

**From Double-Taps to Demonstrations:
Gender Activism in Greece within Grassroots Initiatives and
Instagram's Affordances**

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Abstract

Digital technologies and media have deeply integrated into our lives, to such an extent that activities once perceived as crucial parts of the physical world now take place within the confines of the digital world. Activism, traditionally associated with the physical realm, has been altered with the emergence of new technologies and social media platforms, evolving into what is termed in the literature as 'digital activism'. Interestingly, acts of digital activism have been observed on Instagram, a relatively new social media platform that has gained immense popularity over the past decade and has caught the attention of the academic world. This thesis aims to shed light on this phenomenon, specifically focusing on digital gender activism within grassroots initiatives in Greece. By employing this specific lens, the research investigates how activists in Greece, a Western country that professes liberal values yet faces significant gender equality challenges in everyday life, leverage Instagram's features to promote their goals. Therefore, 14 interviews are conducted with activists who are part of grassroots initiatives and manage their collective's social media. The interviews, as well as the entire research, are grounded in the theoretical framework of this study, which includes literature on activism and digital technologies, the theory of affordances and the current gender landscape in Greece. To analyze the data, a thematic analysis is employed, focusing on how gender activists perceive and utilize Instagram's architecture and features. Three prominent themes emerge from this analysis. First, gender activists in Greece use Instagram to promote their goals, leveraging its young and active demographic and visual-centered vernacular. Their two primary objectives are information dissemination and community building-networking. Second, Instagram is an integral part of the activist toolkit, playing a significant role in both digital and offline activism. Third, gender activists in Greece use Instagram to mobilize society, countering mainstream media control, particularly during the Greek Me Too movement and the COVID-19 pandemic. The study concludes that Instagram Posts serve primarily as archival tools for activists, while Instagram Stories are utilized for immediate and urgent information dissemination. Hashtags facilitate the formation of a closer community and connection to broader movements, enhancing visibility, while Direct Messages act as central hubs for substantial communication between collectives and their followers.

Keywords: Gender Activism; Digital activism; Platform affordances; Instagram; Greece

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Chapter 1: Introduction

"Our failures of our past, the failure to interrogate patriarchy and antiracism, the failure to interrogate racism and feminism continue to shape modern politics. They undermine our collective capacity to create a more robust and inclusive set of coalitions around social justice. Now, I call these intersectional failures of the past, Trojan horses of today" - Kimberlé Crenshaw

In her profound words, Kimberlé Crenshaw, a renowned civil rights advocate and scholar of critical race theory, acknowledges the ongoing struggle for true gender equality (TED, 2016). While contemporary society prides itself on progress, there are still some dark areas that demand our attention. Crenshaw calls for us to uncover, address and highlight these issues, advocating for an intersectional approach that encompasses the experiences of women of color, disabled women, refugee women, individuals who were not biologically assigned as women but identify as such, and those from working-class backgrounds.

On paper, it seems that the current state of gender equality is showing signs of improvement, at least in the western world. In an era marked by intensifying inequalities and a surge in populism, the gender dimension within the inequality discourse emerges as a beacon of hope (Bertrand, 2020, p.1). Globally, progress has been achieved as gender disparities in education and workforce participation diminish (Bertrand, 2020, p.1). The gender wage gap in full-time employment is steadily narrowing and women are making inroads into the higher echelons of income distribution, making strides towards greater gender equality in economic opportunities (Bertrand, 2020, p.1).

Similarly, there appears to be an improvement in the quality of experiences for LGBTQ+ individuals. Over the past century, there has been a significant transformation in the landscape of LGBTQ+ rights across many regions of the world, notably in Western Europe, North and South America, and Australasia (Magni & Reynolds, 2023, p. 50). Advances in public opinion, political initiatives, and legal frameworks have propelled progress towards equality (Magni & Reynolds, 2023, p. 50). Same-sex marriage is now legally recognized in 37 countries, and LGBTQ+ individuals in numerous jurisdictions benefit from varying degrees of protection against hate crimes, discrimination in employment based on sexual orientation, as well as rights related to adoption and military service.

However, the Trojan horses Kimberlé Crenshaw speaks of (TED, 2016) remain embedded in the current landscape, bringing unexpected challenges that perpetuate gender inequalities. This is why gender-related activism remains highly relevant today, even in countries like Greece, where women have the right to vote, participate in the public sphere,

and same-sex marriages are legalized. Greece appears to be a country of contradictions: it has a historically progressive and innovative cultural legacy (Zervoulis, 2016, p. 15), and its present suggests that significant gender-related milestones have been achieved. However, the lived experiences of its citizens tell a different story. Gender-based violence, including domestic violence and sexual harassment (Karakasi et al., 2022, p. 86), as well as cultural stereotypes, stemming from traditional gender roles (Beltrán Tapia & Raftakis, 2022, p. 331), continue to disproportionately affect women and LGBTQ+ individuals, limiting them and their well-being.

Gender activism in Greece is very prominent within the confines of the digital world. Numerous feminist and LGBTQ+ grassroots collectives with the goal of fighting for gender equality have been identified, especially on Instagram. These collectives engage in what has been defined in previous literature as 'digital activism'—a form of social activism that utilizes the technological tools provided by social media (Dumitrica & Hockin-Boyers, 2023). The study of digital activism reveals that technological innovations have indeed transformed societal, economic, and cultural landscapes to such an extent that activities once thought achievable only through immediate and physical action have shifted into the digital realm (Cammaerts, 2015, p. 2). Platform affordances such as interactivity, connectivity and sharing provided by social media (Amanatidis et al., 2019, p. 26) have facilitated the rise of so-called digital activism, offering digital activists a whole new toolkit for action.

With the double objective of exploring the current landscape of gender-related claims and how traditional forms of advocacy have transformed with the emergence of new technologies, this thesis aims to answer the following question:

How do gender activists within grassroots initiatives in Greece reappropriate Instagram's platform affordances?

An answer to this research question potentially offers the opportunity to enhance the academic fields of gender studies and digital activism and to highlight their close intersection. The field of digital activism has been evolving, with prior research discussing its various perspectives and classifications. George and Leidner (2019, p. 4) define digital activism as "social activism mediated through digital technologies", while Özkula (2021, p. 66–71) distinguishes between different aims and repertoires of action employed by activists online. Treré (2018, p. 145–147) emphasizes the importance of balancing online and offline activism for success, while Dumitrica and Felt (2020, pp. 1826–1829) discuss technological and interactional challenges faced by activists online.

The findings of this thesis will dive into the relatively new and unknown world of Instagram, contributing to the advancement of the field of digital activism and expanding the

literature on digital gender activism. Digital gender activism will be examined within the context of this specific platform, given its status as one of the most widely used platforms worldwide, with more than 2 billion users globally (Statista, 2024). This is particularly pertinent considering Instagram's nature as a platform that predominantly promotes Western lifestyle ideals (Vukčević, 2020, p. 166). Content on Instagram often revolves around outings, travels and selfies, reinforcing Westernized beauty standards and neoliberal values. This thesis will explore how activists perceive and utilize Instagram's affordances beyond its standardized use, particularly in promoting gender equality.

By focusing on issues including all genders and sexual identities, the findings of this thesis seek to contribute to the development of an intersectional approach to activism. Gender activism in this thesis encompasses tactics advocating for both women and LGBTQ+ individuals, ensuring inclusivity across diverse social identities. Thus, this research aims to contribute to a more intersectional academic discourse through its findings, fostering a concept of gender equality that is inclusive of all individuals, irrespective of race, class, sexual identity, and other social categories that confer privilege.

From a societal perspective, this research holds significant value as it offers explicit insights into the experiences and tactics of gender activists, particularly those engaged in grassroots initiatives in Greece. In a country like Greece, where traditional gender norms and gender inequalities are still persistent (Beltrán Tapia & Raftakis, 2022, p. 331) despite progressive legal frameworks, findings of this research aim to enhance the digital activist repertoire for fighting for gender equality and inclusivity. This research emphasizes the importance of social media as a safe space for marginalized voices and demonstrates how digital tools can be advantageous for them. Such findings are significant for activists, policymakers, collectives and institutions committed to advancing social and gender justice and striving to create a better world.

The structure of the thesis will be as follows: Chapter Two contains the theoretical framework informing this thesis, including the literature relating to gender activism, its intersection with digital technologies, the concept of platform affordances, Instagram, and the current situation regarding gender issues in Greece. Chapter Three describes the method employed to answer the research question, detailing thematic analysis and the coding process that followed the interviews conducted with Greek gender activists. Chapter Four analyzes the results and answers the research question by presenting emerging themes observed in the interviews. Finally, Chapter Five provides a synopsis and discussion of the results, a conclusion to the research, and addresses limitations and potentials for further studies.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

2.1. *Digital Gender Grassroots Activism*

In establishing the conceptual framework of this study, a fundamental exploration into the multidimensional concept of activism is imperative. By exploring its nuanced definitions and theoretical underpinnings, this thesis aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of activism within the context of gender grassroots activism and digital technologies.

2.1.1. Activism and Digital Technologies

Activism is an activity undertaken by both individuals and collectives of different types (e.g., NGOs, citizen collectives, or social movements). Activism is “marked by a sense of urgency, anxiety and alertness to a life under attack” (Svirsky, 2010, p. 177). It encompasses a discomfort with the status quo and embodies turbulence and restlessness, challenging our comfortable and stable existence—and as such, activism is a form of disruption of everyday life and its structures that may irritate the larger public as well as the elites (Svirsky, 2010, p. 169). Activism is often defined by a distance from (and a sense of opposition to) the regime and political parties, as the latter are an integral part of the existing system that activists seek to alter (Schwedler & Harris, 2016, p. 4). Furthermore, activists also function as catalysts that corral existing organizations, individuals and groups, as well as persuade others to embrace common goals, and disseminate information about opportunities and strategies (Schwedler & Harris, 2016, p. 4).

According to Saunders (2013, p. 9), activism can be defined as “the action that movements undertake to challenge some existing element of the social or political system and thereby help fulfill movements' aims”. Elaborating on this definition, social movements are considered informal networks among people from diverse backgrounds, collectives, and organizations involved in political or cultural debates and disputes rooted in a common collective identity (Della Porta, 2020, p. 939). Individuals and groups involved in social movements and activist practices aim to influence the political regime and mobilize symbolic, rather than material, resources (Della Porta, 2020, p. 943). Their goal is to transform traditional societal structures that maintain and perpetuate inequalities and fixed power structures rooted in social institutions, norms, collective identities and cultural values (Della Porta, 2020, p. 943).

Nixon (2012) posits that activism includes a range of practices of resistance rather than a “general sense of opposition to prevailing power” (p. 3). This definition implies that activism is not just about rebelling against the status quo in a specific way but is something

more than that: it is also about critiquing and transforming existing power relations. This can be manifested in various ways, for example by challenging existing unjust laws, advocating for a marginalized community, promoting social and cultural change through grassroots initiatives etc. According to Svirsky (2010, p. 169) the logic of activism is interventionist and operationally hyperactive, as it engages with various aspects of society, injecting external forces with the aim of effecting change within the system. From this point of view, activism involves the interaction of different forces, people, and objects, leading to direct struggles against various issues (Svirsky, 2010, p. 170).

In this project, taking into consideration all the above mentioned literature, activism is the collective and individual engagement in actions characterized by a sense of urgency and restlessness, aimed at challenging elements of the social or political system perceived as oppressive or unjust. It involves a discomfort with the status quo and embodies a commitment to effecting change by critiquing and transforming existing power relations and societal structures. Activism includes a plethora of practices of resistance beyond mere opposition to prevailing power, including but not limited to protests, advocacy, community organizing and cultural interventions. Activists function as catalysts, mobilizing individuals and groups, disseminating information, persuading others to embrace common goals in pursuit of social, cultural transformation and political influence.

In the existing literature, the most common distinction lies between conventional activism, associated with party system politics, and unconventional activism, encompassing a range of political activities by movements, including boycotting, petition-signing, protesting and sabotaging (Saunders, 2013, p. 9). However, activism is an umbrella term that does not fit strictly within the conventional-unconventional binary, as it encompasses a plethora of activities and its meaning continually evolves. Rootes et al. (2003, as cited in Saunders, 2013, p. 9) have distinguished between conventional activism, demonstrative activism, confrontational activism, property damage, and violence. Demonstrative activism comprised rallies and marches, confrontational activism involved blockades and sit-ins, property damage encompassed acts of vandalism, and violence entailed aggression directed towards another individual. McAdam (1986, p. 68–71) discusses ‘high risk activism’, the type of activism in which the danger of being injured or arrested is inherent and ‘low risk activism’ that takes little time and resources, for example, voting or petition signing.

According to George and Leidner (2019) “digital activism is social activism mediated through digital technologies to promote social movements” (p. 4). Karatzogianni (2015, p. 5) views digital activism as “political participation and protest organized in digital networks”. Digital activism has equipped activists with a virtual toolkit comprising technological tools and methods for effecting social change. Consequently, the mobilization methods and requirements of and for digital activists now diverge from those of traditional activism

(George & Leidner, 2019, p. 4). For example, unity is no longer a strict requirement for the activists as nowadays they operate in a decentralized manner. Activists are now able pursue their own paths, creating content and sharing opinions about the cause. Quantity is not crucial either, as seen in the effectiveness of political bots, which can make significant impacts with small numbers (George & Leidner, 2019, p. 4). Collective action, the gathering of individuals uniting for a shared interest or beliefs, has transformed with the advent of information systems (IS) into what is termed connective action (George & Leidner, 2019, p. 4–5). Connective action aims to elucidate contentious political action in the digital age, introducing an innovative aspect of organization and content sharing provided by IS (George & Leidner, 2019, p. 4–5).

However, there is some debate in the literature regarding the role of digital technologies in contemporary activism. While all of the aforementioned points indicate that the nature of activism is largely transformed and influenced by digital communication, particularly with its new characteristics of horizontality and leaderlessness, other scholars adopt a holistic approach that discusses the importance of media hybridity and offline means of organizing. Treré (2018, p. 145–147), for instance, emphasizes that for activist endeavors to achieve success, activists must carefully balance between online and offline realms by utilizing digital tools to coordinate physical acts. Rather than solely depending on social media, they should also capitalize on traditional media platforms such as television and newspapers and not only broadcast their message to the public through digital means but also maintain robust internal communication to uphold organizational structure and cohesion (Treré, 2018, p. 145–147).

Another way of distinguishing between different types of activism is by focusing on the different aims and repertoires of action employed by activists themselves. Aims refer to what activists seek to accomplish through their action, including advocacy and political commentary, recruitment and movement building, organization and coordination, online direct action, hacktivism, civil disobedience, and research and documentation (Özkula, 2021, p. 66–71). To reach these aims, activists often deploy a repertoire of actions – or specific interventions, tools, or rituals that are publicly performed to achieve the aims.

Advocacy and political commentary refer to the publicly stated support of an ideological position through self-publishing or dissemination on social media (Özkula, 2021, p. 67). This becomes achievable through activities such as tweeting, blogging, posting, and engaging with content through comments, likes, shares, etc. Examples include political memes, social media challenges like the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge, and hashtag activism like #MeToo. Recruitment and movement-building involve activities that mobilize people towards collective action, often through organized campaigns or movements (Özkula, 2021, p. 67). It often goes beyond individual advocacy to focus on building communities and

collective identities. Organization and coordination involves activities before, during, and after protests, using technologies like GPS tracking and hashtags to facilitate coordination (Özkula, 2021, pp. 68–69). Online direct action, hacktivism and civil disobedience involve dissent or protest actions carried out in digital spaces, including activities like creating political parody, hacking, spamming, and culture jamming (Özkula, 2021, pp. 69–70). Lastly, research and documentation encompass actions related to researching and documenting human rights abuses, election monitoring, countering rumors, and fighting voting fraud (Özkula, 2021, p. 70). It involves gathering and disseminating information to raise awareness or challenge authorities.

While digital activism can support activist goals through (new) digital actions, it is not devoid of challenges. Dumitrica and Felt (2020, pp. 1826–1829) discuss two such types of challenges: technological and interactional. The first category refers to the tension between the activist aims and the commercial goals of social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, which aim to keep users engaged and extract profit from their activities (Dumitrica & Felt, 2020, pp. 1826–1828). Algorithms on these platforms shape the visibility of content, leading to decentralized message circulation, filter bubbles, and focus on social media metrics like likes and shares. All of these can, at times, sabotage activist's causes. Interactional barriers stem from the mediation of social interaction online (Dumitrica & Felt, 2020, p. 1829). While social media enables connections among like-minded individuals, it also fosters echo chambers and can be easily exploited by opponents. Additionally, digital activism can take a personal toll on activists, leading to burnout and strain on personal relationships and professional reputations. Activists may face backlash and online abuse, which can have significant emotional and psychological effects (Dumitrica & Felt, 2020, pp. 1830–1832).

This section of the theoretical framework is going to function as the basis for my interview guide and analysis of the findings. Drawing inspiration from the discussed topics, the interview questions will be formed accordingly in order to uncover the activist's aims and the way they perceive digital technologies, how they leverage on them and if and how they are limited by them. The analysis of the findings will focus on how these technologies and their affordances are reappropriated by gender activists and how these new digital tools have altered the activist landscape.

2.1.2. Gender Grassroots Activism

This thesis focuses on gender activism via Instagram. Gender activism refers to the rights of specific gender identities like women, gay, bisexual, asexual, gender fluid, or transgender individuals. As such, gender activism represents a broader and often inclusive discourse on sexual and gender identification (Schindel, 2008, pp. 56–57).

For the purposes of this research it is essential to explore what gender is and deconstruct it. Historically, gender encompasses both theoretical and linguistic dimensions that extend beyond the biological aspects typically associated with sex (Lindqvist et al., 2021, p. 333). While sex addresses physiological characteristics such as genitalia, chromosomes, and body features, the concept of gender refers to social aspects including cultural stereotypes associated with behavior, personality, and expressions conventionally labeled as feminine or masculine (Lindqvist et al., 2021, p. 33). It is crucial to note that sex should not be seen as determining gender, as this merging is prescriptive and excludes individuals with diverse experiences and identities. Traditionally, responses to sex are dichotomous, with options being female or male, while responses to gender may include woman/man or feminine/masculine (Lindqvist et al., 2021, p. 333). However, this binary framework neglects existing variation and excludes individuals with intersex variations whose anatomies do not fit typical dichotomies.

Gender identity, a key facet of gender, is self-defined and can vary in stability and fluidity over time and contexts (Lindqvist et al., 2021, pp. 335–336). The binary system falsely implies that gender consists only of mutually exclusive alternatives of woman/man, disregarding other gender identities that exist between or beyond these categories. Non-binary gender identities, which do not fit into the traditional binary framework, are often encompassed under the umbrella term "transgender", although not all non-binary individuals identify as transgender. The gender binary system is intricately linked to patriarchal societal structures. Patriarchy is essentially the authority of fathers: a societal, ideological, and political framework where men exert control over women's roles and behaviors through various means such as coercion, social norms, legal systems, language, education, and the division of labor (Rich, 1977). This system results in women being consistently marginalized in relation to men. Patriarchal societal structures, to be upheld and perpetuated in favor of those who benefit from them, necessitate the reinforcement of the gender binary system.

From a Foucauldian perspective, gender and power intersect. Foucault and Carrette (2013) have argued that discourses of sexuality and gender can both produce power dynamics and provide avenues for resistance (McGlashan & Fitzpatrick, 2017, pp. 486). Their theories suggest that gender operates as a disciplinary mechanism within society. By

appropriating Foucault's concepts, feminists highlight how the female body is a prime illustration of his arguments about discipline (King, 2004, p. 30). They emphasize how societal norms and practices, such as fashion and beauty standards, subject women to disciplinary techniques aimed at controlling and regulating their bodies (King, 2004, pp. 30–31). These practices, rooted in gender ideologies, reinforce power dynamics that privilege masculine norms and marginalize femininity. Throughout history, women have been predominantly evaluated and esteemed based on their physical appearance, often prioritizing it over other attributes. This societal tendency has also cultivated apprehension and unease towards femininity and its perceived "otherness" (King, 2004, pp. 30–32). Even in contemporary times, characterized by notions of equality and progressiveness, the female identity remains subject to surveillance and regulation through disciplinary measures not imposed on men (King, 2004, p. 33).

In this thesis, I regard gender as a method of social control that both produces, dictates and restricts one's mode of being (King, 2004, p. 31). Despite extensive exploration in current literature, no definite definition of gender activism has been established. Incorporating a Foucauldian approach concerning the intersection of gender and power, this research defines gender activism as the type of activism that encompasses broader issues related to women and LGBTQ+ individuals, aiming to challenge hegemonic patriarchal discourses and social restrictions surrounding, affecting and marginalizing them.

The opportunities and challenges presented by the current era for advancing gender justice are unparalleled (Keddie, 2021, p. 171). There's unprecedented engagement with gender justice, spurred by events like #MeToo and #TimesUp. However, there is also a rise in anti-feminist movements, including hashtags like #HimToo and the INCEL movement, reflecting backlash against feminist activism (Keddie, 2021, p. 171). According to literature, there are many ways in which diverse genders and sexualities are spatially policed, marginalized, and valorized (Johnston, 2017, p. 654). Feminist and queer academics and activists argue that place matters to gender politics and activism for the construction and implementation of politics of inclusivity (Johnston, 2017, p. 654). Studies shed the focus on activist spaces that serve as platforms for students to engage in awareness-raising, community-building, and advocacy around gender-related issues, reflecting key aspects of gender activism (Keddie, 2021, p. 182).

Current research on gender activism in the digital context engages with some of the following topics. The necessity for space within digital realms is crucially emphasized through the utilization of hashtags and the emergence of what is termed "hashtag feminism" (Linabary et al., 2020, pp. 1827–1828). This involves employing social media hashtags to tackle issues identified as feminist, by sharing personal stories and perspectives of inequality, constructing counter-discourses, and reexamining cultural figures and institutions

(Linabary et al., 2020, pp. 1831–1832). Nevertheless, there exists a debate regarding whether such activist expressions are indeed significantly influencing and fostering cultural change (Linabary et al., 2020, p. 1844). On a positive note, a study on Indonesian female journalists who participate in digital gender activism, has shown how digital media have enabled Indonesian women (as digital citizens) to creatively express themselves, challenge traditional gender norms and coordinate socio-political activism to advocate for issues related to gender justice and injustice (Winarnita et al., 2022, p. 621).

Additionally, a study on how LGBTQ+ Latino activists in the US utilize digital technologies has shown that online organizations contribute to shaping discourse that is more intersectionally focused on addressing social inequalities (Schmitz et al., 2022, p. 271). It has been observed that their website prominently featured health-related themes, such as disease prevention, as integral aspects of social justice and the embodiment of social activism through artistic expressions. The way they used social media advocated for a strengths-based approach, emphasizing the importance of advocacy grounded in resilient personal and collective values. Another study on LGBTQ activists on social media discusses their concerns that, while social media has altered and enhanced their activist repertoires, it is not sufficient because not everybody has access to them or possesses the necessary skills to utilize them effectively (Pain, 2023). LGBTQ activists face many challenges online as they are often targets of trolling and sexist and homophobic attacks (Pain, 2023).

In this project, I approach gender activism from the perspective of grassroots, citizen-led initiatives. Grabs et al. (2016, p. 100) define grassroots initiatives “as including any type of collaborative social undertaking that is organized at the local community level, has a high degree of participatory decision-making and flat hierarchies. In addition, they generally engage with the voluntary contribution of time and resources of the organizations’ members to achieve a particular shared cause”. Therefore, this activism involves individuals who publicly distance themselves from institutional power structures and adopt a bottom-up approach to advocate for gender justice and rights; and, challenge patriarchal oppression through community-based organizing and direct action (Kalpagam, 2002, pp. 4688–4689). For the purposes of this thesis, gender activists involved in these initiatives will be interviewed to explore the various ways they utilize digital technologies to promote gender equality and raise awareness of pertinent issues, from the grassroots to all levels of society.

2.2. Platform Affordances and Activism

For such grassroots gender activist efforts, digital technologies in general and social media in particular have promised to reduce the costs of organizing and mobilizing for social change (Dumitrica & Felt, 2020, p.1829). However, reliance upon digital technologies and social media also entails that activist communication is affected by platform affordances (Hautea et al., 2021, pp.1–2); in line with social media use practices, many activists try to adapt their message to the platform vernaculars (Gibbs et al., 2015, p. 257). In turn, this raises questions on how adaptation to platform affordances and vernaculars impacts activists' mission, repertoires and action, and impact. This thesis focuses on these questions in the context of Greek grassroots gender activism on Instagram. After elaborating on the notions of platform affordances and vernaculars in relation to Instagram, this section synthesizes the findings of previous empirical studies on this topic.

2.2.1. Theory of Affordances

The concept of affordance is a versatile one (Bucher & Helmond, 2018, p. 3). With its initial roots found within the field of ecological psychology and design studies, the concept is mostly used to describe how material artifacts enable, dictate and limit the actions of their users (Bucher & Helmond, 2018, p. 3). Generally, the theory of affordances, as developed by Gibson (1977), proposes that the environment offers agents various opportunities or possibilities for action; and, that agents can perceive these possibilities and adjust their behavior accordingly. In this sense, affordances entail both the options enabled by the environment and the agent's ability to work with, around, or against these options.

Affordances can be extended from the environment to objects and particularly technological artifacts. In this context, affordances refer to properties of objects that are relative to an observer, existing within an environment that encompasses both material and mental aspects (Gibson, 1977). However, observers may perceive affordances differently, even within a singular environment, leading to divergent paths and creating limitless opportunities for interaction and adaptation (Gibson, 1977). Therefore, affordances can be viewed as relational properties (Bucher & Helmond, 2018, p. 4). When talking about perceived affordances, Donald Norman (1999, p. 38) emphasizes the importance of designing objects in a way that clearly communicates how users should interact with them. This notion has become a central concept in user experience design, shaping practices within digital media and technology industries.

In the field of sociology and communication, the discussion of affordances provides a framework for conceptualizing the impact of technology on social behaviors and tendencies (Bucher & Helmond, 2018, pp .8–11). Hutchby (2014, p. 86) talks about ‘communicative affordances’ to refer to the possibilities for action emerging from given communication media. He further explains that communication affordances manifest through various channels. Hutchby (2014, p. 88) distinguishes telephone and mobile affordances. These affordances allow for intimacy at a distance, caller pre-identification and personalized communication experiences, enhancing interpersonal relations and allowing them to grow across distances.

Texting affordances provide for asynchronous and quasi-synchronous communication, allowing participants to exchange messages at their convenience. Internet affordances contribute to the emergence of digital communities with the individuals interacting while being geographically and temporally apart (Hutchby, 2014, p. 88). These affordances have altered the field and means of communication and have fostered a new mediated digital reality.

Platform affordances pertain to how technology influences user actions within a particular social media platform and the digital structures supporting these platforms, including how users perceive and utilize them (Hautea et al., 2021, pp. 2–3). In their turn, these platform affordances are interconnected to platform features, meaning the technological structure and design of the particular platform. Affordances include processes and concepts such as visibility, editability, persistence and association, all of them crucial for collective action and the success of grassroots movements and initiatives (Hautea et al., 2021, p. 2–3).

2.2.2. Platform Vernaculars

As technology and social media usage becomes a natural part of daily life, certain behavioral practices start to emerge and form around the use of social media platforms based on platform affordances (Peck, 2017, p. 32). This does not imply that every individual will utilize social media in identical ways; technologies offer users a framework while also allowing room for personalization and diversity within that framework. However, it does highlight a societal influence that aids in comprehending the development of expectations that support a particular practice (Peck, 2017, p. 32). This subsection of the theoretical framework discusses the emergence of platform vernaculars. I define the concept of platform vernaculars as the internal meaning-making processes and communication practices observed within digital platforms.

In addition to platform affordances, the use of each social media platform develops vernaculars or “styles, grammars, and logics” (Gibbs et al., 2015, p. 257). This vernacular arises from both the structure and features of the platform, which essentially dictate potential actions and modes of engagement, as well as the intermediated behavioral patterns and communication norms of users that develop gradually over time (Hu & Kidd, 2023, p. 413). Pozzi (2016) talks about vernacular literacies, a concept that refers to everyday practices of communication and expression, particularly on social media platforms. They involve voluntary and self-generated activities like sharing, commenting, liking and creating content online (Pozzi, 2016).

Platform vernaculars emerge as users interact with the platform's features, tools, and cultural norms, creating a distinct way of communicating that is tailored to that particular platform (Peck, 2017, p. 32). For example, a common platform vernacular can be considered the documentation and sharing of everyday, mundane activities by users. Platforms such as blogs, YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram serve as mediums through which individuals can document and share their everyday activities, ranging from meeting with friends to grabbing coffee or having a meal. This sharing process amplifies the visibility of these mundane practices, making them accessible to a broader audience (Peck, 2017, p. 32). Increased visibility on certain digital practices results in mass awareness (Peck, 2017, p. 33). Hence, the affordances of the online platforms allow users to see their individual actions not only as singular and distinct vernacular expressions but also as part of a larger body of vernacular practice. Taking this into consideration, it is clear that proliferation and accessibility of social media usage, has resulted in shifts regarding societal norms and in the creation of these digital vernaculars and practices that were once inconceivable (Peck, 2017, pp. 32–35).

Previous studies on platforms employing visual vernaculars, such as Instagram and Snapchat, have revealed that visual communication practices are influenced by various factors including the platform's infrastructure and its specific social contexts or audience dynamics. For instance, sharing an 'ugly picture' on Snapchat is generally socially acceptable, whereas an Instagram post is typically crafted with more caution, considering its broader audience reach. In the case of Instagram, Hu and Kidd (2023, p. 413) argue this vernacular is centered on visuals, particularly photos and videos which are then combined with the use of tagging and filters. Additionally, a key facet of Instagram is its mobile nature and its sharing features (Hu & Kidd, 2023, p. 413).

In recent years, users on Instagram have also embraced emojis, everyday communicative symbols that contribute to the meaning-making process emotionally and socially (Hu & Kidd, 2023, p. 413). Their presence on Instagram has been termed "iconographic communication" (Siever et al., 2019), blurring the lines between writing and imagery, verifying the common allegation that people's attention span is constantly shrinking

and that image “has positioned itself as the most appealing and dominant way of transmitting significance and information” (Vukčević, 2020, p. 159).

2.2.3 Instagram’s Affordances in Activism

Instagram is an image-based social media platform (Dumitrica & Hockin-Boyers, 2023, p. 3318). Therefore, it has been observed that its design encourages a vernacular centered on visuals, particularly photos and videos (Hu & Kidd, 2023, p. 413). It is characterized by a mobile-centric design and sharing functionalities (Hu & Kidd, 2023, p. 417). Editing pictures with filters is also highly prevalent on the platform. Regarding users’ communicative patterns and language use, Instagram’s vernacular is characterized by the use of hashtags and @user labeling conventions, always accompanied and centered around an image (Hu & Kidd, 2023, p. 419). In this subsection of the theoretical framework, it is attempted to document some of the ways that activists leverage both its visual and non-visual affordances to promote their cause.

Just before diving into the details of how activists use Instagram’s vernacular for their purposes, an overview of the platform’s features and their perceived affordances is required. The core affordance of Instagram is the ability to upload and share photos and videos, which can be edited and altered using filters, allowing users to modify their pictures to their liking and collect ‘likes’ from other users (Tyer, 2016, p. 39). These photos and videos can be viewed as posts displayed in the feed and have a permanent spot on the user’s profile. Inspired by Snapchat (Lu & Lin, 2022, p.1), Instagram also introduced the Stories feature, allowing users to create and consume short content, up to 15 seconds long, that is displayed only for 24 hours. The ephemeral nature of Stories prompts users to perceive it as a more authentic and urgent form of content (Lu & Lin, 2022, p.1). Another very popular attribute of the platform is Direct Messages, which provides personal and direct communication. Hashtags and location tags are commonly used and facilitate categorization and discovery based on interests and location. Additionally, Instagram has an Explore page where the algorithm again boosts content according to users’ interests and current trends.

Kakavand (2024, p. 39) argues that the focus on social media platforms enables hypotheses on how communication patterns are influenced by the characteristics inherent in the architecture of the social media platform, all while accounting for the user’s agency. While Vukčević (2020, p. 166) has asserted that Instagram, as a platform, promotes westernized neoliberal values through its vernacular, and its meaning and semantic structure are predominantly elitist, endorsing certain lifestyles while marginalizing others, current literature shows that the platform and its vernaculars has been utilized for activist purposes to challenge the status quo.

Within Instagram's confines, a popular visual and rhetorical political tactic, termed as slideshow activism is found (Dumitrica & Hockin-Boyers, 2023, p. 3318). Slideshow activism, recognizable for its PowerPoint-style presentations focusing on a particular matter or cause, disseminating information about complex political issues, comprises a series of slides (photographs) containing concise texts and visual elements. This type of activism is an emerging visual template, leveraging on affordances such as accessibility and spreadability. Additionally, hashtag activism, originally coming from Twitter, has recently made an appearance on Instagram in photoform (Kim et al., 2020, pp. 1–2). A hashtag, denoted by the symbol #(hash), is a concise keyword integrated into social media posts to facilitate easy searchability amidst the platform's vast volume of content. It functions not only as a navigational tool for locating and tracking posts of relevance but also as a succinct indicator of one's position on a particular concern. Activists who need an efficient way to widely circulate their beliefs and engage in real-time communication with the public, leverage on its affordances of searchability and spreadability. The study by Kim et al. (2020, pp. 16–19) confirms that using photos with integrated hashtags for promoting an activist cause, results in great shareability.

Haq et al.'s (2022, p. 3728) work shows Instagram's network is indeed vital in promoting social activism. Activists adjust to the vernaculars of this highly visual platform by focusing on symbols, distributing screenshots of other media, and integrating text in the images to improve the media depth. Regarding the published image content, Haq et al. (2022, p. 3734) highlight that pictures of the police are the most frequent among activist's, reinforcing the anti-police sentiment. Screenshots are utilized for disseminating campaign-oriented generic messages, typically featuring written slogans and protest-related banners. Protesters in this study use their mother tongue to create a sense of unity and those specific visuals to provoke the necessary psychological reactions to fuel protests (Haq et al., 2022, p. 3735). It is concluded that Instagram functions as a valuable channel for distributing images and slogans (contained within hashtags) to boost the group morale and upcoming events. Instagram affordances allow its users to work in networked settings and as individual voices (Haq et al., 2022, p. 3735).

Other literature suggests that Instagram promotes a form of logic termed "brand-building news", wherein visually-oriented content is presented for a more passive consumption by news audiences (Hase et al., 2023, p. 1503). Even though 'passiveness' does not align with the the ideals of the activist figure, Semenzin (2022, p. 113) argues that some feminists have leveraged on the brand-building affordance of Instagram to shape public discourse on gender and combat sexist oppression, thereby facilitating the emergence of new creative tactics of resistance. Feminist activists often establish brands on Instagram,

advocating for digital feminist labor rights, redefining intersectional feminism, and believing in the potential of social media to foster networks (Semenzin, 2022, pp. 132–133).

Instagram has become deeply ingrained in our lives in an unprecedented manner, especially within the context of photographic history (Hu & Kidd, 2023, p. 413) and it is of great interest to observe the various ways in which activists utilize it. The interview guide and the discussion section of this thesis will heavily draw from this aspect of the theoretical framework, focusing on how gender activists in Greece leverage and reappropriate the platform's affordances. More specifically, questions addressing Instagram's aforementioned features, such as Posts, Stories, and Hashtags, etc, will be used to understand how activists perceive and utilize them to achieve their goals. For example, literature discusses how the ephemeral nature of Instagram Stories allows users to create and consume authentic content (Lu & Lin, 2022, p.1), but how do activists engaged in gender activism specifically view and leverage this feature? This will be explored to contribute to the current literature on digital activism and gender studies.

2.3. Gender Activism in Greece

Contemporary Greece is often regarded as the legitimate heir to classical Greece, with its people acknowledged for laying the foundations of what is commonly referred to as 'Western civilization' (Zervoulis, 2016, p. 15). However, when it comes to the handling of gender and women's rights issues within modern Greece, the reality may not be as idealistic as its historical legacy suggests. This section of the theoretical framework aims to outline the historical trajectory of women's and sexual minorities' issues in Greece, alongside an examination of the current situation regarding their visibility and representation in both public and private spheres. Furthermore, it will address the challenges faced by women and sexual minorities, as well as the landscape of gender activism in Greece.

Despite ancient Greece being often portrayed as the cornerstone of civilization and the cradle of progressive thought, the status of women in ancient Greek society reveals a predominantly patriarchal social structure (Seitkasimova, 2020, pp. 49–54). Drawing from existing historical records, it is evident that women held a subordinate position to men in ancient Greece (Seitkasimova, 2020, pp. 50–51). They were predominantly seen as entities meant to propagate the species (Seitkasimova, 2020, p. 52). Across all Greek city-states, women were denied political rights, were not considered citizens and were also restricted from owning or inheriting land (Seitkasimova, 2020, p. 54). In accordance with societal norms, women were expected to primarily fulfill domestic responsibilities, concentrating on the upbringing and education of children in alignment with prevailing societal norms (Seitkasimova, 2020, p. 52). The general consensus was that their life's purpose centered on these household duties (Seitkasimova, 2020, p. 52). Married women were subject to the authority of their husbands, while it was socially acceptable for the men to engage in other relationships (Seitkasimova, 2020, p. 52). As ancient Greek society primarily centered around men, this often led to the abandonment of numerous female infants at birth (Seitkasimova, 2020, p. 53).

However, the circumstances regarding what are now perceived as sexual minorities were markedly distinct. Western roots of modern same-sex relationships can be traced back to ancient Greece (Zervoulis, 2016, p. 15). During this era, male companionship was celebrated, a fact evidenced by numerous paintings, writings, and philosophical dialogues (Zervoulis, 2016, p. 16). Some historians theorize that male homosexuality entered the Greek world through the influence of the Dorians, who upon migrating to southern Greece, fostered homosexuality through a military-oriented education system (Zervoulis, 2016, p. 16). In the context of same-sex relationships, particularly in Athens, a common pattern emerged where the younger male partner (*eromenos*), typically assuming a passive role,

would often be the recipient of admiration (Zervoulis, 2016, p. 16). This younger partner would be drawn to the benefits, such as friendship, education, and potential political advancement, that a relationship with his older, active male partner (erastis) could offer. For the older man, this kind of relationship implied a high social status, while for the younger man, it was considered a gift. Although there is substantial evidence also for female to female relationships, records detailing women's lives are scarce. It is important to highlight here that in Ancient Greece, in general, homosexuality was not viewed as contrary to their religion or nature (Zervoulis, 2016, p. 17).

Against such historical trends, the contemporary Greek landscape on gender issues is quite different. Before the current situation is laid out, it is important to first highlight that modern Greece identifies strongly as a European country and an active member of the EU. As such, women and sexual minority rights are guaranteed by the Greek Constitution. More specifically, according to the fourth article "Greek men and women have equal rights and equal obligations" (Greek Const. art. IV , § 2). Regarding sexual minorities there is no express provision but according to the fifth article, "All persons shall have the right to freely develop their personality and to participate in the social, economic and political life of the country, insofar as they do not infringe the rights of others or violate the Constitution and the good usages" (Greek Const. art. V, § 1). However, at the same time, Greek society is also religious and influenced by the influential Greek Orthodox Church, which often espouses problematic and conservative views concerning gender roles and LGBTQ+ issues (Zervoulis, 2016, p. 18).

Until the end of the 20th century, women were socially delineated by their innate roles as wives and mothers, often confined to domestic life and considered as second-class citizens (Beltrán Tapia & Raftakis, 2022, p. 330). While Greeks now exhibit a notably high inclination to believe that gender equality has been attained (Anastasiadou & Samara, 2022, p. 14), official data official data warn that Greece lags significantly, ranking last on the EU Gender Equality Index (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022). Overall, according to the 2022 Gender Equality Index published by the European Institute for Gender Equality, Greece holds the lowest rank in the EU, with a score 15.2 points below the EU average (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022).

Gender-based violence remains a significant and complex issue in Greece, gaining increased visibility in recent years, particularly through feminist activism (Anastasiadou & Samara, 2022, p. 14). The year 2021 marked a pivotal moment with the emergence of the Greek #MeToo movement, further shedding light on the prevalence and impact of such violence within Greek society (Anastasiadou & Samara, 2022, p. 14). Furthermore, Greece has recently witnessed a surge in femicides (Karakasi et al., 2022, p. 86), a phenomenon that has sparked intense discussions regarding the position and role of women in

contemporary Greek society. The reason behind this surge can be traced back to the economic and social crisis imposed due to COVID-19 (Karakasi et al., 2022, p. 86). To expand on the current status of women in Greece, it is essential to highlight that within the present neoliberal administration led by the 'New Democracy' party, out of 64 ministers, only 15 are women (Iatridou, 2023). Setbacks have also been observed in terms of equal pay, accompanied by a rising gender inequality in the sub-domains of financial resources (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022).

The Greek family traditionally adheres to a patriarchal structure, characterized by rigidly defined family roles (Beltrán Tapia & Raftakis, 2022, p. 331). This particular structure of the Greek family has indeed influenced the status of both women and LGBTQ+ individuals within Greek society. Subsequently, this has contributed to the emergence and persistence of a homophobic discourse, which is often perpetuated by the strict adherence to traditional Christian values (Zervoulis, 2016, p. 18). Despite the decriminalization of sex between men in 1951, it wasn't until 2015 that the Greek parliament passed a bill acknowledging civil partnership agreements for same-sex couples. To underscore a significant triumph, this year witnessed the passing of a law by the Greek parliament, legalizing same-sex marriage (Labropoulou, 2024). This landmark achievement marks a substantial advancement for human rights in Greece, establishing it as the first predominantly Orthodox Christian nation to recognize marriage equality for all (Labropoulou, 2024).

Transitioning to the realm of gender activism in Greece, it is essential to establish the context of the country's dynamic history of grassroots activism and social movements. This history frequently revolves around trade unions, leftist political factions, radical anarchist groups, and student activism. These movements utilize a range of protest methods, such as strikes, demonstrations, school occupations and road blockades (Kouki & Chatzidakis, 2021, p. 880). Previous studies have indicated that following the anti-austerity movement in Greece and the subsequent economic crisis of 2009, there has been recognition of the involvement of women in solidarity initiatives (Kouki & Chatzidakis, 2021, p. 884). In addition to the noted rise in women's involvement, there has been a shift towards social reproductive forms of activism. It has been noted that the Greek economic crisis served as a catalyst for grassroots mobilization as it became evident that many Greek social movements shifted their focus from street demonstrations demanding protection for those affected by austerity measures towards other forms of activism (Kouki & Chatzidakis, 2021, p. 881).

Regarding the current situation in Greece related to issues of gender activism and identity, previous research on activists has shown that LGBTQ+ individuals face serious challenges in their daily lives, often due to societal reactions to their identity (Nikolaidou et al., 2022, p. 54). These challenges include difficulties in finding employment and housing, as well as violence and harassment from fellow citizens and their treatment by law enforcement

(Nikolaidou et al., 2022, pp. 55–57). Attacks and hate speech have seen a significant rise in Greece, accompanied by considerable gaps in awareness regarding gender identity issues (Nikolaidou et al., 2022, pp. 55–57).

Due to these substantial challenges in their daily lives, these individuals often face social exclusion. These challenges serve as primary motivators for gender activists to act, driven by factors such as oppression stemming from traditional gender identities, discrimination, stigmatization - including self-stigmatization (Nikolaidou et al., 2022, pp. 55–57). Individuals involved in gender activism in Greece aspire to assert their claims through a variety of actions, engaging in public spaces and to enhance awareness and visibility and to foster empowerment through self-help and solidarity efforts (Nikolaidou et al., 2022, pp. 66–67).

This subsection of the theoretical framework aims to establish a foundation and depict the Greek context concerning gender issues. By offering historical context and discussing contemporary events, it lays the theoretical groundwork for engaging with Greek gender activists during interviews, ensuring a coherent flow and relevance of information and fostering critical thinking regarding the data provided by the activists. In return, this thesis and its findings will offer both theoretical and practical insights into the perceptions of current gender issues among individuals in Greece. It will explore the motivations behind advocating for these issues within the digital sphere and examine how Greek activists effectively utilize platforms like Instagram to further their causes.

Chapter 3: Methods

This thesis seeks to investigate what gender activists in Greece are doing on Instagram, how they are doing it, what tools they are using and what are the consequences. To achieve that, it is essential to first gather the experiences of these individuals, thus, in this research, gender activists are invited to share their online practices and insights through a series of qualitative, in-depth interviews. In this section, I will outline the approach adopted by this study, detailing the methodology employed to address the research questions and collect data. Here, I will also include details of the sampling procedure, an overview of the interviewing process, and the topic guide used. A comprehensive summary of the research participants will also be presented in tabular form. Finally, I will discuss the measures taken to uphold the ethics, reliability and validity of this thesis, as well as certain limitations that come with this specific research.

The rationale for selecting a qualitative approach lies in the objective of comprehending, describing, and elaborating on (Flick, 2018, p. 5) how activists in Greece attribute significance to Instagram's affordances. A qualitative research method has been identified as the most suitable approach for interpreting complex social phenomena, such as digital gender activism, due to its ability to define and uncover concepts and patterns during the research process (Flick, 2018, p. 5). This method accommodates accordingly the dynamic nature of digital activism, allowing for in-depth exploration. As for the analysis of the collected data, a thematic analysis of the interview transcripts is employed, as this method of coding facilitates a comprehensive overview of the data and enables the generation of extensive conclusions (Braun & Clark, 2006, pp. 77–79).

3.1. Data Collection

In-depth interviews are one-on-one interactions between the researcher and individuals whose experiences and knowledge can answer the research question (Johnson, 2001, p. 104). The depth part of the interview refers to the fact that the discussion includes personal matters, such as an individual's self, lived experience, values and decisions, occupational ideology, cultural knowledge and perspective (Johnson, 2001, p. 104). Sociologists frequently employ this approach because it enables them to delve deeply into individuals' personal perspectives, interpretations, cognitive processes, and underlying assumptions about life and society as a whole (Healey-Etten & Sharp, 2010, p. 157). This can also be applied in this project as in-depth interviews are chosen with the intention to

capture the multiple and deeper views of individuals about the usefulness of Instagram in gender digital activism.

To conduct substantive in-depth interviews, several steps should be taken into account. Firstly, to ensure an authentic and fruitful discussion, it is crucial to avoid leading questions (Healey-Etten & Sharp, 2010, p. 159). The use of technical jargon should also be avoided, as it can theorize the discussion, influence or complicate the answers (Healey-Etten & Sharp, 2010, p.160). It is vital for the interviewee to be given adequate time to respond and for the interviewer to refrain from interrupting the subject. Instead it is better for the individual conducting the interviews to sit back and patiently await for the answers to naturally emerge (Healey-Etten & Sharp, 2010, pp. 163–164).

In this research, all the aforementioned tips are consistently applied during interviews to ensure the validity of the data. Opting for semi-structured interviews aligns with Healey-Etten & Sharp's (2010, p. 159) argument that this format enables interviewees to articulate deep feelings and provide rich detail about specific experiences. Thus, leading, close-ended, and judgmental questions are carefully avoided (Healey-Etten & Sharp, 2010, p. 160). Instead, the interview guide comprises open-ended questions concerning individual experiences, Instagram usage, and interpretations of the Greek landscape of digital gender activism. Throughout the interviews, numerous follow-up questions probing "why" and "how" are utilized to transform brief responses into meaningful insights (Healey-Etten & Sharp, 2010, p. 162).

The interviews focused on participants' experience of gender activism in Greece and use of Instagram in this context. The topic guide started with a set of introductory questions about participants' self-identification regarding activism and gender issues, whether they identify as an activist or not and whether they have put a label i.e. feminist on their advocacy repertoire. Given that the label of activist is often controversial among citizens (Bobel, 2007, pp. 148–150), interviewees were asked about their own self-identification. Interviewees are also asked about their general goals regarding fighting for gender issues and how they attempt to achieve them. This is important because these answers provide insights to the interviewees' values, priorities, commitment and strategies in relation to current gender-related challenges. The second topic includes questions formulated to uncover the ways activists leverage Instagram technology for advocacy purposes. Here interviewees are asked specifically about their Instagram usage and how they interpret and utilize the platform's affordances. Lastly, the final topic contextualized the current situation in Greece regarding gender rights and equality, also within grassroots initiatives.

For this project, a number of 14 interviews were conducted, lasting between 45 to 60 minutes. The interviews were conducted in Greek, via Microsoft Teams and audio-recorded for transcription purposes. Interview transcription in qualitative research presents both

potentials and complexities. According to Oliver, Serovich, and Mason (2005, p. 1280), transcription facilitates profound reflection of the data as it transcends mere mechanical conversion; it serves as a pivotal stage where the subtleties of participant responses are unveiled. It allows researchers to scrutinize and refine their reflexivity: By adhering to careful transcription practices and engaging in self-reflection regarding their interpretations and biases, researchers can enhance the accuracy and depth of their findings (Oliver, Serovich & Mason, 2005, pp. 1279–1281).

In my research, the transcription process indeed builds a space for reflection and analysis of the data, consequently bringing to light patterns crucial for the coding process of the thematic analysis I have adopted. However, it is crucial not to overlook the risks associated with the transcription process, including the potential loss of nonverbal cues and the inherent subjectivity in interpretation (Oliver, Serovich & Mason, 2005, pp. 1279–1281). In my research, a significant drawback has been the transcription software itself used by Microsoft Teams. Although the software offers Greek language support, one limitation is that the program often inaccurately transcribes words and phrases, necessitating manual correction and sense-making. Thus, all the automated transcriptions were carefully edited by relistening to the audio recordings and correcting words and phrases that were often misinterpreted by Teams.

3.2. Sampling

The population in this project consists of Greek gender collectives on Instagram. The reason for focusing on gender collectives instead of individual activists, despite the research question addressing activists, is that gender collectives on Instagram serve as hubs of grassroots activism, providing a more concentrated and standardized source of data. Additionally, I have personally observed that these collectives have a broader reach and influence than individual activists, making them more appropriate for participant selection in my study. Since there is no pre-existing list of these grassroots (or citizen-led) collectives, I first identified those present on Instagram. I then contacted them via direct messages and email, inviting their members to participate in interviews on behalf of their collectives.

More specifically, participants were selected based on the following criteria: First, they had to be involved in gender activism. Since the term "activist" can be quite broad (Cortese, 2015, p. 215), participants had to be part of self-identified grassroots initiatives advocating for women and LGTQ+ issues and with a presence on Instagram. Grassroots initiatives typically operate from a bottom-up approach, using local and communal decision-making practices. The individuals involved and the practices they engage in aim to

distance themselves from institutional power structures with the desire to reform them. This ethos underscores the fundamental philosophy driving these initiatives, emphasizing community empowerment and decentralized governance. Since I chose to approach accounts of gender collectives, every participant from the outset met this criterion.

The second sampling criterion was that participants recruited from within these grassroots Greek gender collectives present on Instagram were responsible for managing the social media presence of their respective activist groups. Given that the majority of the interview revolves around platform affordances, it is essential that the sample comprises individuals who are well-versed and actively engaged in overseeing their group's social media activities.

Finally, the last sampling criterion was that participants had to be part of Greek grassroots gender collectives on Instagram with over 500 followers. This threshold does not closely align with categories for accounts that exert significant digital influence. For example, Ruiz-Gomez (2019, p. 17) defines micro-influencers as having between 5,000 to 100,000 followers. Yet, in the Greek context – and based on what I have observed on Instagram as a former member of a non-governmental organization myself –, smaller-scale collectives with follower counts as low as 500 can wield significant influence within their local communities. Despite their comparatively modest online presence, these groups often foster deep engagement, facilitate meaningful discussions and mobilize action on gender issues by operating at a grassroots level and catering to a local, albeit fragmented, audience.

The recruitment was done by contacting Greek feminist and LGBTQ+ collectives via direct messaging on Instagram or via email. This approach is categorized as purposive sampling, with elements of snowball sampling evident, as a small portion of the sample was identified based on recommendations from interviewees themselves to connect with other collectives and their members. A total of 14 participants were part of the project (see Table 1):

Participants	Collective	Number of Followers (Instagram)	Position in the collective
Participant 1	Gender alliance based in Athens	1.983	Social Media Manager
Participant 2	Feminist collective based in Athens	547	Founding Member & Social Media Manager
Participant 3	Feminist collective based in Athens	518	Founding Member & Social Media Manager
Participant 4	Feminist collective based in Athens	1.327	Social Media Manager
Participant 5	LGBTQ+ collective based in Thessaloniki	636	Social Media Manager
Participant 6	Feminist union based in Athens	4.365	Board Member, Columnist for the Collective's Paper & Social Media Manager
Participant 7	LGBTQ+ and feminist collective based in Athens	1.970	Social Media Manager
Participant 8	Feminist collective based in Athens	13,1 K	Social Media Manager
Participant 9	LGBTQ+ digital initiative based in Athens	501	Social Media Manager
Participant 10	Feminist collective based in Larissa	1.474	Social Media Manager
Participant 11	Feminist collective based in Athens	503	Founding Member & Social Media Manager
Participant 12	Trans digital initiative based in Athens	965	Founding Member & Social Media Manager
Participant 13	Feminist collective based in Athens	1.700	Founding Member & Social Media Manager
Participant 14	Feminist collective based in Athens	1.518	Social Media Manager

Table 1: Overview of participants and the grassroots collectives they represented.

3.3. *Data Analysis*

To analyze the transcripts of the interviews, I have opted for a thematic analysis. This choice is made on the basis of this method's ability to recognize recurring concepts and themes, particularly when dealing with a substantial volume of data. Given the extensive content across 14 extensive interview transcripts, employing this method appears fitting as it offers both adaptability and the ability to uncover insights that transcend individual experiences. In my capacity as a researcher, however, it is imperative for me to carefully reflect on the data, prioritizing the words of my interviewees without imposing personal interpretations or biases. I must also thoroughly assess all aspects present with the aim of identifying not only dominant but also marginal themes.

Thematic analysis is a widely used qualitative analytic method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting concepts within data (Braun & Clark, 2006, pp. 77–79). The overarching objective of this method of analysis is to find themes in the data that contribute to answering qualitative research questions (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 82). According to Braun & Clark (2006, pp. 83–84) there are two approaches in thematic analysis, one that is inductive and one that is theoretical or deductive. When opting for an inductive approach, themes emerge from the data itself and not from the researcher's theoretical interests or questions. On the other hand, a theoretical approach calls for themes identified based on the researcher's interests and questions. For the purposes of this research, a combination of inductive-deductive coding is employed. In the coding process, the theoretical framework and research question of the thesis clearly influence the patterns searched for identification. However, as the data is processed, new ideas emerge, which are taken into account and contribute to enriching the findings.

Before diving into the coding specifics of this thesis, it is essential to comprehend the process by rephrasing the steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 87) to achieve it successfully. Coding, in the context of data analysis, is a systematic process of breaking down and categorizing information. It begins with familiarizing oneself with the data, transcribing if necessary, and noting initial ideas (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 87–88). Then, interesting features of the data are identified and coded across the dataset, with relevant data collated for each code (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 88–89). These codes are then grouped into potential themes, and all data pertinent to each theme is gathered (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 89–91). Reviewing the themes ensures alignment with the dataset, culminating in the creation of a thematic 'map' of the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 91–92). Themes are refined, with clear definitions and names assigned (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 92–93). Finally, the process concludes with the selection of compelling extracts, a final

analysis, and the production of a scholarly report linking findings to the research question and literature (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 93).

For my analysis, all interview transcripts were uploaded at Atlas.ti, where I followed a systematic coding process as described above. Sentences from the transcript were highlighted, as the analysis emphasizes ideas and experiences, and one or more codes were assigned to them. For example, the ways participants discussed Instagram and its features were marked, along with all actions, both physical and digital, seen as part of their activist agenda and goals. All these codes were later clustered into broader groups, which gradually encompassed more codes, changed names and reshaped as themes.

The first theme, Goal Promotion, explores how Instagram's demographic (young, active users) and its vernacular, which emphasizes visual content, facilitate the promotion of gender equality and how the platform serves as a space for information dissemination and community building. The second theme, Activist Repertoire, examines the digital acts of activism such as advocacy, political commentary, networking and documentation, alongside the promotion of offline activism through organizing events, providing aid, and publicizing marches and festivals. The final theme, Mobilization of Citizens, focuses on the Greek context post-#MeToo movement and the issue of government media control. It examines how gender activists strategically use Instagram features to mobilize citizens and challenge the status quo. This includes posts as archival tools, Stories for immediate updates, hashtags for increased visibility and community building, emojis for aesthetic impact, and direct messages for personal communication. The full coding tree is found in Appendix B.

3.4. Ethical Considerations

Before the interviews are conducted, the interviewees are requested to read and sign an informed consent form. This form is emailed to them in Greek and signed before the interviews. While maintaining anonymity in interviews may not be feasible, measures are taken to ensure that personal details remain confidential, and their data will be utilized solely for research purposes. At the outset of each interview, the rights written in the informed consent form are repeated, and participants are requested to verbally confirm their consent. In the consent form and during verbal communication with interviewees, it is clearly stated that their identity and the account handle of their grassroots collective will be kept anonymous and that their data will be used exclusively for research purposes and will not be shared for any other reason beyond the scope of the study. Furthermore, participants are asked to give their consent for audio recording during the interview sessions, which will

facilitate accurate transcription and analysis of the data. All participants are adults aged 18 or above, and to safeguard their identities, pseudonyms are assigned to them.

3.5. Reliability and Validity

Throughout the research process, each interview is audio-recorded in its entirety, while simultaneously, a transcription software in Microsoft Teams diligently captures the comprehensive dialogue between the interviewer and interviewee. Notably, prior to commencing the interviews, a pilot interview was conducted to refine and ensure the clarity and fluidity of the process, based on received feedback. During the coding phase, the identified themes are consistently grounded in the precise words and experiences articulated by the interviewees. Therefore, abstract and theoretical interpretations are consciously avoided, adhering strictly to the participants' expressions. This approach, termed "low-inference descriptors," involves documenting observations in explicit and concrete terms, including direct quotations from participants, rather than imposing subjective interpretations (Silverman, 2011, p. 361). The adoption of this method is deliberate, aimed at ensuring the reliability of the research outcomes.

According to Silverman (2011, p. 394), several tools exist for validating qualitative studies. These include analytic induction, constant comparison, deviant-case analysis, comprehensive data treatment, and the use of appropriate tabulation. Specifically, in this research, the focus lies on constant comparison and comprehensive data treatment. This entails thorough assessment and consideration of all data, ensuring that the analysis process continues until every piece of information is accounted for. Moreover, findings from each interview are continuously compared and contrasted to depict the variation in gender activism practices among Greek collectives on Instagram.

3.6. Positionality of the Researcher

According to Tracy (2010, p. 846) to further ensure the study's ethical research process, it is important for the researcher to engage in self-reflection. Sharing personal experiences, attachments and connections with the subject under investigation can influence our understanding of the phenomenon (Tracy, 2010, p. 842). In this context, it seems pertinent to acknowledge my personal background as an activist and my expertise in digital activism, particularly on Instagram.

For a couple of years, I was a member of Amnesty International Greece and identified myself as an activist. My activism encompassed both physical and digital realms. I

participated in street protests, assisted in organizing various events for human rights advocacy, and promoted Amnesty's content on my personal Instagram account. Particularly during Covid-19, my activist efforts were predominantly online. I shared online petitions, actively recruited members through digital platforms, and used Instagram to spread information. These factors may introduce personal biases that could influence both the interview process and subsequent data analysis. However, as Maier and Monahan (2010, pp. 23–24) have pointed out, when conducting the interviews and assessing the results, I make a concerted effort to strike a balance between being closely engaged with the issues discussed and maintaining a level of detachment.

3.7. Limitations

There are several limitations associated with this research design that warrant consideration. Firstly, it is important to acknowledge that the majority of individuals interviewed belong to collectives based in Athens, the capital of Greece. This lack of significant variety in the sample may introduce sampling bias, as different regions of Greece may exhibit distinct characteristics in their mobilizations due to the different socioeconomic components of each region. Furthermore, while the decision to include collectives with a small follower count was deliberate and justified previously, it is important to acknowledge that the results of the research may have limited generalizability potential due to this. The potential risk of losing nuances in translation when transcribing the data in English is also taken into account. The data analysis relied on transcriptions of interviews originally conducted in Greek, however, some quotes are translated into English in order to be included in the Results section. This process bears the risk of losing some context-specific details in translation.

Chapter 4: Results

After conducting 14 interviews with individuals deeply engaged in gender activism and part of feminist or LGBTQ+ grassroots collectives, the thematic analysis addressing the initial research question of this thesis—'How do gender activists within grassroots collectives in Greece reappropriate Instagram's platform affordances?'—has produced the following themes: Instagram as a space for goal promotion, Instagram as part of the activists' repertoire, and Instagram as a tool for mobilization in the Greek context. After analyzing the emerging themes, this section will conclude by highlighting the link between Instagram's affordances and gender activism in Greece.

4.1. Instagram as a Space for Goal Promotion

4.1.1. Instagram as a Space for Goal Promotion due to its Demographic

Contrary to statistics (Statista, 2024) indicating that Instagram is the third most popular social media platform globally, the majority of the interviewees from Greece mention that they choose to run an Instagram account because they perceive it as the most popular platform at the moment. During the interviews, the individuals are naturally comparing it to other social media platforms to justify its current popularity. Participants 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 14 elaborate on how users on Facebook are not as active anymore. Specifically, Participants 9 and 14 use the phrase "Facebook is dead", while Participant 12 declares that "Facebook is for boomers" and boldly states that they do not know anyone who uses Facebook anymore. Participant 14 further compares Instagram with other social media platforms, noting that while Twitter, now X, can be used for political discussions and activism, its format is more suitable for brief reports. "The whole world is moving to Instagram" according to participant 1, whereas participant 13 bluntly states that "Instagram is hot". Participant 14 explains that the decision to engage in gender activism on Instagram was driven by an unconscious feeling that like-minded people and collectives already active and causing a commotion on the platform would help their own collective grow and promote their goals.

When asked why their grassroots collective is active on Instagram specifically, the majority of the interviewees answered that the platform's demographics consist mainly of young people. All participants 1,4,5,6,7,9,10 emphasized the youthful nature of Instagram's user base. Participant 1 called Instagram "a youth platform" and participant 5 justifies this focus on youth by stating that "the younger ages are the future of the movement". Participant 6, whose feminist collective is also active on Facebook and has a large following, justifies

operating an Instagram account as being inclusive for their gender activism: "Instagram is a way for people who do not have Facebook to get in touch with us. For example, a 22-year-old girl who got harassed will also have a space to send the collective a private message."

4.1.2. Instagram as a Space for Goal Promotion due to its visual-focused Vernacular

"Instagram is the medium where images play the most dominant role" stated Participant 4. This observation aligns with previous literature, as verified by Hu and Kidd (2023, p. 413), who argue that Instagram's vernacular is highly centered on visuals. Interviewees discuss how Instagram's emphasis on images has impacted and almost replaced the modern news format and the way people nowadays stay informed making it the ideal space for gender activists to promote their agendas. More specifically, Participant 9 notes that Instagram combines aesthetics and information, making the experience of staying informed more pleasurable and enjoyable, potentially replacing traditional mainstream media sources for some individuals. Participant 12 adds that due to Instagram's visually focused nature, people opt to scroll through it during their everyday breaks, while commuting, or simply when they are bored. Aesthetics can be political as said by Participants 4 and 7 and this is something that gender activists in Greece seem to leverage on.

All the above observations suggest that the findings from the previous study by Vukčević (2020, p. 159), which stated that the image "has positioned itself as the most appealing and dominant way of transmitting significance and information" are not far from the truth. Furthermore, the assertion that society's attention span is gradually shrinking (Vukčević, 2020, p. 159) seems to be supported by the insights provided by participants in this study, who linked Instagram to this phenomenon. Participant 12 highlights that Instagram offers relatively light, easy, and fast information that users can access quickly, therefore they prefer it as a means to stay informed about social issues. They note that while Instagram provides this surface-level information, users also have the opportunity to delve deeper into these topics if they desire. In contrast, Participant 12 suggests that Facebook is perceived as more serious and demanding of attention span. Participant 14 adds that the act of visualization on Instagram has made it easier and more accessible for people to react to a collective's call or public announcement. This suggests that the visual nature of Instagram facilitates engagement and response to content compared to platforms that rely more on text-based communication.

Emojis, bright colors, and aesthetically pleasing posts are identified by the interviewees as key elements that make Instagram's vernacular a suitable platform for achieving their goals. Participant 12 mentions that they use emojis in their texts because

they are eye-catching and can draw attention, while Participants 2 and 14 also note that by using emojis in large announcements, they can make them lighter and more enjoyable. Participant 10 adds that employing emojis can help promote posts or stories through the algorithm. Participant 1, a member and social media manager of a queer collective, mentions a preference for images with the colors red, blue, purple, and yellow, noting that they have observed the algorithm boosting these types of images, especially if their quality is high. Participant 5 continues with the realization that a visually appealing picture, such as a well-made poster, is sure to catch the eye of their followers. Those observations appear to align with Ruiz-Gomez's (2019, p. 20) definition of the attention economy, which posits that attention has become the most valuable commodity in today's society.

“Instagram has a sense of social immediacy” - Participant 8. According to the interviewees, Instagram's platform affordances, particularly those that are image-based, have been described as giving a sense of urgency and immediacy, often associated with the feature of Instagram Stories. Participants 7 and 10 use Stories when they want to promote something that happened during the same day or convey urgent information. Participant 3, when asked about Instagram's greatest advantage, chooses the Stories feature because they offer immediate information. Additionally, a Story serves the attention economy (Ruiz-Gomez, 2019, p. 20) because it is short, usually includes an image and therefore can be easily and subconsciously consumed, according to the same participant. Lastly, participant 13 notes that because of these attributes, users frequently scroll through Stories in their free time and states that the way that they perceive Stories as an immediate tool to disseminate information.

4.1.3. Instagram as a Space for Goal Promotion: Dissemination of Information

During the interviews, gender activists are asked to elaborate on their goals and aspirations. The answers prompted by this question reveal a strong link between the activists' aim to disseminate information and Instagram's platform and features, which they perceive as a fertile ground for this purpose. According to Participant 2, their collective's presence on Instagram aims to achieve adequate information dissemination to the public. They emphasize that gender activism on the platform also reaches people who are not involved in the feminist and LGBTQ+ movements, those who are not organized in a collective or participating in street activism. Paraphrasing Participant 6, even if one person gets informed by a post or Instagram story about issues related to gender discrimination and equality, it is considered a success.

Gender activists in Greece use Instagram to promote various types of information related to gender issues. Participant 3 dedicates their content to raising awareness about

gender-based discrimination, violence, and patriarchy, aiming to involve femininities in public discourse who are not up-to-date with current gender claims. They leverage Instagram Stories to upload terms and their definitions, such as 'patriarchy'. Similarly, Participant 9 uploads content explaining terms like 'grooming' to familiarize people with such situations and posts information about the feminist movement to counteract its negative connotations. According to Participants 7, 8, and 14, Instagram Stories have proven to be an effective tool for disseminating important and urgent information. They serve to inform followers about upcoming marches and events, as well as details about the collective's operations and upcoming meetings.

Participant 12, a member of a trans digital initiative, uses Stories in the form of Q&As to address trans issues, such as information about gender-affirming surgery. Their goal is to make information about trans people accessible to the Greek audience, believing that Greek society is still largely uninformed about these issues. They translate content found online in English and post it in Stories or create memes related to the trans community, which are then uploaded as Instagram posts. Participant 4 aims to create visibility regarding gender issues through their Instagram account, addressing everything from day-to-day problems to incidents of sexual harassment in workplaces and universities.

4.1.4 Instagram as a Space for Goal Promotion: Community Building and Networking

When asking participants about their goals in engaging in digital gender activism, the concept of space is frequently mentioned. Participant 2, who not only manages the account but also initiated the feminist collective, explains that their motivation for founding the collective and its Instagram account was the desire to create a safe space. This space is intended for women and people in general to seek help, engage in conversation, or take collective action. Participant 8 states that their collective's goal and digital presence aim to enable femininities to occupy space that is usually taken away from them, allowing them to live more freely. Participant 5 aims to create a space where LGBTQ+ individuals can coexist and empower each other, despite ideological differences. According to prior literature (Johnston, 2017, p. 654), the need for a place that serves as the base of a community is crucial in gender politics and activism to actively engage in politics of inclusivity.

Instagram has played a significant role in facilitating connections among gender collectives. Participant 11 describes Instagram as a space where women unite and connect with like-minded individuals, highlighting how the platform has helped their collective form close relationships and collaborate with other groups. Participant 13 also emphasizes the importance of Instagram in enabling their collective to quickly and easily get in touch with other collectives, ultimately allowing them to build a network. Through the feature of direct

messages, gender collectives correspond with each other. Participant 2 notes that this correspondence has led to the organization of common events and festivals addressing gender issues in Greek society.

During the interviews, it has been observed that the use of hashtags translates and facilitates the aforementioned need for space and collaboration within online collectives. Participant 9 mentions using hashtags in their Instagram posts to connect with the broader movement. Similarly, Participant 12 utilizes hashtags to carve out online space for trans information, employing a Greek trans hashtag to direct users to a hub of relevant content. Participant 14's interview reveals that hashtags, including trending ones related to the Greek gender landscape such as #femicide or #March8th, are used primarily for algorithmic promotion. Nevertheless, the notion by Linabary et al. (2020, pp. 1827-1828) that the use of hashtags, defined as "hashtag feminist" is employed to create digital space for the movement, is validated.

4.2. Instagram as Part of the Activists' Repertoire

4.2.1. Instagram and the Digital Activist Repertoire

Interviewing members of feminist and LGBTQ+ collectives has revealed that Instagram is fully integrated into their activist repertoire. "Activism nowadays has taken another shape." - Participant 3. The idea that the nature of activism has changed with the emergence of new technologies George & Leidner (2019, p. 4) is validated, as Instagram is not just an ephemeral tool used to boost physical activism; it is also a primary landscape where they take action.

One of the things that are part of the digital activist's repertoire according to the findings but also prior literature (Özkula, 2021, p. 67) is advocacy and political commentary. Participant 13 noted that Instagram Posts convey a more serious tone and this is the reason why the collective leverages this feature to make their political announcements and advocate for feminist and gender related issues. Advocacy and political commentary through Posts has also been validated by other participants. For example, Participant 9 elaborated on how when they were curating the Instagram account of their collective they chose to generate a Post regarding the murder of queer Greek activist 'Zachie Oh' by police forces (Staff, 2023) and went on to write a long announcement, regarding this incident as one of the most shocking gender related events the country has experienced, advocating for justice in the upcoming trial. Participant 3 also describes how the collective's most recent Instagram Post is a political commentary on an incident that has shocked Greek society: the case of child trafficker Elias Michos and the involvement of numerous political figures (*Kolonos: Michos Guilty of All Charges Including the Rape of the 12-year-old Girl – Mother Not Guilty*, n.d.). They believed that a post with a political analysis was necessary, as Michos's conviction marked a historical moment for the gender and feminist movement in Greece.

In addition to advocacy and political commentary, another crucial aspect of the activist repertoire is research and documentation. Participant 12 highlights that the most important part of their activism involved researching information on trans issues online, translating it into Greek, and presenting it on their account to make it accessible for trans individuals in Greece. Participants 3 and 7 mention that their Posts document incidents of police violence, specifically citing an incident where a girl was heavily beaten by the police after attending the feminist march on March 8 2024. Participants 6, 8, 13, and 14 collect incidents of sexual harassment sent by their followers through direct messages and are posting or reposting this content from other collectives to raise awareness.

When it comes to assessing the digital activist repertoire, participants' views are divided. According to Participant 3, Instagram "has entered our lives for good" which is why Participant 8 believes that digital activism has come to align with the structure of our daily lives. Participant 9 notes, "I understand that internet activism has increased in recent years and it is very interesting and fortunate that platforms are not just used to promote lifestyle but also to advocate for certain political positions, usually in a disruptive manner.". Participant 1 thinks that engaging in forms of digital activism on Instagram disseminates "food for thought" to people who are not usually familiar with issues related to gender discrimination and equality. This is why Participant 10 believes that we should engage more in digital activism and that collectives should pay more attention to Instagram. Participant 9 also believes that there are many remarkable accounts of collectives online that promote visibility regarding gender issues and that even one repost can lead to a small change in the world.

The digital activist repertoire, however, has its disadvantages. For example, Participant 6 discusses the commercialization of feminism, referred to in literature as "glossy feminism" (Banet-Weiser et al., 2019, p. 13), where Instagram accounts promote 'girl power' and attract many users with polished posts and catchy feminist slogans, but fail to be truly intersectional or effect meaningful change. According to Participant 5, this phenomenon can be traced back to the socioeconomic structure of our society, particularly neoliberalism, which has led to the individualization of values and the structure of our daily lives, making individuals desensitized to societal issues and rendering collective action outside the digital realm a modern luxury. Participant 8 laments that digital activism often only reaches those who are already interested in these topics, saying about her collective's Posts on Instagram: "Okay, I will engage with them, my friends will too, but what about others?". This statement illustrates the phenomenon of echo chambers on social media, where messages circulate only within a limited group of like-minded individuals (Terren & Borge-Bravo, 2021, p.1). Participant 3, upon reflection on the digital activist repertoire, comes to the conclusion that it represents a rather subdued form of activism.

4.2.2. Instagram and the Offline Activist Repertoire

"It is of great importance to use Instagram as a tool and not as a field of action" stated Participant 4. While the majority of participants have evaluated gender activism on Instagram positively, noting its significant reach and visibility, many interviewees have emphasized the need to balance digital efforts with physical actions. "The world has become deeply attached to the Internet and the safety net it provides. However, one cannot live solely within the confines of a screen" - Participant 5. It is noteworthy that when participants are asked about their collective's activist agenda for promoting their goals and creating

awareness, several responses highlight non-digital actions that are later showcased and promoted within the Instagram platform.

The interviewees emphasize the diverse range of offline activities undertaken by their collective to advance their cause, ranging from street protests to educational initiatives and community support. Many of the collectives are a familiar presence at protests and festivals, actively voicing their advocacy for gender equality and social justice. Specifically, participants 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 consistently highlight their collective's involvement in street activism as a primary means of promoting their cause. Moreover, their dedication to education shines through activities such as movie screenings followed by insightful discussions, book presentations, and thought-provoking exhibitions. Participants 2, 3, 7, 13, and 14 specifically emphasize their collective's efforts in organizing such educational events. Participant 11 further elaborates on their collective's initiative in hosting an interactive exhibition addressing the issue of dowry, showcasing their commitment to addressing critical social issues through creative means.

Participants 6 and 7 underscore the significance of their collective's role in knowledge dissemination through the publication of magazines, providing a platform for in-depth exploration of pertinent issues. Additionally, Participants 3, 13 and 14 elaborate on the establishment of self-education circles dedicated to keeping the community informed about new laws and current events, thereby empowering them with essential knowledge and information. Many interviewees also elaborate on various awareness-raising events organized by their collectives, with Participants 2 and 3 specifically emphasizing initiatives aimed at raising awareness about femicides, addressing a critical issue in Greece that requires immediate attention. Moreover, the majority of the interviewees highlight their collective's active significant milestone in the country's LGBTQ+ rights movement.

Operating at the grassroots level, Participants 2, 3, 7, 13, and 14 share their experiences in organizing fundraising parties and retailing merchandise such as bags and stickers, effectively harnessing community support to further their cause. Concurrently, Participants 4, 6, and 10 discuss their collective efforts in extending legal assistance and offering shelter to women in need, underscoring their dedication to providing tangible support and solidarity. Furthermore, Participants 2, 3, 10, 13, participation in and organization of festivals as spaces for both celebration and advocacy. Notably, Participant 5 shares insights into how their collective initiated the organization of Greece's inaugural self-organized Pride Festival and Participant 14 emphasizes the importance of fostering a sense of community through organized gatherings, where individuals can openly discuss, share poetry, and engage in artistic endeavors.

Although all the aforementioned acts of activism take place offline, Instagram has played a pivotal role in facilitating the offline activist repertoire. Gender activists document

these events by capturing moments through photographs and leverage Instagram for promotional purposes. Many interviewees have emphasized the significance of Instagram posts as archives of their collectives' past events and actions. Consequently, they choose to showcase all their past events and their participation in marches through posts. Participant 14 articulates this sentiment, stating, "[Posts] have an archival character, something that we would like to stay in our archive and be more accessible later.". Conversely, gender activists in Greece utilize Instagram Stories as a platform to issue calls to action, invite individuals to protests and upcoming events, and organize their collective's functions regarding the time and location of assemblies.

4.3. Instagram as a Tool for Mobilization in the Greek Context

4.3.1 Control of the Mainstream Media

When asked why they advocate for gender issues on Instagram specifically in Greece, Participant 9 responds, "Do you remember how the murder of LGBTQ+ activist Zak was depicted on the news? That's why.". The interviewee refers to the September 2018 incident where Zak Kostopoulos, also known as Zackie Oh, an LGBTQ and HIV rights activist and drag queen, was killed by police forces. The news coverage at the time was marred by homophobic discourse, and the video of the incident was edited to support a false narrative that Zak was attempting to rob a store, justifying the attack on him (Staff, 2023).

"The TV channels are not free, nor is the press. We have to find an alternate space to shed light on the truth and express ourselves freely", says Participant 3. According to Participant 2, gender activists in Greece "want to achieve adequate information that does not exist in the mainstream media". Traditional media in Greece face significant constraints on freedom due to extensive governmental control and influence, a situation that has worsened since the financial crisis and Covid-19 (Stamouli, 2022). Financial instability has made media outlets more dependent on government support, leading to increased censorship (Stamouli, 2022). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the government directed state funds to supportive outlets and enacted a controversial law criminalizing "fake news", raising fears of punitive measures against critical and anti-government reportage. Incidents such as the murder of journalist Giorgos Karaivaz and the use of Predator spyware on reporters underscore the dangers faced by the press (Stamouli, 2022). This situation has led to Greece's fall to the lowest rank for press freedom among EU countries (*RSF's 2022 World Press Freedom Index: A New Era of Polarisation*, 2022), reflecting a deeply constrained and partisan media landscape where independent journalism struggles to survive (Stamouli, 2022).

Therefore, according to Participant 13, Instagram serves as a platform for counter-information. Participant 8 further elaborates that having no link with the current government gives them autonomy, noting that any ties with the government would contradict the very essence of their feminist collective. The majority of the interviewees, when asked about the advantages of grassroots mobilization, concur with this statement and highlight the sense of autonomy it provides, particularly in the Greek context: "It's liberating because we do what we want. The team does what the team wants. We discuss everything among ourselves, make decisions collectively, and organize our actions among ourselves. We don't have any restrictions beyond ourselves, our own selves." - Participant 7. "We have no account to give to anyone, let's say, we are not affiliated with anyone" says Participant 2,

discussing how this independence empowers their collective to mobilize freely. They emphasize that decisions are made collectively, allowing them to express their thoughts and feelings openly on their online platform without inhibition. Participant 3 adds that having access to uncensored information about gender-related issues on Instagram enables individuals to critically assess the current situation and cross-check the actual facts.

4.3.2. The Greek #Me Too Movement and Covid-19

"In my mind, the period of the pandemic was crucial for digital gender activism in Greece. At that time, posting on social media was your biggest weapon. If it were 15 years ago, when social media did not exist, we wouldn't have known what was happening or how levels of gender-based violence had increased, precisely because people were shut in their homes. There wouldn't have been the same level of action that took place then, when gender collectives were actively spreading the message on Instagram that 'if something is happening to you, you can come to us.'" - Participant 4

When asked about the incentives and timing for launching their Instagram accounts, Participants 2, 3 and 13 reveal that it was in 2021, during the pandemic. Participant 13 says that: "We launched our collective and our Instagram account during the pandemic, a time when women began to speak openly about abuse. We realized how many women in our area were facing these struggles and felt an urgent need to mobilize against the patterns of abuse that Greek society was facing but had not fully acknowledged".

The aforementioned statements align with the general situation of the time. In 2021, when former Olympic champion Sofia Bekatorou disclosed that she had been sexually assaulted by an unnamed executive of the Hellenic Sailing Federation, the #MeToo movement was ignited in Greek sports (Kallergis, 2021). Inspired by Sofia Bekatorou, more athletes began sharing their experiences of sexual harassment and abuse on social media using the hashtag #metisofia (on Sofia's side) (Kallergis, 2021). Following Bekatorou's revelations, Greece experienced an unprecedented increase in reports of sexual assault and harassment, ranging from verbal abuse to the rape of minors (Kallergis, 2021). The #MeToo movement extended into the arts sector, with actors and actresses speaking out, exposing the pervasive culture of sexual assault and harassment within Greece's art scene. These disclosures resulted in several prominent resignations and dismissals (Kallergis, 2021). Similarly, numerous complaints of sexual abuse from ordinary people began circulating on the internet and social media.

Gender collectives on Instagram mobilized under those circumstances. The majority of participants from feminist collectives revealed during the interviews that they utilize Instagram and Direct Messages to connect with victims of abuse. Additionally, they use

Instagram Stories to raise awareness about incidents of such nature. Participants 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 13, and 14 discuss how they reach out to women through Instagram, providing them with practical assistance such as legal support, financial aid, mental support, and even accommodation.

Towards the end of the interview, Participant 6 reflected on gender activism on Instagram, particularly in Greece, citing an incident that occurred during the quarantine period. The interviewee discussed the leakage of a pornographic video involving Greek mega lifestyle influencer Ioanna Touni. Following the video's leak, a significant solidarity movement emerged under the hashtag #metintouni (on Touni's side), with people across the internet condemning the act of sexual abuse depicted in the video, as well as the patriarchal discourse associated with it. Participant 6 sees this as a victory for the feminist movement in Greek society, highlighting how gender activism on Instagram and gender collectives mobilized for women's solidarity, against patriarchal stereotypes and macho behavior.

4.4. Instagram's Affordances and Gender Activism within Grassroots Initiatives in Greece

After reviewing the themes that emerged from the thematic analysis, it is now possible to confidently address the research question: "How do gender activists within grassroots initiatives in Greece utilize Instagram?". By carefully adhering to the theoretical framework in designing interview questions for gender collective activists and closely analyzing their responses, insight has been gained into how these activists navigate Instagram, perceive the platform's architecture and leverage its features to achieve their goals.

Starting with their perception of Instagram's technological infrastructure, the interviewees acknowledge that the platform is primarily focused on visual rather than textual affordances. During the interviews, participants elaborate on how they interpret and leverage this emphasis on visuals. Most of them view this visually-centric architecture as a powerful tool for disseminating information, mobilizing Greek society, performing digital acts of activism and showcasing their physical acts of activism. By carefully selecting high-quality pictures, bold colors, emojis, and crafting an aesthetically pleasing style in their posts and stories, gender activists in Greece aim to capture followers' attention and promote their agendas. The interviews highlight that activists capitalize on the tendency of people to scroll through Instagram in their free time, drawn by the ease of consuming image-based content on the platform.

Diving into the specifics of Instagram's world, gender activists perceive Posts as having an archival dimension. They create Posts to document their offline activism, including street protests, educational initiatives, and community support, as well as to announce pressing issues, raise awareness and mobilize support both online and offline. For significant announcements, many participants use emojis to enhance the aesthetic appeal and readability of the content. It is also very common to end the Post with a context-related hashtag; for example, many participants mention using hashtags like #γυναικοκτονία (#femicide) or #8Μάρτη (#March8th). By generating these hashtags, gender activists aim to leverage the algorithm to boost their posts, linking them to the broader movement. According to the participants, hashtags can foster community building, create online spaces for their movements, amplify their messages to broader audiences and enhance visibility of their cause.

Reevaluating all of the participants' answers related to the feature of Stories, it is concluded that activists use Instagram Stories to pass on urgent information and mobilize their audience for immediate action. Stories provide a sense of urgency and immediacy, corroborating the literature by Lu & Lin (2022, p.1). They allow activists to disseminate

information quickly and effectively, particularly during critical moments or events. This information is usually about upcoming events, protests and practicalities such as meeting of the collectives. Collectives also utilize the feature of reposting stories from protests and documenting incidents to counteract traditional media bias. This strategy leverages Instagram as a platform to create a discourse that provides alternative information. Many collectives prioritize Stories, believing that people engage more with them than with posts, given their demand for shorter attention spans.

Finally, the feature of Direct Messages emerges prominently in the interviews. As the title implies, activists associate it with a sense of directness between collectives and their followers, highlighting its role as a hub for substantial communication. Many gender collectives use Direct Messages to offer support to victims of abuse, collect reports of sexual harassment incidents, or engage in informational conversations about gender issues or the collective's function. Another crucial aspect of this feature is its role in connecting collectives with one another, facilitating networking and collaborations. Most participants perceive this feature as a means to connect with like-minded individuals and cultivate relationships that can culminate in both online and offline gatherings, strengthening the movement.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This study focuses on digital gender activism in Greece within grassroots initiatives and explores how activists perceive and utilize Instagram's infrastructure. The overall objective is to enrich the literature on digital activism on Instagram and broaden both academic and societal knowledge regarding the modern activist repertoire, specifically in the promotion of gender equality. To achieve this, 14 interviews were conducted with activists who are part of collectives active on the platform. The theoretical framework of the thesis encompasses activism and digital technologies, the theory of affordances, a historical background and the current situation of gender equality in Greece. This theoretical foundation, along with the interviews, aims to generate data to answer the research question: **How do gender activists within grassroots initiatives in Greece reappropriate Instagram's platform affordances?**

The thematic analysis employed to analyze the data from the interviews has brought to light three distinct themes, showcasing the ways activists perceive and use Instagram for their purposes. First, it is concluded that activists in Greece turn to Instagram to promote their goals due to its immense popularity, especially now that, according to them, Facebook is gradually losing its appeal. Additionally, Instagram has a younger demographic, which aligns with the target audience that gender collectives aim to engage and involve in their movement. Its visual-based vernacular also contributes to its popularity and effectiveness in promoting activist agendas. The platform's image-based functionality provides an easy and light way to consume and share information, requiring less attention span.

Gender initiatives on Instagram focus on two primary objectives: disseminating information and building community. These initiatives educate their audience about gender issues like discrimination and patriarchy, while also promoting events and activities to encourage participation in social causes through Instagram Stories and Posts. Gender activists use Instagram as a platform for creating safe spaces, networking and fostering a community among women and LGBTQ+ individuals. This includes connecting people with shared experiences and building solidarity among gender collectives, facilitated by specific hashtags that bring together people and information, as well as through direct messages.

The second theme that emerged from the data analysis highlights Instagram's integration into everyday life, making it a fundamental part of activists' repertoire. On one hand, Instagram serves as the platform where discussions about gender issues unfold, equipping activists with a new digital toolkit to advocate for gender equality, politically comment on incidents undermining it, conduct research, and document instances of sexual harassment and police brutality. On the other hand, activists from the collectives also utilize

Instagram as a tool to complement their offline activist activities. They document their collective's offline events by capturing moments through photographs and then posting them on Instagram for promotional purposes.

Finally, gender activists in Greece within grassroots initiatives have increasingly relied on Instagram as a mobilization tool, particularly due to limitations on freedom of speech in mainstream media, as highlighted in the interviews by the participants and research by Reporters Without Borders (*RSF's 2022 World Press Freedom Index : A New Era of Polarisation*, 2022). Activists in Greece assert that television and press lack freedom, necessitating the consumption and dissemination of truth online, with Instagram emerging as a central platform for this purpose. Grassroots collectives, independent of government or institutional influence, maintain autonomy on Instagram, using it as a hub for counter-information that mobilizes Greek society.

When asked about the reasons for creating an account on Instagram, many participants disclosed that their collective established its presence during the COVID-19 quarantine. This period coincided with the emergence of Greece's #metoo movement in sports and the arts, accompanied by a rise in domestic violence, femicides, and incidents of sexual harassment. Gender activists on Instagram provided support and advice to victims through direct messages, while publicly exposing and condemning instances of gender-based discrimination and violence using specific hashtags to increase visibility and virality.

Considering all the themes and subthemes discussed earlier, one can clearly discern the answer to the thesis' research question related to how Greek gender activists within grassroots initiatives reappropriate Instagram's affordances. Instagram Posts for gender activists have an archival dimension: collectives generate posts encompassing important announcements, photographs of past events, activities, and protests that they want permanently displayed on their profile. This helps showcase their collective identity and activist repertoire. On the other hand, Stories convey a sense of urgency and immediacy. Activists use them to mobilize for upcoming events, share urgent news, and provide practical information about the collective's activities, but they do not require a permanent place on the collective's account. Hashtags are frequently used in posts to boost their visibility through the algorithm and connect them with like-minded content, making the post part of the broader cause. They help create a space and increase visibility for the movement. Participants use Greek Hashtags to enhance the Greek activist scene and make Greek gender activism more coherent. Lastly, for Greek gender activism, Direct Messages have proven to be a crucial way for collectives to network with other collectives and simultaneously provide support and information to their followers.

This study has enhanced literature on digital and gender activism but has certain limitations. One significant limitation is that the research and results are geographically and context-specific, focusing on Greece, where the gender landscape is shaped by the country's unique values and peculiarities. Therefore, the generalizability of the results is limited. Additionally, the majority of the sample is from Athens, the capital, making the study less inclusive of activists and collectives from non-urban areas. This urban-centric focus further limits generalizability. Another limitation is that the results discuss only certain Instagram features, excluding others like the Explore Page, Reels and Instagram Lives. Further studies could address these features for a more comprehensive understanding of Instagram's role in digital gender activism.

Despite the aforementioned limitations, this study provides analytical insights into how gender activists perceive, utilize, and reappropriate Instagram's platform affordances. It contributes to the theory of affordances by demonstrating how a predominantly 'lifestyle platform' is utilized by activists to advocate for gender equality. Besides the enrichment of digital activism literature, this research can also serve as ground for further comparative research on how Instagram and other digital platforms are utilized by gender activists in different geographical and cultural contexts. Because affordances are perceived differently by individuals and can vary over time, future studies that uncover similarities and differences could deepen our understanding of the digital activist repertoire, advocacy tactics and their impact on promoting gender equality globally.

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Appendix A–Summaries of Interviews

Participant 1

The individual is part of a grassroots gender alliance based in Athens. Despite actively promoting gender rights, they refrain from identifying as an activist due to their perception of the term as more radical. Their role includes managing the alliance's Instagram page, posting consistently 2-3 times per week. They have observed how Instagram's emphasis on visuals has led to the commercialization of content, with aesthetics significantly influencing engagement and reach. Regularly monitoring Instagram metrics, they've discovered methods to enhance content promotion, such as utilizing specific hashtags. They argue that individual accounts are more effective in digital gender activism in Greece, as Instagram tends to amplify individuals over collectives, making it challenging for the latter to gain significant visibility. This is why the alliance contemplates collaborating with Instagram influencers.

Participant 2

The interviewee is a founding member of a feminist grassroots collective based in Athens and oversees the collective's social media presence on platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. From a young age, they have identified as an activist, advocating for issues and injustices affecting women and LGBTQ+ individuals. Initially opting for a Facebook page for their activism, they observed a lack of engagement and decided to expand to Instagram, recognizing its popularity. They employ emojis to break up text and engage followers, particularly when making announcements or sharing lengthy posts. They heavily utilize Instagram stories. They also frequently use hashtags like #femicide to connect with the broader movement. Direct messages allow them to interact with followers and collaborate with other collectives. They believe that gender activism on Instagram in Greece fosters community building, which extends offline. Given the government control over mainstream media in Greece, they see digital activism as crucial for disseminating information.

Participant 3

The interview highlights a founding member and social media manager of a feminist solidarity collective based in Athens. This individual identifies as an activist, engaging in various acts of activism within the feminist solidarity movement and personally combatting

everyday forms of sexism through discourse. While the collective initially focused on Facebook, they decided to expand to Instagram due to the perceived urgency. They believe that Instagram, particularly through its stories feature, provides a more effective platform for conveying messages. They argue that Instagram's user-friendly interface fosters familiarity and directness, especially with the option to scroll through feeds and stories, which predominantly consist of visuals. According to the interviewee, gender activism on Instagram has illuminated gender injustices in the Greek context. They advocate for a multidisciplinary approach to activism, integrating both digital and physical efforts, as the most effective strategy for instigating change.

Participant 4

This interview is conducted with an individual actively involved in a feminist collective based in Athens. They are responsible, among other things, for managing the social media presence, particularly on Instagram. The individual identifies as an activist dedicated to combating everyday manifestations of patriarchy. They explain that they decided to engage on Instagram due to requests from younger members to establish an account for easier following. While they strive to maintain a regular posting schedule to stay visible in the algorithm, their posting frequency ultimately depends on current events and urgency. They actively engage with followers through direct messaging, utilizing the platform to disseminate information about their collective and offer assistance and shelter to women in need. The individual acknowledges that Instagram's emphasis on visual content isn't always conducive to making formal announcements for collectives. To attract public attention to their posts, they consistently incorporate emojis into their bio. They consider Instagram Stories to be the most crucial and accessible feature due to its immediacy and ease of consumption. Lastly, they observe that in the Greek context, digital tools have expanded the activist toolkit and facilitated broader outreach. However, they caution that this digital activism often prioritizes low-risk, informative content and may not align with more assertive forms of activism that involve direct action or claiming space.

Participant 5

The interviewee is an individual who has been involved in queer activism since 2009 and is part of a queer collective responsible for organizing Thessaloniki's Pride Festival. They began engaging in activist tactics out of a desire to both discover and subsequently foster a safe and confident LGBTQ+ community. They emphasize the significance of platforms like Facebook, which offer textual affordances beneficial to such collectives. However, they

stress that an Instagram account was deemed essential due to the platform's popularity, particularly among the youth demographic. Regularly updating the collective's account, they curate content that they wish to be perceived as an archive representing the collective to the public. They underscore the immediacy of Instagram, noting that impactful visuals have a broader reach, particularly in stories. They posit that post-COVID-19, there has been a significant digital mobilization for queer and feminist causes, though they observe that this mobilization tends to remain confined within the digital realm.

Participant 6

The interview features a member of a feminist union who holds roles in social media management, serves on the union's board, and contributes to the union's magazine. Engaging in gender activism, the interviewee identifies as a feminist activist with the overarching goal of combating everyday forms of patriarchy. While the feminist union maintains an Instagram account, the interviewee finds the Facebook page more convenient and effective due to its broader reach and textual affordances. The decision to launch the Instagram account aimed to engage with a younger demographic. A key platform feature frequently utilized by the interviewee is Instagram Stories, through which they share informative content about upcoming events, marches, and current issues. In the Greek context, the interviewee believes that digital activism has played a significant role in bringing attention to gender issues, citing an incident where digital gender activism catalyzed tangible change.

Participant 7

The interview features a member of a LGBTQ+ and feminist collective based in Athens, Greece. This individual strongly resonates with the feminist and LGBTQ+ movements, emphasizing their connection with the anti-racist, anti-fascist, and public goods movements. Among their responsibilities within the grassroots collective is managing social media, where they prioritize aesthetics, recognizing their political significance. They have chosen Instagram over Facebook due to shifting youth demographics, utilizing platform insights and algorithm interpretation to optimize their posts. An intriguing finding was that a post using the hashtag #FreePalestine didn't reach as wide an audience as previous ones. They have recently incorporated reels into their strategy, as short videos tend to garner more views according to Instagram's statistics. Despite the significant impact of social media, especially Instagram, on gender advocacy in Greece, the interviewee stresses the importance of translating this digital activism into tangible actions on the streets for real societal change.

Participant 8

The individual interviewed is affiliated with a sizable feminist collective in Athens. They do not classify themselves as activists due to their belief that the term carries individualistic implications. They note an obstacle posed by Instagram's caption word limit and emphasize the importance of using attention-grabbing photos alongside captions. When crafting captions, they utilize emojis to delineate paragraphs and for aesthetic appeal. Hashtags are employed to align with Instagram's language and to enhance the algorithm's ability to connect their posts to broader causes. The collective views their Instagram posts as archival, while Instagram stories are utilized to promote upcoming events and mobilizations. The individual cites the platform's urgency and widespread user base as reasons for the collective's active presence. They also express frustration with instances where the algorithm appears to impede their posts. In the Greek context, the interviewee highlights the positive impact of gender activism via Instagram, including increased visibility and collaboration between feminist and LGBTQ+ collectives. However, they caution against the potential for Instagram to foster echo chambers, wherein like-minded individuals may follow these accounts, potentially leading to a distorted perception of progress in Greek gender activism.

Participant 9

The individual is an integral part of a feminist and LGBTQ+ digital initiative situated in Athens, Greece. They oversee the content creation for the initiative's Instagram account, generating articles and producing podcasts, all of which they perceive as integral to their daily activism. However, due to a heavy workload and limited resources, their regular Instagram postings have become less frequent, despite their heightened involvement during the quarantine period. They specifically opted for Instagram as their platform of choice for the initiative, citing Facebook's decline in relevance and noting that the younger demographic is highly active on Instagram. They emphasize that Instagram has become the primary source of information, particularly for younger generations, offering a blend of current events and aesthetic appeal that makes information consumption more digestible. They firmly believe that Instagram provides an ideal environment for the emergence of accounts and individuals dedicated to promoting change and disseminating crucial information.

Participant 10

The individual is a member of a feminist collective based in Larissa, Greece. They describe themselves as activists due to their efforts in promoting gender equality and creating a safer environment. Utilizing Instagram as a platform, they curate posts to serve as an archive of their collective, showcasing past events and expressing their views on current issues. Emojis and hashtags are strategically employed to boost post visibility through the platform's algorithm. They recognize the importance of aesthetic appeal in increasing reach and often continue longer text in the comments section to maintain visual attractiveness. For informative content like upcoming events, they utilize Instagram Stories for promotion. Their decision to join Instagram stems from the desire to engage with a younger audience. They note that digital gender activism in Greece, particularly through personal storytelling, has reshaped the landscape significantly. They highlight the Greek #metoo movement of 2021 as a prime example, emphasizing its predominantly online nature.

Participant 11

The interviewee, a founding member and social media manager of a feminist solidarity group in Athens, highlights the group's internal focus, which involves weekly meetings for discussions on pertinent matters, engaging in creative pursuits such as arts and crafts, and other activities. Over the course of two years, they spearheaded a project centered on the concept of dowry and curated an art exhibition around it. Instagram served as their primary promotional platform due to its efficiency. While their current Instagram usage has decreased, it remains a tool for promoting upcoming events or activities. They attribute Instagram to facilitating collaborations with other collectives advocating for gender issues.

Participant 12

The interviewee is one of the two founding members and social media managers of a trans collective in Greece. The collective's activities are exclusively online, aiming to disseminate essential and accurate information to trans individuals in Greece regarding various issues such as transitioning, where to purchase resources like bandaids, and engaging in more theoretical discussions about trans identity. Their primary mode of communication is through posting stories featuring Q&A sessions. They employ humor, including memes, to address trans issues, describing their content as "fun." Additionally, they utilize direct messages to engage with their followers, providing guidance and support. They are of the belief that

digital activism in Greece, particularly concerning trans rights and visibility, has significant room for growth.

Participant 13

The interviewee is one of the social media managers of a feminist collective and solidarity group based on a small town outside Athens. Their ultimate goal is to overthrow patriarchy, and the way they try to achieve this is by making their presence loud in the local community through events, meetings, and their online presence. They consider the ability to use Stories provided by the platform very important as it offers immediacy and results in quick and easy communication of the message or call they want to make. They do not use many emojis or hashtags as they feel it does not align with the content they use. Through the platform, they have come into contact and collaborated with other collectives. They believe that online activism in Greece has both positive and negative aspects. The positive is the visibility and that most people are now informed about gender issues; the negative is that online activism through reposts is trendy and there is a discrepancy between online participation and physical presence.

Participant 14

The interviewee is one of the founding members of a feminist collective in Athens, who also manages the group's social media, including Instagram. Their goal is to create a safe space for women in their city, promote self-education, and provide mutual support, both emotionally and practically. They created the Instagram account to coordinate and publicize the collective's activities and to amplify their presence in their city. Through Instagram, they make announcements and take positions on gender-related issues, and they connect with other collectives. They post content that they want to be visible on their main feed as an archive, while stories are used for ephemeral and coordinating calls. Overall, with regard to gender-related activism in Greece, they believe that Instagram has significantly contributed to spreading information.

Appendix B–Coding Tree

