
Listening to the Streets: An Audiovisual Essay on Sound and Protest in Contemporary Greece

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Resumen

Abstract

This paper offers an illustrative and analytical exploration of audiovisual media that capture the sounds of protest and dissent in contemporary Greece -ranging from user-generated content shared on digital platforms to footage produced by public broadcasters, including YouTube videos, news reports, and materials created by activist media collectives. By shaping the sonic landscapes of mobilisations, demonstrations, strikes, and riots, these recordings present a broad gamut of auditory expressions, such as chanted slogans, protest songs, sirens, ambient urban noise, whistles, booing, shouting, tear gas explosions, stun grenades, and baton strikes.

Presented as an oral communication accompanied by an audiovisual essay, this project juxtaposes and recontextualises these sonic fragments to highlight their political, affective, and symbolic force. Adopting a pluralistic ethnomusicological perspective, it critically engages with the aesthetic and emotional dimensions of protest, examining how the interplay of sound and image functions not merely as documentation, but as a performative act that contributes to the shaping of collective memory and the articulation of counter-hegemonic narratives.

Special attention is given to the role of sound in these media artefacts, arguing that protest audio constitutes a distinct field of both sonic resistance and official power -blurring the boundaries between documentation and artistic expression. Often raw, affectively charged, and deeply embedded in local context, the audiovisual essay presents the effects of mainstream and activist media discourse, foregrounding the embodied, lived experience of political struggle and highlighting the epistemological and methodological potential of multimodal research. It argues that sound-image assemblages can reshape how ethnomusicologists engage with conflict, offering new ways of listening to, engaging with, and intervening in the politics of conflict in the contemporary world.

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Author's bio

Nick Poulakis (PhD in Ethnomusicology and Cinema) serves as a staff member of the Ethnomusicology and Cultural Anthropology Laboratory at the Department of Music Studies of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, where he teaches film music, ethnographic cinema, and applied ethnomusicology. He is also an adjunct instructor in the Modern Greek Culture Program of the Hellenic Open University. He has been involved in various research and artistic projects and has written several articles and book chapters on ethnomusicological films, video life-stories of migrants, anthropology of film and TV music, media education, and audiovisual literacy. His recent books in Greek include *Musicology and Cinema: Critical Approaches to the Music of Modern Greek Films*, *Music from Optical Theater and Silent Cinema*, and *World Musics: Soundscapes, Identities, and Practices*.

Contraseña: sound, image, audiovisual, media, Greece, protest