

# Greek TV Documentary Journalism: Discourses, Forms and Authorship

Afroditi Nikolaidou

Panteion University, Hellenic Open University

## ABSTRACT

*In the era of media convergence, it is more and more evident that journalism, filmmaking, television, cinema and the Internet all merge on an empirical, industrial and conceptual level. The effect of this tendency – as a result of the ongoing transformations of media culture during the economic crisis, namely after 2010 – is apparent in Greece, too, with the recent rise of online documentary journalism. However, research on the history of Greek TV documentary is practically non-existent. Taking on Jason Mittell's notion of the TV genre as a cultural category (Jason Mittell 2001; 2004; 2008), this paper explores the "discursive practices", the formal changes and the establishment of authorship of this TV documentary and journalistic genre that is at times called "enimerotiko programma" (literally "informative programme") and at others documentary. The paper delves into the three most acknowledged TV series created by journalists Stelios Kouloglou (Reportaz horis synora/Reportage Without Borders), Sotiris Danezis (Emboleimi zoni/War Zone) and Yorgos Avgeropoulos (Exandas) that were often presented at the Thessaloniki Documentary Festival.*

## KEYWORDS

Documentary Journalism  
Genre as cultural category  
Greek current-affairs programme  
Greek TV documentary  
Greek TV history

## INTRODUCTION: QUESTIONS OF HISTORY

Although the confluence, and at the same time divergence, of journalism practice and documentary filmmaking has always been a part of the discourse about the documentary genre,<sup>1</sup> histories on non-fiction film include a variety of TV programmes or cinematic works that were created for mainly informative reasons (Ellis & McLane 2006; Beattie 2004). Moreover, considering the expansion of media convergence, it is increasingly evident that journalism practice, filmmaking, television, cinema and the Internet all merge on an empirical, industrial and conceptual level, so that even the discussion of distinguishing between documentary journalism and documentary film has become obsolete – unless one refers to television's older forms. Statements like John Corner's in *The Art of Record* that "documentary television has been dominated by the journalistic – the use of the documentary form as a means of *expanded reportage*" (1996: 2) are less valid twenty years later, since both journalism and documentary have been going through a transformation, partly because of a changing technological environment that foregrounds new types of visual journalism, of professional practices and ethics.

The emergence of what is known as the "New Documentary" (Bruzzi 2006) changed attitudes toward documentary and journalism. For instance, Michael Moore, a journalist principally, defended journalism but at the same time challenged both documentary's "truth claim" and established journalistic values like accuracy and impartiality already with his first film, *Roger and Me* (1989). To those who accused him of inconsistency, of mixing shots from various spaces and times, of presenting inaccurate information when constructing arguments, Michael Moore has replied that he uses documentary in the same way one would write an editorial, an opinion leading article<sup>2</sup>. Another way, in which the journalistic and documentary cultures merged, came about from the transition of journalism into the digital environment and later into social media. Journalistic videos, documentaries produced by media organizations, episodic or autonomous, feature or short, interactive, transmediatic or linear, become a respected and indispensable form in the news industry, but also in the Festival circuit. *New York Times* launches the very successful, both artistically and journalistically, Op-Docs in 2011 and Al Jazeera Documentary Channel starts in 2007 and is now a very powerful producer of internationally acclaimed documentaries that blur the line between documentary filmmaking and journalism, between television, theatrical and online distribution and exhibition. This shifting environment is manifested also in various public discussions and reports, like the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Open Documentary

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<sup>1</sup> See Grierson's distinction (1998 [1932]) between higher and lower categories of recorded material.

<sup>2</sup> For an overview on the discussions about Michael Moore's work, see Kaklamanidou (2009) and Paschalidis (2009).

Lab Report (2015) on the intersection of interactive documentary and digital journalism or the Center for Media and Social Impact (School of Communication, American University) at Sundance 2015.<sup>3</sup>

The effect of this tendency, as a result of the ongoing transformations of media culture during the economic, post-2010 crisis,<sup>4</sup> is apparent in Greece, too, with the recent rise of online documentary journalism like the *Prism GR* (2011) by Nina Maria Paschalidou and *Debtocracy* (2011) by Katerina Kittidis and Aris Hatzistefanou, a form of activist journalism as Lydia Papadimitriou (2016) has explained. At the same time, popular current affairs and historical-interest TV programmes, which are categorized as documentaries and are directed by well-known journalists, have enjoyed an extended screening life online and/or pay TV, like Cosmote History Channel (*Mihani tou Xronou/Time Machine* by Christos Vassilopoulos, *To kouti tis Pandoras/Pandora's Box* by Kostas Vaxevanis, etc). Moreover, as Fani Kountouri and Afroditi Nikolaidou (2015) have argued, documentary journalism as a form of the so-called “independent journalism”<sup>5</sup> framed the discourse on the crisis in the Greek public sphere.

This tendency led me to question how this contemporary merging between journalism practice and documentary filmmaking occurred in Greece. Under a Greek film and TV history perspective, the relation of documentary filmmaking

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<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.thewrap.com/how-new-york-times-op-docs-change-the-way-film-and-news-media-intersect/>, <http://cmsimpact.org/media-impact/sundance-2015-documentary-or-journalism/>, <https://www.documentary.org/magazine/message-medium-difference-between-documentarians-and-journalists>, <https://ijnet.org/en/blog/what-journalists-and-documentary-filmmakers-can-learn-one-another>, <http://www.niemanlab.org/2014/10/controlled-chaos-as-journalism-and-documentary-film-converge-in-digital-what-lessons-can-they-share/>. Accessed 20/7/2018.

<sup>4</sup> In fact, one could talk about a post-2008 era taking into consideration the international crisis of 2008 and the December 2008 riots in Athens, that lead to a mediatic visibility of Greece.

<sup>5</sup> “Independent journalism” is a label adopted by the emerging, mostly online media, in the post 2008 era. This media self-positioning as “independent” is established through the profile of the websites (usually in the “who we are” or editorial sections), the frontispieces, or even the website logos, where not only do they use the word “independent”, but also they expose the journalists’ personal trajectories in and against the mainstream media. Moreover, in terms of content, they give voice to activists, social scientists and politicians who do not have broad access to the hegemonic media. Therefore, the identity of “independent journalism” grants more validity and credibility to the content *ab initio* of these outlets with regards to the mainstream media, as it implies a relation of dependence between the latter and the political and economic establishment. The self-labeling as “independent” encapsulates a variety of convergences between traditional and new media and forms of journalism, which point to the dynamic of this trend in the formation of public sphere. Moreover, many of the founders or participants in these media directly or indirectly were aligning with SYRIZA’s announcements at least until the referendum in 2015 (Kountouri & Nikolaidou 2015).

to journalism can be traced as far back as the war newsreels in the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Lambrinos 2005), as well as Dimos Theos and Fotos Lambrinos's *100 ores tou Mai/100 Hours of May* (1964), Roussos Koundouros's *Institouto Morfotikou ke Epistimonikou Kinhmatografou/Institute of Educational and Scientific Cinema* (1953-1967), Leon Loisios's *Elliniki zoi 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> part/Greek Life 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> part* (1964), the "political newsreels" for EDA (Pagoulatos & Stabakis 2006: 326) or even the political documentaries and TV documentaries of the 1970s and 1980s, like Nikos Kavoukidis's *Martyries/Testimonies* (1975) and the TV series *I Ert sti Vorio Ellada/ERT in North Greece* (1978-1985) ERT. These documentaries were made, however, by established cinema filmmakers. On the other hand, popular current affairs TV programmes like the *Reporters* (1981-1988) ERT2 often employed documentary-like techniques<sup>6</sup> (Angelopoulos himself has even directed a short documentary for the first episode), but were never called a documentary series. Valoukos, in his accounts on the history of Greek Television (1998; 2008), has detected the importance of documentary and what is called a "cultural show" (*politistiki ekpobi*) for the evolution and reinforcement of a specific identity of public television until the introduction of private television (1989). As Valoukos explains, it is during the first half of the 1990s (around the Gulf War period) that there is a new "type of TV aesthetics" that replaces TV documentary (1998: 46). This type of TV product often called "travelogue", "chronicle" or "reportage", mixes video and archival material with interviews and expresses the journalist's opinion on important political and social issues. It is here that journalists like Stelios Kouloglou and Pavlos Tsimas replace the classic documentarian. However, Valoukos, on the one hand, does not mention any specific titles, and, on the other, he neglects programmes like *Reporters* that were using the same techniques. His only reference is Fotos Lambrinos's *Enas Oktovris 70 Chronon/October 70 Years Old* (1989-1990) ET1, who again has a filmmaking background. For instance, Costas Hardavellas's *60 Lepta Horis Montaz/60 Minutes Without Editing* (1993) MEGA Channel, a title that clearly refers to the American *60 Minutes* (1968–present) CBS, was one of the programmes with the above characteristics coming straight from a journalistic background and most importantly by the journalist who founded the *Reporters* programme.

My research questions, though, are rather concerned with the intersection of the television and the cinematic field in the post private television era (i.e. after 1989). These fields were and remain discursively divergent.<sup>7</sup> However, the

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<sup>6</sup> Actually, many of the issues discussed in this article like the formation of public personas, the journalist's participation/appearance on location, the TV show's correlation with cinema can be detected in this series. However, further research of the entire show is needed in order to establish this genealogical relationship.

<sup>7</sup> Eva Stefani (2007) is very clear about placing documentary in the art and cinema tradition.

apparent merging takes place with two retrospectives presented at the Thessaloniki Documentary Festival (TDF). The TV documentary series *Exandas* ([2000-2003] Alpha TV; [2003-2013] NET) and *Embolemi zoni/War Zone* (2003-2013) MEGA Channel by acknowledged journalists Yorgos Avgeropoulos and Sotiris Danezis respectively, were screened at TDF (the first in the 2006 and the latter in the 2008 edition) placing their creators among a list of celebrated documentary auteurs. The fact that cinema documentarians protested against the programmer's decision to promote journalism and television by organizing a parallel series of screenings and expressing their disappointment in press release,<sup>8</sup> only proves the still conflicting attitudes towards cinema and TV and the strong emergence and ambivalent approval of TV documentary journalism. In order to comprehend this merging, it is important to place the development of this type of show in the context of the changing audiovisual environment of the 1990s. Stelios Papathanassopoulos (2005) provides a necessary framework of the history of Greek Television as an institution and industry. The "anarchist" emergence and establishment of private television from 1989 onwards, its destructive impact on ERT in terms of advertising revenues, the sudden urge to accommodate the new mediatic environment that led to its 1997 profile and programme transformation<sup>9</sup> (Papathanassopoulos 2005: 298-299); all these appear to be an exegetic context of the discourses described in this paper.

In this respect, this article falls under wider research areas, namely the history of Greek Television, of Television Journalism and the history of Greek Documentary. My main focus is to map out the genealogy of Greek documentary journalism after the emergence of private television, without however including the recent rising of pay TV in Greece (something that would be the focus of another article along with the emergence of online documentary journalism). For that reason, I examine the following questions in three distinct parts:

- a) What are the industrial and cultural discourses about documentary during the 1990s and 2000s that led TV stations and journalists to explore it as a genre?
- b) What are some of the formal changes of the three most acknowledged TV series created by journalists Stelios Kouloglou (*Reportaz horis synora/Reportage Without Borders* [1996-2013] ERT), Sotiris Danezis (*War Zone*) and Yorgos Avgeropoulos (*Exandas*) that led to the presentation of their work at the Thessaloniki Documentary Festival?

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<sup>8</sup> See the reportage of Pavlos Kagios (6/3/2008).

<sup>9</sup> In 1997, ET1 adopts a more entertainment-based profile, and ET2 is renamed NET and plays a more informational and cultural role. In 2003, NET becomes more eclectic and competitive and ET1 adopts a cultural profile, with quality talk shows and documentaries (Papathanassopoulos 2005: 298-299). *Exandas* by Yorgos Avgeropoulos becomes part of the NET programme in 2003.

- c) What kind of journalistic and documentary authorship and authority do these shows promote that could be said to establish a distinct style of journalistic performance?

My paper explores the above issues from a film and television studies perspective, without pointing to the journalistic values or practices of journalistic research, something that would contribute to a Bourdieusian logic of the journalistic field. Moreover, this approach is essential since the dynamics of media and form convergence lead to the erasure of the older distinction between art and journalism, documentary journalism and documentary as an art and film form. In this paper, I explore the transformation of the above mentioned series' formal approach, changing from journalistic to more cinematic.

### **THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS: DOCUMENTARY JOURNALISM AS A GENRE**

The framework of such a research is defined by three topics often addressed by documentary theory and television studies. The first is the ambiguity of the word documentary itself, a "slippery" term that is better used as an adjective (Ellis 2005: 342; Corner 2000: 682). This vagueness is evident both in discussion and practice within the Greek media industry as it is presented in the next part of this article.

The second topic concerns the even greater definitional slipperiness of TV documentary "as a form of journalism", a form that Corner traces to have been established in British television in the 1950s due to competition "with ITV's network being available to viewers as well as the BBC" (1995: 84). This mode of TV programming "addresses topical subjects in a series format using journalistic conventions" (Hill 2005: 19). *60 Minutes* (1968–present) CBS, *World in Action* (1963-1998) ITV and others often resemble the magazine style format or fall into the current affairs category, but are presented as part of documentary history (Ellis & McLane 2006). In recognizing four types of factual categories (News, Current Affairs and Investigations, Documentary and Popular Factual), Hill recognizes the sort of "one off investigative documentary" (2007: 45-47) that falls into the current affairs programme category, which is broadly described as being usually presenter-led; containing political debate, long-form journalistic inquiries and audience participation; and exposing domestic and topical themes that derive from the news agenda and mix studio-based talks with reports and archival footage. Similarly, Keith Beattie finds that:

[C]urrent affairs programming moves away from the format of the news bulletin in those cases where a programme is composed of short, filmed reports on a single topic. In such cases, current affairs programming intersects with a related, though distinct, form of television news reporting, that of the longform television news documentary. (2004: 161)

The three series I investigate fall into the monothematic “current affairs” programme (in Greek often called “*enimerotiki ekpobi*”/“*informative programme*”), but the adopted label “documentary” along with a change in context and form point towards a third theoretical account that frames this research. As attested by Corner, there is a long-standing theoretical distinction between *art* and *reportage*. This distinction in relation to documentary’s status “as aesthetic artefact and as referential record” is intensified by the uneven cultural status of cinema and television (1996: 11).

However, the above frameworks are based on American and British television. Definitions, forms and functions of TV genres should also be placed within local and national frameworks. Literature on Greek TV history has scarcely examined documentary journalism. National television practices, cultural discourses about this type of programming and its history, and industrial choices that have shaped the format, identity and cultural status of these series, are so far unknown.

Jason Mittell’s (2001; 2004; 2008) notion of the TV genre as a cultural category is a very useful tool for tracing both the formal and “discursive practices” of the documentary genre in Greece and most importantly the discursive formation of the kind of TV programme that is at times called informative (“*enimerotiko*”) and at others documentary.<sup>10</sup> Mittell’s approach is to “analyze the contextualized generic practices that circulate around and through texts.” (2001: 8). One might look “at what audiences and industries say about genres, what terms and definitions circulate around any given instance of a genre, and how specific cultural concepts are linked to particular genres” (Mittell 2001: 8). Mittell breaks down these discursive practices into definitional, interpretive and evaluative ones (2001: 8; 2004). These discursive practices – that rely on the “discursive formations” by Michel Foucault – can be detected in a variety of texts, practices, documents and discourses.

In this case, these discourses have been gathered from the archive of ERT,<sup>11</sup> the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation (the TV magazine *Radiotileorasi/Radiotelevision*<sup>12</sup> and ERT’s information cards of the Beta tapes), the Thessaloniki Documentary Festival (all the catalogues since 1999), the proceedings from the two industry meetings for documentary in 1993 and 1994

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<sup>10</sup> For instance, the first two episodes of *Reportage Without Borders* are labeled differently in the information card that follows the beta tapes of the shows. The first is labeled as documentary and the second as informative.

<sup>11</sup> I would like to thank everyone at the ERT archive for being extremely helpful during this research project.

<sup>12</sup> *Radiotileorasi* is a weekly Radio and TV magazine published from the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation since 1939. It stopped in 2013, an online version was launched in 2015 and it is a free press since 2017.

(1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting For Documentary Proceedings [henceforth MFDP]) and from press reviews. The study of the documentaries themselves as well as information and opinions gathered from interviews with various relevant sources<sup>13</sup> were indispensable in this research. Firstly, I will outline the discursive and audiovisual contexts within which the three most acknowledged programmes emerge. Subsequently, there will be an examination of the formal mechanisms that changed over the years, ascribing a more artistic status to these shows and a distinct kind of authorship to the journalists. As already stated, this study centers around *Reportage Without Borders* by Stelios Kouloglou, *Exandas* by Yorgos Avgeropoulos and *War Zone* by Sotiris Danezis; a choice based, on the one hand, on the fact that episodes from the three series were screened at the Documentary Thessaloniki Festival; and on the other, because their presenter-creators maintained their journalistic profile, while at the same time expressing views on aesthetics, forms and topics concerning documentary journalism and engaging with different artistic forms.<sup>14</sup>

*Reportage Without Borders* (RWB) is a TV documentary series first screened in January 1996 in ET2. It was created and presented by Stelios Kouloglou, an already acknowledged journalist at the time. *RWB*, using conventions from current affairs programmes was promoted clearly as a documentary series. Most importantly, it has since evolved into a Web platform with the same label since 2008 (*TVXS* which means *TV Without Borders*) that marked the so-called “independent journalism” in Greece during the crisis. Therefore, it is a TV series that has transformed into an entire transmedia pole, popularizing certain new trends of journalism practice (like Web TV and documentary as journalistic tools, citizen journalism, user-generated content, activism journalism, etc). Here, I focus on the first five episodes, broadcast 14 years before the emergence of the economic crisis in Greece (January to June 1996).

*Exandas* by Yorgos Avgeropoulos started broadcasting in 2000 on Alpha, but later moved to ERT in 2003. Although very few episodes from the pre-ERT era are readily available today, this early period is more like a probing period (the episodes do not have a director, but a directing editor, namely *skinothetiki epimelia*) that will lead to the formation of an independent production company that continues to make independent documentaries under the same label during

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<sup>13</sup> Among them, the journalists Stelios Kouloglou, Yorgos Avgeropoulos, Sotiris Danezis, Maria Koufopoulou, the filmmaker and producer Yuri Averov, and Dimitris Kerkinos, Head of Programming at the Thessaloniki Documentary Festival since 2016. Sotiris Danezis was extremely helpful in sharing with me in digital form a large part of his series’ archive.

<sup>14</sup> Stelios Kouloglou has written novels, Sotiris Danezis is also a photographer and Yorgos Avgeropoulos (interview 16/4/2018) explained to me that his knowledge of music and playing in a band helped him in his filmmaking.



the economic crisis.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, journalist Yorgos Avgeropoulos has since become a director, vividly participating with his work in the public discourses about the crisis.

*War Zone* was broadcast on MEGA Channel between 2003 and 2012. The series gradually acquired a cinematic style, especially since Dimitris Gerardis took over as director. Sotiris Danezis never became the director of the series although he was responsible for every directorial and editing input.<sup>16</sup> He also built a strong authorial identity and is regarded as the creator of the series in every respect. As a result, a tribute to his work was presented at the Thessaloniki Documentary Festival in 2008, as was his documentary from the same series *To thavma/The Miracle* in 2010.

## DISCURSIVE TRAJECTORIES FROM TELEVISION TO THE FESTIVAL

During the first half of the 1990s, TV documentary reaches a low point in the American and British environment and is followed by the rise of reality TV. John Ellis mentions that documentary is seen as “an endangered species” (2005: 343) on British Television and Annette Hill marks how the “deregulation and marketization of media industries” (2005: 15) increased the competition and made documentary television a hard-to-survive genre.

Similarly, the first half of the 1990s is a bleak era for Greek documentary – the Ministry of Culture halts funding, the Greek Film Centre kickstarts new programmes that have not yet paid off, technology changes, European programmes emerge and are received with skepticism, and, most importantly, private TV stations are launched, where deregulation and the quest for high audience ratings and advertisement revenues prevail.<sup>17</sup> All these have an impact on public TV that searches for a distinct identity. In the first trimester of 1993, my research shows that documentaries are under-presented in the core schedule of ERT. Three years later, documentary has become a major pillar, especially for ET2 (later NET).<sup>18</sup>

As far as private television is concerned, revenues come from commercials (and not through tax imposed to citizens, and European and state funding as is the

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<sup>15</sup> See <http://www.exandasdocumentaries.com/> and <https://www.smallplanet.gr/en/>. Accessed 25/3/2019.

<sup>16</sup> Interview Sotiris Danezis (21/9/2017).

<sup>17</sup> These are also topics of discussion in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting For Documentary held in 1993 and 1994.

<sup>18</sup> All information in this section (unless otherwise stated) is based on the first trimester of 1993 (*Radiotileorasi* issues 1194-1206), and the entire year from September 1995 until August 1996 (*Radiotileorasi*, issues 1333-1383).

case for public television). This means that viewership becomes more valuable than other programming criteria. As a result, fictional TV series, glamorous variety TV shows (like *Bravo Roula* [1994-2000] MEGA Channel), morning shows and talk shows (a rather popular genre of that era) prevail. Documentary remains scarce during the 1990s and early 2000s. To be more precise, the year *RWB* began in ET2, i.e. 1995-1996, private television would include as documentaries only the “making-of” of well-known American or Greek films that function mostly as promotional tools, a couple of factual entertainment programmes (*Pos pernoun I plousii/Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous* [1984-1995] Syndication), and a couple of documentaries (like *Monster* [1992], a documentary about Stalin screened on ANT1). These documentaries are screened either early in the morning (at 07:00) or in the midnight zone.

In this unfavorable environment, documentary professionals express both their anguish about “a period of crisis” (Papadopoulos and Pagoulatos in 1<sup>st</sup> MFDP [1993: 8, 11]) and their concern about a certain generic ambiguity procured by private television. Private TV stations like MEGA Channel “are not in love” with documentaries and there is a perceived “lack of understanding” between the two worlds (of cinema and documentary, and private television) (1<sup>st</sup> MFDP [1993: 123]). Cinema documentarians and critics discuss (even lament) the replacement of documentary genres like the “propagandist documentary”, the “social problem documentary”, the “protest documentary” with images from within the “news corpus” (Xanthopoulos in 1<sup>st</sup>MFDP [1993: 75]). All the above complete the “definitional discourses” about the mix-up of documentary with “every informational programme” (Gaitanos in 2<sup>nd</sup> MFDP [1994: 12]), with documentation and fiction (Papakyriakopoulos in 2<sup>nd</sup> MFDP [1994: 33, 35]). Most importantly, they denounce the rise of the “era of reportage” that unfortunately blurs the dividing lines between documentary and reportage (Lambrou in 2<sup>nd</sup> MFDP [1994: 35-36]).<sup>19</sup>

The anguish about a generic uncertainty is complemented by “interpretive discourses” on documentary. Kouloglou (interview 10/3/2018), Avgeropoulos (interview 16/4/2018) and Danezis (interview 21/9/2017) do mention the prejudice against documentary in the cycles of private TV during the 1990s and early 2000s. Documentary was considered “boring” and certainly not something sellable to advertisers, therefore private stations were not willing to name these series as documentaries. Kouloglou’s first TV documentary journalism series was for SKAI and was called *Idikos apestalmenos/Special Correspondent* (1993-1994), but the series was not defined as documentary, although conceptually it was.

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<sup>19</sup> Another critic insists on the damage done by journalists like Hardavelas (a prominent journalist at the time) and others of his kind, who “without any shame get into the bedroom and thus shoot documentary in the back” and “kill the very notion of documentary” (Frangoulis in 2<sup>nd</sup>MFDP [1994: 55]).

Avgeropoulos claimed that Alpha was selling his documentary series to advertisers as a travelogue (*taxidiotiki ekpompi*). Accordingly, the description of the first season of *War Zone* did not include the word documentary. Danezis and the media only start presenting his work as a documentary series during the second season.<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, public television under this mediatic environment starts promoting documentary as the genre that manifests the truth (Vlahogianni 1996). By 1995-1996, when Stelios Kouloglou's series begins, ERT starts adopting a dynamic stance towards becoming a supporter, producer and distributor of documentaries. ET1, ET2 and ET3 devote a large part of their daily schedules to programmes labeled as documentaries, among them Greek, British, Canadian, Australian, German and a few French and Japanese productions. According to their titles, brief synopses or extended promotion in *Radiotileorasi*, documentaries are devoted to ethnographic, religious, history and art history themes. Yannis Exarhos, ET2 Chief Executive Officer in 1996, explicitly explains the decision to highlight documentary in the public television programming within the context of the private television rise and its illusionary world:

[O]ur televisual landscape was and is intense and dangerous since it presents illusionary elements. There is a deficit in the world of reality. [...] Through documentary ET2 connects to the world of the real. (In Vlahogianni 1996: 35)

According to the same CEO press announcement, Kouloglou's documentary series is categorized as documentary of sociological and ethnographic themes and placed next to established or young documentary filmmakers, like Lakis Papastathis, Roviros Manthoulis and Eva Stefani (Vlahogianni 1996). Additionally, TV critics receive, interpret and evaluate these series with a tendency to disclaim documentary's dull status. Between 1996 and 1998 when shows like *RWB*, *Video* (MEGA Channel) by Pavlos Tsimas and other special monothematic programmes by journalists appear, TV critics praise their "revealing", "informational" aspect and even draw parallels with the effect fiction films have on audience.<sup>21</sup>

Most importantly, the discussion in the 1990s and 2000s about TV documentary and journalism reproduces the longstanding "evaluating discourse" on the low

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<sup>20</sup> Danezis uses the word "documentary" for the first time in his closing presentation in the last episode of the 1<sup>st</sup> season (*Isvoli ston Panama/Invasion in Panama*). The second season of *War Zone* is presented in the media as a documentary series.

<sup>21</sup> See Papadopoulou (3/11/1997), Papadopoulou (10/10/1997), Rigou (5/11/1997), Alexiou, (15/10/1997). However, these critics do not use the word documentary when they interpret and evaluate the shows.

status of television and the high status of cinema as a medium *per se* and specifically as an art form. According to documentary filmmakers of the early 1990s, television has appropriated the “expressive and aesthetic means of documentary”, which is an actual “desecration”, and even “destruction” of the genre (Xanthopoulos in 1<sup>st</sup> MFDP [1993: 25, 75]) and TV programmes are characterized by conventionalism (Pagoulatos in 2<sup>nd</sup> MFDP [1994: 15]). Accordingly, even journalists themselves, like Kouloglou (interview 10/3/2018), Avgeropoulos (interview 16/4/2018) and Danezis (interview 21/9/2017), claim that they were trying to create a more cinematic kind of audiovisual news work, implying thus the aesthetic superiority of cinema and the need for adoption of such a means in their profession.

An equivalent distinction is made between the term “creative documentary” and other types of documentaries or audiovisual documentation. During discussions at the 1993 and 1994 MFDP, the term “creative documentary” is claimed to have first appeared in the newly-founded European Economic Community Funding Programmes for independent projects that were not commissioned by public or private institutions (Papakyriakopoulos in 1<sup>st</sup> MFDP [1993: 88-89]). This also connotes a distinction between the artistic and non-artistic documentary, a discussion raised in the 1<sup>st</sup> MFDP.<sup>22</sup>

More than a decade later, when the retrospective of the *Exandas* at the TDF took place, in a programme that includes episodes of the TV series *Traveling with Maya* (2004-2013) NET<sup>23</sup> and Stelios Kouloglou’s *RWB*,<sup>24</sup> “creative documentary” is clearly used as a European audiovisual policy term, distinguishing itself “from television reportage” (Rammou in Greek Docs Catalogue [2006: 5]). However, in the same catalogue, Dimitris Eipides relates documentary work with “an alternative news broadcast” (Eipides in Greek Docs Catalogue [2006: 2-3]). This co-relation between creative documentary and “alternative news broadcast” challenges the essentialist approach where TV or journalistic programmes lack creativity by default and plays a crucial role in promoting TV productions as a cultural and artistic kind of work meriting exhibition at an international film festival.

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<sup>22</sup> For instance, by anthropologist and film critic Sotiris Dimitriou (1<sup>st</sup>MFDP [1993: 35])

<sup>23</sup> In this type of “travel series”, Maya Tsokli, a presenter and journalist, travels and provides the audience with “cultural, historical, social, political, religious, environmental and touristic information”. See <http://www.onos.tv/travelling-with-maya-tsoclis/overview/>. Accessed 25/3/2019.

<sup>24</sup> In contrast to the above example, it is interesting that the title of the series *RWB* is not mentioned in the TDF catalogues, proving an attempt to disconnect it from the TV show and ascribe an autonomy in distribution and consumption.

Since 1999, the Thessaloniki Documentary Festival is a major modulator of discourses in 21<sup>st</sup> century Greece. NET, having changed its profile in 1997 (along with European regulation, namely 1997 revision of *Television Without Frontiers*), is co-organizer of the first International Documentary Festival. This collaboration created a transnational environment that led to an extensive visibility in the press in favor of attitudes towards European programmes and networks.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, the variety of styles and themes of films that are being included in the programme each year (like the work of directors and journalists Michael Moore, Jon Alpert) do not perpetuate the evaluative distinction between television and cinema, or between works created by journalists or filmmakers. Since the festival's first edition, Dimitris Eipides, the Documentary Festival creator and Director, always underlines in his introductory texts the informational aspect of documentary (and not only its artistic status).<sup>26</sup>

### TV DOCUMENTARY JOURNALISM IN THE 1990s AND 2000s: FORMAL CHANGES

Aside from the changes of the mediatic and discursive environment that contributed to a reflection on documentary genres, on the relation of cinema and TV and to a transformation of its status from something dull to something that might be informative and entertaining (words often used by Eipides in the TDF catalogues), TV documentary journalism underwent certain formal changes that transformed these shows from mere TV products into documentary films released from the screening constraints of television.

Corner (2008b: 124-125) distinguishes between “thick text” and “thin text” documentaries. As he explains, “thick text” documentary is “creatively dense”: “This is a result of its mode of use of such features as narrative design, subjective voice, symbolic suggestiveness and the dynamics of depicted action (including dramatization)” (ibid: 124). According to Corner, this sort of documentary has a stronger authorial status that can often be more important for formal analysis than the thematic intervention in a specific field of knowledge. On the other hand, “thin text” documentaries – and TV documentaries are often included in this category – “work with a more directly reportorial and observational discourse” (ibid). Although they almost never completely disengage from journalistic protocols – like providing background information on an issue or using an expository voice-over – the documentaries of Kouloglou, Avgeropoulos

<sup>25</sup> See Maria Koufopoulou's interviews (2/4/2000; 23/4/2000; 15/10/2000).

<sup>26</sup> See for instance: TDF Catalogue (1999: 9; 2000: 14; 2001: 15). Eipides often uses the words “informational”, “communicative” and “entertaining” when referring to the functions of documentary. On the other hand, Michel Demopoulos, artistic director of the Thessaloniki International Film Festival points (in the same catalogues) to the evaluative distinction between cinema's artistic status and television's “shallowness” and clearly situates documentary within the realm of cinema.

and Danezis are slowly transformed into “thicker” texts and gradually build an authorial identity. For instance, *Mehri tin teleftea stagona/Up to Last Drop: The Secret Water War in Europe* by Yorgos Avgeropoulos (2017) has an elaborate and specific cinematic style based a lot on audiovisual atmosphere and symbolism.

Prerequisites for this evolving documentary “thickness” are the encounter of these journalists with international trends during the Ex-Yugoslavia war (1991-1999). Although private TV channels did not include documentaries in their programming, they nevertheless, in a highly competitive mediatic environment, allowed journalists Kouloglou and Avgeropoulos to become war correspondents (Yugoslavian war, Kosovo). Both of them consider this to have been highly influential for their career, since they got in touch with journalists from major European TV channels where practices like long-form reportages or documentary were more common.<sup>27</sup>

More specifically, Kouloglou worked as a correspondent during the Yugoslav Wars in the 1990s – he was writing for newspapers and did current affairs programmes on behalf of SKAI and Ant1 Radio. So, when he went on to create *RWB*, he focused on themes he already knew well and had spent time with. All three journalists expressed their objections to the Greek broadcast journalism of the period. Time, above all, was a vital and differentiating factor; time for research, editing<sup>28</sup> and screen time in order to expose their theme, something radically different to the quick pace and rhythm of TV news, reportages, or the fragmentation of talk shows or magazines. Moreover, in terms of production, the three series include in their teams established filmmakers, or young filmmakers that will later work for cinema, too, like film directors Constantina Voulgaris and Yuri Averov.

Within this environment, the three series explored a variety of documentary modes and stylistic choices. In their quest for a more cinematic means of expression they accomplish what John Corner (2008a) calls “pictorial creativity”, even if it remains one of illustrative function. “Pictorial creativity” includes less frontal presence of the journalist, less voice-over (inserted text provides the necessary information), elaborate mise-en-scène, mobile framing, change of focus, characters’ point of view shots, use of visual metaphors, sounds, shots and testimonies that add to the atmosphere and do not merely provide information.

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<sup>27</sup> The mini-series *Death of Yugoslavia* (1995) BBC and the subsequent feature-length *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation* (1995) was a very influential piece of work on the subject.

<sup>28</sup> Avgeropoulos actually claimed that he left Alpha TV and formed his own production company because he needed much more time in the editing room (interview 16/4/2018).

The major characteristic of this type of series is the studio-based presentation and the journalists' frontal medium shot presentation on location. The use of such a convention is not mandatory and will eventually wane. When used in the first seasons of the series, it serves a twofold function: it establishes the genre, since the journalists use the word "documentary" in order to present the episode<sup>29</sup> (doing away with any ambiguity), and it also establishes their authorship, as I discuss later hereby.

From early on, *RWB*'s first five episodes contain a variety of conventions and techniques attaining thus a more flexible form. Every episode is broken into five parts, and in between the presenter introduces and comments on the subject. This type of studio presentation, where the presenter is seated or standing up while behind him a screen projects preview clips of the upcoming documentary (a type of presentation used for other current affairs programmes and, later on, for documentaries like *War Zone*), embraces a "documentary" that seems to exist autonomously (it even begins with its own opening credits sequence) inside the overall show (in the same way a reportage would be used as an insert).

Studio presentation forms an interpretive and contextual shell around the "documentary". In fact, Kouloglou's second episode does not include a studio-based presentation, nor a frontal presentation on location. In this episode, "Stelios Kouloglou"<sup>30</sup> explores the profession and personality of journalist Alfonso Rojo, and follows him to Sarajevo and Madrid using a participatory and less expository method. Avgeropoulos's *Exandas* does not have a studio-based presentation, but in the early episodes the journalist presents his theme on location (in medium shots). Later on, this reportage-style technique is minimized when he forms his own production company and becomes a director. In episodes like *Delta-I vromikes doulies tou petreleou/Delta-Oil's Dirty Business* (2006) it is obvious that the expository mode is mixed with the participatory and the observational. Danezis eliminates studio presentation and on-location

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<sup>29</sup> In his initial verbal presentation Stelios Kouloglou talks about "a new broadcast series" and then in the middle of this very first episode he explains that "after our return from Bosnia where we were filming this *documentary*", or later he explains that "it is different to walk for five minutes on a suspicious [for mines] area for the purposes of a *documentary* and another thing to live for years within a landmine". In the opening presentation of the second episode, Stelios Kouloglou again, talks about how the "idea for this *documentary*" was born in Moscow in 1993". In the next three episodes there is not such a mention although episode number 2 has no presentation and functions as an one-off documentary. Moreover, in the final episode the presenter seems to be very cautious as he mentions that the programme includes "three reportages" on Russia, one that refers to the nouveau-poor, one to the nouveau-rich and one to the women who try to escape through marriages.

<sup>30</sup> I put Stelios Kouloglou in quotation marks in order to differentiate him from his off-screen persona. See the next section of the paper.

presentation during the fourth season (2006-2007) when he starts collaborating with director Dimitris Gerardis. From then on, *War Zone* documentaries become more cinematic in the sense that they acquire less voice-over and more “pictorial creativity” through visual metaphors.<sup>31</sup> *Exandas* and *War Zone* gradually embrace shots that do not just provide information but also deliver an atmosphere<sup>32</sup> since they function as “proper indices”, to use Barthes’s terminology, on narrative structure analysis (1977: 96).

Another formal element that these TV programmes conquer is the original music score. Kouloglou acknowledges its importance from as far back as 1997, when he hires Dimitra Galani to compose and sing for the episode *Sinomosia Agapis/Love Conspiracy* (26/5/1997) ET2 that is promoted as a love story between a Bosnian Muslim woman and a Greek Christian man. Both Avgeropoulos and Danezis introduce original music to the programmes in their fourth season. Avgeropoulos (interview 16/4/2018) asserts that he needs an original music score because of the rights one has to pay if the documentary is screened elsewhere, namely at a festival, or bought by a sales agency. Although it seems to be a choice of necessity, it is also a choice that adds artistic value, cultural capital and removes the chains that strictly tie each programme to a Greek TV screening (where music rights are ensured).

In the years to come, the series minimize conventions that tie them to TV genres like the news presentation and informative programmes, and acquire more visual elaboration. The series’ content (international current affairs), production values and formal choices overcome a standard national TV environment and disengage the episodes from being exclusively broadcast on TV.

## THE JOURNALIST AS AUTEUR AND PERFORMER

Although there is wide recognition of the collaborative dimension of the medium of film, and the acknowledgement of different kinds of auteurs, like the performers, producers and even the studio,<sup>33</sup> the director remains a central figure in film historiography, cinema poetics and film criticism. Accordingly, documentary directors like Agnès Varda, Werner Herzog, Errol Morris have been praised as auteurs focusing on their unique cinematic style, concrete artistic universe and specific thematic axes (Hughes 2016).

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<sup>31</sup> For instance, when Danezis uses the word “puzzle” to describe the personality of incestuous Josef Fritzl (*To ema tou Josef/Joseph’s Blood*, 2008-2009), pieces of a puzzle actually recreate a VFX representation of Josef’s photograph.

<sup>32</sup> For instance, the last shot with the open door in *Dio onomata gia mia diktatoria/Two Names For A Dictatorship* (*War Zone*, 2007-2008), or the ironic use of music in *Enas Anysihos Amerikanos/A Worried American* (*War Zone*, 2007-2008).

<sup>33</sup> See the second part of the edited book by Grant (2008).



In my study, the style of the different programmes cannot be considered as the locus of authorship because, although there appears a kind of “pictorial creativity”, this creativity does not form a strong, specific, exclusive stylistic identity for each programme until much later. Rather, authorship rests with the journalist and not the director of the film, with the former recapitulating and reinforcing his authority in the general mediatic field. *RWB*, *Exandas* and *War Zone* have different directors at the beginning. Public announcements refer to Stelios Kouloglou, Yorgos Avgeropoulos and Sotiris Danezis as creators of these documentary programmes, even though *RWB*’s director is mostly Andreas Apostolides; Avgeropoulos collaborates with Dimitris Gerardis before he takes over as director. *War Zone*’s director is the TV director Manos Volanis, and later Dimitris Gerardis who has a cinematic background.

In fact, television authorship is more complicated than the filmic one and relates to the construction of “public personas” (see Kraszewski 2008) and to journalistic authority (Zelizer 1990). Moreover, the collaborative aspect of the medium and creative experts, like the showrunner or commissioning editor (in reference to American or British TV), are more central. The notions of “authorship by responsibility”, “by management” and “authorship as a product”, to which Mittell (2015) refers in his study of fiction television, nonetheless apply for non-fictional programmes. This synergy between production practices and “the romantic notion of singular authorship” (Mittell 2015: 87) is reinforced in the case of documentary journalists because of their status as public personas constructed through their actual print journalism, other written work and electronic media exposure. Journalists might be authors by responsibility, but at the same time they are writers of the script and voice over, and presenters, a sort of auteur-performer.

Stella Bruzzi, based on Peter Wollen’s distinction between the author within the text and beyond it, distinguishes between the documentarian Nick Broomfield and “Nick Broomfield”, the latter being the auteur as he appears within his documentaries (Bruzzi 2006: 208). This distinction can be used to explain authorship in documentary journalism, since these works have a more “openly authored style” (ibid: 210) that is directly related to the journalist-presenter, who is responsible for thematic and formal decisions, and one that challenges notions of observational and journalistic objectivity. Keith Beattie in his chapter about “Television Documentary Journalism” discusses the strategies of journalist John Pilger in delivering importance not only in the events he reports on, but also forming a specific authorship by questioning long professed values, like impartiality and balance, and building authority through proximity to the events. Moreover, his on-screen journalistic identity consists of wearing a specific attire, that promotes the “professional hunter, or contemporary explorer or committed roving reporter” (2004: 177), of verbal references to his long career, of explicit

political comments along with a specific “calm, measured and uniform” vocal tone that expresses the rationality of the expert against any dreadful event (ibid: 179). The “theatrical elements”, the gestures, postures and vocal enunciation (Pleios 2011: 245-246) of the journalists’ presentation contribute to their screen personas and the show’s authorship, since current affairs programmes are attributed to their presenters-journalists, regardless of who the director is. The *RWB* and *Exandas*’ opening credits explicitly state that the series are *by* Stelios Kouloglou and *by* Yorgos Avgeropoulos (during the ERT era), while *War Zone*’s titles use the preposition *with* Sotiris Danezis attributing an authorial credit also to the channel.

Although *RWB* is not directed by Kouloglou, the first press release in the opening paragraphs announces a documentary series of international affairs and mentions both the channel (ET2) and the presenter/journalist Stelios Kouloglou. Andreas Apostolides, the director, is mentioned at the end of the press release along with the line producer (*Radiotileorasi* issue 1354 [1996: 69]). In every announcement or TV criticism of the show the director is barely mentioned, if at all. This is not only due to the fact that Stelios Kouloglou was actually writing the script and deciding about directorial detail,<sup>34</sup> but also because, by that time, Kouloglou was already an established journalist with a distinct voice, as attested by his articles on Russia and Yugoslavia in various newspapers and popular magazines (*KLIK*), and his books (1986, 1988). He was literally an author. At the same time, his radio shows since 1989 have used similar strategies to his TV series, and Kouloglou also hosts a similar show, but without the documentary label, on the private station SKAI (Kouloglou interview 10/3/2018). His trajectory through different media and genres, on the one hand, builds a transmediatic and intergeneric authorship, and, on the other, relies on media convergence (radio, TV, press) that will later be encapsulated in his website, TVXS.gr.

Most importantly, his roving reporter persona in the turbulent times of the dismantling of Eastern Europe and Balkan regions is used and reinforced in the series’ opening sequence – one that remained the same and is a trademark for the series: snapshots from warzones, recognizable figures like Clinton and Gorbachev superimposed with entry stamps from Stelios Kouloglou’s actual passport that establish his professional function as a “passport journalist”. The credit sequence explicitly builds and foregrounds Kouloglou’s authorship and authority through his proximity to various turbulent major affairs of global interest.

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<sup>34</sup> The director might not have been part of the crew when they were travelling abroad. Moreover, some of the material was filmed even before the beginning of the series and was used again with complementary shootings (Kouloglou interview 10/3/2018).

The other two series also highlight an approach that resembles that of their international counterparts, but each one builds authorship through different traits. The opening credits of *Exandas* point to its international themes that unite the world under a humanistic global view of the planet. *Exandas* is an astronomy and navigation instrument that sights celestial bodies through reflection into a mounted mirror<sup>35</sup> and as such reminds the viewer of a camera, one could say. *Exandas'* emphasis on the device of reflection turns the attention toward a medium that is used to navigate one's place in the world, to change perspective, echoing therefore the importance of the mechanics of cinema and television as a means to practice journalism. *War Zone's* credits in the first season explicitly use images from war conflicts and, most importantly, certain seminal and socially impactful images, like the iconic "Napalm Girl", thus promoting a serious, responsible and pro-human-values journalism that shapes public opinion.<sup>36</sup> The year 2006-2007, when *War Zone* is being directed by Gerardis, the credits sequence changes and images of war (soldiers, war helicopters, tanks) are foregrounded, as well as indices of images from the Middle East. In the year 2008-2009, the credits sequence changes again and starts with a snapshot of Danezis's passport along with the countries he has been to (Vietnam 2003, Alaska 2007, etc.), building up reflexively on the series and Danezis's successful trajectory.

Apart from the credits, performative, discursive and film direction practices in each episode, such as manners of speech, gestures, costumes and mise-en-scène, construct a specific authorship attributing to each journalist a distinct identity. A common point of the three series is the establishment of proximity of the journalist to the event, by distinguishing between the journalist on location and the journalist-presenter, by using the voice-over and comments to reinforce specific characteristics and build authorship. "Stelios Kouloglou", "Yorgos Avgeropoulos" and "Sotiris Danezis" as personages are a construct of complex performative and discursive practices within these documentaries.

"Stelios Kouloglou", the presenter, is casually but neatly dressed. Even when he wears a tie, he doesn't don a suit, as was the norm for the male TV presenters of the time. His tone is calm, however his diction is not always crystal clear.<sup>37</sup> In the first episodes he is even seated with his hands crossed, resembling an attentive or studious person during an interpersonal educational communication. This performance is juxtaposed with his persona in the first two documentaries

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<sup>35</sup> For more, see <https://www.britannica.com/technology/sextant-instrument>. Accessed 25/3/2019.

<sup>36</sup> Both series, at least at the beginning, do not build in an already established journalistic authority, although Yorgos Avgeropoulos was a recognizable reporter and Sotiris Danezis had already worked on equivalent shows before 2003.

<sup>37</sup> This actually adds to his unpretentious on-screen persona.

where it is obvious that he is adventurous, bold, with a sense of humor and at the same time humble, since he is not often on screen and the voice-over is not his. His presence is manifested by shots from behind or short off-frame questions. His presence provides credibility and evidentiality, but it is not at all flamboyant or 'showy' (the way it is in a Michael Moore, Nick Broomfield or even John Pilger documentary). The overall image is one of a strong roving, intelligent, but humble reporter that offers TV space and time to his subject-matters.

The *Exandas* series does not have a studio presentation from the start, relying more on the typical form of TV documentary and less on the current affairs shows, which often include studio presentation. Yorgos Avgeropoulos starts signing as director of the series in the second season (2004-2005) of broadcasting for NET. "Yorgos Avgeropoulos" is constructed as a mix of simplicity, underplayed boldness and personal sensitivity in understanding other cultures and less privileged points of view. He achieves that through participation in occult rituals like in *Zombie* (1<sup>st</sup> season, 2004) and *45 hronia epanastasis/45 Years of Revolution* (2<sup>nd</sup> season, 2004); by being on screen (usually listening) when interviewing challenging or dangerous informants, as in a reverse shot of him listening to the disguised rebel of FARC<sup>38</sup> (*O polemos tis kokainis/The War of Cocaine*, 1<sup>st</sup> season, 2003) or to the militia of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (*Delta-Vromikes doulies tou petreleou/Delta-Oil's Dirty Business*, 4<sup>th</sup> Season, 2007). In a few of the first episodes he is also presenting his theme on location, establishing a more reportage-like proximity to his subject-matter. During all these appearances, "Yorgos Avgeropoulos" wears his round glasses, is simply dressed, usually with a modest beige shirt, resembling more a modest guy-next-door than a roving journalist who travels around the globe to meet with rebels, criminals or governmental and economic elites. Moreover, "Yorgos Avgeropoulos", although very careful in presenting different sides, praises at the same time – through his camera work (juxtaposition of shots) and voice-over – an advocacy journalism that understands and sympathizes with the less privileged, the revolutionaries, the socially deprived. For instance, the use of the word "rebels", "partisans", "revolution" ascribes his journalistic identity with the role of understanding and exposing the non-dominant points of view, those of the oppressed. This dialectic between oppressors and oppressed, between economic and political elites and the people, between rich and poor traverses most of his work and constitutes an interpretive framework that later, during the early years of the Greek financial crisis, will be disseminated by the media. His rhetoric, however, is never simplistic, since these dualisms are themselves historically and culturally contextualized.

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<sup>38</sup> FARC: Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia.

"Sotiris Danezis" maintains a very strict and professional journalistic tone and attire. When presenting in the studio (in the first two seasons), he is always formally dressed; his diction and enunciation are flawless and impeccable; his way of addressing the camera and turning his head when the shot is changing from wide to medium close up, his smooth but decisive hand gestures while carrying a pen (a prop reminding that high status journalism means writing) and his reading a well-performed written text, construct the ultimate professional TV journalist, one who knows exactly all the performative rules of news television. This early presentation still shares a link with news presentation (something Danezis was also doing for MEGA). While on location, Danezis is dressed according to the environment and always in a casual and even sportive way. This juxtaposition between an on-studio presenter and an on-location, ready to adjust to action, journalist promotes the distinct identity of "Sotiris Danezis" as a journalist who can effortlessly adapt to different roles within his profession. When Dimitris Gerardis becomes the film director of the series, this on studio presentation, although flawless, is not required anymore; Danezis as presenter and MEGA Channel are well established; the series removes all these elements that tied it to news presentation or current affairs programmes and moves toward a more cinematic documentary style. His indisputable professional persona is empowered by promoting the journalistic value of impartiality and balance. It is very clear that a distinct characteristic of "Danezis" and *War Zone* is this sober inclusion of different points of view. This is reinforced in the *War Zone* Catalogue (TIFF 2008) when writers and politicians from every side of the democratic political spectrum contribute with articles. The stance point of "Danezis" and *War Zone* is one of anti-war, anti-violence, pro-peace and reconciliation, discourses that serve, as he asserts, a journalism of humanistic values (Danezis interview 21/9/2017).

## CONCLUSION

From a TV and Film History perspective, this research article lays out the transformation of discourses on TV documentary and the gradual acceptance of documentary as a genre (something that goes hand in hand with its international revival), the transformation of the formal elements of documentary journalism in Greece and the prevalence of a serious and distinct televisual authorship from the part of the journalists involved in the three most important documentary series (*RWB*, *Exandas*, *War Zone*) in the late 1990s and 2000s. The high competitive environment – with the rise of private television and the establishment of the Thessaloniki Documentary Festival in 1999 – played an important role in revolutionizing the discourses on the industry and, along with aesthetic changes, in releasing the series from the distributing constraints of the small screen.

Documentary as a journalistic genre allowed for more independence and provided a crack in the system of “the limited development of journalism as an autonomous profession” (Papathanassopoulos 2007: 94). It enabled the exploration of topics that were not tied to a strict news agenda. It advanced an alternative pace in seeking out and presenting information, context and commentary that diverged from other genres, like the news and the talk shows that were prevalent during the 1990s and 2000s. The examples under scrutiny demonstrate, in terms of visual form, the possibility of journalism moving towards the art of documentary. They also demonstrate the appearance of journalistic characteristics that incline viewers towards the type of “independent journalism” and documentary journalism that emerged during the crisis in Greece.

In this trajectory, the role of private television in shaping the market is not one-dimensional. Private television might have caused a destabilization of ERT’s profile, but it pushed the public broadcaster to attain a distinct role in promoting documentary. Private television gave journalists the chance (form-wise) to exercise other types of journalism and report from contemporaneous war zones; although it did not contribute to the promotion of the documentary genre, it nevertheless offered the context and means for a re-generation and rebranding of the journalist profession. On the other hand, public television developed a distinct place for documentary in general and not only for documentary journalism. The two series *RWB* and *Exandas* were long-lasting series and ERT provided a nurturing environment for experimentation and quality improvement. (MEGA was the only private channel among its competitors that developed this sort of quality factual programming and labeled it as documentary in the early 2000s).

Last but not least, the Thessaloniki Documentary Festival has been a major platform not only for screening these documentaries and contributing to the elevation of their status, but also, more importantly, for being instrumental in a changing discourse about documentary, journalism and television in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Although definitional discourses on whether a journalistic piece of work might actually be a documentary or not still persist, it is certain that the merging of documentary filmmaking culture and journalistic culture has become even stronger after the Greek crisis, with the recent documentary work of journalists like Aris Chatzistefanou, Nina-Maria Paschalidou, Daphne Tolis and others. Further study of this tendency would include new types of public address to the digital environment and the transition of Greek Television (see [VICE.com/gr](http://VICE.com/gr)), and especially of Greek documentary, into a transmedia and transnational era.

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