kai to oneiro pagose. Ena chroniko tou AIDS (Athens: Exantas, 1990); Alexis Bistikas, Evangelismos (Athens: Patakis, 1994).

[40] Gkeltis, "I proslipsi," 3; Sivri, "AIDS."

[41] Sivri, "AIDS."

[42] Riedel, "Movement", 241.

[43] On the charter of the EEMAA, see "Katastatiko," Ellinika Archeia AIDS, July–September 1995, 285–90.

[44] "Seminaria-synedria," Diminiaio Enimerotiko Deltio, November–December 1989, 23.

[45] "Synentefxi sto 'Kraximo' me ton kathigiti epidimiologias kai viostatistikis tis ygeionomikis scholis Athinon Georgio Papaevangelou", Kraximo 6 (May 1986): 4.

regarding men who had sex with men: While he spoke out against "repressive measures" targeting HIV-positive people in a queer magazine interview, [46] a book he authored on AIDS did not include voices of men who had sex with men.[47]

Meanwhile, queer individuals in Greece were not silent. Gay cisgender men, like Andreas Velissaropoulos, created the radical left-wing Greek Homosexual Liberation Movement (AKOE) in 1976.[48] Despite widespread transphobia among gay cisgender men, the group collaborated with some transgender women who were sex workers, like Elisavet Vakalidou.[49] Prominent members also included gay cisgender men Loukas Theodorakopoulos and Grigoris Vallianatos.[50] A catalyst for the mobilization of gay cisgender men and transgender women was the 1977 center-right government bill "on the protection from sexually transmitted diseases and regulation of relevant matters", which foresaw closer police oversight of gay men and sex workers.[51] The scale of AKOE's influence is difficult to gauge, as membership records are not available. Still, it managed to mobilize "around 500" people, queer and heterosexual, in protest actions in 1981, against the 1977 bill.[52] The magazine AMFI was

[46] "Synentefxi sto 'Kraximo'."

[47] Georgios Papaevangelou, AIDS (Thessaloniki: Paratiritis, 1988).

[48] On AKOE, see Kostas Yannakopoulos, "Omofylofiliko kinima," in Vassilis Vamvakas and Panagis Panagiotopoulos, I Ellada sti dekaetia tou '80: Koinoniko, politiko kai politismiko lexico (Athens: To Perasma, 2008), 392–94. On gay cisgender men and transphobia, see Nikolaos Papadogiannis, "Greek Trans Women Selling Sex, Spaces and Mobilities, 1960s–80s," European Review of History 29, no. 2 (2022): 331–62.

[49] See Elisavet Vakalidou's memoir Betty: Kapetanios tis psychis mou (Athens: Typothito, 2007), 168.

[50] For a collection of primary sources on AKOE, see Loukas Theodorakopoulos, "AMFI" kai apeleftherosi (Athens: Polychromos Planitis, 2005).

[51] Kostas Yannakopoulos, "Via kata ton thilyprepon andron sti metapolemiki kai synchroni Ellada," Synchrona Themata, no. 150–52 (2021): 122–28.

[52] Theodorakopoulos, "AMFI," 40. The figure cannot be corroborated by other sources, however.

affiliated with AKOE, which existed until 1990, from its inception in 1978 and throughout the 1980s.[53] It was run by a committee comprising seven to ten members, aged between 22 and 40 years, who were mostly gay men, students, and professionals.[54] From 1985 to 1987, Antonis Georgiou was its editor, and Vallianatos oversaw subscriptions. Lesbian activist Irene Petropoulou became editor in 1988.[55] Meanwhile, the politicization of transgender women also continued in the 1980s. The magazine Kraximo, a forum for some of them, addressed queer sexualities and genders more broadly, advocating the idea that sexual liberalization could become an element of radical thinking.[56] The transgender woman and sex worker Paola Revenioti edited it from 1981 to 1993, when it had a circulation of 3,000 to 6,000 copies, mostly among the anarchist scene in Athens' Exarchia Square, where squats had emerged in the 1980s.[57] Some anarchists even formed part of the small group that supported Revenioti in publishing the magazine.

While the 1977 bill never became law, it accentuated the deep suspicion of AKOE towards state institutions, and its initial perception that the latter could use HIV/AIDS to stigmatize same-sex practices, as Theodosis Gkeltis argues.[58] Driven by such suspicion and reacting to the widespread homophobia in society, AMFI initially claimed that while Kaposi's sarcoma, a disease that was sometimes HIV-related, was common among gay men abroad, it posed no threat to Greek ones.[59] Building on the latter expectation, or the fear of associating

[53] On AMFI, see: Theodosis Gkeltis, "O omofylofilos antras mesa apo tin proti ekdotiki periodo tou AMFI", in Dimitra Tzanaki (ed.), Ygeia, kavla kai epanastasi (Athens: Asini, 2021), 445-469.

[54] Yannakopoulos, "Omofylofiliko kinima."

[55] See, for instance, AMFI, no. 18–19 (summer 1985): 1; AMFI, no. 2 (October–December 1988): 23

[56] Papanikolaou, Kati, 396.

[57] Papanikolaou, Kati, 396.

[58] Gkeltis, "I proslipsi."

[59] "Avgoustos 1982," AMFI, no. 12–13 (winter 1982): 83

HIV/AIDS with gay men, several gay activists largely abstained from HIV/AIDS activism in the 1980s and 1990s. Notably, the nonprofit Greek Homosexual Community (EOK), founded in 1988, ran very few events addressing HIV/AIDS.[60] Thus, as Brian Riedel aptly remarks, EOK had a "minimal relationship with" HIV/AIDS activism.[61]

However, from 1985, some queer activists in Athens began to openly engage with HIV-related issues, slightly later than their counterparts in other Western European countries, like the UK and West Germany, who had been doing so from the early 1980s.[62] Building on an emotional vocabulary of boldness, the Athens-based queer activists publicly expressed their views, aiming to fend off stigma and decouple HIV prevention from same-sex sexuality. One of those queer activists, Vallianatos, narrated that he felt it was time to challenge homophobia and biphobia in public discussions in a "courageous" and "provocative" manner.[63] He raised the issue in AKOE and was elected its press officer, a role he held from 1985 to 1989.[64] In this capacity, he appeared on TV as an openly gay activist to talk about safer sex for all sexually active individuals.[65] Thus, in contrast with Riedel's argument in this case, synergies

[60] Riedel, "Movement," 246.

[61] Riedel, "Movement", 245.

[62] On the UK and West Germany, see, for example: Nikolaos Papadogiannis, Rachel E. Love, and Terry Anderson, Trajectories: AIDS Activism in Western Europe (St Andrews, 2022).

[63] Interview with author. See also Vallianatos' narration in the documentary "AKOE/AMFI: I istoria mias epanastasis" (2023), directed by Iosif Vardakis.

[64] Thodoris Antonopoulos, "Ton kairo tis amfisvitisis," 10%, October 2005.

[65] Grigoris Vallianatos, "Eimai politikos anaskela, ochi orthos!," interview by Antonis Boskoitis, Lifo, 4 December 2017, https://www.lifo.gr/lgbtqi/grigoris-ballianatos-eimai-politikos-anaskela-ohi-orthos (last accessed: 20 June 2024).

between queer and HIV/AIDS activism appeared in AKOE.[66] Similarly, the twentieth issue of AMFI referred to (high-risk) practices that could affect heterosexual individuals and those engaging in same-sex contact.[67] Similarly, while Kraximo argued that, "to a great extent", AIDS affected "homosexual men", it also sought information about its transmission among heterosexual people.[68]

Simultaneously, AMFI and Kraximo also addressed how same-sex contact could be safer and pleasurable. The former pointed out that "the insertion of the penis in the anus (without a condom) is the main means of transmission of the virus [HIV] for both [sexual partners]".[69] It also stated that "love is your personal issue but health a matter of everyone. Use rubber condoms."[70] Similarly, Paola foregrounded her profession in Kraximo, to dispel the fear that frequent sex necessarily leads to HIV transmission, and highlight safer sex: "What should I say given that I sell sex? Simply use CONDOMS."[71] While prioritizing condom use, AMFI made some initial references to nonpenetrative forms of safer sex, pointing out that "masturbation, simultaneous or not, is not dangerous. All skin-touching sexual pleasures, like petting, are not risky."[72] Meanwhile, it continued to voice the fear that HIV/AIDS can be used as a weapon to promote restrictive sexual norms and marginalize gay men.[73] Kraximo also echoed a similar fear, claiming that HIV/AIDS should not be used as a pretext to limit the

[66] Riedel, "Movement", 245. Despite making this claim, though, Riedel also notes briefly the engagement of gay activists with safer sex: Riedel, "Movement", 243-244.

[67] "To politiko keno kai to AIDS," AMFI, no. 20 (1986): 14

[68] "Synentefxi sto 'Kraximo'."

[69] "AIDS", AMFI (September–October 1987): 6

[70] "Safe sex," AMFI, no. 3 (1989): 49.

[71] "Kalliarntosoures", Kraximo (January–February 1987): back page. Emphasis in the original.

[72] "AIDS".

[73] "To politiko keno".

frequency or pleasure that people, including queer ones, derived from sex. Thus, its approach differed from Papaevangelou's advice for the reduction of one's sexual partners. In advocating enjoyable safer sex, an article in Kraximo stated "fuck, or it will be mayhem!"[74] Despite being edited by a transgender woman, Kraximo's attitude towards transgender people and HIV/AIDS was complicated. Overall, it lambasted prejudice against trans people.[75] Nevertheless, it confronted the HIV-related stigmatization of male same-sex sexuality more broadly, regardless of their gender orientation.[76] Actually, it was AMFI that loudly criticized mainstream newspapers for encouraging the persecution of some transgender people as "dangerous" for the spread of HIV.[77] Moreover, Kraximo did not elaborate on obstacles transgender people may have faced in having safer sex nor did it limit its HIV prevention information to this group. Crucially, it did not explicitly address the close link for many transgender women between gender transitioning and sex work, and the significance of safer sex for the latter.[78] Similarly, it did not offer advice on how to make sexual practices employed by at least some trans women selling sex, like tucking, safer and pleasurable.[79] The latter involved making the groin area appear smoother if they had not had gender-affirming surgery. This attitude may be due to Revenioti's perception that "there were very few AIDS

[74] "O erotas AIDS den fovatai," Kraximo, no. 6 (early 1980s), 1.

[75] "Ego I porni", Kraximo (1 September 1981): 1.

[76] "O erotas".

[77] AMFI, no. 2 (July–August 1987): 44.

[78] On the complex links between sex work and gender transitioning in Greece, see, for instance, Papadogiannis, "Greek Trans Women."

[79] On tucking, see the autobiography of trans woman Minelli in Betty Vakalidou, Poso paei… I apagogi tou Kosta Tachtsi (Athens: Polychromos Planitis, 2009), 64.

cases among transgender people", a claim that cannot be corroborated as relevant information on transgender people was not published in Greece at that point.[80]

The shift of queer activists to boldly advocating pleasurable safer sex was facilitated by transnational developments. The increasing student migration from Greece to Western Europe from the 1970s facilitated these linkages. The number of Greek undergraduate and graduate students abroad increased from 9,985 in 1970 to 29,665 in 1987.[81] Simultaneously, the Cold War affected those connectivities, given that queer activism was very limited and/or faced substantial impediments under most Communist regimes, making, thus, any potential contact with its Greek counterparts impossible.[82] Vallianatos said studying abroad and influences from his "bourgeois" family made him open to ideas coming from other Western countries.[83] His oral testimony indicates that Paris, New York, and the West German HIV/AIDS organization Deutsche Aidshilfe, founded in 1983, were his reference points simultaneously for gay lifestyles and, later, HIV/AIDS activism. As he recounted: "I studied in France. I became more courageous about my sexuality there. I saw gay magazines appearing in public in Paris in the 1970s. This was unthinkable in Greece." ACT UP in New York appears in his narrative as particularly influential for his boldness to get involved as a gay man in public

[80] Paola Revenioti, "O Ellinas einai k@lomparas apo tin fysi tou," Over (26 August 2021) https://www.overfm.gr/paola-revenioti-o-ellinas-einai-klomparas-apo-ti-fysi-tou/amp/ (last accessed: 20 June 2024).

[81] Andromachi Hadjiyanni, "Age Groups," in Dimitris Charalambis, Laura Maratou-Alipranti, and Andromachi Hadjiyanni (eds.) Recent Social Trends in Greece, 1960–2000 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004): 60.

[82] Hearne, this special issue; Lukanc, this special issue; Josie McLellan, Love in the Time of Communism: Intimacy and Sexuality in the GDR (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[83] Interview with author. See also: James D. Faubion, Modern Greek Lessons. A Primer in Historical Constructivism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993): 237.

discussions on safer sex. His willingness to underline his engagement with tendencies in the West, especially the US, is manifest not only in the content but also the style of his testimony. Seeking to demonstrate his English proficiency, Vallianatos often included untranslated English words in his narrative. He narrated: "I also encountered ACT UP when it was created in New York … I remember I was impressed by the rage and the sadness of people who were hit hard by the disease [AIDS] and the promise they gave to those who had died to act politically, to be out, to 'unleash power' [mentioned in English in the testimony]; I was happy that the activism had a specific form, I was enchanted … Although I was a tourist, I witnessed everything important [for HIV/AIDS campaigns] there, like safer sex, which first appeared there."[84] His testimony resembles the idea of a "brotherhood" stretching across the North Atlantic, with ACT UP serving as a model for mobilization, which Matt Cook has found appealed to some gay men in England.[85] In Vallianatos' narration, and building on ACT UP in New York, safer sex no longer appeared as a set of instructions to gay men but ones they employed to empower themselves by challenging the stereotype that gay sex is synonymous with AIDS. Vallianatos also claimed that Michael Pollak, who was the author, among others, of sociological works on HIV/AIDS, brought him into contact with Aidshilfe in the late 1980s.[86] In maintaining this link after Pollak's death in 1992, Vallianatos also sought to stay in touch with the organization's safer sex approach. As he stressed, this organization was a reference point for him in terms of HIV/AIDS campaigns, without offering further details. Meanwhile, Petropoulou also recounted receiving Aidshilfe and the

[84] Interview with author.

[85] Cook, "Archives," 71.

[86] Interview with author. For a tribute to Pollak's life and work, see: Research Committee on the History of Sociology, Newsletter (March 1993): 6.

Terrence Higgins Trust in the UK publications on safer sex while she was AMFI's editor. A professional translator, she helped translate them into Greek.[87]

Cross-border transfers and HIV/AIDS activism were significant not only for individuals from "bourgeois" origins: Revenioti, a sex worker who lived in a lower-middle-class district of Athens, testifies to the social diversity of the conveyors of such transnational flows to Athenian queer activism. While it is impossible to assess the impact of Revenioti's ideas on other transgender people, including sex workers, and whether it tracked and helped shape their safer sex perceptions, Kraximo was recognizable among queer activists and was cited in AMFI.[88] Revenioti rarely traveled abroad. While some Greek transgender women selling sex migrated to work in West Berlin, traveling abroad was complicated for women from this social group. It was costly for them and required the use of identification documents which listed the gender assigned to them at birth, with which they did not identify.[89] Still, Revenioti was in close contact with gay activist publications, particularly in France. Alexopoulos (pseudonym), an anarchist supporting Revenioti in the late 1980s and a cisgender gay man, narrated that she had contacts with activists in other Western European countries, such as the magazine Gai Pied in France, from which she learned about HIV prevention and safer sex.[90] She had texts from those publications translated for Kraximo through a collaborative process. Alexopoulos recounted that Revenioti and Kraximo "could not read English or French, but her collaborators read these for her."[91] In this respect, Kraximo built on cross-border transfers of ideas to underpin Revenioti's preference for pleasurable safer sex. The fear that safer sex

[87] Interview with author.

[88] For instance, "To Kraximo," AMFI, no. 9–10 (1981): 16.

[89] Papadogiannis, "Greek Trans Women."

[90] Interview with author.

[91] Interview with author. See also a request for translation in: "Kalliarntosoures".

would dilute sexual pleasure was a concern among campaigners in several countries, like West Germany, Italy, and Belgium.[92] Kraximo captured some of those concerns by publishing a translated text that was originally authored by Belgian psychotherapist Claude Vandevyver, who argued that safer sex was vital but could take away from passion.[93] Kraximo does not mention, however, whether the interview was first published in another language elsewhere or whether it had contacted Vandevyver. In any case, the effort to present safer sex as pleasurable in Kraximo was not simply an import. Pleasurable safer sex was in sync with the attitudes of Revenioti and other transgender women who sold sex for sexual enjoyment in the 1970s and 1980s: While sex work was highly precarious, they also experienced it as an opportunity to have joy and express a gender identity that differed from the one assigned to them at birth.[94] As Papanikolaou aptly remarks, Revenioti was keen on reframing pleasure by displaying and subverting its interconnections with desire, and established gender norms.[95] Vallianatos and Revenioti were among the mediators of transnational flows for the increasing synergies between HIV/AIDS and queer activism in the 1990s, to which I will turn after covering some key developments affecting such campaigns in the 1990s.

Turning points in the mid-to-late 1980s and early 1990s

The late 1980s and early 1990s witnessed political diversification and an increasing entanglement of HIV/AIDS campaigns across Western Europe and North America, where radical collective action on HIV/AIDS emerged, exemplified by the activities of ACT UP.

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[92] Beljan, Rosa Zeiten?, 224; on Italy, see Love in this special issue.

[93] "Sex horis kindyno I kindynos tis sexoualikotitas?," Kraximo (April–May 1988): 45–46.

[94] On the precarity and pleasure of selling sex for trans people, see: Papadogiannis, "Greek Trans Women," 341.

[95] Papanikolaou, Kati, 397.

The first ACT UP chapter was created in New York in 1987.[96] Two years later, ACT UP was established in Berlin and Paris and other chapters would follow.[97] Some ACT UP groups, such as in Germany, ceased to be active in 1993.[98] ACT UP chapters in the US and Europe interacted closely, marked by the exchange of correspondence between ACT UP in Germany and the US.[99] This interconnection also entailed gatherings of ACT UP members from across Western Europe in the early 1990s to protest against HIV/AIDS policies at the national and international levels.[100] Other ACT UP chapters were involved in international solidarity campaigns, such as the Paris one protesting in front of the West German embassy.[101] ACT UP branches across the West used a similar emotion-laden language, revolving around indignation at heteronormative society and, in some chapters, like in the US, around gay pride.[102] Central to the emotional vocabulary underpinning their language and practices transnationally were the slogan "silence=death" and the pink triangle symbol. The Nazis had used the latter to identify and persecute people the regime labeled as homosexual men.[103] It

[96] Gould, Moving; Sarah Schulman, Let the Record Show: A Political History of ACT UP, New York, 1987–1993 (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021).

[97] Broqua, ACTION=VIE; on ACT-UP London, see Severs, Radical; on Germany, see Breu, "Schwule Lebensweisen."

[98] Ulrich Würdemann, Schweigen=Tod, Aktion=Leben: ACT UP in Deutschland 1989 bis 1993 (Berlin: Thomas Michalak, 2017), 77–78.

[99] Tremblay, "Visual," 579.

[100] See the autobiographical book of a German ACT UP activist: Würdemann, Schweigen=Tod, 77–78.

[101] Tremblay, "Visual," 579–60.

[102] Gould, Moving, 143–45; Tremblay, Badge, 192.

[103] The gender identities of some of those persecuted people did not necessarily correspond to the labels the Nazi regime used. See Bodie A. Ashton, "The Parallel Lives of Liddy Bacroff: Transgender (Pre)History and the Tyranny of the Archive in Twentieth-Century Germany," German History 42, no 1 (March 2024): 79–100.

was reclaimed from the 1970s by gay activists and, subsequently, HIV/AIDS activists in various parts of the West as a symbol of cisgender gay identity.[104] ACT UP activists in several Western countries also enacted die-ins, namely a simulation of being dead.[105]

This intensifying transnational interaction entailed asymmetries, both among HIV/AIDS campaigners from different countries and within the local and national groups. Those hierarchies were akin to what Tremblay aptly depicts as "homosynchronism": an "assemblage of public memory and political rhetoric" which portrays white European queers as role models, "non-European" queers as "trapped" in premodern times, and demonizes "racialized queers domestically".[106] ACT UP's very emotional vocabulary also reinforced the erasures of white lesbian women, whose oppression by the Nazis was not captured in the symbolism of the pink triangle.[107] Moreover, and although this topic deserves more attention, transgender activists were also absent from several of these campaigns. While ACT UP chapters in the US attracted lesbian women, bisexual people, transgender individuals, and straight allies, they were dominated by gay cisgender men.[108] Meanwhile, Act Up-Paris was open to individuals who varied in terms of their sexual orientation, but there were "hierarchies of experiences" within the group. As Christophe Broqua argues, cisgender gay men were expected to play the leading role in the group while transgender individuals did not participate.[109] Likewise, Würdemann does not list transgender people among the groups participating in ACT UP in

[104] W. Jake Newsome, Pink Triangle Legacies: Coming Out in the Shadow of the Holocaust (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2022); Tremblay, Badge.

[105] Papadogiannis, Love, Anderson, Trajectories, 13.

[106] Tremblay, Badge, 224.

[107] Tremblay, Badge, 245; Severs, Radical, 56.

[108] Gould, Moving, 131, 145; Cvetkovich, Archive, 156–204.

[109] Broqua, ACTION=VIE, 86–92. Broqua refers in ACTION=VIE to no transgender activists in Act-Up Paris. In our correspondence, Broqua has also confirmed that he is not aware of trans activists involved in that group.

West Germany whereas George Severs shows that very few trans people did the "radical act" of being visible in HIV/AIDS campaigns in England.[110]

These asymmetries did not remain uncontested, however. During the 1980s and 1990s, subjects other than white cisgender gay men strove to become more visible in HIV/AIDS campaigns. For instance, from 1984, queer of color activism, white lesbian feminism, and HIV/AIDS campaigning "collided" in West Germany, according to Christopher Ewing. Such collaboration was manifested, for instance, in the activities of Aidshilfe, without totally eclipsing the prominent role of white gay men in its activities.[111] Meanwhile, Act Up-Paris and the Terrence Higgins Trust increasingly tried to target and even involve people of color in their activities and safer sex campaigns.[112] Besides people of color, white women, heterosexual and lesbian, also became more visible in HIV/AIDS campaigns in the West from the mid-1980s and early 1990s.[113] Crucially, they also developed transnational connections: A case in point is the European network of Women Living with HIV, a subgroup of the International Community of Women Living with HIV (ICW), which was established in 1992.[114]

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[110] Würdemann, Schweigen=Tod, 63.

[111] Ewing, Color, 101–2.

[112] Papadogiannis, Love, and Anderson, Trajectories, 12, 25. On efforts to engage with HIV-related racist stigma in France and the UK, respectively, see Broqua's and Biswas' articles in this special issue. Regarding Black queer activists also in relation to HIV/AIDS in the UK, Sue Lemos is researching a PhD entitled "'Pioneers of Our Own Future': Historicizing the 'Black Lesbian and Gay Movement' in Britain, 1960s-1990s" at the University of Warwick.

[113] Ewing, Color, 96–112; Emma Day, In Her Hands: Women's Fight against AIDS in the United States (Oakland: University of California Press, 2023), 97–132.

[114] For a self-presentation of the ICW, see "About us," https://www.wlhiv.org/about-us (last accessed: 26 June 2024). See also Severs, Radical.

Meanwhile, HIV/AIDS campaigning became more widespread in Athens. As in other Western locations, those groups varied in terms of the radical manner of their actions. The moderate Elpida and Kentro Zois kai Empnefsis (Center for Inspirational Living, henceforth Kentro) were created in 1989 and 1991, respectively, whereas the more radical ACT UP Athens was founded in 1993.[115] These groups formed a loosely knit network of HIV/AIDS campaigners in Greece that sometimes participated in joint activities on safer sex promotion.[116] Kentro also supported people living with HIV.[117] All three organizations were also in close contact with the Kentro Elenchou Eidikon Loimoxeon (KEEL, Center for Infectious Diseases Control),[118] which was established as an agency within the Ministry of Health in 1992. It monitored AIDS among other infectious diseases.

In the expanding HIV/AIDS campaigning in Greece, and like elsewhere in the West, an increasing concern with the rising number of AIDS cases among women became manifest in the early-to-mid 1990s. Heterosexual sexual contact resulted in 54 AIDS cases among women (43.5% of all women with AIDS) and 71 AIDS cases among men by 30 June 1995 (7.3% of men with AIDS). Cases among lesbian women and transgender people were not reported.[119] Regarding the other cases, 19 women and 106 men had contracted HIV following various

[115] "Panellinios Syllogos Ypostirixis Foreon tou Iou AIDS Elpida," Diminiaio Enimerotiko Deltio, November–December 1989, 10–12; "Ethelontismos 'Elpida' ston agona kata tou AIDS," leaflet, n.d., ca. early 1990 (year estimate based on when events the text described as currently happening occurred); formal ACT UP charter, September 1993; Kentro Zois, 20 chronia (Athens, 2011).

[116] Kentro Zois kai Empnefsis, Etisia Anafora 1992/93, 8; "Ethelontismos 'Elpida'."

[117] Kentro Zois, "Etisios apologismos," 1995, 6.

[118] For an account of such contacts from Panagiotis Damaskos' perspective, who was involved in queer activism and worked for KEEL, see "Interview with Panagiotis Damaskos", https://taa.st-andrews.ac.uk/2022/06/16/interview-with-panagiotis-damaskos/ (last accessed: 24 June 2024).

[119] "Krousmata AIDS," Ellinika Archeia AIDS (July–September 1995): 295.

types of blood transfusion; 13 women and 30 men due to intravenous drug use; 10 men were homosexual/bisexual drug users; and for 220 individuals (38 women, 182 men), the cause of their HIV transmission was "unknown".[120] Notably, the EEMAA continued to single out gay/bisexual men as "high-risk groups".[121] However, state-sponsored campaigns promoted safer sex for heterosexuals and men who had sex with men.[122] The efficacy of grassroots and state-sponsored safer sex campaigns warrants further research, but it seems that some social groups, like university students in Athens and Volos, were aware of and practiced safer sex.[123] In any case, the combination of these transnational and national developments accentuated an increasing emphasis in Greece on safer sex campaigns for people, regardless of gender and sexual orientation.

ACT UP Athens: Outrage as a galvanizing force

On 17 February 1993, the newly-established ACT UP Athens held a press conference to outline its aims.[124] While Riedel argues that doctors established ACT UP Athens, its co-founders included Vallianatos and Desi Galiatsatou, a transgender man from the Athenian

[120] "Krousmata."

[121] "Krousmata."

[122] For instance, "Nai ston erota, ohi sto AIDS," n.d., ca. mid-to-late 1990s. Year estimate based on when events the text described as currently happening occurred.

[123] M. Diomidous, I. Mantas, N. Vetsikos, F. Harizani, G. Pahios, and I. Tsantiris, "Gnoseis kai staseis panepistimiakon spoudaston kai spoudaston TEI oson afora tin hrisi antisylliptikon," Ellinika Archeia AIDS (July–September 1995): 248–54.

[124] "ACT UP: To anthropino 'emvolio' tou AIDS," Eleftherotypia (18 February 1993).

middle-class district of Kolonaki,[125] active in AKOE from the mid-1980s, where he was active as a trans person.[126] ACT UP Athens was the first explicitly HIV/AIDS campaigning group in that city which was coinitiated by openly queer activists who also engaged in queer campaigns. Concerning the other HIV/AIDS organizations in this period, they were not activist ones strictly speaking in the sense of engaging in confrontational action, as defined in reference 2. Moreover, the fragmentary material on Elpida contains no reference to it addressing the condition of queer people in particular. Regarding Kentro, some of its members and volunteers were queer. Christos Lampounos (pseudonym), a gay man and a prominent member of the organization in the 1990s, narrated that the Centre helped him "overcome the fear" of expressing his sexual orientation.[127] Nevertheless, addressing explicitly men who have sex with men in HIV/AIDS campaigns was controversial within the Centre: The proposal of some gay members and volunteers that the Centre publishes such material raised eyebrows, at least as Lampounos recounted.[128] This reticence stood in

[125] Galiatsatou identifies as a man without discarding all feminine elements of his identity, like the name "Desi". Galiatsatou's trajectory vindicates, thus, Stryker's argument that gender transitioning is not a movement to a particular "destination", like from femininity to masculinity, but one "away from the unchosen starting place" that may follow various trajectories. Susan Stryker, Transgender History: The Roots of Today's Revolution (New York: Seal Press, 2017): 1. On Galiatsatou as a trans person, see his interview with Fotis Sergoulopoulos, entitled "Aisthanomai trans andras alla echo synithisei na me fonazoun Desi", published on 15 February 2021, available at https://www.lifo.gr/podcasts/sergoulopoulos/ntaizi-galiatsatoy-aisthanomai-trans-andras-alla-eho-synithisei-na-me?amp, accessed at 30 July 2024.

[126] On the role of Galiatsatou and Vallianatos in ACT UP from the outset, see, for instance: "ACT UP: To anthropino"; The Center for Inspirational Living, Annual Report 1992/93, 8.

[127] Interview with author.

[128] Interview with author. On the proposal, see, for example: "Protaseis apo tin brainstorming session tis omadas periodikou", apparently late 1990s. On Kentro and same-sex sexualities, see also: Nikolaos Papadogiannis, "HIV activism in Athens in the 1990s and transnational connections", unpublished conference paper, July 2024.

contrast to the content of ACT UP Athens' campaigns, as shown below, which referred to men's same-sex practices. The EEMAA was not involved in queer activism, either. ACT UP Athens' creation was thus a landmark for HIV/AIDS and queer activism, marking the shift of some queer activists from addressing HIV/AIDS in their public interventions in the 1980s to contributing to systematic HIV/AIDS campaigns.

Concurrently, ACT UP Athens also marked a turning point in transcending the boundaries between queer and heterosexual activists. Heterosexual activists had protested in solidarity with queer ones in the past, such as against the 1977 bill. Nevertheless, this was the first instance in which they worked together to shape the sexual practices of individuals regardless of their sexual orientation. ACT UP Athens comprised individuals with varying attitudes to heteronormative institutions. Melina Mercouri, a woman married to a man, participated. Crucially, Mercouri was a prominent MP for socialist PASOK and Minister for Culture in 1981-89 (and again in 1993-1994).[129] Similarly, ACT UP Athens also involved people with varying professions, such as doctor Chryssoula Botsi, sex worker Revenioti, journalist Vallianatos and psychologist Karolina Varelopoulou.[130] On the whole, while the available sources do not provide information on the number of ACT UP Athens members, in 1993, the mainstream newspaper Ta Nea estimated that the group mobilized 50 protestors at a rally.[131] However, this figure should be treated with caution, given that it cannot be corroborated in other sources and may also exclude members or sympathizers of the group who did not

[129] "ACT UP: To anthropino."

[130] ACT UP charter. Vallianatos, Galiatsatou, interviews with author.

[131] "Mas afora olous I mastiga tou aiona," Ta Nea (15 June 1993): 51

participate in that action. Still, ACT UP Athens' actions were not unnoticed: they were covered in influential mainstream newspapers in Greece.[132]

The contribution of some queer activists to the setting up of ACT UP Athens was related to the political diversification and increasing interconnectedness of HIV/AIDS campaigns in the West. These activists picked up on some of the emotional language of ACT UP elsewhere in that region. As mentioned earlier, Vallianatos, one of the initiators of ACT UP Athens, had observed the activities of ACT UP in New York and was impressed by the "rage and sadness" of its activists, which he felt "unleashed power" on him as a gay man.[133] The feeling of common belonging to a transnational community of radical, outrage-driven HIV/AIDS activists also vindicated Galiatsatou's commitment to HIV/AIDS campaigns. He recounted: "I knew about Act Up-Paris, they had done so much! … We asked ourselves: which is the strongest AIDS activist group in the world? We thought it was ACT UP. Therefore, we decided to found ACT UP also in Greece!"[134] His phrasing "they had done so much" refers both to the extent of its activity and its confrontational manner embedded in outrage.

The mechanics of the interaction between ACT UP Athens and other ACT UP branches were complex, however. None of my interviewees recounted ACT UP Athens activists participating in the transnational ACT UP coordination and solidarity gatherings in Europe in the early 1990s.[135] A reason for this lack of involvement is that some ACT UP chapters, such

[132] For instance: "Mas afora"; "ACT UP: To anthropino." On the readership and the significance of mainstream newspapers in Greece for public debates in the 1990s, see: Maria Komninou, Apo tin Agora sto Theama. Meleti gia ti sygkrotisi tis dimosias sfairas kai tou kinimatografou sti synchroni Ellada, 1950-2000 (Athens: Papazisis, 2011): 180-186, 192-196.

[133] Interview with author.

[134] Interview with author.

[135] Vallianatos recounted witnessing ACT UP activities in New York in the 1980s, but he mentioned nothing about participating in transnational ACT UP gatherings in the 1990s.

as those in Germany, which were proactive in those transnational protests, had folded by the point ACT UP in Athens emerged. Nevertheless, Act Up-Paris continued to exist, but face-to-face contact between it and ACT UP Athens was nonexistent, at least according to the available sources. For instance, Vallianatos recounted participating in international HIV/AIDS conferences but did not mention that the latter were an opportunity for him to develop joint protest activities involving ACT UP Athens and other ACT UP chapters in the West.[136] ACT UP Athens members Galiatsatou and Alexopoulos narrated that they learned about the actions and rhetoric of ACT UP chapters through word of mouth. Alexopoulos, an ACT UP member at that point, highlighted the cross-border connections of other ACT UP members, especially Vallianatos.[137] Similarly, Galiatsatou stressed that "such [transnational] contacts were Vallianatos' responsibility".[138]

Attention to the local level also mattered for the ACT UP Athens members, however, and pertained to the limited face-to-face interaction between the latter and other ACT UP chapters. Vallianatos narrated that "[we had to consider] our limited resources compared to other chapters, like Act Up-Paris, and shape the scope of our activities accordingly".[139] ACT UP Athens members did not experience a local focus as a deficit, though. Being able to galvanize activists in Athens was a source of prestige for Galiatsatou, who asserted that "my specialization was organizing and uniting people", adding that some of the rallies that ACT UP held were massive: "everyone was there!"[140] The rhythm of his narration underpinned this sense of self-esteem: he tended to slow down to emphasize his contribution to stirring up

[136] Interview with author.

[137] Interviews with author.

[138] Interview with author.

[139] Interview with author. Available sources do not indicate the financial situation of the organization, however.

[140] Interview with author.

protests in Greece, to which he dedicated most of his interview, while referring to ACT UP's transnational contacts in passing.[141] As a result, he did not feel at a disadvantage due to his lack of transnational contacts compared to Vallianatos. Crucially, Galiatsatou's role as a founding member of ACT UP Athens and a person frequently representing the group in its public events demonstrates that Vallianatos' mediating role with HIV/AIDS campaigners elsewhere in the West did not help create a hierarchy of roles within the group at the expense of not-so-well transnationally connected members.[142]

Such a focus on local conditions filtered how ACT UP Athens activists approached transnational influences. Crucially, Galiatsatou had been accompanying seropositive people to the Andreas Syngros hospital in Athens and was outraged by their treatment there.[143] "A doctor treated my [seropositive] friend in a terrible way [and told him] 'you spread the disease, go away, we have no beds'," he recalled.[144] Those experiences galvanized Galiatsatou to coinitiate an HIV/AIDS activist group and made him seek inspiration from activists elsewhere in the West. Moreover, Vallianatos recounted the shame and fear that several gay men felt due to the frequent and enduring in the 1990s links made in public discussions in Greece between HIV/AIDS and men who had sex with men.[145] Fighting against these perceptions incentivized Vallianatos to co-establish ACT UP Athens.[146]

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[141] On the rhythm of one's narration in an interview, see Alessandro Portelli, "On the Peculiarities of Oral History," History Workshop Journal 12, no. 1 (1981): 96–107.

[142] On Galiatsatou's role, see, for instance, Zefi Klironomou, "To AIDS einai edo," Eleftheros Typos (22 June 1994): 40–41; "ACT UP: To anthropino."

[143] Papadogiannis, Love, and Anderson, Trajectories, 7.

[144] Interview with author.

[145] On such stigmatization, see, for instance: Tsalicoglou, "Disease", 90-91; Yannakopoulos, "Zoes".

[146] Interview with author.

Similarly, the creation of ACT UP Athens drew on the particularities of queer coalitional politics in Athens. Building on their contacts since the 1980s, Vallianatos, Galiatsatou and Revenioti took the decision to co-establish the group.[147] The significant visibility of transgender activists in queer campaigns in Athens, despite the prejudice trans people faced from some gay cisgender men, stood in contrast to the minimal, if nonexistent, participation in some other HIV/AIDS campaigning groups in Western Europe, as outlined above.[148] ACT UP Athens was not necessarily more inclusive, though, than HIV/AIDS campaigners elsewhere in the West. Like queer activism in Athens at that point, it did not engage with migrants and/or people of color in the period in question, in contrast to the above-mentioned relevant (but ambiguous) efforts in West Germany, the UK, and France. Although most migrants in Greece at that point came from Southeastern Europe and the former USSR, there were students from African countries living in Athens.[149] Still, the antiracist movement, let alone the involvement of people of color in it, was only at an embryonic stage in the mid-1990s in Greece.[150]

Outrage in ACT UP Athens' language and actions

[147] Interviews of Vallianatos and Galiatsatou with author.

[148] The reasons why transgender activists were visible in queer campaigns in Athens since the late 1970s warrant a separate article. Notably, however, while Severs shows that transgender activists in England feared that an HIV/AIDS diagnosis would obstruct them from having a gender-affirming surgery, such a fear is not expressed in any available sources regarding ACT UP. Severs, Radical, 56.

[149] For instance, Pothiti Hantzaroula, "Perceptions of Work in Albanian Immigrant Testimonies and the Structure of Domestic Work in Greece," in Helma Lutz (ed.), Migration and Domestic Work: A European Perspective on a Global Theme (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007): 61–76.

[150] "20 chronia Antiratsistiko Festival Athinas," AlterThess, 30 June 2017, https://alterthess.gr/20-chronia-antiratsistiko-festival-athinas/ (last accessed: 20 June 2024); text based on the analysis of Aliki Kosyfologou.

Outrage not only galvanized queer activists to engage in HIV/AIDS actions, but also underpinned the language of ACT UP Athens. The latter's members expressed "outrage" at the marginalization of specific social groups that was exacerbated by the AIDS epidemic.[151] In this vein, it fought against "racism", a term which they used in a broad manner to include the stigmatization of men who had sex with men, and intravenous drug users particularly.[152] However, at that point, ACT UP Athens did not address the HIV-related bias against people of color. Crucially, not only did it not mobilize people of color, as mentioned above. It did not, openly at least, challenge the racist undertones of the press coverage in the early 1980s of the Zambian student who died of HIV-related causes, either. This omission may be attributed to the abovementioned limited development of the antiracist movement in Athens. Nevertheless, there are no racist references concerning the latter in ACT UP Athens' leaflets or testimonies I have collected.

Simultaneously, ACT UP Athens members, queer and heterosexual, broadened the scope of their approach to HIV/AIDS as compared to the public interventions of queer activists in the 1980s. The former activists linked HIV prevention to social justice issues not raised by the latter in their relevant interventions. In an outrage-laden vocabulary, ACT UP Athens claimed in one of its leaflets that the "plunder" of the Global South [from Global North countries] and

[151] For instance, "ACT UP eimaste emeis," Athens, n.d., ca. mid-to-late 1990s. Year estimate based on when events the text described as currently happening occurred.

[152] "I drasi antikathista ta dakrya," ACT UP Athens leaflet, n.d., ca. 1997–1998. The text does not mention campaigns that ACT UP Athens launched and promoted in the late 1990s and early 2000s, like its work with Muslims in Greece, which shows that its publication took place in the mid-to-late 1990s at the latest.

the pollution of the environment had led to the spread of diseases globally, including AIDS.[153] The purported link between HIV/AIDS activism and the fight for social justice underpinned a concert that the group held in Athens in 1996 dedicated to HIV/AIDS information campaigns.[154] The concert's songs were also released as a record. The record booklet posited that "broader developments", like the exploitation of the Global South, environmental pollution, and famine, caused the epidemic and needed to be addressed in HIV prevention.[155] The ecological and anticapitalist language that ACT UP Athens used did not morph into activism addressing the environment and the Global South, however.

In expressing its outrage against HIV-related prejudice, ACT UP Athens contributed to the intensifying efforts of HIV/AIDS campaigns in Athens, including Elpida and Kentro, to recalibrate the public discussion and policy addressing people with HIV. Elpida, presided by Mary Angel, promoted HIV prevention and fought against prejudice against people with HIV.[156] Kentro also engaged in HIV prevention, while its main activity until January 1996 was the buddy system, namely one-to-one support by its volunteers to seropositive individuals.[157] Meanwhile, key aims of ACT UP Athens activists up to the mid-1990s were HIV prevention and safer sex, and the well-being of people living with HIV.[158] ACT UP demanded the distribution of the latest AIDS medication, which, at that point, did not cure but could improve the everyday lives of people with HIV. Simultaneously, ACT UP established

[153] For example: "ACT UP: Polemiste to AIDS, ohi tous anthropous me AIDS," n.d., ca. 1996. Year estimate based on when events the text described as currently happening occurred.

[154] ACT UP, "En touto nika," 1996.

[155] "En touto nika"; "Polemiste."

[156] "Ethelontismos 'Elpida'", n.d., probably early 1990s.

[157] The Center for Inspirational Living, 'A Comparison Study of a Closed Versus Open Format. HIV Men's Support Group', Athens 1998, 4 [original title in English].

[158] "Mas afora"; "I drasi"; ACT UP, "AIDS kai ta dikaiomata mas," Athens 1996; "Eimaste emeis."

four sub-groups, which engaged systematically with specific objectives: the first supported people with HIV who were hospitalized and received inadequate care.[159] The second offered food, lodging, and medication to those seropositive people who needed them.[160] The third sub-group provided legal advice to people with HIV, whereas the fourth supported those impoverished people with HIV who lived in a guesthouse in Kaminia, Piraeus, where they often faced the hostility of the local community.[161]

The outrage-based language of ACT UP Athens that underpinned its actions shaped its ambiguous attitude towards state institutions. Despite its collaboration with Mercouri, a mainstream politician, in June 1994 ACT UP Athens members engaged in confrontational action targeting the Health Ministry. To express their demand for the distribution of the latest AIDS medication, they performed a die-in and threw red-dyed eggs – symbolizing the blood of those people who had died of HIV-related causes – at the ministry during a demonstration in June 1994.[162] Outrage marked ACT UP Athens' actions in this die-in. Galiatsatou's testimony is telling in this respect, at least regarding his feelings: he recounted that "we were outraged … when the others threw eggs at the Ministry, I couldn't stop them".[163] Galiatsatou appeared to relive this emotionally intense moment during the interview, and raised his voice to make his outrage palpable.

When expressing outrage in its texts and actions, ACT UP Athens employed practices, slogans, and symbols developed by ACT UP chapters elsewhere in the West, such as at the

[159] "ACT UP: To anthropino."

[160] "ACT UP: To anthropino."

[161] "ACT UP: To anthropino." Galiatsatou, interview with author.

[162] Klironomou, "AIDS"; Papadogiannis, Love, and Anderson, Trajectories, 9.

[163] Interview with author.

1994 die-in.[164] It also adopted the slogan "silence equals death" and the pink triangle in its texts.[165] However, it did not link the latter symbol to the Nazi persecution of gay men, as ACT UP activists did in West Germany. As some of ACT UP Athens' leaflets were black and white, the color of the triangle was not obvious.[166] While some queer activists in Athens were aware of the use of the pink triangle by the Nazis, links between past and present in general were not as important for their HIV/AIDS campaigns as they were for their German counterparts.[167]

In folding outrage into their demands and actions, ACT UP members also built on their ideological background, which, in turn, pertained to transnational and local developments. The group mobilized people ranging from Vallianatos, a liberal, to the Far Left and anarchists, especially in the Exarchia squats.[168] Anarchist Alexopoulos was happy to use outrage-laden and provocative language in the ACT UP actions in which he participated, as it was in line with the confrontational tone of the Greek and British punk bands that he followed.[169] As mentioned above, Alexopoulos was active in Exarchia Square, where anarchist and punk networks synergized. He was initially part of the Kraximo editorial team and then joined ACT UP Athens.[170] Galiatsatou recounted that the team supporting Kraximo,

[164] On ACT UP Athens and the die-in, see "En touto nika"; "Asfales sex."

[165] "Eimaste emeis."

[166] "Eimaste emeis."

[167] Crucially, no. 7–8 of AMFI (1980–1981) was dedicated to the victims of Nazi oppression.

[168] On these squats, see Dimitris Kitis, "The Anti-Authoritarian Chóros: A Space for Youth Socialization and Radicalization in Greece (1974–2010)," Journal for the Study of Radicalism 9, no. 1 (2015): 1–36.

[169] Interview with author. On the history of punk cultures in Athens, see Giannis N. Kolovos, "Koinonika Apovlita"; I istoria tis pank skinis stin Athina, 1979–2015 (Athens: Aprovleptes Ekdoseis, 2015).

[170] Interview with author.

which was influenced by anarchism and punk cultures, was very active in ACT UP.[171] The link between punk music and ACT UP was also manifested in the concert that the latter organized, which included Greek punk bands, such as Deus Ex Machina.[172]

Diversifying safer sex

ACT UP Athens' outrage at the HIV-related stigmatization of specific social groups was coupled with its effort to promote safer sex for all individuals regardless of their sexual orientation. The group perpetuated the similar approach of queer activists to safer sex in the 1980s. Like AMFI in the 1980s, an ACT UP leaflet in 1996 argued against the notion of "high-risk groups", such as men who had sex with men.[173] Another leaflet claimed, in a humorous manner, that "a way to catch AIDS … is to believe that it only happens to homosexuals and drug users".[174]

Simultaneously, the HIV/AIDS activist group embraced the link between safer sex and pleasure that queer activists like Revenioti had established already in the 1980s. ACT UP challenged sexual abstinence or associating safer sex solely with conjugal relations, as the Greek Orthodox Church did, and it did not call for the reduction of one's sexual partners, as Papaevangelou posited.[175] The group also used bold language to stress that safer sex could be enjoyable. It denounced the "ongoing sterilization" and "degeneration of love" since the

[171] Interview with author.

[172] "En touto nika."

[173] "AIDS kai ta dikaiomata mas."

[174] "Polemiste."

[175] "Polemiste." On the Church, see Iera Mitropolis Dimitriados, "AIDS: I apeili yparchei, esy ti tha kaneis?" (1996).

onset of public discussions about HIV/AIDS.[176] As illustrated above, campaigns like that of EEMAA in the 1980s approached safer sex as a risk-reduction strategy rather than a means towards enjoyment. In his oral testimony on his ACT UP activity, Vallianatos also related "pleasure" to promoting safer sex.[177]

Nevertheless, ACT UP Athens also expanded and diversified the promotion of pleasurable safer sex patterns compared to queer activists in the 1980s. Whereas the latter offered brief advice on nonpenetrative sex, ACT UP material described in detail how, under particular conditions, masturbation, oral sex, fingering, massage and petting could also be relatively safe and enjoyable ways to have sex.[178] A leaflet mentioned, for instance, that "massage is soothing, safe, and pleasurable".[179] ACT UP also offered more detailed advice tailored to the varying sexual practices of the individuals it targeted. While one of its leaflets advised on safer sex for everyone, it included a drawing of two men engaging in mutual masturbation.[180] From around 1997, the material of ACT UP Athens also began to address safer sex for women who had sex with women, deviating from the silence of state-sponsored safer sex campaigns in this regard. A leaflet stressed that ACT UP Athens engaged with the sexuality of "homosexual" men and women.[181] However, the group's materials linked explicitly same-sex practices to specific sexual identities only to an extent. The abovementioned image of men helping each other masturbate did not address them as having a specific sexual orientation.

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[176] "En touto nika."

[177] Interview with author.

[178] "Asfales sex, mia prosfora tis ACT UP," Athens, n.d., ca. mid-to-late 1990s.Year estimate based on when events the text described as currently happening occurred.

[179] "Asfales sex."

[180] "Asfales sex."

[181] "I drasi."

Overall, the intricate synergies of HIV/AIDS and queer activism in ACT UP Athens were manifest in the group's safer sex material: while not confining safer sex to the same-sex practices of men and women, the group helped make queer individuals who were cisgender more visible in public debates. Nevertheless, and in line with what Kraximo did in the 1980s, ACT UP Athens did not address safer sex with regard to transgender people. A key transgender ACT UP activist, Galiatsatou, played a vital role in this regard: He insisted on "keeping the campaigns against two forms of prejudice, against transgender people and people with AIDS, separate, while getting involved in both".[182]

The message that safer sex could be pleasurable, and the complex interfaces of HIV/AIDS and queer activism, underpinned not only ACT UP Athens' texts but also its actions, and the sexual lives of some of its members. ACT UP Athens' activists used humor to present safer sex as being enjoyable rather than simply a means of avoiding danger. For example, in June 1994, they wore outfits resembling condoms to distribute leaflets containing information on HIV prevention in Athens.[183] Galiatsatou also recounted ACT UP members distributing condoms in front of the Minion department store while being playfully dressed up in Santa outfits.[184] ACT UP Athens activists also distributed condoms in bars and at events jointly organized with other campaigners, like those of Kentro in 1996.[185] While these actions addressed sexually active people regardless of their sexual orientation, the group's fundraising activities drew on the strong links of some of its queer members with gay bars. Again, Vallianatos and Galiatsatou narrated performing in a "joyful" manner, doing shows,

[182] Interview with author.

[183] Klironomou, "AIDS."

[184] Interview with author.

[185] Klironomou, "AIDS."; on the joint event with the Kentro, see the leaflet "AIDS: Mas afora", 1995.

and talking about safer sex, to promote the latter and seek financial support for ACT UP.[186] Similarly, Vallianatos recounted how engaging with ACT UP combined the emotions of outrage and pleasure also for some of its queer members' "intimate relationships": "Most of our work revolved around pain, fatigue, fear, and outrage, but these go hand-in-hand with pleasure in people's lives."[187] He did not give further details, possibly to avoid infringing on other activists' intimate lives. It is unclear whether affairs between gay men and lesbian women, which existed in ACT UP chapters in the USA but were criticized there, also appeared in ACT UP Athens.[188]

Depicting and enacting safer sex as pleasurable in ACT UP Athens campaigns was linked to transnational flows and local developments. Regarding the former, Revenioti had already been circulating translations of texts from northwestern Europe linking joy to safer sex in the 1980s, as mentioned above. Meanwhile, shifting media cultures, and changing perceptions of the significance of pleasure in Greek society more broadly also left their imprint on ACT UP Athens. Vallianatos helped shape a novel conceptualization of masculinity in the late 1980s in the mainstream Greek magazine Click, founded in 1987. The magazine's perception of masculinity was oriented towards the pursuit of pleasure, and its model man was expected to be a consumer who followed trends in fashion and took care of their body, such as by using perfume.[189] This approach was in sync with a broader change in Greek society from the late 1980s: seeking happiness became the norm, supplanting an ethics system that valued hard

[186] Vallianatos, Galiatsatou, interviews with author.

[187] Interview with author.

[188] Cvetkovich, Archive, 191–97.

[189] Panagiotis Zestanakis, "Ekdoches tou andrismou sta ellinika lifestyle entypa tis dekaetias tou '80: Playboy, Status, Click (1985–1990)" (MA diss., University of Crete, 2008).

work.[190] Safer sex was a vital element for this pleasure-oriented masculinity in Click, an association that Vallianatos reinforced in the interviews he gave to that magazine on HIV prevention.[191]

Meanwhile, although the outrage-based emotional tone of ACT UP Athens safer sex campaigns largely built on ACT UP activism elsewhere, and punk cultures, their content owed more to ideas of scientists and moderate campaigners in other Western countries, and its own research. Regarding the latter, ACT UP Athens activists researched in 1996 same-sex patterns in venues that homosexuals frequented, without, however, specifying the gender of their target group.[192] Meanwhile, relevant ACT UP leaflets cited the work of Luc Montagnier and Peter Duesberg, pioneers in the study of HIV and AIDS, to argue that safer sex does not eliminate but minimizes the risk of acquiring HIV.[193] Aidshilfe's influence on ACT UP Athens' approach to safer sex should particularly be imputed to Vallianatos' respect for Pollak's work and his ensuing ties with Aidshilfe's members from the late 1980s, mainly through mail and the international AIDS conferences in which he participated.[194] While neither my interviewees nor the available ACT UP Athens' leaflets indicate that ACT UP Athens was influenced by Aidshilfe in advocating safer sex for women, the efforts of both groups converged in this regard: in the 1990s, Aidshilfe increasingly reflected on how to

[190] Vassilis Vamvakas and Panagis Panagiotopoulos, "I Ellada sti dekaetia tou '80," in Vamvakas and Panagiotopoulos, I Ellada, lxv–lxix.

[191] For instance, Amaryllis, "International Sex," Click (May 1990): 100–104; "Grigoris Vallianatos. Mia syntomi kouventa me ton Petro Kostopoulo," Click (December 1991): 155.

[192] KEEL, Omades Ergasias, "Eisigisi gia ta telika keimena ton omofylofilon atomon," (5 May 1997): 1.

[193] "En touto nika."

[194] Interview with author.

address women in its campaigns.[195] Therefore, it seems that instead of translating Aidshilfe material partially or in its entirety, ACT UP Athens' members were inspired by the gist of the former's ideas in the early-to-mid 1990s.

In dealing with the issue of lesbian safer sex, ACT UP Athens was likely also guided by the actions and transnational contacts of the Greek lesbian activist Maria Katsikadakou (Cyber). Vallianatos recounted that "we [in ACT UP] were in close contact with Cyber".[196] Cyber, who initially identified as a woman and from 1996-1997 as a transgender man but also "in-between" femininity and masculinity, was a recognizable figure among lesbian women, running women-only parties called Cyberdyke, which took place from as early as 1995 in the Athens-based clubs Booze and Berlin.[197] In shaping her/his activist and lifestyle ideas, also on safer sex, Cyber interacted with lesbian activists from other Western countries. A meeting point was Skala Eressou. According to Venetia Kantsa, from the late 1970s and the early 1980s lesbian feminists visited the village in Lesvos.[198] Among them was Cyber, who narrated that she/he first learned about safer sex there: "The first community addressing AIDS and lesbians were the German lesbians I met in Eressos [which is near Skala Eressou]. There, a Greek lesbian flirted with a German one … [and they went to a tent together] and the Greek

[195] Dimitra Kostimpas and Hella von Unger, "'Wir wagen es […] all unser Arbeiten Prävention zu nennen': Das Konzept der Strukturellen Prävention der Deutschen Aidshilfe," Österreichische Zeitschrift für Soziologie 48 (2023): 278–79.

[196] Interview with author.

[197] See the following autobiography: Maria Cyber/Maria Katsikadakou, Mia lesviaki zoi (Athens: To Rodakio, 2021), 56, 58. Cyber mentions there that she is fine with "he" and "she" as pronouns. On the Cyberdyke parties, see Cyber, Lesviaki, 65.

[198] Venetia Kantsa, Dynamei files, dynamei eromenes (Athens: Polychromos Planitis, 2010).

left after two seconds, screaming, 'she is crazy, she has put on a kind of a glove [meaning a condom]!' In 1997, I started running workshops on lesbians and safer sex."[199]

Around 1997, an internal conflict emerged in ACT UP Athens amid broader changes in HIV/AIDS activism in Athens. No longer regarding it as radical and believing it had moved too close to state institutions, Galiatsatou withdrew from the group.[200] Meanwhile, the introduction of antiretroviral therapy (HAART) became the new treatment standard for HIV also in Greece and helped reduce substantially HIV-related deaths from 1997.[201] Whether this development brought shifts in HIV/AIDS campaigns in Greece merits further study. In any case, safer sex promotion continued and diversified further. In the late 1990s, the material used in safer sex campaigns was also reconfigured to include photos of people having sex. A case in point is the campaign material of Synthesi, an organization created in the early 2000s that combined HIV/AIDS and queer campaigns.[202] Synthesi maintained close links with transnational subjects, such as the European AIDS Treatment Group.[203] Leaflets with such photos were also at the forefront of the expanding, but fraught, synergies between the state and civil society associations in HIV/AIDS campaigns: Part of KEEL's apparatus was the Committee for Information, in which campaigners also participated, including ACT UP Athens and Kentro.[204] The committee debated issues such as how to prevent the spread of HIV. In May 1997, working groups collaborating with the committee offered their suggestions on how to design leaflets involving and addressing gay men and lesbian

[199] Cyber, Lesviaki, 38–39.

[200] Interview with author.

[201] National Public Health Organization, HIV Surveillance in Greece 35 (December 2020): 30.

[202] For instance, see the booklet "Gay Sex: I siopi ton teknon," n.d.

[203] Interview of Makis Leonidou (pseudonym) with the author. Leonidou was a member of Synthesi.

[204] On the Committee, see, for instance, KEEL, "Eisigisi."

women.[205] The actual leaflets drew on safer sex ideas and images from the UK and Germany, and the research ACT UP Athens conducted in 1996 on the sexual patterns of homosexual individuals. Nevertheless, the committee served as a battleground of conflicting approaches to safer sex, which resulted in KEEL declining to include its logo on these leaflets.[206] One way or another, the changing landscape in safer sex campaigns in Greece was influenced by cross-border flows of ideas.

Concluding, this article has shown that the increasing engagement of several queer activists in Athens with HIV/AIDS campaigns, and the diversification of their safer sex perceptions, were catalyzed by a selective reception of emotion-laden ideas from HIV/AIDS campaigns in the US and Western Europe. The impact of those cross-border transfers on Athens-based queer activists was complex but important, resulting in queer HIV/AIDS activists in Athens developing an affective solidarity deeply inspired by HIV/AIDS activism elsewhere in Western Europe and the US without necessarily being directly involved in it. Research so far has mostly focused on the transnational coordination and synchronicity of HIV/AIDS campaigns in northwestern Europe and North America. By contrast, this article helps recalibrate the geographical focus of such research and illuminates the variability of such transfers involving Athens-based queer activists. The latter only occasionally interacted face-to-face with the expanding collective action on HIV/AIDS elsewhere in the West. Similarly, Athens-based queer HIV/AIDS activists did not engage in simultaneous transnational

[205] KEEL, "Eisigisi."

[206] "O hiv ki emeis: Gia tous antres pou agapoun antres"; "oi lesvies, to sex kai to hiv," n.d., ca. late 1990s/early 2000s. The leaflets were published after 1997, when the abovementioned working groups collaborating with the Committee wrote their recommendations. The leaflets do not mention organisations engaging with HIV/AIDS campaigns that appeared in the early 2000s. Thus, they must have been published between 1997 and the early 2000s.

HIV/AIDS actions with their counterparts in Western Europe and North America. Moreover, these transnational flows shaped the HIV/AIDS campaigns of these queer activists in tandem with transnational but also local punk cultures, shifting media landscapes in Greece, and the specificities of queer activist coalitions in Athens. Nevertheless, social developments in Greece since the 1970s, especially the increasing student migration from Greece to other Western countries, and the influx of lesbian tourists from the latter to Lesvos, helped HIV/AIDS activists in Greece interact with HIV/AIDS campaigning patterns and ideas developed in other parts of Western Europe, and in North America. As a result, the intensifying confrontational HIV/AIDS activism in the West left its imprint on Athens, particularly affecting an emotional language that mobilized queer activists in Athens to participate in HIV/AIDS campaigns. Such mobilization escalated from bold public interventions in the 1980s to the outrage-driven creation and systematic campaigns of ACT UP Athens from 1993. The latter was the first HIV/AIDS activist group in Greece to be co-founded by individuals engaged openly in queer activism, including gay cisgender men and a transgender man and a transgender woman. While selectively receiving tendencies in ACT UP campaigns in other countries, ACT UP Athens was not necessarily less inclusive than the former in terms of involving trans activists. Crucially, trans activists in ACT UP Athens were more visible compared to other ACT UP chapters in the West, like Paris. Sexuality figured prominently in these bold public interventions of queer activists in Athens in the 1980s and outrage-laden HIV/AIDS campaigns in the 1990s. Crucially, emotives of outrage underpinned ACT UP Athens' texts and actions, which aimed to challenge the resilient in the 1980s and 1990s HIV-related stigmatization of men who had sex with men. In this vein, and building on the similar efforts after 1985 of some Athens-based queer activists who subsequently joined ACT UP Athens, this group promoted pleasurable safer sex for all individuals in line with their sexual orientation. In so doing, and being influenced by

moderate HIV/AIDS campaigners, as well as lesbian activists, in northwestern Europe and the US, ACT UP Athens activists increasingly addressed the issue of safer sex for lesbian women in the 1990s. Still, this diversification was not bereft of exclusions: ACT UP Athens' safer sex perceptions ignored people of color in the period under study. Moreover, despite the involvement of transgender activists in ACT UP Athens, its safer sex advice did not explicitly address transgender people. These intricate links between transgender and HIV/AIDS activism in Athens can still help diversify research on HIV/AIDS activism in Europe. Such work has challenged a prominent public health scholarship narrative on HIV/AIDS focusing on biomedical progress, but has hitherto largely neglected the contribution of transgender people to transnational flows of HIV/AIDS campaigning ideas, and collective action on HIV/AIDS at the local and national level.

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