

Thessaloniki: the 'erotic' city

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These hot and quite days of August, I wandered with my bicycle around the empty Thessaloniki. I rode into the back streets of Harilaou, Kato Toumpa, Faliro, downtown, Xirokrini, Ampelokipous. I saw the same picture everywhere. Ugly buildings, unrented neighborhood shops, filth and abandonment. Numerous itinerants with barrows and their babies rummaging the garbage and collecting everything from clothes to recycling items. The small shops, which used to bring life to the neighborhood and serve its needs, do not exist anymore. They have all closed down. The former commercial central streets are paved with business carcasses that disappeared. It's not easy to meet Greeks in the backstreets of downtown, not because they are on holidays, but because they don't leave there anymore. A 'no man's land' neighborhood just down the Vardari area. A cocktail of low rank brothels and Chinese shops, which sell at wholesale prices all kinds of junk, makes you think you are in Thailand.

Old people sit on their squashed balcony, watching over the movement in the backstreet. Idle Georgians play domino or backgammon in the parks, while drinking beers. Bulgarian Gypsies rummage the garbage. Black people sell watches and sunglasses. The immigrants came here and watched the Greeks live in an elusive to them life style. They were rubbing their eyes. And yet in only a few years they managed to balance the situation to their advantage. But it was us who went down the pit. I don't reminisce at all the supposedly glamorous lifestyle of the previous years. But not all of us lived that way. Today we are called to pay the price for the wild party, in which some residents of the 'society's penthouses' indulged. Those who swept everything away are now trying to sell

us the solution, which comes with a cost that we must pay. We, who lived and still live in the upper ground floor, the first and the second floor of society. The immigrants live in the basements.

So, I was thinking, mate, that's why people call Thessaloniki an 'erotic' city. Because it fucks us.