Athens RBF Field Notes

**List of interviews**

AN1 Aiketerina

AN2 Eleni & Spiros

AN 3Antonis

AN4 Athanasios

AN5 Konstantinos and Konstantinos

AN6 Panagiotis

AN7 Nicholaos and Manos

AN8 Evangelos

AN9 Alexandros and Alekos

AN10 Port town meeting

AN11 Theodoros

AN12 Vasilis

AN13 Pontios

AN14 Lykourgos

AN15 Irene

Interview Guide Athens

***Intro questions***

1. Would you describe yourself as an activist?
2. How/when did you first become politically active and how was it that you came to join this movement/protest in particular?
3. On what previous experiences (your own or those of others) did the movement/activities build?
4. Would you currently consider yourself part of a wider movement? Or in the past two years? What would you call the movement?

***Background/identity of movement activists***

1. How would you describe the majority of participants in movements / protests? In other words, are they mostly young, unemployed men…..?

**Sub-questions**

1. Are these protests/activities primarily a young persons’ thing?
2. B. Before the eurocrisis, did most of the people now active have permanent jobs? Or were working conditions already precarious?
3. C. What level of education do most of the people protesting have?
4. D. Do you think there is solidarity between generations in Greece?
5. E. Apart from young people, old people are also particularly affected by this crisis. Are they politically active in any particular ways?

***About the movements***

1. What were the main slogans of the movement?
2. What would you say the high point of the movement was?
3. What did people in this movement do besides demonstrating in the streets?
4. What was the main form of communication? How widespread is the use of social networks (e.g., Twitter, Facebook) for communicating within the movement?
5. Do you read, listen to or communicate in languages other than Greek?

***Relationships with other Actors (including political parties, NGOs, etc.)***

1. How involved were formal organisations (in other words, political parties, trade unions, and NGOs) in the mobilisation (beginning of; later)? Which ones?
2. How, if at all, is this movement connected to other movements?
3. We have heard about ‘solidarity economy’ projects, such as the potato movement. Are they much connected to this protest movement or other movements in general?
4. What do you see as the main achievements or impacts of the movement? Where do you think the movement stands now?
5. Have new leaders emerged from these movements?
6. Do you think the civil rights of activists were protected?
7. Do you think nationalist/right-wing/fascist movements have also been strengthened by the crisis?

**Movements and wider worls/prior**

1. Do you see what you are part of as an Athens movement, a Greek movement, or a European or global movement?
2. Have you followed news of OR do you have contact with other movements across Europe or indeed globally? If so, which ones?
3. Or did Athens in fact become an example to others in a specific way?
4. Do you think there unique things about the Athens movements and its experience that you would not expect so much elsewhere?

**Targets and aspirations**

1. What does democracy mean to you?
2. Who would you demand democracy from?
3. What would you describe as democratic practices?
4. Is/are the movements themselves democratic?
5. Is social justice a term that has meaning in Greek? Who would you demand social justice from?
6. Does the word dignity have resonance in Greek? How about indignation?
7. Has indignation been and can it continue to be a source of mobilizing?

**Aiketerina, 8 April 2013**

*Q1:*

I consider myself both a humanitarian actor and also an activist. Whenever you take a political stance you are an activist. While I don’t belong to a political party, I have left leaning views.

*Q2 - Q3*

I have participated in most of the riots, demonstrations and occupations of the past few years. I wanted to see them from the inside, to see what they represent. Because what was happening for the first time in Greece was that the older generation, people like my mother, wen to protest and I also wanted to be a part of that. Being an NGO person meant I was always an active member in society. In all the movements I see people in need. But I was never part of a specific movement, like the Greek Debt Audit, because it has a very particular character. But I participated in the demonstrations because there are people in need and because I want to help.

I am against some of the movements especially those that are very party driven or have political agendas. I see myself as a person who is fighting for democratic rights. Because I believe in democratic rights, social benefits and labour rights. But I am fighting as an individual and I will continue to do so because movements stop.

For some people, they just woke up because there are people in need and we realized that we need to unite and to show solidarity to everyone. But I don’t like that they only show solidarity to Greeks and not to others in our society.

*Q4*

Waking Up movement for people to realize that they need to do something and that up until then we had been isolated and that we were not showing solidarity to others and to their neighborhoods. They realized that they are also being affected by the crisis. So they become active otherwise they would not have become active. So a lot of the people in these movements, apart from the older ones, like the anarchists, were new. They realized that they and people they knew were being affected. So they started to show solidarity. So if they knew someone who had been fired, they collected clothes and food for them. Because they realized if they had not been reached by the crisis, they would be soon.

*Q6 Slogans*

* ‘No more saving’
* ‘Backyard dictatorship’
* Many anti-fascist slogans e.g., ‘I am not going to get afraid [of the fascists’
* ‘Get them out! [The politicians]’
* ‘Burn the Parliament!’

[When asked about the mountze hand sign, she showed it as an open facing palm directed at someone. This symbolic gesture means ‘get the hell out’.]

People in the Indignados were also using the mountze.

*Q7*

2010 was the high point of the movement from May – August 2010. Because that was when there was a lot of enthusiasm and energy. But then August came, which is our usual month for taking summer holidays, and people in the squares left for their holidays. The movement lost its dynamism.

At first the movement was grassroots driven. People went out based on a call on Facebook without really knowing what they could do. But they went out because they were very angry. But then, later, the political parties infiltrated and Syntagma Square became divided. Before August already there were the leftists and the ring wing nationalists. The nationalists in Syntagma had no connection to leftists. While at the beginning it was one it then split into two.

In 2011, people had become very disappointed because we hadn’t achieved anything and then at that time the Golden Dawn came out and we were disappointed without ourselves. In 2011, it was similar to 2010 where there were people who had political views and those who didn’t, but who had come out to protest because they were driven by anger.

Today there is a big disappointment. Some people say they are spraying us [with chemicals] so that we don’t react. So that the people are being numbed and lulled so that we don’t go out and take guns and attack parliament.

People are very disappointed with themselves and not just with the political parties because we didn’t have a common agenda. We didn’t gain anything.

*Q8:*

*People were doing other things as well as demonstrating. There were lots of urban gathering in* people’s homes and parks. People met to talk and to collect food, money and clothes. This was the first time to gather money for fired employees.

At that time a couple of big newspapers also closed down and the journalists who were fired joined the protestors.

In many well-to-do neighbourhoods, like in Haidari, it’s an occupation in a very wealthy area where people drive Mercedes cars. You will see wealthy houses with unemployed people sitting inside and they have nothing opt eat. They need to survive but they are too embarrassed to take benefits and to say that they are in need.

So these people begin to self organise to help each other. So the poverty and crisis has also reached unconventional places.

*Q9:*

It is the same as Tahrir Square. The protests began with one open call on Facebook, which went viral. The communication was done mostly on Facebook. Twitter and YouTube were less important. Mobile phones were also important.

In 2008, when the police killed Alexis Grigoropolous, SMS and mobile phones were predominately used.

Electricity bills have been raised. People call these bills ‘haratsi’ which is a word meaning taxes that was used during the Ottoman occupation and it referred to the taxes Greeks paid to the Ottomans for everything from the land, to homes, basically taxes to live. The Ottomans without accountability or regulation imposed these taxes. Now that same word, ‘haratsi’, is being used to refer to the electricity bills because they too are being applied as if randomly and that they have no relation to how much electricity is consumed. So you if you don’t pay the bill, then they turn off your power. The electricity is owned by the state and also private interest. The companies complained that the term ‘haratsi’ was being used to describe the electricity bills.

*Q22*

Democracy is freedom to choose within the regulations of society. It does not mean to do whatever you want but to at least be able to live how you want to and to express your views and to be represented by people who listen to your views.

*Q23*

I demand democracy from me. If I can’t be democratic I can’t ask it from others. Also I demand that the media be democratic and then finally the politicians.

*Q24*

Democratic practices start from school; it starts from how the teacher listens to the children or at work if the director meets with the staff. Democracy is about interrelations people those who are in charge and those who do things. There has to be exchange of opinion from the top to the bottom.

*Q25*

Yes, the movements are democratic. Some movements have tried a lot to be very democratic but with some it didn’t succeed not necessarily in being democratic but being effectively democratic because they took the approach to listen to everyone’s opinions. And this took a long time to listen to everybody and everybody wanted to be heard. It was a long process. If in your mind democracy is to listen to everyone and to hear everyone then this leads to things not happening.

*Q26*

No one in Greece uses the term ‘social justice’. We use the term justice but not social justice. We call it the social state apart from the Communists who believe it is Kiniko Kratos [??]. The social state should provide a [safety] net for the poor, to be able to protect the vulnerable and the leaders. Because we see that the first to be affected by the cuts were the vulnerable, the pensioners, those on benefits, the mothers. This was the injustice that they experienced. What we were fighting against with the second memorandum was the huge cuts.

But it was not done fairly. Employees from the parliament did not see their pay cut. They receive 16 months of salary. It is the usual 12 months plus a month extra for Christmas and for Easter and two more months. These are untouched and no politician has ever tried dot change this. When it was proposed to discuss this, the parliament employees went and stopped the hearings. This is how they are outside society. Because they were never affected by the cuts to pensions so these people, the employees of parliament, are seen as separate from society.

*Q 27*

Dignity [Axioprepiu] means worthy living. To have the acceptable minimum standard of living to have food, clothes and a house and to be able to support yourself and your family and children.

Indignity [aganaktis] means I am fed up, I can’t take anymore, and I can’t accept anymore.

*Q28*

People fist mobilized on the basis of indignity than they felt empowered. Now it’s like a society in a coma. Maybe another bad incident will happen, like an explosion to wake us up again and get things to happen again. Another riot another police beating of a child, the same that happened with Grigoropolous. But today people are disillusioned.

For instance, yesterday the Troika came here and no one went out into the streets to protest. Before, they wouldn’t have gotten to Syntagma. They would have held the meeting at the airport. But yesterday, they came and went and no one said a thing.

We started out in 2010 with great expectations but thing was achieved but at the same time you still have people organizing and showing solidarity to each other they have become more sociable with friends and family. Maybe we realise that the system can’t be changed if you are confronting it all the time. There are now new movements that happened at the neighbourhood level where people are gaining space and parks. Families are taking kids to the public parks and people are socializing again and looking after their neighborhoods.

*Q13*

The different solidarity movements are really connected with the protests. There are people in the solidarity movements who did not have a connection with the riots or protests but they se solidarity is the way to go. So you will see teachers who are there, some of course were involved in the demonstration, but you also see whom who are just there to talk and to make cookies, because they are unemployed and they can’t do the things they used to do before like go shopping or to the cinema, so they spend their free time together, they drink coffee, eat and socialize.

*Q11*

There is no connection between these movements and NGOs. Only in instances where people from movements would refer people to NGOs or to a formal structure so that the NGO could give them more assistance.

But there was a huge connection with the political parties, especially now and maybe that is why the majority people have lost faith in the movements and see them as party driven and didn’t want anything to do with the parties. They didn’t want to go with political party banners and they feel that the parties don't’ express their rights. At the beginning the movements had a clearer social character, they were more grassroots. People did not hold signs and they were not affiliated with political parties. But then the parties came in.

At the Indignados we had open democracy with the microphone in the Syntagma, people would address a whole variety of subject. Many political party representatives also came and stared to give speeches using the microphone and using the same discourse. So the grassroots movement lost is character. The same applies with the unions. People realize that the parties and the unions are part of the corrupt system so no one believes in them. When a big riot took place, the union organized a strike on the metros so that people could not get to the riot.

But at the open democracy anyone could speak for 10 – 15 minutes and say whatever they wanted to say. Everyone wanted to speak so it took a long time. Then many things merged for us to vote on. So we lost time, people did not have experience with doing direct democracy.

*Q15*

New leaders did not emerge, but new figures did. Syriza gained a lot of ground. Before the crisis it had 4% and now its is the second largest party. We never had a left party rise so high. But it happened because of the crisis and the movement.

Also new figures emerged from the world of economics, like Greek economists who we had never heard of before but who gave views on what was happening about the European Union, the euros, etc.

But no civic leaders emerged.

People were interested in talking to Syriza leaders, especially Tsipiras. There are about 10 – 20 people who are well known.

A new magazine has started to be published which is the focal point of the leftist where they publish provocative covers and write controversial issues. Most of the journalists are those who were fired from their jobs in the last couple of years.

*Q16*

Violence has made people quit the movement and also opened the discourses that the far right ad the far left both use violence. But the government to show the similarities between these sides was doing this.

*Q14*

People feel guilty and accept hate fact that they have been part of the problem in the whole social system being broken in that they didn’t pay their taxes, that they weren’t punctual or precise. They feel the need to change something. They realize that they have the power to do some things to demand space and rights and to self organize.

*Q18*

Most movement is based in Athens and in Thessaloniki. The small islands re not so much affected. These are urban-based movement and this is like in other European countries, where the protests are based in London, Rome, Madrid.

*Q19*

I don’t so much follow the other movements.

*Q20.*

Greece has has been an example about how people have been affected. It is an example of the crisis. We have become a target for help. Like when the international [name deleted] collected money they sent it to Greece, not to Portugal or Ireland where people are also affected by the crisis. Maybe it is because we cry more than others and so we get more attention.

*Q21*

One thing which is unique is the Golden Dawn’s ‘Doctors with Borders’ initiative which is about only helping Greeks and other others. But I don’t know so much about other European movements to answer this question.

There is not much learning from elsewhere. We have participated in a pan European call for riots.

There is some similarity to Tahrir Square, but we see differences with the Arab world. They are fighting against a different kind of dictatorship than we are fighting. But we are all fighting for the same rights, we all want the same things like dignity and a better future.

In Greece we invented democracy and we will reinvent it.

END

**Eleni and Spiros, 8 April 2013**

They started their work in September 2012, but even before formulating the solidarity network they knew each other since 2010. They were talking about the haratsi and how it is unjust. They were speaking with lawyers about what could be done about the electricity disconnections.

*Q 1 – 2*

We started by doing assemblies in the neighbourhood to see what problems people were facing and we launched open calls and started to get together. We realized that the Golden Dawn was going around [name deleted] and doing solidarity activities and we tried to find a way to confront the fascists. So it was an opposition action against the fascists, against the Golden Dawn and what they were doing. Because we realized that if no one was standing by the people in need, then the Golden Dawn would take over.

There were many social problems and no one was helping the people. We showed them that there is another way of dealing with things. We started by doing actions in September before opening of the school s and we gather things for the underprivileged children such as pencils, books and bags to help those kids. We showed that we can help and what can be done for them.

The aim is not to be a charity the aim is that people face problems and understand that they have to self-organise. It is not just about giving them food, but teaching them how to fight for their rights themselves. It is to get them off their sofas and their beds and into action.

This is not just activism, but also a political intervention, we have a multi-dimensional approach to get people to participate and become part of the solution.

It is aimed at getting people to wake up and to resist. But we are also working at interventions at the municipality level to help people find their way through the system.

We went to the electricity company (DEH) and asked them not to disconnect the electricity of low-income households. But they refused.

*Q3*

We already knew each other because of our activism against pollution that is created in [name deleted] by the petroleum companies and also we had been organising at the municipality level.

*Q4*

Many of us first met each other at the Indignados and we tried to move the Occupy movement to [name deleted] but this didn’t succeed at the [name deleted] level. So we started to gather and see what we could do differently here.

*Q6*

Slogans

* ‘There is Another Way’
* ‘Solidarity for All’
* ‘Solidarity, Resistance, Revolution’

We had a very successful action with volunteer doctors who came and examined school children for free. Because every two years all school children must be seen by a doctor and to get their papers. This costs at least 100 euros so we brought the volunteer doctors and they saw the children and this was a great success.

Then we started to do the work on reconnecting electricity to homes that had had their electricity cut.

We are fluid and flexible, so we see and adapt to what needs to be done. We have volunteer electricians who are working with us to reconnect and when we reconnect we place a paper saying that his was reconnected it is illegal but the owner is told and we get into discussions about what is ethical and what is unethical. What is haratsi and what is legal?

Access to electricity is a basic need, people still need it and so you can keep accumulating their bills, but you should not disconnect them. Also alongside the electricity consumption changes, people pay taxes in their electricity bill to the municipality. We tried to intervene with the municipality to at least reduce the taxes for low-income families and the unemployed and to help reconsider their debt.

*Q9*

We have a Facebook page and we also regularly distribute leaflets and do gatherings. We do gatherings at the neighbourhood level and we also drive around in a car with a microphone – very old school! We also have a house for the purpose of the movement and we hold gatherings but we also use it to collet things for distribution.

*Q7*

For us 2013 is the peak, the high point. The problem is that you now are getting new groups of people who are facing poverty. There are the new poor. They are emerging and these are people who cannot accept their situation and they are very embarrassed to ask for help so it’s very difficult to reach the new poor. That is why we make open calls and big actions so that people feel that they can come.

*Q22*

Democracy is a high value issue and a big thing in our lives, but especially during the last few years’ democracy is under fire in Greece. The government plays the role that is imposed by outsiders, so no actual democracy is taking place and because of this imposition, there is a threat to democracy. We want to re-create real democratic procedures at the grassroots level. Like open democracy (the agora) and to incorporate that into the people.

*Q23*

Democracy comes from all of us. From the government and municipality, but if we want to give democracy real meaning it has to start at the grassroots and society must fight for it. It’s not a gift, but something that you have to fight for. You must fight for democracy.

*Q25*

We are trying to make the movement democratic but it is difficult because you have to learn how to do it. It starts with small teams and trying to take common decisions. There are no official leaders, we work with other movements and we do common activities and we tell people in assemblies to actively participate. It is about getting the people who ask for help to become actively participating. The biggest victory for us is for people to take part and to participate.

*Q26*

We see our actions as social actions. So when we show solidarity and help out families who are on low income, this is a social justice issue. Like cutting electricity in some cases has led to health problems, so this is a social justice issue. We accept working with anyone from any political party, except from the Golden Dawn, the fascists. We are responsible for things now. Because we did not take a stance before. We woke up as citizens in 2010.

Before the crisis things worked on the individual level, in other words, people took care of their problems as individuals or individually. But now Greek society is realizing that things have changed and that positive change will only come through community actions and struggles. Of course the political system is to blame, and you need to put on the table the issue of changing the political system, but this will only happen at the grassroots or else the political system will stay the same.

*Q27*

Dignity is a high priority issue for us. So we tried to show and demonstrate dignity in all our actions and approach our work through dignity and to not make people feel as though they are getting charity because we say that while you are getting something from us, we are also giving you something. So we get people involved in difference ways. Some people cook, some work in the garden, etc.

It is very impressive of how people react because they also want to give back to the greater good. Like the woman we had helped who then came and gave us clothes for younger children.

What dignity means is not to bow your head and not to get something for free but to stand and fight for your lights [Spiros]

*Q 28*

Indignation was what led to the first actions but it shouldn’t be the last. By being indignant you do nothing, but you need to find a way to change things. So the first level is when you are angry and you express your anger. The second level is to see what you can do to change the situation. The Indignados didn’t have political demands, we were asking for open democracy. But what was it to achieve? Democracy is a constant process.

*Q11*

We have members who are also part of political parties, but they try to keep it outside of the movement [note: Spiros is a member of Syriza]

Our movement is not seen as partisan movement, but it is part of the wider left. We don’t want to get into partisan politics not only because we believe that this could split the movement, but because we want to be open to everyone and to talk to society.

No NGOs or the Church were involved, but we didn’t ask for their help either. But this doesn’t mean it can’t happen in the future. But it will be with real NGOs and the real Church. We want to remain autonomous. We don’t take funding from donors and we are against funding. Even if someone approaches us and wants to give us something, even if we take it we won’t publicize them and their donations. We are not here to promote the donors.

*Q12*

You will see these types of movements all over Greece we are connected via Facebook and our blogs. Like with the Potato movement we exchange ideas and good practice and expertise and are in touch with each other on the personal level.

*Q15*

We don’t believe in leaders. There is a negative example where the movement, ‘We Don’t Pay’, lost its way when it tried to turn into a political party. This movement started by a family who said that hey would not pay the road tolls and other people also said they would not pay them, but then they decided to turn into a political party and participated in the latest elections and probably thought they could become politicians. This was bad.

*Q14*

Through this movement we have reached people who were unreachable. We have helped people to survive and met people who were completely marginalised from society and made them part of the movement. We put a barrier against the Golden Dawn in our area. So if it was either the Golden Dawn or us and people saw that we were helping them. Also, people who were Golden Dawn members also left and came to join our side. Through the movement we see each other and we also help each other.

*Q16*

No police violence has been used against our movement in [name deleted], but we have witnessed police violence as individuals in our previous experience in demonstrations. But if they change the law on electricity and it becomes mileage [?] to reconnect then we will probably face issues with the police. But we hope not.

But look at what happened to We Don’t Pay, the state began to issue penalties and also the companies took some of the drivers to court for destroying the toll barriers and this led to the end of the movement.

*Q18*

What we are doing in [name deleted] happens all over Greece in different ways but with common goals. Similar solidarity movements are emerging in Spain and Portugal, but its specific here because we started with the fight against pollution and we are small we don’t have the power to extend our movement everywhere. People have visited us from other regions that want to learn from us. [Neither are natives of [name deleted]. Spiros has been there for 20 years and Eleni for 3 years. But both consider it their home. They said they came to consider it their home when they started to fight to protect it from pollution.]

*Q 19*

They are gone to a conference that was held in another region, which was organised by the Greek Debt Audit, and the conference was Internaitonal and there were reps form other countries. There they shared their experiences, but they don’t know about experiences form other countries. They see the most similarities with Latin America (Argentina).

END

**Antonis, 8 April 2013**

A professional journalist, who worked at a big radio company. He produced a documentary.

*Q1*

I don’t use the term ‘activist’ because of how the term is used and understood in Greece. There is a difference to how a journalist is perceived and how an activist is perceived. I don’t want to be seen as an activist, but as a journalist.

Today, the entire political spectrum in Greece has moved to the extreme right wing so just doing your job is now seen as being radical.

My both documentaries were broadcast globally but not in Greece. I was fired from my job four days before the documentary was released. Officially it was due to financial reasons, but I have taken them to court to say it was because of political reasons.

The film is polemical and people say not balanced, but that is because the other side has been given so much attention

When I started to make the film about debt, I found myself in debt as well. So I put a call on the Internet on my website and in 15 days I had received funding to finish the film. This also helped me to connect with people. All around Greece in occupations, there were public screenings of the film. It created a debate around the issues of debt and austerity. The biggest newspapers started attaching us and saying hat we are not balanced and this also helped to create a debate. Up until that point everyone believed that we should pay the debt, what we tried o to show was the difference between public and private debt. That you are not morally responsible for the public debt.

*Q4*

I consider myself part of the left and I support left parties, but more in my capacity as a journalist than a party member. For instance, I write articles etc.

*Q7*

For me the peak was 5 May 2010. This was the first time in my life that I though the demonstrators would enter parliament. The police couldn’t stop them. But then three people burned to death in a bank. This was the point people were really angry, but then the political parties became involve and that the movement lost its power. But it depends what you mean by peak, and maybe this is a process.

The maximum comes when people realise that their future will be much worse than their past. This happened in May 1968 when people realised this. In Greece it happened in May 2008 when you had the killing of Grigoropolous.

*Q6*

Slogans? We had two types of people involved in the Indignados. There was the middle class that was politically confused and had never voted. They were just shouting ‘thieves’. But this for me is a dangerous slogan because it doesn’t see the structural problem and that this crisis isn’t caused just by corruption.

On the other hand there were people who were discussing and arguing in the agora in the Syntagma and talking about democracy. People were saying that the dictatorship didn’t end in 1974 because there is still a policeman on every corner.

In the Arab Spring they said it was a new 89, and that it was about democracy. But you then they saw it was about the economy stupid! But in Greece they said it was only about the economy, then they realised that it was also about politics and that we didn’t have an elected PM and that we don’t have democracy.

*Q22*

We need to redefine democracy and can’t say that democracy is that which was created of ancient Greece. For me you can’t have political democracy without economic democracy. It is impossible to have a neoliberal structure and a democracy. It all started with Pinochet and then Thatcher [[1]](#footnote-1)expanded it in Western Europe and this was the beginning of the end of democracy in Western Europe.

*Q23*

We aren’t in a revolutionary state to change the structure. The KKE is waiting for a new revolution, but things are not going to change at that level. The experience of Latin American shoed that you can’t wait for the revolution, but you needs to change and take intermediate steps.

*Q24*

Democratic practices mean bring power to the people. It is to renationalise assets and bring democracy to how the market works. But in more direct ways of voting like referendums. But we didn't have a referendum on either to enter or leave the EU or the Euro. The debate on privatization is only now emerging, I knew it as a journalist the problems of privatisation but it wasn’t part of the public debate until now. Because people grew up in the neoliberal ear so they have naturally come to people that public is bad and private is good. With the film we’re making we are trying to show that you have higher levels of corruption in the private sector.

*Q26*

Social justice is a term often associated with the socialist party that was supposed to create a welfare state but didn’t. It didn’t take money from the economic elites. This crisis was created because they never wanted to take money from the economic elites.

*Q27*

‘Dignity’ is a notion lost in translation we are in such a deep crisis that everyone tries to survive and it’s not the best time to talk about dignity.

Indignation can’t be a sustainable basis for mobilization. You can’t sustain a mobilization base on indignity and that was the problem of the Greek left. That they had a unique opportunity because they had predicted the crisis but when it came time to offer solutions they could ‘t come up with any. That is when the fascists came to take over the system.

So we had indignation and daily protests but you need few demands, we didn’t have basic demands. The left is a spectrum from the anarchists all the way to Syriza. Syriza is not radical left, they are centre left. Theoretically the KKE is radical. Syriza is more active but they are not active in the workplace with workers where they need to be. They are talking about gays and the Roma, but that isn’t where they need to start.

*Q11*

The political parties were not interested in the movements. The KKE was against it because unless it comes from their Secretariat they don’t get involved. The Unions they were saying they support it but becoming a union leader in Greece is one step to become an MP. So they are treated as traitors.

Syriza wanted to be there on the ground, but at Syntagma if you said you belong to a political party you were thrown out.

But at the same time there is a danger of the movement becoming apolitical. The movement lost out because it didn’t have an organizational structure. I support organizational structures. You need them to have impact.

*Q15*

You don’t need a leader to create a movement. But when you have a movement, then leaders emerge. But there was no one leader who emerged from Syntagma. You can’t expect leaders to emerge from such a huge demonstrations. Demonstrations in Egypt didn’t stare in 2011, they started much earlier in 2005 when workers in {??} were protesting. There they were just angry and took to the street.

*Q14*

Greeks think back to World War II and say we couldn’t stop the Germans. But if you look at what has happened, in terms of impact, two governments have collapsed in Greece because the people started attacking the politicians. They had to change and these are the victories of the movement. We didn’t stop the disaster but we did change the governments.

People used to be more proud during the Indignados. But now the movement is at a low point in 2013. The movement is slipping, but it’s still here. And perhaps things may gain heat up. But we are still losing the battles on the street. Nevertheless it was an experience of being in a democracy.

*Q13*

The rise of the solidarity movement also emerged from Syntagma and that was an impact of the Indignados. It’s what we need because we never had that. When had family between the state and the individual. But we didn’t have cooperatives, now we do because the family isn’t working; it’s not providing that safety net.

*Q16*

Debate that violence is coming from everywhere but I say it’s the government that uses force against the population. Violence isn’t’ just about physical force but also about measures that create unemployment. So you see the violence of the system and the violence of the extreme right wing intersects with the deep state.

Here the deep state is the Para state it is the police, the secret service and the people of the underground. When a famous activist, an iconic figure [who?] was murdered in the 1960s, it was the Para state who killed him.

Some people condemn violence and say you can’t fight violence with violence. But I don’t condemn violence.

*Q9*

We had a website for our films and the mainstream media only understood the hype.

Facebook was not used for organising. Of course we had pages, it helped in checking the events.

But in 2008 people with alternative points of view were fired from the mainstream media. My parents and grandparents listened to BBC and Deutsche Welle in the past to get news about things in Greece. Now we also hear about things like the gold mine near Thessaloniki and about my film via the Guardian or Al Jazeera.

For instance Reuters published a report about the Piraeus Bank. There was no mention of this in the mainstream Greek media. Then a few days later when Piraeus Bank issued a press release it was in all the newspapers, but people didn’t know what this letter was all about because they had not seen the original report by Reuters. So it made no sense to them.

YouTube was used to give information about the 5 May bank fire when the owner was blamed for letting his workers work that late and everyone saw that even though it was not on mainstream media.

The media is owned and controlled by a few families who are involved in shipping and construction. Even in the golden era of the 1980s and 1990s and early 2000s we never had an independent media so the Greek media has accepted everything the Troika wanted because it was what the economic elites also wanted. It was about destroying workers’ rights and sending labour rights back to the 19th century.

*Q18*

People don’t read foreign newspapers. The level of cosmopolitanism in the citizens is more. But if people knew what was happening in the world things would be better. But they don’t know about Argentina or Iceland.

*Q19*

I was in Barcelona when the Athens Indignados stared. And someone called from Athens opt my friend in Span asking how to do the vote. Also Spaniards in Greece protested in front of the Spanish embassy in Athens.

Everyone is saying we should participate in pan European networks of protest but I think we are sill operating at the national level. We need to start from there and then think at the European level. The European level will emerge from the national level.

We are a very politicized society. It’s because of the dictatorship.

*Q21*

We are unique because we are the only country that has had a neo Nazi phenomenon. You would have expected it in Spain with the Franco experience, but they didn't get it. So you have to ask why we have the Golden Dawn. My explanation is that the fascist movement is not grassroots but is created by the political elites it is something that is imposed on society.

But we are fighting a structural problem but still don’t see the similarities with other countries that are experiencing similar issues such as Ireland. But this is all a problem of the Eurozone.

END

**Athanasios, 9 April 2013**

*Q1*

I work with a social centre nearby, that has many political theory (?) initiatives, and I give self-defence classes. I also do advocacy for prisoners’ rights, but that is not connected to the centre. I would call myself an activist.

*Q2*About fifteen years ago. Someone told me about the social centre, there was a café, there were low prices, immigrants would also come there, I started working at the bar and joined different groups.

*Q4*Yes, I was not organically involved, but the groups that I am part of did participate in all the demonstrations. We are part of the far left. Anarchist? No, communist. I used to be a member of Syriza, and in a way I still am, but I am not an activist for them.

*Q7*

At Syntagma square, these were the most populated demonstrations ever, even during the junta, 67-74, I was not alive then, but people say that only then there was something similar. At the same time, in the last 2-3 years, you also see other examples, social spaces being created around Greece, when 5, 3, 2 years ago that was not obvious, and anti-fascist initiatives are really augmenting at the moment in different neighbourhoods, people realize they have Golden dawn and they need to do something about it. People are trying to do solidarity economy. That is a big thing at the moment, there are small initiatives in various places.

Q Are there other initiatives you can think of?

It is hard to say, in the last year we have seen a fall in mobilisations. Maybe people are tired, maybe they have put all their hope in Syriza, if they get elected to the government that they are going to solve their problems.

During the mobilisations at Syntagma, it was more or less the same thing. But in Greece we have a strong tradition of far left groups, the communists, the anarchists, the whole range, and they still remain the corp of it, the core yes.

After Syntagma failed, it didn’t manage to move on, a lot of assemblies were created in neighbourhoods, with the same structure, the same demands but with a focus more on the local society, whereas Syntagma was for the whole thing.

*Q) Do you follow news about movements from other countries?*

Yes, the whole thing that happened in North Africa, in Egypt, that was very very interesting, a lot of people were following it, wanted to know what would come out of it.

*Q22*

That is a big question. One thing I am sure is it does not mean that you can elect your government every four years. It is that people can decide for themselves at any point, people should participate in the commons on a daily basis.

*Q23*

You mean at the level of the central power? The state is one thing, the oligarchs are the second, the mass media is the third one. But it should come from the emancipation of the people, from individuals.

*Q24*

What I said before, when people are gathering in their own neighbourhoods, weekly or monthly, and they are asked about major decisions that are being made.

*Q25*

A lot. Even the unofficial ones. It is very hard to be democratic, but steps towards direct democracy are being taken every day. People are beginning to doubt the traditional ways of doing things.

*Q) Do you think people’s consciousness is changing?*

You cannot really see that it has brought results directly, but their consciousness is changing somewhat, more than it used to be.

*Q27*

Sure, the whole thing, the mobilization, it is the impoverisation of the people, but that is not the only thing, the state, the EU has taken people’s dignity away. That has been the spark.

*Q?*

It is a hard thing to say. When the state, the mass media think that people are fools, that they do not ask the people about the whole situation.

*Q What about indignation, outrage, can the movement be sustained on that?*

It can only be a spark, it can help, but to move to another level you need more stuff, you need a collective frame, it makes you angry but you cannot be only angry, you need to be organized, to come with collective solutions.

*Q) What do you think the role of political parties, trade unions and NGOs has been?*

All the traditional ways have failed, especially during the crisis, that is why people turned to Indignados or other forms of self-organisation, to overcome their lack of political power.

*Q) What impact or achievements do you think the movements have had?*

It is hard to say, the only thing I can say for sure is that people have become more active, more involved in the political process, they have come off the couch; they believe much less what the mass media says.

Some have become involved in local assemblies, some have joined Syriza, or Golden Dawn, some went to demonstrations when they never had done before, some participate in local assemblies.

*Q Violence?*

You mean from the state side? A lot, the Syntagma square mobilisations were met with excessive violence from the state, teargas was used for even the slightest of reasons, when in other cases they wouldn’t use it.

*Q) Do you think it turned people away, or have they become more determined?*

In the beginning when it was very massive, it did scare people, I’m sure some people turned away, because you cannot defeat state violence, you cannot really answer it successfully.

*Q) Do you think Golden Dawn has made people afraid?*

Yes, it has made a lot of people afraid, a lot of anti-fascist groups have come up, people have realized that there is only a collective way to face the Nazis, you have to react, to do something. Golden Dawn was strengthened quite a lot, some people, quite a lot actually, really found an answer to their problems in the far right ideology.

*Q) Do they do solidarity actions as well?*

Yes, they have done it, but they only do it for people to see that they are doing it.

*Q18*

Both, all of that at the same time. It is a social centre, it is in a neighbourhood but at the same time it is a metropolitan area, so it is a local but also a Greek thing, and also European in a way.

*19) Do you personally have contacts in other countries?*

I used to, I was living in London for a couple of years, and I was also involved in social movements there, so I do have some contacts.

*20) Do you think Greece/Athens has been an example to other countries?*

Kind of, yes, but sometimes for the wrong reasons. People were enjoying the violence of the protests, confronting the police violence. It is always good to resist, but you need more. We were famous for the rioting, that was one of the main things. Not like in Spain, where the Indignados were an example to everybody else.

*Q) Do you see the Arab revolutions as part of the same struggle, or is it really quite different?*

It is similar in the sense that people took their lives in their own hands. It depends on which country, the revolution in Tunisia had more things in common with Greece, the demands were left oriented, in Egypt that was part of the movement, but parts were also very religious.

*Q) Is there anything else that you think we should know about?*

At the moment I only have bad things to mention. Police brutality is becoming more and more excessive all the time. A report came out, the police are torturing people in ways that are never seen before. The state is trying to answer the whole resistance by the people by assimilating the practices and demands of the far right, arresting immigrants, putting them in jails that do not even meet the lowest standards of imprisonment.

A year ago, the police went in different areas and arrested people, mostly junkies, but that were prostituting themselves, they forced them to have an HIV-test, and the ones that were positive, they published their pictures on tv and on the Internet. They have hardened their stance towards all minorities, all the weak ones in society.

And the social movements have not found an answer. There are growing reactions, but they haven’t found an answer so far at least.

END

**Konstantinos 1: (29) and Konstantinos 2 (20), 9 April 2013**

[Name deleted] has now grown and has around 100 active members and is split into 6 sub-groups each with 30 members. These sub-groups are [details deleted].

The members have jobs and do this on a volunteer basis, after work and on weekends. The average age is 28 years old.

*Q1*

I joined the movement/organization when it as initially formed in 2010. I read about it in the press and while I first hesitated because none of my personal friends were involved, I went to a meeting and decided I liked it. I also met people who are now friends. The founders were fed up with people who criticised everything and who didn’t act and I liked this position. I wanted to do something and to be part of the city.

It is a movement, a group of citizens. It is not an NGO and we don’t have any funds.

Yes, I am an activist but I prefer to use the word ‘active citizen’ over activist or volunteer because the word ‘activist’ in Greece has a different meaning. It usually refers to a person who uses violence. Whereas the word ‘volunteer’ refers to NGOs who get money but who do nothing. I prefer active citizen (energia polite).

*Q3*

Two individuals [details deleted] founded the movement/organization in September 2010. These men did not know each other personally, but shared a love of the city. They connected via the Internet and decided to create the organisation.

*Q4*

The movement/organization could be seen as a wider movement because most citizens want to see positive change. So in their turn they connect. This movement didn’t emerge out of the Indignados.

One of the greatest successes of movement/organization was that similar groups have been created in other Greek cities such as Thessaloniki, Iraklion, etc. So the movement/organization inspired people to get to know their neighbours, to get to know each other and to care for each other.

*Q 6*

“We are Athenians, with Deeds’ i.e., so not just in words, but through our actions

The name came about by linking the words Athens + Zapatista but it doesn’t have the revolutionary dimension of the Zapatistas.

The big difference between our group and the Indignados was that they were angry and they destroyed parts of our city. We believe things must change, but we believe that active citizens can lead to positive change.

*Q7*

Our movement is still growing. We have not yet hit our peak; we are still on the ascendency. We got a lot of media attention in 2010 and we still have a high level of involvement.

A lot of people have criticized us saying, but we have more followers on Twitter and the number of subgroups is growing.

*Q9*

Our group was formed on the Internet people submit their email and they get a newsletter about forthcoming events and actions. They we send a follow up newsletter about what has been done. We don’t have paid memberships or membership cards, but people feel like members. Last year we had a walk called ‘Jewish Athens’ at the end we go to a Jewish restaurant and then when we got there, they asked us if we had membership cards and we didn’t.

We tried to make videos to highlight our actions but we are not on YouTube. But our FB page has 65,000 likes and 8000 followers.

*Q22*

Democracy is that people take decisions but because they are not able to take daily decisions, we elect representatives to take decisions for us. It is also about human rights and following procedures and rules.

*Q25*

The whole functioning of the movement/organization is democratic because there are small subgroups of maximum 30 people so everyone has time to speak, to express their views and to speak freely. Most important is the procedure is brainstorming before the action and this is how we improve our action. That is how our members see how they can participate. Everyone is treated equally and they are implementing their ideas from bottom up, not top down.

*Q23*

You demand democracy from the government and the public sector. We are lucky to have great coordination with the Athens mayor and at the municipal level.

*Q27*

Dignity (axioprepia), yes it is important. A few weeks ago we did a fund gathering and met people who we were going to give food donations. But they were all very proud people. Some showed us papers from the hospital to demonstrate that they had faced health problems. They didn’t feel comfortable getting help. One man kept sending us emails saying that no one should know in his neighbourhood that he was getting food aid.

These two years the situation has changed dramatically. People can’t afford to buy food because they don’t have jobs and these are people who may live in big houses and have expensive cars.

*Q28*

Personally speaking, because everyone has a different opinion (Konstantinos), I don’t agree with these Indignados movements. People have the right to express their opinions against austerity measures. But setting fire to buildings or destroying marbles won’t change anything. Because we all pay, all of Athenians will pay for the damages and seeing my city in demonstrations, on fire and gas mask made me depressed. It caused more problems than solved them.

*Q11*

We have no affiliation with parties or the government. Sometimes we support actions by NGOs, such as MDM and Limika, which is an NGO that helps homeless people with mental problems and we collected winter packages for them.

We consider ourselves active citizens but we don’t belong to any political parties. As for the NGOs, the first two years we have had very good collaborations with NGOs because we had many supporters and members. And NGOs are helpful because we can put our members in touch with NGOs. Since we are not professionals, we make the connection between citizens and NGOs. So when citizens for instance, want to donate blankets we put them in touch with the NGO who can help distribute those blankets. NGOs are experience and have that knowledge that we don’t.

*Q12*

The regional groups exist, but we are not part of one network. We have connections and we exchange ideas and experiences and good practices.

*Q13*

We haven’t done solidarity activities, but we express solidarity.

*Q15*

The founders try to keep the movement/organization ideal profile so that those who join, now who to behave and how to act within the movement. It’s important to keep that profile. Now one founder left and the other one is the lead and then there are the sub group coordinators. But we hold meetings about the future actions ad that his how we decide.

Donations are made in kind and we don’t take monetary grants. This gives us transparency and builds trust. When we want to make an action, for instance we ask for brushes or pain from businesses. When we wanted to do a festival for underprivileged children we went to businesses and asked for things.

We have a very good brand name, so businesses trust they and us are happy to give us donations. But we don’t publicize this, in other words we don’t put ads or business logos in our newsletters, but we thank the donors in the newsletter.

*Q18*

This is connected to Athens because the situation in Athens was worse than in other places in the Greece. Maybe in Greece there was ground for this to be built. And now because of crisis show solidarity, which they didn’t before and people care of their neighbours because they think that in a few months it might be them who are in that situation. In other European countries people are more familiar with volunteering and that type of civic work and they respect public space but it is just happening here. In the next week, we will go to a conference in Germany where we will present about the movement/organization. We often get calls from journalists from around the world such as in China, Japan, Russia and Turkey. [When asked how thy find out about them, they said, maybe they know them from people in Greece]

*Q17*

For whoever is joining the movement/organization, they have to leave political ideas outside and to take up the identity of the active citizens. We are liberals with left ideas.

We demand a state with a social structure and safety nets. Although we take a political positions and views, we react to things at a policy level as well. We had a project to protect rights of second-generation migrant children. But even this campaign, which was about migrants and policy, we did the campaign in the our -movement style- way, which was not radical, but instead very friendly and not political.

We don’t want to subsidize the state but to show simply that people can do something. We have the example of a lady who lived next to a park, which was dirty. She kept calling the municipality to come and clean it. But she never thought to do it herself.

People need to wake up, citizens need to wake up and connect with public spaces and their responsibilities. The main criticism people tell us when we say to be active is that they say, ‘that is not my job’.

*Question about individual responsibility*

Yes, individual responsibility is a very important. It is a key factor for us and if people here are more responsible we would’ve been in a different situation. The people who shout and yell and who didn’t pay their taxes or care about the public space are now complaining, but they didn’t take their responsibilities seriously.

END

**Panagiotis, 10 April 2013**

The [name deleted] is a social movement, which was founded in 2011. It is independent from political parties and its aim is to explain to the public why the Greek public debt should not be paid. The discussion began with Panagiotis explaining the three reasons why the Greek public debt should not be paid. They give public talks and publish articles and report about why the debt is ‘illegal, odious and illegitimate’. This is in reference to the two tranches of international loans received by Greece in 2010 (110 Billion Euros) and in 2012 (130 billion Euros).

His three main points were that:

1. The debt is not legal because it was not accepted by the Parliament and this means it is against the Greek constitution.
2. The Germans owe Greece reparations dating back to both World Wars and if these reparations were paid, they would amount to two thirds of the loan being wiped out. He said all countries affected by the wars had received reparations from Germany apart from Greece. He referenced a Der Spiegel article, which he said was not available in Greece.
3. In the period before the loans debt was 115% of GDP, today after several restructurings it is now 167%, apparently the biggest in the world, even bigger than Argentina. Which shows that the policies are not working and are being imposed by the IMF, EU, ECB and Germany. Which means that the creditors have a big responsibility for the growth of the debt.

According to him, they made tens of public speeches and printed leaflets and in 2011 where in Syntagma Square with the Indignados.

*Q1.*

Yes, I would describe myself as an activism. All these years scientists and professionals like economists, historians, and lawyers have benefitted from the education they have received and we now have a duty to reveal and disclose what is happening to the public. Alongside the professionals there are also ordinary people in the movement.

*Q2:*

Some of us knew each other before, but others we got to know each other later. The way we connected was through our circle and networks of friends.

*Q3:*

We host public discussions on not just debt, but also other issues, including the environment, so we call people from other movements to speak at our events.

*Q6*

Slogans

* “We don’t owe, we don’t pay, we don’t sell” [against privatization and debt repayment]

*Q7*

Now the larger movement is in decline. It was at its peak 3 years ago, when the most draconian measures were imposed. So people were organising against the government. People say we failed to reject the measures and that we weren’t able to stop them. So now we don’t see as many strikes as before because of the elections offspring 2012 where Syriza received many votes. But there is now more danger of unemployment and poverty. 120,000 young scientists have left and moved in recent years to Northern Europe, especially Germany. This is a dangerous brain drain.

As for the high point of the movement, it was in May 2011 when we organised an international conference against public debt and were also active with the Indignados. Now we have lost momentum in the last 10 months.

*Q9*

We stay communicate by email through email lists and we organise face-to-face discussions at the Floral Café.

*Q10*

We are also connected to the IAGA [??] A pan European committee on debt and we also have contacts with the government of Ecuador, because I have done consulting for them as an economist. So I am very familiar with the discussions about Latin America. We are also in touch with the Jubilee Debt campaign in the UK.

*Q22*

In this country, the Troika has radically affected the workings of democracy and we are seeing a return to the days of the junta.

Last night there was a big struggle in Skoures (?) the gold mine, where police smashed into people’s homes without a warrant and took them to the police station. What is happening in Greece now only happens in military regimes. After they arrest people they don’t let them call their families. The Greek police are also doing torture.

Greek oligarchs who have very good relations with the Troika so they report the news in such a way not to criticise the policies the best reportage about Greece is actually published outside of the country control the mass media.

Of course there are some small magazines, which print more independent news stories, but the big mass media is silent on these issues. So we have a return to the military regime

*Q23*

Democracy should be like in 2009, now we want a more direct system. We need several things to make democracy happen.

1. Separation between the Church and the sate.
2. MPs need to be held accountable
3. The mass media should be accountable to the people

Now Greek construction companies who also own the gold mine and the biggest TV channel and newspapers own it. Without changing this accountability, and also the separation of church and state, there can be no democracy.

*Q25*

No, the movements are not democratic. If they were democratic they would’ve won. They lack a strategic vision and their disadvantage is that they look backwards and try to save what has been lost. But if they want to solve unemployment, which is currently tat 27 % in Greece, and has increased 3 times over the past 3 years then they need to look for solutions. The only way to solve this problem is for everyone in Greece to work, but to only work for 4 hours a day. But no one is demanding this. So whoever is working today is working for 12 hours but only getting paid for 4 hours.

*Q27*

Yes, dignity has helped us to build the movement in Syntagma Square in 2011. But everyone gives it a different context and understanding. To me dignity is not to pay the public debt, to work less hours and to resist he occupation of Greece by the rook and especially the technocrats from Germany. So the case of Greece is the Troika is destroying our dingy. If we want to recover our dignity we need to drop the Troika into the Aegean Sea, especially the Germans. Some people say we are occupied by the 4th Reich.

*Q28*

A movement can’t be sustained on indignation alone. The Indignados had a very good chance but if we want to make a stable and sustainable movement, it needs an organizational backbone to become a real working movement. This will then be able to address the unemployment, the issues with the Troika and the occupation of Greece.

*Q11*

Many of us belong to political parties or other movements in the regions.

As for NGOs, they have a very bad reputation in Greece. They are considered as a clear way of imperialist intervention. For instance, Soros demolished Yugoslavia with NGOs. Many NGOs are funded in Greece by Soros. The US policy in the Balkans was implemented by Soros.

All of this doesn’t mean those who participate in NGOs are spies of Soros of course. There are also some good NGOs, like MDM.

As for the 2 big unions, ADEDY and GSEE, they are corrupt. Especially the GSEE has a very bad reputation. It is a big bureaucracy and all the leaders live well and have no links with the working classes and the people hate them. So people sometimes hate the GSEE leader more than they hate politicians. So if the GSEE organised an event about the public debt, we would not go and support them.

So now e have small work placed based unions and see the direct democracy.

*Q15*

Yes, new leaders have emerged but not gone to political parties. You saw leaders in the Squares but the mechanism of making leaders has not link to more traditional ways.

*Q13*

Some of the solidarity movements can’t be stable and they change over time. Like the potato movement, which was last year, doesn’t happen this year because the price of potatoes has risen and it is more profitable to sell them tan to give them away. So even if you want to do solidarity, it must be based with the left and the unions (?)

Ultimately, without a confrontation with the Troika nothing will change. The government has no resources for making the change.

*Q16*

Violence is not something inherently bad. In any case, when you go to the demonstration you only take one banknote and an ID card otherwise the police plant things on people in their backpacks. Also, with 27% unemployment you can understand why people are angry and smash banks and don’t accept when the police arrest them.

*Q on responsibility*

For many years we spoke about responsibility and I do my work and my trade unions does the action on by behalf. So in that way I participated but the Union was responsible for representing my views. No all this has changed. Now many professionals are being silent to keep their jobs. There is no sense of personal responsibility. But in time of crisis you are judged by what you say and you write. So you must be accountable for what you say and what you write. A year ago, sometimes journalist and politicians would be beat up by the public on the street for things they had said or done.

*Q 17*

People were hitting journalists and MPs who favoured the troika in 2011. Now Greeks hit Pakistanis and refugees. The rise of the fascists has come about because of the Troika. Before the Troika, the Golden Dawn only had less than 1% of the vote, after the crisis the number of their supporters has increased. This is because the Greek oligarchs are supporting them. These are the oligarchs who never pay a euro in tax and they together with the Troika have led to the rise of the GD. The oligarchs give money to the GD and the mass media is giving them the space to express their views. On Sunday night on a big TV talk show, the host had invited 4 GD members, no one from Syriza and only 1 MP from New Democracy. People were very angry.

It is unjust to say that the Greeks have led to the rise of the GD. It was the Greek ship owners who have done so.

END

**Nicholaos, and a younger man, Manos, 10 April 2013**

*Q1*

In our opinion, the debt crisis is not the cause of the problem but a symptom of the policies carried out capitalism. The crisis is due to policies carried out in countries around Europe. The mainstream bourgeois parties and by the EU is to present the result of the debt crisis as the cause, to reverse this. But the crisis was caused in Greece because various governments due to the government channelling state money into the hands of the TNCs in various ways. So one issue there is an attempt to conceal this reality from the workers.

Flowing from this interpretation is that this is a debt crisis leads to solutions that don’t deal with the basic roots of the crisis. Because the debt is the result of the capitalist development because all countries have a level of debt. Even the strongest capitalist economies have a debt. So solutions being proposed in Greece are in the direction to increase the profits of MNCs as a way of getting out of the crisis. So foreign and local creditors are in reality robbing and looting the income of the people in general in the name of the crisis.

So the role of the party is to reveal the causes of the crises, which workers are undergoing in Greece. So we want to expose the line of the mainstream bourgeois party and the new left parties and say that it’s a distortion of capitalist development where we consider to be a cause of capitalist development itself.

We’re trying to generalise the protests of the people and the workers. In order to deal with the consequences of the measures being taken at their expense. The development of capitalism will be just as barbaric as the crisis we are experiencing. So we are offering a socialist perspective, which will to seek deep changes to the economy.

*Q2:*

We didn’t have any relationship with the movement in Syntagma Square because large elements in the Square are which had a strong anti-KKE and organised trade union. We came into conflict with some elements, including the anarchists and also at the Square there were the Para state and police elements in the movements. The movement in Syntagma Square didn’t have broadness and dynamism as those in Spain. It hasn’t taken a lasting or mass characteristic. The movement was a useful alibi for the government and are used by certain forces to hide the real identity of the GD to small ultra left groups under the label that they were non-party political. GD was assisted in its participation in this movement. GD had a major presence in the Squares.

The line they were pushing was that the unions and KKE leave the square.

*Q3*a large section of workers and working people and people who follow our assessment say that KKE was the only party vindicated in its analysis of developments in Greece. A lot of workers who may not agree to leave the EU recognise that the KKE is correct in its analysis of the EU as a predatory union and no an alliance of the people. Also the large section of works recognise the role of the KKE in organising strikes in which the role of the party was decisive without the role of the party in PAME [the militant union] it wouldn’t have been able to organise the strikes.

*Q4*

The Party is structured on two level at the workplace and neighbourhoods. During the crisis we try to help organize people’s committees such as women’s organisation, youth organisation, and to develop activities to reconnect electricity to give food and provide solidarity. There are serious problems at the local level.

Despite the fact that some progress has been made by the committees, they didn’t have a strong base. This intervention is difficult because the capitalist forces intervention. So for instance, the supermarkets will provide food, which is past the sell by date to the soup kitchens to conceal their responsibilities and appear as if they are doing well. The question isn’t just solidarity but it is how to support people to stand up on their own two feet so they can struggle against it.

The question isn’t just solidarity but how to support people to stand on their own two feet so they can struggle. The movement to re-connect electricity didn’t come out of Syntagma but it had been done by the KKE including addressing road tolls and free access to the beaches. So the actions organized by PAME in these respects played a leading role.

Some sections and committees of elections have been set up to reconnect the electricity and also gone to the municipalities to burn tax bills.

So we are trying to take measures for working classes including addressing the hike in nursery fees, etc. It’s important to show solidarity in the neighbourhood and community. We haven’t reached the level we need to but we have the correct orientation on these issues. We can see the progress of the working people in that they are showing us their support. We have an increase in votes in the union levels and we show positive steps have been made.

*Q8 and 5*

In the last 3 years we have seen an increase in the level of the crisis not from nothing but because the struggles existed in before the crises. The mass struggles in the general strikes were there and some in the recent years have been very dynamic including the 9-month Elefsina steel works strike.

But in the movements there has also been an increase in the role of agent provocateurs to derail the protests. They burned the Marfin Bank in May 2010, which led to 3 deaths. There is no doubt that without these struggles the measures would be more painful than we are experiencing now. But despite this the development of the struggles has not corresponded to the needs of the movement. Although the struggles have a more mass characteristic, there are only a small section of the workers who is mobilized in the strategic areas.

Despite the strength of the unions, the unemployment has not decreased. This is because of the activists of the unionists, which is controlled by the government, which slants the unions in the eyes of the people. So the struggles have a defensive characters, which limits the impact of the measures but doesn’t deal with the problems of unemployment. So the leaders of the ADEDY and GSEE through their practise and theories didn’t prepare the workers for what was to come. They were telling the workers that if they contributed to the economic growth and made sacrifices, that they would get more prosperity and rights. But all they got in the end was the crisis mad more sacrifices

We think the struggles should have an aggressive nature it is not enough for unemployment to be criticised, it should be fought.

*Q7*

A deep capitalist crisis cannot persist without violence. So violence intimidation, and repression are used to implement the political line. They take on an general character. Police violence was not born out of the crisis but it is generalized because of the crisis. Police surveillance of the general assemblies and are present in the protests and are used to crack down on the demonstrations.

So we see how the bourgeois parties and the EU are talking about shrinking the state, but this means shrinking the spending on health, welfare and education and expanding and strengthening the state in surveillance and repression. The repressive organs of the state are being expanded including the thugs, the Para state, the strike-breakers, the agent provocateurs.

Two years ago a strike in Athens was attached by the GD fascists, as well as under cover police and organized football hooligans and elements of the criminal underworld. You can see at the level of the workplace also violence, where health and safety issues don’t exist, but then there are 100s of security personnel.

We are certain that the level of violence and repression will follow because you can’t solve the sharp problems of the people. This has a serious impact on the politically immature part of the movement.

But the labour movement and the KKE have a lot of experience of dealing with police violence and these situations. We don’t seek to use photos or videos to illustrate and publicize police violence. We attempt to study it to neutralize it. We choose the site of struggles of the police and agent provocateurs can’t choose the terrain. So we study the characterises of intimidation in the work place so we can address it. These are long-term serious strikes that we supported such as the steel workers in Elefsina.

So with the dogma of law and order, they are intimidating workers in the large factories and those working for MNCS.

So we intensify our activity to address the general rise of violence. We believe workers should be defiant and not be afraid in the face of repression. We play a leading role in this struggle without covering our faces with masks and hoods.

*Q9*

If you ask any big oligarchs they would answer you about democracy. But if you ask a worker they would say no. We believe democracy has a class aspect to it. We believe that democracy masks the crisis of capitalism. When the mask is removed, it its naked forms it is the dictatorship of the monopolies. There is crucial measure of freedom is needed.

The situation is becoming more unbearable so the question of democracy should be seen in the reflection of democracy in the workplace. See it in the regulation of the workers rights and how the constitution is trampled. They change the laws to fit the needs of the monopolies and the employers and the freedom exists for the capitalists and the employers and not for eh works. Their rights are restricted.

*Q10*

*What rights and responsibilities should citizens have?*

Frist, the right of the citizen, and we don’t like that term because it conceals the social position we prefer to speak of workers. So the right of workers is to enjoy the fruits of their labour. But this isn’t possible now.

We need a revolutionary change in society but movements and struggles can do something, but not everything. While a few control the means of production the rights will only have a relative and not an absolute character. Now all rights envisaged and that were won in the 20th century are being called into questions.

So whatever successes were won on health care, social welfare and education are been destroyed so that on the one hand the struggle for the left is for these rights but to explain to workers that these will be pots of contention. Unless the workers take control of the means of production this won’t be resolved.

Even talk of rights and democracy is used as an alibi to justify wars such as the interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan where lives of people weren’t improved, and where new tyrants emerged. So in the name of equality and democracy of right, the pension age of women is raised in Europe. So what is real democracy when 40% of the young are unemployed or work in wretched conditions.

*Q11*

The meaning of the term dignity can’t silage form the general situation. A workers I told by an employer to accept a reduced salary or to be fired. Where is the dignity in that? The dignified response would be to reject it but workers end up submitting. Or where is the dignity of a young 35-year-old person who must beg his parents for 2 euros to go out for a coffee.

So we need a collective struggle and solidarity. It can help people maintain their dignity in this difficult situation. So the unemployed people feel ashamed because they feel its their own fault and some commit suicide and in this conditions people are forced to behave in ways that have no dignity so the collective action can provide an answer as well.

*Q16*

This is a very relevant issue. In some of these countries se the highest form of conflict is armed struggles in order to resolve which issues, in the Arab countries the backwards structure of the bourgeois has remove the relics of feudalism. The bloodshed in Libya and Syria are who will take over natural resources… And Lenin said… the end.

END

**Evangelos**, **10 April 2013**

*Q1*I have just finished a PhD about (..).

History Athens activism: 1974 saw the break-up of the communists, small formations become more important, outside the parliament. People were involved in labour movements until 1981, when PASOK first gets into government, people on the left put their faith in the government so there is not much mobilization. In 1991 you had huge student demonstrations against a law imposing fees, and the law was not passed.

What changed in 2008 is that protests became more spatially dispersed. The police could only enter Exarchia square as a riot squad, and on 6 December they came in shooting and shot the boy Grigoropoulos. After that you had a gathering, it went on SMS and the Internet and there were demonstrations also in other cities where you had no previous movements, there was an expansion of the movement, but also oppression.

In April 2010 there was a squatting of the GCSE building, first there was an anti-gathering against their congress, the conference was cancelled and officials were afraid. In 2010 the secretary-general of the GCSE was beaten up in front of the parliament, to give you a sense of how they are hated. So that squatting was quite important, and from 2008 you see an expansion of squatting practices, three main university buildings were squatted: Athens Technical School, Athens Law School and Athens Business School.

*Q2*

It is difficult to say, it depends what you mean by activist, I see myself as a researcher, but I also participated.

*Q3*

They were not exactly demanding anything, they co-existed in their heterogeneity. The differences were not dissolved, but lessened.

*Q) What kind of heterogeneity? Of class?*

Of all sorts, class, political parties, some were unemployed, some were immigrants. There was no party leading it. It gave people a definite change in perspective, they took control of their daily lives. It was a subversion of the everyday. It has also been a major element in the post-austerity events, out of specific frustrations people create something different, another way of experiencing things.

*Q) Do you think this is also relevant to the indignados movement in Syntagma square?*

Yes, it was also a space that people organized their lives around. The occupation lasted 2.5 months, and it was very heterogeneous. People have said that there was an upper square with people waving flags, shouting slogans at the parliament, showing frustration, fighting with the police and a lower square where they were trying to do another way, but they were also in communication with each other, and feeding off each other.

There was a change after 2008 in that people also began to occupy open public spaces, since 2009, it started with Navarina park in Exarchia where you have probably been, then there was Agros park in Tritsi, and then Patission Street.

*Q) Can you explain a little this interest in parks, it seems to be common between very radical groups* *and a group like Atenistas, they all talk about watering plants, but it seems to be about green space, not so much about the food.*

There is a big difference in the political essence, in the radical groups it is against state politics. But people organize their daily lives through the parks, there is no green space in Athens. It is about having another relation with the land, cultivation of the land. It is not Athens specific. People exchange what they produce, it is not mass production of course, but they exchange seeds. The grassroots economies have expanded greatly.

*Q6*

There are past discourses, such as ‘haratsi’ you have probably heard, it refers to the poll tax, but it relates back, and even the mainstream media use it now. And there is a reference to a military movement in 1908 that demanded constitutional changes, people say “Goudi” referring to that place. And there is dosilogos, which means collaborators, and was used during the second world war, this was used when the IMF came in 2010.

And “Burn the parliament – it’s a whorehouse” , delegitimizing mainstream politics.

There has been criticism mostly of GCSE, the critique is that they are traitors of the class struggle.

*Q11*

Syntagma was against leaders. But Syriza benefited a lot from it, and even Golden Dawn did. But these are the dynamics of a crisis, it has not emerged from Syntagma, there were anit-immigrant discourses from 2008.

*Q9*

I have not researched it so much. There were websites, twitter, not sure of Facebook. But mobile phone messages have altered the experience of the space, that you can get messages from the other side of a demonstration, ‘how is it there?’

*Q) Impact?*

The idea of community is being renegotiated. Heterogeneous and homogeneous versions are being advocated. University buildings used to be asylums where the police could not enter, now they can enter them. New police units have been created.

*Q21*

You mean direct democracy? It is non-mediated, it delegitimizes the idea of political representation. I have my own views about it, but I would not like to share them. Syntagma was criticized by a variety of people including the militant left.

A guy from Syriza has written a book ‘Constructing Democracy’, very critical of that as well.

*Q23*

To do it together, have another kind of interaction.

*Q24*

The state has been untouchable. Laws have been passed, but if they want they can change the law. It is not about our obligations, people understand they have obligations, but the relation with the state is dialectical, only through demonstration do they create communication, but the policies still pass.

*Q) What has violence done to the movement?*

You could not ignore that part of the movement, it became part of daily life. People who had daily participation, they all had a gasmask, they all knew the reactions from the police. There was always the expectation that something may happen. On the 30th of May 2011, it was a battle, if there are 700 people in hospital with truncheon wounds you cannot call it anything other. They would buy a very simple mask, they would say tomorrow we go to Syntagma. They know what it is to demonstrate, it is not a problem of being afraid, of fear. I don’t think many people are fearful.

There are also critiques of the violence, after so many actions, what are the effects? I would not say it was fear. It has become more apparent, but it was already there in the micro-circumstances, immigrants were tortured before, but the police has been reorganized, with the mandate to protect the city centre. It is more apparent, they have to constrain demonstrators, there is the rise of Golden Dawn, and new tools of aggression, such as the motorbike cops, they said we want something faster.

*Q26*

I would not like to say what needs to happen, because that would have to be decided in collective social processes. There have been so many mass actions, and no specific effects, it has affected participation. The last few months have been very quiet, in terms of unrest, but there seems to be a reformulation of the social contract. What has happened with the goldmine, they have invaded people’s houses, but the community has gathered and burned the police station, so it is happening in another place.

*Q) Do the groups you have researched have connections with activists in other countries?*

Yes there is a connection, it is not a formal organization, but there is a network. Things are published and translated at least into English, in 2008 one of the things to do would be to put it on the media web.

*Q) Arab revolutions??*

I am very hesitant to talk about it, but in terms of strategy, of tactics, in their daily lives to break the alienation and oppression.

END

**Alexandros and Alekos, Squatted Public Building, 10 April 2013**

The building is on a residential street in a very upper middle class neighbourhood of suburban Athens. Residents of the area have occupied the house and gardens for the past 18 months. The house is three stories and the rooms are used for different purposes. On the day we visited, there was a yoga class piano and guitar lessons, and people sitting around having coffee and chatting. On other days they do singing, lessons in foreign languages, drama, film screenings, etc. On Sundays they have potluck open kitchens. The entrance is into a seating area with tables and chairs and a library. Around that room there are posters about past and forthcoming events as well as more political or cultural posters. Through that room is the clothes donations area, where there is a rack of children’s clothes and toys. Through there is the kitchen, where there is a small piggy bank for donations for coffee and snacks. People are encouraged to wash up after the eat or drink.

And also on the ground floor were a teaching room where there was the guitar lesson and also a room that was formally a cell, because at one point this building had been a police station.

On the second floor was the main hall where there was a large film screen, but also art pieces including papier-mache and clay figurines. There was a piano lesson going on.

On the third floor were classrooms. They advertised ‘secret lessons’ which Aiketerina explained as being a throwback to Ottoman times when the Greek Church would hold secret lessons inside Churches to teach the Greek language in secret. Now it is a political term to show that they are teaching or tutoring for entry to secondary school, as another form of subversion. The house has been renovated and cleaned by them. There are signs explaining the rules and etiquettes of behaviour.

The door is new and steel reinforced, after a fire bombing by some local fascists destroyed the old wooden door. Which they still keep outside in the garden.

They began occupying the building since the beginning of 2012 because of the difficult situation in Greece and because some citizens in [deleted] decided for solidarity reasons to help themselves because they also experiencing the consequences of the crisis.

All activities are related to solidarity like food collections and the distribution to families in need. There are free lessons e.g. in English, biology, music, singing, dancing, yoga, etc. there are film screenings and they also collaborate with other groups of people, they do shows, event, book presentation, talks, etc.

*Q1.*

No, we don’t consider ourselves activists because we are doing very targeted actions. We are doing this because there is a need.

*Q2*

To this extent we have not been active before. And in this form it is the first time. There were other forms of solidarity through unions.

*Q11*

Yes, yes have links with other solidarity movements. We consider ourselves Cleary politicized but the citizens who participate are from mixed backgrounds but of course they have connections with political parties.

*Q4*

Yes, of course we were in the Square. The Indignados had many meetings in this neighbourhood. So that is how we are connected to it and also work with other solidarity movements in the regions. Such as the Sporos movement which is aimed on environmental issues and they give seeds for planting.

Our slogan is “No One Alone in the Crisis’ [they have a poster which shows a man about to fall off a cliff and two people pulling him back from the precipice.] They see a constant rise in the activities more in terms of the people who are in need but also in the number of people who want to help.

But people are compelled to participate because it’s a solution to their problems.

We have a website and also distribute leaflets and people also learn about us by mouth to mouth and they are also on Facebook.

*Q22*

Democracy is not something, which you can describe in one sentence. But it is something, which lifts and differentiates humans from other species.

*Q24*

Democratic practise at the state level help most people to be on the same level ad to be equal. But its equality that everybody should be helped. By that we mean everybody, both Greek and immigrants. We need to have also freedom of expression and to not be afraid to express our ideas and to be equal in front of the law. Because the same law is applied different to a poor person and to a rich person.

*Q25*

As far as we can, yes, we try to be democratic in our moment. But we aren’t a perfect society and we have many problems and these problems can also be found in the movements and we are trying to do our best.

*Q27*

Axioprepia – dignity. Yes, absolutely it is very important. That is why we fully disagree with the activities of the Church and the mainstream media who promote philanthropy and charity. Helping people isn’t about charity. It is to help alleviate them from the crisis and to support them psychologically. That they also feel like participants and they are involved in the activities is very important.

*Q on responsibility.*

I believe the state responsibilities have now been taken over by the people because the state does nothing. There are 1.5 million unemployed who don’t have access to basic health care. So the state is nowhere to be found. This is a very basic need and a fundamental right to have access to a doctor or a hospital, but 1000s of people don’t even have access to the medications they need.

As for rights, we all had rights which are being taken away from us. Everything that we gained din the last 150 years we have lost in the past 3 years. We had gained these through very hard and painful fights and now they have been lost.

*Q28*

The next steps should be a more organized reaction. The movements need to grow up and to become part of the daily life of the citizens.

*Q14*

The movements have had a positive impact. Here we have a very concrete impact and everybody knows and helps each other. Now people are very disappointed however with what happened at Syntagma Square. When there were heated debates and those are nowhere to be found today.

*Q16*

In the context of occupation we are always concerned and afraid of violence. We were attacked by the fascists who threw a firebomb and we had to change our wood door and but a metal secure door. We didn’t call it a fascist attack but this group Pernion(?) claimed responsibility and issued a statement saying they did it. No one has been held responsible. [Then again they are also illegally occupying the building].

Fe people stay way, people have not become afraid of it. I come here with my child.

*Q18*

It’s a bigger movement people are coming from other cities to learn from each other but I don’t see a connection at the European level.

END

**Port town meeting (Notes Ishkanian), 10 April 2013**

Eleni and Spiros invited us to this meeting when we met them on Monday in Athens. This is a solidarity initiative which works on electricity reconnections, food and medicine distribution, and with more general solidarity and support of those who have been affected by the crisis in [name deleted].

[Name deleted] is a suburb of Athens, [details deleted] and is a mostly working class area where there are shipyards, a petroleum plant, steel works, etc. The shipyard is also in economic crisis where in one particular case, workers haven’t been paid for 18 months by the private owner due to the non-receipt of the payment for the works by the state.

The main point of the meeting was to discuss the recent party which had been held in [name deleted] by these two organisations and which had raised over 1700 Euros. The meeting was to account for the monies spent/raised and to decide what to do with that money. They did not agree on whether to distribute food packages, medicines or vaccines. Also, more concretely how to make the package distribution equitable. In other words, should a family with 11 children get 2 or 3 packages or 1 just like everyone else? Should packages all have the same things (pasta, olive oil, etc.)? Or should those with children get more milk and less oil?

Initially there were about 15 people there, mostly men, with a few women. As the night went on, more men came but no more women. The discussion also turned to the shipyard, because one of the 700 workers who had not been paid for 18 months was at that meeting and he spoke about their conditions. He expressed the anger with the local union, accusing them of betraying the workers and of having ‘sold out’ to the government in that they would neither advocate for them nor help them. He said,

“I a am really proud and my dignity doesn’t allow me to ask for help. But now I am in real need and I have dependents. I need help. I don’t care where the help comes from.

Everything is a lie. Greece has been sold [i.e., lost its sovereignty]. What is needed is to get rid of all the politicians.”

As he went on in this vein, some of the others at the meeting told him that this meeting wasn’t about politics and that they didn’t want to talk about politics or about political parties. They said that they focus on how they can help each other.

The man then went on to thank everyone and to say that in addition to seeing him as a shipyard worker, they also wanted them to see him as a friend and that he felt very welcomed by the group. He later added that he would tell people at the shipyard about these two organisations. He said, what you have done is so great and significant. But one action is not enough, the need is very great.

Another man said,

“We have lived in fear for so many years. Fear of expressing our political concerns. Our actions should have a political character. Because everything is about politics, is political. But we shouldn’t see talk about politics as talk about parties. Politics isn’t just about political parties.”

Then someone said, “My neighbour’s house is on fire” a traditional Greek saying, which meant, yes, I see a problem, what do I do, should I help or turn away?

They discussed whether to support the strike on X, which would go from [name deleted] to Syntagma Square with their banner.

Then the group agreed that we all need to fight together, their slogan has become “no one alone during the crisis”.

The meeting was then turned back to the discussion of how to spend the money earned from the party event.

Another man at the meeting told us about a particular occupation. He said it started 23 years ago and is the longest continuous occupation in Athens started by students and left revolutionaries. It has held concerts, film screening and has a general cultural character with a mix of people inside. They become like an art laboratory for new artists. The buildings are owned by the public sector, b the municipality of Athens. Alongside [name deleted] there are 22 occupations in Athens. But the government is closing them down one by one. They are doing this in order to target the larger movement and to close down the free spaces where people were meeting.

They have always held an anti-fascist position because the Golden Dawn has an office 500 m away.

He said he remembered as a child how the GD would come to the school and do propaganda activities.

At one point during the meeting, early on, Eleni’s husband said “do you see us like African children, who are starving? Have you come to write about us as though we are poor and hungry?”

We had to explain our work and to say that our aim was not to objectify but to talk about the global impact of the crisis and how this has led to political resistance and mobilization. He complained saying,

“Many people come and write about how we are now poor. But there are many people and many ways of dealing with the crisis. We are resisting and helping each other. Before the crisis, everyone lived individually and politics wasn’t a major concern. You got on with daily life, you worked, you consumed, and you went on holiday. But you didn’t think or talk about politics all the time. Now that is what we do.” [THE POLITICIZATION OF DAILY LIFE]

**Steelworkers strike**

The company, which has plants in Athens and Thessaloniki, started firing people despite reporting profits. When protests erupted, they fired another 40 people. This was the beginning of a nine month strike and occupation of the steelworks, supported by KKE, who supported the families with food, but allegedly also with money. Because of the occupation, people who wanted to work were also unable to, and did not receive income, so it was a very contentious action. After nine months, the riot police broke down the entrance (allegedly with help from inside), the strike was broken and the workers still fired.

END

**Port Town Meeting (Notes Glasius), 2013**

The premises are in a pedestrianized street in the working class suburb of [name deleted]. A clear political place with a political orientation against the government, first with a green remit, but then also giving free lessons, Greek lessons to immigrants and all manner of lessons to children. The premises were given to them. The place is colorfully painted and has a bar, the meeting table is made out of doors. We are offered some wine, there is also tea. Many people smoke.

We speak to [name deleted], who has been involved in the oldest occupation in Athens, since 1989. It was started by students and artists, with a clear cultural orientation, first doing only concerts, but later also screenings and lessons. It was a mix of people with a primarily art character, but also anti-fascist, because Golden Dawn’s offices were only 500 metres away. He remembers Golden Dawn used to come into his school with leaflets even when he was a child, they had 0.03% of the vote but they came into the schools. The building belonged to the municipality, it was supposed to be renovated to become a school. He says there are 23 such occupations in Athens, but the government is closing hem down one by one and no new ones are coming. There is no law that occupancy of a building gives you rights, there is such a law only for fields, after 20 years it is yours, but only on an individual basis.

Today the group/movement has a follow-up meeting to the successful party given last Saturday, attended by 500 people. There are, at the height of the meeting, about 20 people present, age late 20s to late 50s, mainly men, some women. Some look middle class, some working class, some activist. Eleni calls for quiet, but there is no chair, there does appear to be a note taker. First there is a financial audit: the takings and receipts from the party are written on a whiteboard. 1700 euros was made from the party, even though souvlaki and lottery tickets were sold for just one euro. About one hundred bags of food were collected, and the discussion turns on how to distribute these. First they will all have to be opened, because the contents are not equal and distribution has to be fair. All packages should have the same contents. People give Eleni, who is to coordinate the distribution, pieces of paper with names and numbers of families in need. They must come and collect, for the network has no capacity to deliver. The situation of a family with 11 children comes up: should they have two or three bags? Or should the contents be differentiated according to need? There is also a discussion of whether there should be priority distribution for those most in need, but most agree that all need to be treated equally. With the distribution, people will be given a short explanation of what the network is about, and how they can participate. A man who was one of the first people to have their electricity reconnected, and has cooked at the party, says that he has relied on food distribution from the church for three years, and therefore knows that the distribution should not be on Sunday: then people will go to the church instead. The discussion turns to a child that has been fainting in school, the family was having the child fed through common meals at the school, the father is a technician and the teachers are looking at whether any work can be found for him.

The meeting is interrupted by someone arriving who is from a shipyard: he had been invited to come and share his experiences. The shipyard had an order for the government, but the government hasn’t paid and the shipyard owner has been paying workers only 50 euros per month (?) advance, this concerns 700 workers. The man in question says the shipyard union doesn’t care for them, they refused to accept help, he suspects the union wants to see them ‘pushed down to the bottom’ to embarrass the government, this is why they have not accepted help. He does not care where the help comes from, whether it is from Syriza or from a movement. Personally he is helped by friends, his mother has helped him again and again. Dignity does not allow people to ask for help, but they are in need now, and they (he?) has a lot of dependents. His nephew needs to be helped. Syriza supported a strike earlier, but now the workers themselves want to go on strike and no one is supporting them.

The discussion turns on whose fault the situation at the shipyard is, the owner? The union? The government? Greece is now sold. He says he has been invited to share his experiences, he thinks there needs to be revolution, all the politicians out of the country. He used to vote PASOK but now he votes Syriza. He is asked to stop having a political conversation. It is said to him that as an unpaid worker, they see him as a friend, and yes the movement’s actions always have a political character, but not party politics. For so long there has been fear to talk about politics, they have a clear political character but they do not want conflict within. The political idea is there, but not the party idea.

Another, younger man is now sharing his experiences: he has been unemployed for two years, is divorced, has a 2.5 year old daughter. Eleni asks him whether he has ever claimed benefits, he says he was too proud, too embarrassed to do so.

The conversation turns back to the party. It is declared a success. Should there be another? A local singer has offered to sing for free, the paint company offers paint for free, it is one of the benefits they still have. But it is also said they should not immediately start thinking about the next party just because they have now found a space. There is a brief discussion on how to spend the money: medicine? Food? The discussion is deferred until the next meeting.

Discussion turns to the march to Syntagma. Should they walk with their own banner?

The man from the shipyard speaks again to say he did not know what to expect when he entered: a movement? A solidarity centre? A political party? Now that they have created some trust, he will talk to get more people involved, he wished he had more time to help. He knows one of the people there, who is also a union person, he can testify that this is a good man who is always in the street, always at strikes and demonstrations. The food collection is well-intended, but it is not enough to meet the immense need.

The meeting goes on, but we decide to leave.

END

**Interview Theodoros, 11 April 2013**

*Can you tell us how the magazine came about?*

Three of us started it. We were working for the mainstream press, 7, 10 (myself) and 14 years respectively, for a newspaper, and we all left for different reasons, but it became a bit stifling, it became impossible to do one’s job, to be independent was increasingly difficult. One of the other colleagues was actually fired because she had been active in the union, it was one of these vengeful lay-offs.

We were opposing the media stance which was very pro-IMF, pro-austerity, it was very moralizing: we’ve been bad, we’ve overspent, we deserve to be punished.

The media was the first to be affected by the new labour legislation, it was like a testcase, first the collective contracts through the union were broken, then it went to the corporation level, then it went to individual contracts, as it has happened all over the world, as we were reminded yesterday [ref. to Thatcher’s death]. The newspaper was contracting, and only retaining the people who behaved properly.

It was maybe the first one that someone started with the proposition that they did not want to be on the alternative fringe, but actually contest the space, do journalism with a nationwide circulation, with all the proper rules of a magazine, but with a different attitude.

We started with no backer, no corporate funding. We put up the money as a group for one edition, and we decided if the money we make is enough, we will carry on. And it sold fairly well. We are now on our 17th monthly issue, and the circulation is rising. We are close to 10.000, and we have enough to pay all our correspondents, which in the beginning was not the case.

There are about 30 people contributing, they all get together at the beginning of an edition, and then there is a tight group of 5 people actually producing it, an editor, I am the editor, a producer, and then copy-editors etc. We are published through a small company of which we are, as a group, the owners.

*Q) Why the name?*

[details deleted]

We are obviously on the left, but we are not affiliated with any party, reserve the right to give

criticism also to the parties on the left. We are critical and we actually publish news stories about what is actually going on, not just opinion pieces or something.

*Q1*

No. Politically speaking, I think the so-called objectivity in the media has been misunderstood. It is not to present all opinions equally, not if one position is patently false and nonsensical, no, you have the find the opinion that you believe is closest to what is actually going on.

*4) Do you see any relation between the magazine and what has been happening in Syntagma quare?*

When we started the protests were still going on, no they had ended in fact, we started in September 2011. There is relation to the crisis obviously, but to the movements in the square, no. It is difficult to speak specifically about the square, the view from the outside has been a bit romanticized, it was a complicated affair.

Q) Why do you produce these striking covers, is it to help sell the magazine?

[details about front covers deleted].

The cost of the journal is 5 euros, which is quite high. We do journalism, political analysis, but also some short stories, poetry.

*Q) What do you think of the emergence of the solidarity economy?*

We actually made a list of all the alternative economy outlets, going from food to software, and we are going to do an update.

*Q) How big is it?*

The thing is, it is not one thing. Parts are related to specific political attitudes: the anarchists have been doing this for a number of years, food, giving clothes, kitchens.

The potato movement is a very different thing, it was producers against the middlemen, and it was sponsored by political parts, not openly, but it was.

Then there are some more NGOs, on migration particularly, such as Doctors of the World.

Then there are groups outside the parliament (?)

In Volos they started a bartering initiative supported by the unions.

All these initiatives are not necessarily talking to each other.

*Q) Are the fascists also doing this sort of work?*

The main thing they are doing is Food for Greeks, they do it from time to time, and they did the Greek Bloodbank, which you know is … It is not massive, but they communicate it quite well.

What they also do that is much more worrying, is go to the factories and bully the owners to fire immigrants and hire Greeks. And if you call on them with a specific problem, they may be quite helpful, they will call the employer and get it resolved.

It is not just that Syriza would not have the power to do this, they are the main opposition, but I would like to think that they are opposed to it philosophically.

*Q) Do you think these solidarity economy initiatives are still growing?*

Growing in number yes, I am not sure they are growing in effectiveness. They share an aspect of the square movement: they build parallel structures for circumventing the political structures, but it is ‘if there is not enough food, give them some more food’.

It is a withdrawal from politics in a sense, they have their bit reserved, but the problem is how we think about democracy. It has to come from the institutions, however defined.

*Q) What does democracy mean to you?*

This historical form of liberal democracy has taken a few steps back that 5 years ago were unthinkable. The police posted these pictures of HIV-positive women on the Internet. They have all been omitted quietly, but not with the furore with which they were announced.

They were mostly also drug addicts, but they were not even proven to be illegal prostitutes, when you go into an area where there are customers and women parading, and you arrest the women, how do you prove it? But the published all their personal data, their names, where they were born, everything to protect the public.

And there has been quite a bit of torture, it has been intensifying all of these three years. And the press writes, yes, it is wrong to beat up prisoners, **but** they are criminals.

*Q) So you would defend ‘democracy’ as liberal democracy and rights?*

At the least we should not take steps back.

*Q) What about direct democracy, do you think that has been strengthened in the last few years?*

To an extent it has. It is never straightforward, but after a period in which in many countries, not just Greece, people have been withdrawing from politics, thousands, sometimes hundreds of thousands of people are talking to each other about it, and perhaps they are not very eloquent, and they don’t know very well, but it has to be a good thing.

*Q) What about individual responsibility vs. the responsibility of the state?*

I think it is a bit moralistic, you do have power structures, whether you like it or not, and more power also means more responsibilities. You cannot say tax-dodging needs to be addressed with a reduction of rights, it is not a balance.

You see it now with Cyprus: the rhetoric is about money-laundering for the Russian oligarchs, but the situation does not have to do with money-laundering. If you look, there is an institute that does research on money-laundering, Germany is higher up on this list than Cyprus.

*Q) Do you see the role of the press changing because of the crisis, and this threat to democracy you have identified?*

I think part of its role is always to defend democracy, put checks on power, but in times like these there is more need for revelations.

We need some relation to power, we can’t just do opinion pieces. But it is a fine line, when do you begin to be taking care of the interests of the ones that give you the information. That is a challenge anywhere, but in Greece it has been badly lost.

There is now the big issue of gold mining in Northern Greece. Most of the criticism has been environmental, but we have not done that, we have focused on the terms of the investment. First of all it was an illegal transfer of their equipment, then, the land has been sold ridiculously cheap, with no royalties for, no participation by the Greek state, only corporate tax. For which the government, by a special provision in the constitution, can offer a special percentage outside the normal tax structure for ten years, and a new government if it comes in cannot change this unless they change the constitution.

There has been a barrage of opinion pieces: do you want investment yes or no, but several newspapers are owned by … who also has a 5% investment in the goldmine, and also owns one of the main tv-stations.

*Q) Do you see a role for You-tube?*

I think the social media are very important in some ways. In the case of police violence it is vital. But in other aspects it cannot help, you need the time to do proper investigation, and most bloggers do not have that time. For instance, the enclosure of migrants in concentration camps, to put the right name to it, the Minister of Public Order called that operation Zeus Xenios, the god of hospitality. To be monitoring the arrests [you need professional journalism].

*Q)??*

The most obscure thing to investigate is, when and why do protest fizzle out? Why did they not connect to the more organizational element. They have been dismissive of political parties, and unions, so they never managed to have a lasting effect. They want to take action, but who can actually pronounce strikes? It is the unions.

Syriza has done a good job of boosting its own line, but the squares were much more mainstream. There were the popular assemblies, but there were also nationalists, even the fascists. There was a pronounced, dangerous condemnation of the political institutions, not just particular parties or political behaviours.

*Q) Have leaders emerged?*

No, but it is too soon. Up to now we have seen new forms, but nothing absolute. Some neighbourhood assemblies, places where people are getting together, organize, speak, solidarity actions. It is not as widespread as one would hope, but it is dynamic.

END

**Vasilis, 11 April 2013**

The offices is on the seventh floor of an office building with a four room typical NGO office. There seemed to be about 5 – 6 main staff and as well as visitors coming and going.

Vasilis is a PhD student who has interrupted his studies to come to participate in what is happening in Greece. He begins by telling us about his own book. He also mentions another book, *Democratic Under Construction: from the streets to the squares*.

*Q1*

Yes, I am an activist. But I am also in an in-between position because I am also an academic. So the academics see me as an activist and the activists see me as an academic. I came back in 2010 in the autumn of that year.

*Q3*

Our movement / group came out of Syntagma Square. The shifting point in revolts in Greece was the December 2008 revolts. The main subject or agent of these revolts was the youth, especially the secondary school students. So this was the turning point in reality. Because all the vocabulary, even of the methods of resistance and struggle that this movement used, mainly reflected the political culture and imagination that has been produced by the revolt of the polytechnic against the dictatorship, such as school occupations, local violence, clashes with the police. So in one sense it closed the circle and reached its peak of its political imagination on the December revolt. And this coincided with the beginning of the economic crisis in Greece.

And something important, and something that was felt by the ruling class as a threat it was the possibility of these kind of social movements meeting with the political movements, even with those in the system, including parties. Because for instance, Syriza at the time supported the revolt. So while all the other political forces, the conservatives as well as the left, so the KKE, LAOS, PASOK, New Democracy, all those four drew a line between those political forces that stand for law and order and those that stand for violence and unruliness. This was an important point because it was an end of the culture and the political super structure in Greece of the *meta-politiis*, i.e., the democratic regime at the end of the dictatorship. It was a political and social contract between the political and social forces in Greece. They had shared the cards of the game between the parties and the social forces, so what they unions would do, what the parties would do to keep things in line. So this all came to an end in December. After that you have 2 things. You have the complete delegitimization of political and state institutions in Greece and this happens in the context of a very rapidly expanding economic crisis. In reality now, as a footnote, the 2008 revolt, started in June 2008 because it was a time when some of the big mainstream media wanted to overthrow the conservative government of the time and they began publishing economic scandals that included caderes of the conservative governments e.g. Siemens and the state. So this was the sub-context and created the basis for the de-legitimization which came with a violent way with the revolt of the Greek youth.

*Q6: slogans?*

December produced an essential slogan, a very self-reflective slogan, which said, “December was not an Answer, But a Question”.

So I use the metaphor that the baby was born on 6 December 2008 but then in the Indignados protests of 2011, the baby began to take its first steps and it began to speak for itself.

The squares occupation have a completely different attitude against violence, and against politics and ideology and against many other things out of default. Also for December we [the authors of this book they wrote] called it ‘Revolt by Default’ . and this was useful to explain and it foresaw what happened with the squares between 2008 and 2010.

After the Parliament voted on the first memorandum, on 6 May 2010, the anti-memorandum and anti-Troika struggle began. It was beyond austerity, it was much more serious. On 5 May 2010, there were 250,000 people at the demonstration. This was the first big scale event against the memorandum. So after that, the next big moment was the squares, on the 26th of May 2011. But between those dates, over that one-year, there were many general strikes with massive turnout. On 5 May 2010 there was also a general strike led by the GSEE and ADEDY. This worked as an umbrella, because in reality the unions had lost their power to mobilize people. But their call to strike was accepted because it gave people a framework, a platform to express their rage because they didn’t want to participate in political rallies. It was an umbrella thing, they provided a framework because if the leftist party called for a demo people wouldn’t go. But if the unions called for a strike people felt more comfortable to participate in that. But the unions didn’t increase their membership or gain in reputation out of the strikes. People saw that they, the unions, lack the means of resisting the austerity measures. So the issue trust between the unions and the people is growing.

So then there was the square occupation movement started on the same day in cities all over Greece. This was a spontaneous movement, but anything that happens, happened in a vacuum but it was a spontaneous movement. But what it created was the framework was the call for demonstrating outside of Parliament. In reality, what they said [in the Facebook call ] was that bring your friends, let’s gather together and discuss our problems. But we would not like violence and don’t bring political party banners. So in reality what this meant, was that they by-passed the “specialists of resistance” . the majority of people, it was a huge movement which lasted concretely for 40 days before it was crushed. According to official polls there participated 28% of the Greek population, around 3 million people around the country. This was an experience, which transforms your life.

After the retreat of this movement, which brought many new things as practices, as examples, as paradigms and experiences of how they organise and what slogans they have. The most important thing was the spirit of self-organization of the people and on the basis of open assemblies, what we call people’s assemblies. We had held every night in the square. There were 2500-4000 people’s assemblies everyday for 40 days.

There was an amazing organization of space in the square. There were corridors for people to walk to approach the microphone, everyone was limited to 2-minute speeches and they could speak about anything. The speakers were chosen by lottery and we created a system of working.

The problems were new so the solutions were also new and inventive.

This was the first time that people who had never before participated in demonstrations came out and many people also came to help. We took no funding from anyone, not just because of our ideology, but because we didn’t know each other very well and managing money always leads to suspicion or claims of corruption and so to avoid tainting the movement or raising questions we refused money altogether.

We said we have real needs and everyday we made the list of the products we needed. If people wanted to help, they would bring us things like food or other items. One woman would cook trays of pasticcio and bring that to us.

The social conditions of necessity plus the experience of activists from pervious movements led to the building of a new paradigm of protest.

This experience made visible a new form of organization in the eyes of ordinary people that things can be done in a different way. When the occupation of Syntagma Square finished, when people went back to their daily lives, they carried with them the spirit of solidarity that had started at the square. For instance, some people began to support the social solidarity economy.

From 1987 until 2007 we had a long history of mass youth school occupations, during that time some 90% of the schools were occupied. But even those occupations changed how they were organized and organising after 2011. They were creating for instance thematic groups for cleaning or cooking. They replicated what we had been doing in Syntagma.

So quite a few local initiatives began against rising prices, they began to remove mobile phone antennas off of rooftops and not paying the road tolls.

Grassroots trade unions were also created and refused to pay the rising prices of public transport tickets. The government estimated that during that strike about 60 % of the public commuters didn’t pay for their tickets. After Syntagma Square occupation, all of these types of initiatives multiplied.

Another important struggle before Syntagma was in Kerateia against the landfill. The community there mobilized, organised and forced the government to scrap the whole landfill scheme.

There were three important movements that preceded Syntagma:

1. The occupation and strike at the Elefsina steel plant. This was a massive movement of solidarity organised initially by the KKE. But many other groups joined them. This hadn’t happened since the 1970s.
2. The attack by thugs against a Bulgarian woman who had acid thrown in her face because she was a member of the trade union happened in 2008. This raised issues on many levels – about trade unionism, collective action, violence against a woman, and violence against a migrant.

In February 2012 there was the potato movement. This began when there was the Euro crisis and people didn’t know if Greece was in or out of the Euro. So a group of activists go in touch with the farmers who weren’t able to sell their produce because of this crisis of the Euro. They helped them to cut out and bypass the middleman and sell directly to the consumers. The farmers increased their profit by 20 – 30% by cutting out the middlemen. This was a big success story. According to a small business association survey 20% of consumer used markets where the middlemen had been bypassed. And this happened across Greece.

Finally, another big initiative was the decision to not pay the extra household tax which was being put on top of the ordinary taxes on property and linked to people’s electricity bills. We called for refusals to pay and how to pay for the electricity without paying for that extra tax.

We took this issue of the tax to the highest court saying it was illegal. The government at that point stepped back a bit. It is still in the bill, but now you have more time to pay it before it was 40 days, now it is 80 days. Then if you still don’t pay it goes to the tax office and then they take their time to chase it.

This happened because of a massive struggle on the electricity issue and on this basis the electricity initiatives (i.e., the reconnections) were created in many local areas. The development of the electricity campaign got more exposure because f the involvement of two radical level movement (Syriza). They provided legal support to anyone who refused to pay the property tax and also helped to negotiated their right to only pay the electricity bill and not the property tax. So people were going to town halls and asking mayors to support these initiatives and so this was the basis for other solidarity activities.

*Q2/3*

Our group/movement started from activists who were active in grassroots solidarity movements and it started in this framework. The idea started in late August and by early December 2012, it was part of the strategy of Syriza that 20% of the salaries of Syriza MPs would go to support the solidarity structures like this one. So we tried to speed up some of the existing tendencies within the social solidarity movement through creating our group/movement.

First, we are working to make these solidarity movements more visible and to support their informal networks and the networks between them. Because they face a concrete need, sometimes people can’t see the larger picture. So we help them to see where they fit into the whole process.

Second, after the square and the birth of a galaxy of social solidarity initiatives, people said that nothing happened because of Syntagma Square. There is the conflict of a pessimism that nothing was achieved and we want people to realise that something was achieved and to rethink what it means to ‘win’. And how difficult it is for social change to happen. Some of this impatience for quick changes comes from how we have become used to quick results, the consumerism and we think of political activism in the same way and we want immediate satisfaction. But that is not how things happen. It takes s time for social changes to happen. But the pessimists say, “oh the people went back to their TVs and their sofas’ [after Syntagma’ and that nothing changed

So we need to make more visible the extent of the movement because it produced a different imagination and changed the consciousness of people.

So we have began to map all the social solidarity structures, we don’t include those that are provided by the state or the NGOs or the Church. But we are mapping all of those that are immediately created and led by the people. We also don’t include the GD social projects. We only include self-organized social solidarity initiatives and so far we have counted approximately 250 so far across Greece.

So one of our goals is to map the terrain and to make it more accessible for those who want to contribute and to promote meetings with existing structures and those who want to create social solidarity structures. The numbers of people who want to become involved is rapidly increasing. Largely because the need is growing. So now there are social clinics and we already have counted 30 social clinics.

The 250 social solidarity initiatives actually all do many different things all at the same time. So it’s not that they only focus on food, but they do food distribution, plus culture, solidarity lessons, etc.

We are also facilitating, but NOT coordinating. We don’t want to be a central headquarters of a central representatives of these structures. This is not a top down process and we don’t intervene in the political decision making processes locally. We focus on transparency and assistance. But before the financial assistance, that we sometimes provide, we try to find in-kind donations, especially for instance with medicines. So we connect them through our website and create and link social clinics with social pharmacies and update the list of needs through an new application so one clinic in one part of the country can see where there is medicine available and they can access it.

We are trying to be horizontal in our work.

Our main aim of the Squares was to create a political culture and to demand REAL democracy, direct democracy was modelled on the ancient Athenian democracy.

So for us this type of organizing is a matter of democracy. We organise and hold assemblies that are very participatory and inclusive. So we encourage this at the local level. Where for instance, at the school, the meeting isn’t just the parents and teachers, but also includes the children. We want to redefine democracy form below and outside of state institutions.

But his movement can’t generalize democracy without political structures are changing. Changes in power are needed.

Some anarchists say that they don’t care but still voted in the last elections. According to informal survey, over 80% of anarchist voted in the last election. So voting has stopped being an ideological issue for some anarchists. Also some say I don’t want to join Syriza, but I want to create and participate and for my voice to be heard and to be an equal part of the decision making process. So this has opened up ways how people imagine the reconstruction of our own economy. This is what the potato movement showed. The issue of food sovereignty was put on the table.

So the community becomes empowered on distributing networks of food and the distribution works via farmer’s local networks and people get to know each other. So if one farmer was selling old crops, he is then shunned and those with quality good get more business.

People are very active at the local level and they don’t want to have leaders and representatives. They never give name. Communication happens through FB, blogs and websites.

We didn’t speak to the media. And said not media filming of the assembly or the thematic assemblies. They could film from afar, panning shots, but not up-close. They said the could conduct interviews with individuals but they weren’t allowed to come and film in certain areas and we directed them to our own websites and blogs so they could get the info about us. So the international press was using materials that were in our website. Like the Guardian and Agence France did this.

So we avoided having leaders or representatives. Of course, they exist, but not in the practice of the general assemblies. The practice, which came out of the assemblies, is also being generalized and is being used in different context.

Politicised people and the anarchists didn’t like the word indignant but the majority of the people did refer to it as the Indignados.

Me, too, I didn’t first like the use of Indignados. Because for me it reminded me of the way the right used this word indignation or indignant citizen. So when I got the first call about the 25 May 2011 Indignados occupation, it came from a friend in Thessaloniki, at first I didn’t open that email because I saw the world indignant in the subject heading. This was a word used by PASOK and by right activists. They were playing the role of ‘outraged’ citizens against the strikers. So I thought this was again from the far right activists who wanted to explain the crisis in their own way. Then I started to get more texts and people were all talking about it and I say that it was going to be big. So of course I finally opened the email and also started to follow it on FB.

But for most of the purist anarchist and the KKE (who had only been involved in the steel strike and other strikes which they themselves had organised), they were very critical of the squares. They said it was too middle class, too nationalist and too many Greek flags. They couldn’t understand at that time when people started going to the square that they w=need at some level to use symbols, like the flag, that they felt comfortable with. But for them these people didn’t have the correct class orientation, so they criticised them.

So Syntagma created the new subject. At Syntagma there was the lower square, which as the left and the upper square which was the more plebeian and regular ordinary people. The in the lower square there were intellectual, artists, actors and they produced the literature and the upper square produced the slogans.

GD says they are trying to do solidarity in their own way and that is only to help Greeks and to allow them to connect their politics to their practices. But I don’t know to what extent of the practices exist. I think the scale is small and that they know how to play with the media. So they say, ‘we don’t speak to the media’ and they when they say they are going to speak to the media, it becomes a big event. At first they were attacking street vendors and saying we are doing this to protect Greek businesses. Now when they do solidarity they put the pictures on their website and they said we organised a kindergarten. So the media, in a voyeuristic way, says wow, the fascists created a kindergarten. So this has become the ideology of the spectacle.

People who criticise GD say they are doing charity that the people aren’t involved and they don’t hold democratic assemblies or decision-making isn't participatory. They give speeches about the GD and the only after the speech they give out the food. So this is completely different than the self-organizing sprit of the other social solidarity movements.

But mainstream journalists say GD is active because they do charity and this has become part of the mainstream media discourse.

GD is a problem because it is linked to the para – state structures. We think GD is Plan B of the Greek elite in case of the Grexit to let them do their work. So GD exists so we forget that the system we live in isn’t democratic.

The levels of struggle for democracy, my experience of Syntagma, redefined the basic contradiction between economic and political elites and the people. There was a serious redefinition of how the Greek people understood themselves vis a vis the political filed, and not just as a voter or a party member.

The main slogans of Syntagma occupation were “we won’t leave the squares, until we get rid of you!”

People asked for more democracy and were redefining their sense of ownership of the county. There was a conflict between the old imploding political forms and the system and the springs of new forms of political activism. Because of the heterogeneity of the struggle and as an enemies were trying to manipulate it towards their own aim, there is a second level of struggle in the context of hegemony of the new political super structure and the old political structures.

All political parties were saying that we can’t get rid of all political structures. So you can read the election results of 2012 in several ways. You can see it as either pro-memorandum or as anti-memorandum and anti-Troika.

Until recently, elections were a social resistance directly aligned to the Left. Now it is also linked to GD. Now if the organised political parties change politics because of the anger and frustration, people may take a central role on the centre stage of politics but this will come about because of new and more complicated alliances.

The left was very late in understanding what is happening in society and they are burdened by their past political baggage and so they are sometimes unable to listen to the people and they feel linked towards their institutional roles and the role to be responsible and accountable to the people. But they don’t trust the people.

So when in the last elections people voted for Syriza, it was done under terms and conditions because the only way with social struggle can’t get to major changes, you also need someone to keck them [the politicians] out. The must be a transition from old to new political structures.

Syriza worked because they didn’t condemn the social developments and people turned to Syriza. But left people say why don’t you publicise the social solidarity work like the GD do.

The whole people are struggling for survival and it is very difficult to turn people into activists. We are accused of doing charity, but if you give someone the chance to survival, yes in some ways it does become charity. But what we are trying to remake is a political struggle, a constant struggle. So our group/movement doesn’t have a legal framework, it is not a registered NGO. The fund where the money goes has a legal face but it is separate from us.

So for the party we are the self-organised anarchists and we are one of the social solidarity structures. It is an issue of trust and how we can rebuild rust between people and the new forms of organising and forms of political parties.

Our aim is to reach the point when social clinics will no longer be necessary but are developing new committee based restructuring of the health services. We can no longer re-construct a public health system of the state. That has collapse. But what we are creating is programmatic level things of the kind of public health system that we need.

Unions are also losing their role in society. Because they were state funded and they abandoned their efforts to build relations with the working class. Also there is the front of civil society because George Soros has mimicked us and is spreading his branches but it is unclear what he will do.

The EU also has projects addressing poverty and unemployment and they are providing it via the local government level but also through NGOs. But in Greece you don’t have independent NGOs. Its another way to destroy the social solidarity systems, but including and importing the model of charities and NGOs. This is a kind of civil society business. The church is also doing institutionalized social structures but it’s a jokes. The local mayors for their own client list networks exploit this. For us, the main antagonist is the civil society – the NGOs.

END

**Pontios , 11 april 2013**

Suggests, since he knows much about the environmental movements, to give some history.

The first movement was Peliti, which means tree in the Pontiac dialect, started by so-and-so and his wife in 1995.

The second is Spori, the first ecological community, which is a nationwide movement including more than 100.000 amateur producers. They have recultivated seeds from old plants, do big events, celebrations, exchanging seeds, where thousands gather. It is the biggest movement in the social and solidarity economies. They collaborate rather than cooperate, which means it does not involve taking money.

These are the two biggest, most traditional organisations. Several others are doing the same, also fighting for good nutrition and access to water, against privatization of the water.

His book has a website, a collaboration with other journalists, where they have recorded and documented 2358 movements, solidarity centres, activities and structures, time banks and swaps all over Greece. They have made an application through Googlemaps through which you can find them all.

They are ethical and for equality for all, solidarity. I consider it a result of the 1960s and consumer habits of the 1970s. It is based on the idea of fair prices for agricultural production in the regions, local food markets, promoting local consumption and production, and no use of chemicals or genetic material. It depends on what the city is able to produce, to enforce local production and equal workers rights. I made the comparison with Italy, in Greece we have more occupations and more social centres than in Italy. Ecocity in Rome abbatoir – something similar happens in Greece, there are cities within cities, like in Thessaloniki the mikropolis, that has restaurants, concerts, clothes swaps, social markets, medical centres, drug stores, bird protection. But apart from Athens and Thessaloniki, in every city you have at least 2-3 occupations and social centres.

There are more than 432 occupations and social centres, 90% are post-crisis, there were many occupations before, but after there was an explosion. They come up all the time, I do not have time to document them. As the social welfare state collapses, more are born very quickly. This is the most important thing, no other country has seen such a quick explosion. And I will tell you why, thousands were left without insurance, could not pay for medical care or a doctor. In a very quick time the solidarity centres, social pharmacies came up from a citizen’s movement, without interference by political parties.

Even big hospitals have networks of doctors who after working hours help for free, esp. in cancer hospitals. And the patients who are cured are giving their medicines to others, for cancer medicine is very expensive.

There are more than 300 social markets thousands have their common needs provided, I document it in the newspaper every day. The image that people have of occupations does not respond to the reality. Nearby there is a theatre, it can be considered an occupation, by a team of young people, not all of them are actors.

*How is it paid for?*

Donations, people’s own work and money. These things are more in kind than in money. I am eating here for free for instance because I support the restaurant on my Facebook page and website portal.

*What about dignity?*

The church is one of the most important solidarity actors. It is very cautious, it always has a list of ‘new poor’, the term used for people who used to have a decent standard of living, or were even rich, but now no longer have even daily food. I research this for my newspaper.

A municipality in a very posh region delivers food parcels to everyone, they are not called home visits, but villa visits. Maybe they are even shipowners, but no one says it. The guy with a big house with a pool may be paying such high taxes now, and if his company collapsed, his hand are tied, he cannot sell.

*What is the connection to democracy?*

I do not know. The examples are the most important to see. Once more, solidarity centres multiply. Many people gather and sit together. It is also important that clothes are recycled, doctors are free, medicines for free. There is also a big move to free lessons, even dance classes. If you’ve been to Istos you’ve only seen a small centre, you haven’t seen the big ones.

*Direct democracy?*

I call it the Nile virus [etc].

In Syntagma it was the first time people experienced direct democracy, it happened in a context that was very brutal against representative democracy. You can vote every four years, but if you want to stand for elections you would need billions, you would have to be very ambitious; representative democracy is controlled by the oligarchs. So you have the permanent protestors, and the community social movements, with or without legal form.

Everybody is equal, none are more than the other, decisions are take in assemblies, in democratic procedures. Minorities have some rights, there is not a majority for the others to follow. They have systems so minorities can also do what they want. Syntagma first put it on the table. It has been adopted by Beppe Grillo.

The government does what every is said by the troika, three generals are putting guns to their heads. There are also the financial-economic scandals, like the one on Siemens, in which the two main parties are implicated. The guy who is the connection is held in Germany and they will not extradite him, he could state names and facts, they sold them trains that do not fit the railways. The two big political parties both received benefits. Now the Germans are saying corruption should stop, but they do not want to give back Christoforakis.

The democracy is at the grassroots, but their economic basis cannot have a big impact at the top, unless there is a revolution, a democratic revolution, and decentralization, not everything at the centre. At the municipal level things could work, but they have no funding, no means to do what they want. Many will collapse financially in the next few years, there will not even been garbage collection.

I would like to see you give importance to Greece, to Argentina, to Vancouver where it started from. Greece will survive because of these initiatives.

END

**Lykourgos, 12 April 2013**

*Q1*Yes, I am an activist and sometimes I protest and sometimes I express my activism in other ways.

*Q2*

I have been active since 1998. It was because as the ancient Greeks said, one should be a political human (politikon?) and to relate to and to think about what happens in the world.

*Q3*

The first huge protest was in 2008 when the cops killed Grigoropolous.

*Q4*

No, I am not part of the wider movement and I want to be something different. I don’t want to be part of this. When they were demonstrating here for 40 days, they were demanding nothing. They were only here to make friends and to drink beer. Protests only happened in Egypt, Spain and Syria, here it is a joke.

In the Upper Square, yes it is more how it should be [I.e., people yelling curses at the parliament]

People here have many problems, economic, personal, and they can’t give all their energy to this. But I don’t have the same ideas as the group in Syntagma Square. The people want to change, but they don’t really want to participate and to make that change happen.

It is not that I don’t want to be part of a group, but I don’t want to be part of THIS group.

*Q22*

I don’t want democracy because I believe in aristokratia. That it should be perfect rule. There should be people who are perfect. Democracy isn’t real equality and there can’t be real equality.

The square wasn’t concerned with democracy.

Things must become much, much worse for things to change.

*Q27*

Yes, dignity is important. It means to be honest and to work for all and not just for yourself. It means to work for the social good and not be selfish.

I am very negative about the square and the reasons why they came to the square. But I am positive about protest. I am negative because of the beer and coffee. They should’ve tried to storm parliament. They should try to change their behaviour. But fist we should try to change our minds and not just our voting patterns.

*Q13*

Solidarity centres are good, but they need to work in a more honest way. They need a more complete change of our minds.

People need to leave Facebook and their coffees and to go outside. Facebook is one of the biggest problems of humanity. I use the Internet for serious reasons, to work and to learn about things. But I think social media is humiliating because they have made a good way for people to think they participate. But it’s really humiliating. If you hear what the FBI and CIA as about Facebook, they say thank you for creating it.

*Q21*

Yes, in some way the struggles in other countries are related to Greece, but the ones in Spain is much better than us. Because they keep fighting, they are taking action. Not just sitting around talking.

Only through armed action can things change. My opinion is that this is the only way. Of course we should wear masks, the government shouldn’t know who anyone is unless the government is good and they are not good. We are in the middle of a war and everyone has to work in secret.

*Q16*

Yes, police brutality has gotten much worse. We have heard that there are now microwave guns that can be shot from far away and cook the insides of people.

*Q17*

I don’t know who are the fascists? Is it the government? The Golden Dawn? Or is it the KKE because they are the ones who only want to be in the Square [the KKE} they are always the ones who go in front of the TV cameras.

But people are not angry enough today and I know this because who comes to a protest in high heals is not really angry.

*Q15*

There is a lack of leadership. There is an absence of brilliant brains and education. A true leader is someone who can persuade me and listen to my concerns and be prepared to fight and shed his blood with me.

But I want someone who cares bout his country and who wants to help the people.

*Q Responsibility*

Voters should be responsible. Syriza is the new PASOK. All the political parties are liars. I don’t trust any of them. There is no party that I trust.

Maybe in other countries people are better liars; here in Greece they are behind the times. The police are all criminals, they steal, sell drugs, do racketeering, etc.

END

**Irene,** **12 April 2013**

We met at her home, a suburb of Athens near the coast. She served us coffee and sweets and made a point to tell us about her cat who is named after a French feminist anarchist.

Irene begins by telling us that for the past 3 -4 years she has been a member of [name deleted], an international movement that was created in the 1980s when there was a big problem of debt in the third world. She has also written articles which are available at the website.

She was a member of this international movement before the crisis of debt here in Greece. We also organized as women in this movement. So we were here before the Greek Debt Audit, because we were part of the international movemenet and because of that there was a big sensibility. So when the crisis of debt began here in Greece we started in February 2011 an initiative of (..) and at the same time we created on the international, European level a movement against debt in Europe.

We were already here because we’re members of the international committee.

*Q1*

Yes, I consider myself an activist and also an activist against the global economy. I have been part of the feminist movement since the beginning and I was also a member of the worldwide feminist movement Women’s World March. We had a topical, local section here since 2000.

*Q2*

Our banner was the first banner against debt in Syntagma Square and it was a very pretty banner. It was the first slogan about the debt. “We don’t Owe, We don’t pay”. But in Syntagma there was not a space of social movements, but a space for individuals. So movements had a difficulty of expressing themselves as movements. Because Syntagma was based on individual level of participation.

It was difficult in SS because we tried 3 times to have a feminist approach but it didn’t pass open assemblies.

A feminist approach in this context is that we made a proposition to the assembly to discuss the problem of the link of the debt and feminism. It was impossible. They didn’t agree to put this as a matter of discussion. So we didn’t discuss it. Because in Greece feminism is very fragile and not very strong as a movement and the political parties in general and also of the Left are not feminist parties. It’s a problem.

*Q what is the link between feminism and debt?*

It is something new, not only for society but also for feminism. Historical feminism didn’t agree to link the matter of debt and the status and lives of women. We began to have an action not as a continuation of the old feminist history. I personally am a feminist for 30 years in Greece. We changed the law on abortion, the law on families, and also with women we changed the law for the children of the second generation of immigrants. But there was no will of the old feminist movement to understand why to make a connection between debt and feminism. At the beginning we started to make propaganda. So we were connected to the Greek Debt Audit and we participated in some movements like when they closed hospitals, children’s kindergartens, but it was not our mobilization but it was the mobilization of the movements in general. So we went there, mostly in Thessaloniki, and went to those movements and made solidarity. But it wasn’t really a new connection of debt and feminism. And I believed that we had another qualitative revolution when we made here in Athens when we made the connection with some measures in November 2010 some decisions were made in the health sector, they decided to double the costs for a list of specific treatments and hospitalization. In general for the cost of hospitalization, the state did this.

At the same time we saw the collapse of the health system because they not only reduced the medical personnel and people, esp. women, are left without medical insurance. So this resulted at least 3 million people being left without insurance. And there must be many young women, because we know that young women face 68% of unemployment that have been affected by this. Also there are many women, because of the fact that they are women, who work in the black market and who remain unpaid.

So on the one hand you have women, gender-based, they become poorer and fewer women decide to have children and at the movement that they are more in need, the health sector and the public sector collapse.

So now they face a situation that began in November 2011 when pregnant going to public hospitals, these women are denied hospitalization if they didn’t pay in advance. So entering the hospital, they ask you to pay in advance. So the movement was at the Alexandra Hospital, with midwives, medical personnel, and nurses, when they first noticed that they went on protest. So this org made protests with slogans ‘Birth is Not a Commercial Good’; ‘Free Delivery for All’. They tried to launch a campaign with very few means, but it had wide acceptance. Their campaign continued in another public hospital where a migrant woman was not given her baby unless she paid. So the woman was called [name deleted], and she went there with 5 – 6 other women and they raised a ruckus.

The cost of natural birth was originally 800 euros and C-sections were 1600 euros. Now they have reduced the rates to 600 and 1200 respectively

Now there is another law that is terrible, for the Greek women who give birth to premature babies, they are charged 200 euros a day by the hospital for the treatment. So people are now giving birth in other’s names, using their insurance cards.

So we wanted to connect the problematic that in order to pay the debt they don’t give the European aid, it doesn’t come to the real needs of the population, which is living now. But they have given the priority of paying the debt and not one Euro of the large tranche came to the people and the hospitals. Nothing. But in order to pay the debt they have closed 40% of structures of the clinics and the hospitals and laid off the personnel. Even if a woman goes to the clinic and there are all the structures where to have a baby, there are no personnel. And even if they have insurance, the personnel are not there.

And now we have growing rates of infant mortality. It’s for the first time we have data to show this.

*Q7 Peak?*

There has not been a peak. We must have strong will, but there is an evolution. First, we are in contact with auto-organizing structures such as the metropolitan health centers, this is a social centers. We are also in contact with a European social movement for the defense of public health against privatization and the commercialization of health. We are a member of this. We are trying to work on this with partners with the women’s movement in Italy. We have organized a trip to 9 towns in Italy and I will go next week to 3 towns to make a network of solidarity with Greek and Italian women. On the one hand Italian women are organizing themselves, to raise money and to help, but we are also doing political work in that the meetings we have done in Italy and to show them what they have done to us and to warn them.

*Q8 communication?*

All these things are at the beginning because it is very new because you know in Greece there are solidarity, auto-organizing structures for the health. And for the first time, they want to connect together and to make a network. Now perhaps we can do a real campaign. If there will be a network in Greece it will be better for us to construct ourselves in something larger. We could do an SOS campaign to include the network with the hospital. So women can get in touch. Before this it was only at the Alexander maternity clinic we had doctors and women so if they weren’t there, we took telephones , it was very human and personal contact. It was not a NGO, but it was really based on voluntary, auto-organization.

*Tactics?*

Our tactic wasn’t so many. But it was aimed at awareness raising and public opinion. At the beginning we were looking for what to do and so we heard about the pregnancy issue, we decide to draw attention and focus on this issue and to begin to sensitize and motivate the public. It’s a matter of principle. Something that is very deep and people had to ask ‘what society do I live in? where do I go? What will be the future?’

From the first movement tried to fight for rights, not in the traditional way of strikes, riots or protests but to choose the issue of the pregnant women and to show the brutal face of austerity and the real consequences of austerity.

We have raised this issue internationally as well. I have given interviews to bog European newspapers and I have also written many articles globally and have also participated in meetings in Italy and France. So we have put this issue on the agenda.

What we’ve seen is that all austerity policies have at their epicenter the milestone of reproductive rights, not only Greece but also other countries including Spain and Portugal. So there is an objective basis to this where we’ve seen the closure of clinics. So there is an objective basis to create an International movement on this.

*Domestic Violence increasing?*

Statistics in Greece is a big problem. But we have statistics of phone calls to SOS lines they are exploding and I have a done an article in a newspaper.

Unemployment is increasing and it is linked with domestic violence and political violence. Political violence from the Troika and the Golden Dawn become an example to be followed by others. They don’t want to hide violence anymore, but they want to show it and promote scenes of violence. They promote them in a way.

Tortures are systematically taking place and it’s increasing. Before they were embarrassed to show scenes of tortured people. Now they are proud to show scenes of violence and you have the same thing with neo-Nazis. There was an incidence of a TV show when the Golden Dawn MP hit another MP. Some people thought that due to this incident GD would lose voters, but it was the contrary, why? Because fascism wants to show that they are strong and people want to believe in something that is strong and in strong leadership. But on the other hand you have generally, when people are disappointed and feels weak, like men when they lose their jobs and they want to show to themselves that they are strong so they do this to their women and also their children to impose their authority and their own identity as men. They lose their identity as men when they are unemployed. So violence is increasing everywhere and especially against women.

*Q22*

Democracy is the ability to control my fate and to decide my future. And what we see now is that with the debt and the crisis is the absolute loss of democracy. 90% of the Greek population is against the austerity and we have had 24 general strikes, 1000s of gathered in Syntagma Square and protests. But no one has listened to them. They are also taking power as with the dictatorship, so there is no Parliament anymore. They don’t vote for the laws but they are passed as directives. They signed the memorandum with the Troika, it was done against the Constitution and it wasn’t voted in Parliament. Because it should have passed by 2/3rds in the parliament but it only passed by 50% so it wasn’t constitutional., but the Troika decided it in a top down manner which has infiltrated all institutions.

After 3 years the fate of women and all the historical rights that were gained have been lost.

Because of the loss of the social state, in only 3 years the social state has been completely destroyed. Many women worked in the public sector, in hospitals, schools, and ministries. Because after the 1980s when women entered the labour market, women worked a lot in the public sector, in the social state. So austerity measures destroyed the social state in only 3 years, but not the repressive state is growing. The army and the police are expanding. So you understand why the number of unemployed women is increasing.

Young women have no future anymore because there will not be in the future a social state in the future and because there is also a recession, which has been going on for 6 years already, which is a longer period of depression that the 1929 depression.

We have lost 26% of GDP and at the beginning when we were searching for the identity of our movement, we sad that they are destroying the social welfare state. They began to transfer all the services that were provided by the state to now be provided by women, within the family and without pay. So this increased women’s unpaid labour and all this unpaid work that is worth billions goes to pay the debt. And on this matter you can see the direct relation between women and the debt. But at the movement we aren’t going back to 50 years before, under the patriarchal society where women had a position a and a big role in the family. But see a new phenomenon in cities like Athens where people lack access to basic needs like food, electricity, etc. there are now multi-generational families in small apartments and sometimes only rely on the income of one person. This isn’t a normal situation of patriarchal societies of the past. It may pre-date capitalism. It is something very ancient and very brutal. It is a new phenomenon.

They tell us women to go back to t them home.

Those who govern us, the bank owners, they don’t care how their actions affect people. They don’t care how they are being characterized. They are nihilist. They are in a state of mind that says ‘you can ide, I don’t care. Unless I benefit’ that is why we are in this phenomenon.

So birth becomes something symbolic in this aspect and society can’t exist in this way. Nature, humans and society can’t regenerate in this way.

They have a monolithic short-term view of society. The only thing that matters today is profit.

*Q23*

What state? The state is an instrument of the bank owners and the upper classes. We need to create a new state via auto-organization and where we deicide for ourselves what our needs are. We need a new economic system where women’s reproductive works is valued and the creation of new human relations.

*Q24*

Yes, we have been democratic. But it is so difficult to have democracy because people are so psychologically down. Young women have seen the corruption and the corruption of the political system and they believe in or trust anymore in anything. They believe in nothing. They lack common experience. They were raised under neoliberalism for the past 30 years where antagonism is a priority and the best is the won that has won.

Where austerity exceeds levels and upper classes have individualistic approaches that are destroyed all working rights and they have tried to destroy everything that comes from common actions. And that is the aim of the Troika and the experiment they do in Greece.

The Troika wants to destroy completely every resistance. In this case when the people are so poor its either solidarity or cannibalism. It is not easy to create common actions because everyone suffers. Many times people lose their value and there are misunderstandings. It is a very bad climate. So it is not easy to create a group.

*Q27*

Yes, dignity is the opposite of corruption. It is very important. It is an internal morality and some people don’t have this. But I believe there are values like justice, social justice and not to be sadistic but to instead create joy.

There is also something that we call truth, I believe in truth. In a logical truth. And the truth is collective justice for the majority of the people to be free and to have joy in their lives and to be able to eat to and to develop our human forces, our culture and ourselves.

*Q11*

They are working only with auto-organized movements, not NGOs or other formal structures.

*Q21*

The Arab revolutions are very similar but there they have another type of fascism. That is based on religion. The fascism growing in Europe is like that of the 1930s. one of our aims is to organize ourselves against fascism. The extreme right is growing everywhere.

END

1. This interview was conducted on the same day that Margaret Thatcher passed away. Whether or not the respondent knew about this news is unclear, but they did not mention her passing during the interview. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)