

What's next?

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN GREECE
AFTER THE CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT

WHATS NEXT?

What happened in the „Detention Centre Amygdaleza“ near Athens during the night of 25th of January 2015 was hitherto unseen. The inmates, mostly refugees, yelled „Tsipras, Tsipras“ into their guards faces. It was the night of SYRIZAs electoral victory and this yelling embodied hope: hope for an end to austerity measures, hope for an end to the inhumane treatment of thousands of refugees, hope for an end to the humanitarian catastrophe in the middle of Europe. About three weeks later we arrive in Athens: a group of 14 activists from Frankfurt, Bremen, Berlin and Prague with a profound interest in a direct encounter with the new political situation and many questions in mind.

What is the current state of social movements in Greece? Which conditions, also historical ones, do they face in their struggles for a free society in solidarity? Which tactics and strategies result from their analyses? What have they achieved in the past years and which defeats did they have to take? And what to do if an all-time enemy as the government becomes a potential ally? What possibilities might open up – and what are possible dangers?

Over ten days, we met 20 activists from various backgrounds. And as always by crossing borders of discourses, our own system of categorization didn't work any more. Some call themselves anarchists, others anti-authoritarian, some insist on being antifascists in the first place, to be labeled as „leftist“ is quite unpopular and „communist“ is an insult to many. In the end, we gave up labeling peoples ideological stand: first of all because we just know too little about all the underlying history and secondly because it did not seem relevant to us. What we were interested in were stories of specific projects, places and people, who did not gave up their hope for a better and beautiful life yet. And we met them: in social centers like „K*FOX“ and „Nosotros“, in „Steki metanaston“ and the „Polytechnio“, in the squatted theater „Embros“ and the facilities of the archive of social movements, on the former-airport area „Ellinikon“ and in the narrow streets of Exarchia.

Besides all these encounters, another story became our involuntary companion: On February 13 Mohamed Nadim committed suicide in the already mentioned Detention Camp. The 28-years old name is one on a long list of people being driven to death by this camp-system. To learn about his death was for us to realize the scope and scale of political decisions and fights here in Greece. Immediately it created the well-known feeling of powerlessness. Briefly infected by the sparkling hope for fundamental change, we were brought back to the ground of facts – to a ground of a complex, contested and for some even deadly reality. Three days later, we coincidentally become witness of the memorial service for Mohamed Nadim on Omonia Square. Forty people have gathered, chanting and mourning. A couple of policemen is watching from a distance – that would have looked different a few weeks ago. And then, on the next Saturday, a demonstration is heading to the Detention Centre. More than 100 activists clamber the first fence and find themselves suddenly in shouting distance to the

imprisoned refugees and right in the middle of a high-security section of the repression apparatus. Not surprisingly, the police is „not amused“ - but more surprising is this new self-confidence one can feel that brought us here. „This hasn't happen before“, one of the older activist is wondering. And as quickly as it was vanished, it is back again: the hope, that maybe something really could be changed here.

In many talks, we question our own relation to the fights and fighters we learn about. Aren't we just simply political tourist? External observers of a situation, which seems „interesting“ or „exiting“ to us? And over all: what is the benefit for the ones we meet here, what can we return, how can we support them? A part of the answer is this brochure. To us, it was important not to keep the experiences and insights to us, but to spread them. Not only to learn from them for other struggles and places, but to pose the question of possibilities of transnational solidarity to you as well. In the first days following the elections, there was a lot of discussion about SYRIZAs affair with ANEL, about refreshed dreams of a rising left hegemony in Europe, about the abstract question of reform and revolution. Now, we want to shine a light to the people being involved in social movements on the grass-root level - on the one hand to share impressions, on the other hand to focus on what we think the important questions are: What are the connecting points? What can we learn? And how can we support them to push forward on our common path to emancipation?

We choose interviews as the form of presentation, to give voice to activists themselves and contain the variety of positions on different issues they articulated. Our work was reduced to just edit these impressions. And, again, many thanks to all the ones participating, for their openness, confidence and hope, that inspired us.

Makis is part of different initiatives. For once he partakes in the group that opened the community garden Navarinou in Exarchia – a district of Athens – on the grounds of a former parking spot. A new building in the already densely built district was supposed to be built, so the group squatted the parking spot and started the development of what could be called a common space – open for everyone and any use.

Further information: alternation.at/navarinou-park

Apart from that Makis is part of the street art collective „Political Stencil“.

Further information: politicalstencil.com

Kostas also is part of the street art collective „Political Stencil“. Furthermore he is a member of SYRIZA Youth. The official youth organization of the party SYRIZA, which was founded in 2013.

Giannis also is part of the street art collective „Political Stencil“.

Tonia is part of the organization Solidarity For All (S4All). Specifically, she is mostly concerned with the housing question.

Further information: solidarity4all.gr/en/node/220

Achim is part of the network for political and social rights, Diktyo. Diktyo mostly works on antiracism, political prisoners and human rights issues. They run the steki metanaston in Exarchia – a social centre for and by migrants and refugees.

Fereniki is part of the Struggle Committee for the Metropolitan Park of Hellinikon.

Danea and Yavor are part of Alpha Kappa. Alpha Kappa stands for anti authoritarian movement and labels different groups e.g. in Thessaloniki and Athens. The network was founded in 2002. They work mostly on antifacism, anticapitalism and antiracism. Alpha Kappa is part of the European network Beyond Europe.

Further information: beyondeurope.net/56/antiauthoritarian-movement

Christos is part of the Metropolitan Community Clinic Hellinikon, a social clinic in the area of the former international airport of Athens. The clinic offers health care for free – from pediatrics to psychological support and a dentist.

Further information: mkiellinikou.org/en

"MAYBE SYRIZA IS THE BEGINNING OF PEOPLE GETTING THEIR LIFE BACK IN THEIR OWN HANDS, WHICH WOULD BE THE BEST FOR OUR SOCIETY."

Interview with Makis, Giannis and Kostas

Could you briefly describe the development of the movements from 2008 until nowadays?

Makis: The general frame is a subliminal antagonism between the youth, mostly students, and the authorities. I say authorities in general, because regardless of the political stance of the government, these two parts of society – authority and youth – were always in conflict. Moreover, due to historic reasons, Greeks in general have a high level of distrust in the state and lost their faith in the state's provision of services

This intense relation between youth and authority peaked in the murder of Alexis Grigoropoulos in December 2008. The following protests in the whole country were in a way the beginning of the big movements in Greece. Unfortunately, we needed a dead person to wake up and go out on the streets. So there is an increase of movement activities from 2008 to 2010. At 2010 the massive scale demonstrations against the memorandums started. Over 250.000 people were demonstrating. This acceleration was fiercely stopped by the murders of the three workers at Marfin Bank. They were trapped inside the bank, which was lit on fire by protesters. The three died in the flames. That was the foundation for the first punch of the authority against the movements. Due to this incident the movement decreased until 2011 but regained strength in the major demonstrations from June to October 2011 on Syntagma square, where once 500.000 people issued their protest against the austerity measures. The state reacted with massive force. And, unfortunately, once again the movements weren't able to stop the memorandum. The last mobilization of this scale was in February 2012, when almost 500.000 people protested against the adoption of a new memorandum. This time I felt that the dedication of the protesters was stronger than before. What broke their spirit was not the police, it was the incredible heavy rain that fell that day. In my eyes, this day at Syntagma was like a sea storm. Something shocking and impressive at the same time. Taking beatings from all sides – nature and humans. That was the last time we had big scale protests against the government and the memorandums.

As you, Giannis, mentioned before, you are nineteen years old. You grew up in this atmosphere created by this right wing government, its programmes and the resistance against it. How did you find your way into these fights and the movements? How was it to grow up in this atmosphere of hatred and antagonism?

Giannis: I was part of the movement from 2008 on, even when I was very young back then. It was a cruel and very hard time for me and my family in this era after 2008 and especially 2010. Sometimes we had no food to prepare dinner. The society in general was struggling for a better living. So it was an unspoken experience for me and my family. I went out on the streets for a better future.

After or parallel to the big demonstrations, there started many self-organized initiatives. Did those decrease from 2012 as well?

Makis: Yes. Unfortunately, most of them lost support after 2012. There are many reasons for that. One main reason is that many people, who were part of these self-organized initiatives, lost their jobs. They weren't able to support these initiatives anymore, because this requires to be strong yourself. Taking part in such an initiative means that you have already provided for your own living. When you lost your job, when you have no insurance, when you or your family are indebted, than it is very hard to support a self-organized project even when you want to. This is the main reason why many of these projects failed on the long run. But some of them still exist and work successfully. But in general, after 2011 people got desperate and couldn't see a salvation or solution through these projects.

The four years of austerity measures created a void in the social care system. So people started to organize themselves. With SYRIZA, most likely closing this void, will these solidarity initiatives be absorbed or will they keep on struggling?

Makis: Some of the structures will prevail whatever the government is or does, like for example the clinics. But even before SYRIZA was elected they established a structure called Solidarity for All, which coordinated and funded solidarity initiatives like food banks. So I think SYRIZA already had these structures and will keep on funding these structures in order to support people. Apart from that, there are also some structures from the municipalities, like social supermarkets. And there are some antiauthoritarian initiatives which try to help people. But these are of course in a smaller scale and only in some parts of the country especially in the centre of Athens.

Kostas, what is the relationship between SYRIZA and the movements? What is SYRIZA's way of solving societal problems?

Kostas: The youth of SYRIZA and SYRIZA in general is a party that came from the base of the society in contrast to the other political parties like PASOK. It always had a presence on the streets and in movements like the antifascist, workers or antiracist movements. Now, as the ruling party, it keeps on trying to create grassroot initiatives and still takes part in protests. Their plan for the future is to enable people to take part in the processes of participation and self-organization and not to stick with the mode of delegation of political power that existed the years before. Another task is to attempt to organize a general movement with the left parts of the societies from all over Europe. This could be accelerated by the vote of PODEMOS in September in Spain. The most basic task of this government now is to find a way out of the humanitarian crisis, that the memorandum and austerity measures of the past government have implemented.

Do you think that the vote for SYRIZA is an expression of hope, that the new government will solve the existential problems people have? May this be a reason for a further decrease of the movements? Or can SYRIZA be a help in radically changing society? For example by letting movements grow again through the reduction of state-repression.

Makis: It is very difficult to be certain, that SYRIZA will be a start of a revolu-

tionary process. I am trying to be realistic: maybe SYRIZA is the beginning of people getting their life back in their own hands, which would be the best for our society.

But currently, people still believe in the system of democracy and the return of a functioning capitalism. They haven't realized that these times are over. When this trust in the system is gone, then will be the time for major societal shifts and participation in self-organization. But until that day people will delegate their political power to governments. Also the participation in movements might decrease, because SYRIZA is able to relax the situation and raise the quality of peoples life.

But on the other hand, the political conditions are quite liquid, which is something people experience every 20 or 40 years. So I think neither people nor the movements will await the salvation through SYRIZA, since they don't expect a long term duration of this project anyway. Even the expected improvements in the care- or education-system, aren't enough to calm people and make them passively await miracles.

What do you expect when SYRIZA fails? What will be next?

Makis: In simple words: I think we will be really fucked up. The reason is, that the failing of SYRIZA will be seen as a failure of the left in general. And I expect SYRIZA to fail in the european negotiations, since SYRIZA is playing a game with rules written by those against it and results that are fixed. Following SYRIZA I expect a coalition of conservative and old political parties which will keep on with the politics of austerity. Only that they will be much more cruel, hard and aggressive than the ones before.



All the people working in this clinic are volunteers, spending a share of the leisure-time to provide health care service to the ones excluded from the official public health care. What is your relationship to the patients and how does it differ from usual public health services?

The relationship is quite simple. In their eyes we see ourself. These people were not always excluded from the public health sector, but were pushed out by the policies of the last years. In every given moment we could be in their position – so we treat them as such and try to create an equal and horizontal relationship.

But this project is not just about health care – its a political project as well and we are fighting here on different fronts. One front is the assistance we offer to this people and the second, for me the even more important one, is the political fight. First of all we try to show the world, why this people have to come to us. Through this, we try to empower these people to fight for their rights and this is a difficult but necessary process.

Is there a longer-lasting relationship between patient and clinic staff beyond the actual medical treatment?

We do have patients who stay with us, because they understand what we do here. But with most people the relation ends, when they got what they wanted from us. The biggest problem is the mentality of being reduced to be a “consumer” which was cultivated over decades in the usual social service institutions. We wish it would be different but it takes a long time to change. I think this is not just our burden, but its a long process of reeducation. And up to a certain point we try to do this but its very difficult.

Which changes do you expect with the new government and which role do you play in this new constellation?

We are a totally independent organization but involved in various networks for example Solidarity for All. We created a coordinating committee between community clinics and pharmacies in Athens and solidarity4all is supporting us as an umbrella organization. With the present government we don't have any direct relation, but their promises concerning public health are partly the result of the political pressure we as solidarity clinics movements put on the previous government. Many of the things they declare now to implement are policies we demanded for years. Our primary claim was always to open up the public health system to uninsured people. Syriza put this claim on their agenda, so we are here to assure this promise to be fulfilled.

Additionally, at the moment we are carrying out a small study about all the knowledge we gathered through this years which intends to show the benefits of our approach: the personal relations we build among us and with the patients, the non-bureaucratic way of working, the recycling of medicines – this is a very different way the public health system works at the moment. Once we finish this study

we will hand it over to the minister of health. If Syriza is capable of restoring at least a minimum of health security again, we will push for a mutual relationship, which means the stepwise integration of the solidarity clinics into the public health care sector on the one hand and a change of the “traditional” modus operandi to a more horizontal and democratic one on the other hand.

If Syriza is successful in reimplementing the public health system, what would happen to your institution?

We would have a big party here and the next day we'll close down. And me and all the others would get their free time back. From the first day we started operating, our main goal was to close down again one day. Of course closing down would mean that there would be no need any more for solidarity clinics.

To a certain point its a good thing that this organization existed, but on the other hand they exist to pressure the state to get the public health system working for everybody. If we get to a point, where the new government is producing positive results and the community clinics keep on working, we would start to substitute the system and we would start working backwards. This project is a temporary solution in times of crisis and we always wanted it to become useless at some point. We will accompany the rebuilding of the public health sector in a critical manner and we are even willing to support it to some point. But we will not accept to be the glue for a problem the government is responsible to solve.

And how do you relate your fight to other current political fights in Europe?

We have build small castles against the effects of austerity policies and we are fighting all together. We are just a small ant against a big elephant but if we manage to gather millions of ants relations can change. And at the moment we are in the process of bringing down the elephant.

Is Syriza part of the ants or sitting on the elephant?

We, the ants, hope that SYRIZA will help bring down the elephant and also create a new, much fairer, system for all of us. But we still need to see the first signs of this, and we will continue to watch very closely.

"OUR POLITICAL STRATEGY HAS TO BE: THE POLITICAL RIGHTS WILL BE WON ON THE STREETS."

Interview with Achim

After the elections in February 2012 the movements lost momentum, since a lot of people set their hope into the parliament. What do you see now compared to back then? Do you think the electoral victory of SYRIZA may have the same effect?

Nothing has lost momentum to say this right away. Big initiatives, especially those developed out of the movement of the squares in the summer of 2011, had a rough period. As an example, less people took part in neighborhood assemblies. At the same time, the amount of initiatives increased constantly within the last two years. And these weren't just classic political, medical or social initiatives but also a lot of cooperative projects, like café-collectives, which, as such, aren't necessarily political but a sign of people taking their lives back in their own hands. For now, this is something very important.

I am not able to predict how all of this will develop. What matters now is that the existing movements, which are not as powerful as before but diversified, need to be prepared to take the opportunity that exists through the new SYRIZA-government. They need to build on the existing foundation, become more diverse and get new people involved. Now it depends on convincing people – and that is our task as leftist, anarchist, progressive people – not to hand their political mandate over to the government, but to say: "Okay, SYRIZA is here, let's take this opportunity and our lives back in our own hands".

Is this happening? Are people motivated and get involved in the movements?

It is too early for a profound assessment. Until recently I was quite pessimistic thereof. I feared this syndrome of transmission of political tasks from the people to SYRIZA being too powerful, so nothing would start to move from below within the first time. But seeing now that quite a lot of normal people are going to the streets to support SYRIZA in the negotiations with the euro-group, I am markedly more optimistic that the movements will gain a certain drive out of this. So, SYRIZA would have, in turn, backing for its politics against the troika.

Could you explain this interaction between SYRIZA and the movement more precisely?

SYRIZA isn't a revolutionary, but a social-democratic progressive party. Social-democracy, even a progressive one, is moving to the right under the pressure of bourgeois forces. History has proven that. Only a mass-movement – progressive, communistic, radical, left howsoever – is able to stop this shift. With a strong movement in its back, SYRIZA receives the ability to counterpose the pressure of the bourgeois apparatus of state and to deny regressive reform coercions.

What is in jeopardy, when this project fails?

There are different dangers for this project. For me the first is that the europe-

ans will refuse any relaxation of the memorandum-policy and SYRIZA doesn't find re-funding for the national budget, which would lead to a cut of public services and, thus, to a dissatisfaction of the people. If, from the perspective of the people, the responsibility of failing the negotiations is with SYRIZA, a right vote would be likely, because under austerity the conditions are crappy but at least bearable for a lot of people. I do not see the danger of a fascist election or coup.

Another danger is the lack of a plan B of SYRIZA. If it would be: "everything or nothing – austerity or exit", SYRIZA wouldn't have an alternative, since an unabated continuation of austerity would be dire; likewise an exit out of the euro-zone. The consequences of an exit would be the massification of the human catastrophe. This would be considered as the fault of SYRIZA. Not only the party, but the whole left would be weakened for years.

Let's move thematically closer to your work in Diktyo: What do you, as an antiracist project, hope for considering refugee-policy by the new government?

Only in a few issues SYRIZA defined its position in advance. There were a few specific statements of parliamentarians, fewer from senior positions. The fulfilment of our demands concerning asylum-policy of the EU is, indeed, not simple in a European frame, because you would have to dissolve the contracts of Dublin II and Dublin III. With them in place, you would have to give asylum to everyone.

What we have heard is that the detention cells are cleared, which was also one of our demands. There, people were imprisoned for half a year without seeing the sun once. They got diseases, had scabies, got psychologically ill – which is obvious, when you are in a cell with 30 other persons while it is constructed for ten. So, something has changed there.

Next point: We are demanding to shut down the closed detention camps and to establish open admission-centers. What happens there? There was a meeting of the SYRIZA group for fundamental rights and the government, in which the government proclaimed the will to close the detention camps as soon as possible. But 5000-6000 people can not simply be released out on the streets. There need to be alternatives, which are not existing at the moment. There, I have some criticism. SYRIZA knew with a high probability, that they would govern and SYRIZA knew the conditions in these camps. So, they could have been prepared for this situation. In addition, they could have created spaces by, for example, expropriation of any given hotel. The missing preparation and determination is problematic for me. Indeed, they seem to be goodwilled, but they could have had done much more in this direction.

I don't know what is happening at the sea-border. The responsible minister is the one for shipping – a good man: comrade. But in how far he could directly turn to the coastguard, which is the police, to stop "push backs" – these illegal repatriation into Turkish waters –, I am not able to say. I am not informed.

Could you specify how Diktyo as an antiracist initiative or network could fill this political space, which SYRIZA creates?

Our political task is to strengthen the movements. That is decisive. Our political strategy has to be: the political rights will be won on the streets. This won't change with a SYRIZA government. This is where the pressure has to originate to create change – fundamental change. Of course, we will use the new opportunities and go directly to ministers, state secretaries, representatives, who we know. But basically, we did the same with the former government. In drastic cases you could also negotiate with them. But we hope that this will be possible in much more cases now.

This is basically social work, which is not our main attention. It is necessary within the crisis to remain trustworthy as a radical left, but it can not be our main task as a political group. Instead, it is necessary to create political foundations to change the current situation fundamentally. This means to fight institutional racism; create barriers, which prevent the state apparatus, which has always been politically right and will remain so, even with a SYRIZA government, to maintain this institutional racism. For that, of course, a legislative change is required.

Concerning aspects of racism, we have a problem with the government. Since it isn't simply a SYRIZA government, but a left-right government. ANEL has set distinct boundaries for example concerning the question of citizenship for children of migrants. Here, SYRIZA found a good way to deal with it. If there are controversial bills, the parliamentarians will decide according to their conviction not their faction. This way, SYRIZA is able to find its majority with votes from outside the coalition parties. So certain bills won't fail in advance due to the left-right-coalition. It is on us, as a movement, that such bills will be tabled.

This is one opportunity to use the political space. As said before: For an essential change of the apparatus of state and the fight against institutional racism, a lot of pressure is needed. Also laws, their implementation and their control are needed and that is a question of the movement and of political pressure.



"ALBEIT OUR CONTACTS TO THE PARTIES, OUR STRUGGLE AND OUR INITIATIVE IS NOT A STRUGGLE OF A POLITICAL PARTY"

Interview with Fereniki

Could you briefly describe your initiative, it's beginning and development?

First, let me introduce the site of Hellinikon. The whole area has a size of 620 hectar, is located in the south-eastern part of Athens, close to the city centre and along the waterfront. It consists of three parts: the former international airport of Athens, which was relocated 2001, the former American base and the waterfront of Agios Kosmas.

The struggle about this area started in the 1990s, way before the relocation of the airport, when local governments and local urban movement, supported by various political groups and environmental organizations, demanded the closure of the airport and the conversion of the site into a metropolitan park. Also local committees were struggling against the privatization of the beach by the commercial use of parts of the waterfront, which blocked the public access to the sea.

After the outburst of the crisis in 2010, our struggle was partly reoriented. In reaction to the agreement of the Troika and the former government to privatize the whole site of Hellinikon, our group „The struggle committee for the metropolitan park of Hellinikon“, formed in 2010, defined two main goals: firstly the prevention of the privatization of the site of Hellinikon and secondly the creation of a public metropolitan park, accessible for everyone.

Since then we have been active in various ways. Next to self-organized festivals, exhibitions, public discussions and sport events, we organized and took part in demonstrations against austerity and privatizations. We've also tried to develop relations with political parties, universities, local municipalities and labour unions in order to create broad coalitions in support of our struggle. In my opinion this was very important and made our struggle stronger.

Could you elaborate more on your relations to political parties in your struggle?

We are in contact with all of the political parties, except the neonazi Golden Dawn of course. We send them our documents and brochures, but also we invite all the parties to our events. We ask for meetings with their heads or deputies. With SYRIZA and the Greens we have been in closer relations. Albeit our contacts to the parties, our struggle and our initiative is not a struggle of a political party. Some of our members support the Independent Greeks or the Communist Party. Some of us are anarchists. There is a political diversity in our group and our struggle, which is something very important.

In our earlier talks you mentioned a planning process you organized resulting in a masterplan for a metropolitan park. Could you tell us more about that?

In 2007 the Greek Ministry of Environment and Planning developed a master-plan for the site of Hellinikon. This master-plan included wide real estate

development and a park in the rest site. It was the first attempt of the Greek government to privatize part of the site, despite the declarations by several ministers and prime-ministers of former governments for the creation of park. This master-plan was blocked by massive reactions of local governments, opposition parties, environmental organizations and local urban movements.

Afterwards local governments decided to develop their own master-plan as a response to the proposal of the central government. Among other things, this plan should prove that the creation of a metropolitan park is a feasible low-budget scenario. So in 2009 the local four municipalities conducted a new master-plan for Hellinikon in cooperation with a research group from National Technical University of Athens (NTUA), which I was part of at that time. Since it was a participatory planning process, we worked together with the local community and local urban movements and organized open meetings for discussing the content of the master-plan.

The final proposal differs from the government's in the sense, that we propose a metropolitan park on the whole site of Hellinikon accessible for everyone. We don't suggest large scale intervention. The master-plan proposed reuse of the building stocks and greening of the unbuilt areas. It didn't include any large scale interventions, nor construction of new buildings. We hold on to existing land uses such as sport, social, administrative and infrastructural uses. We propose the use of the former olympic facilities – Hellinikon was the second largest olympic pole during the Olympic games of 2004 – for sport uses. Finally, considering that Athens is a densely-built city by the sea that has neither green nor public spaces nor open access to the beach, our master-plan proposed keeping access to the sea open. It's as simple as that.

The privatization of the former airport was part of an austerity deal. How did your situation change with the new government, which declared to end these measures? And what would happen if they fail?

Things are complicated. It is not clear what the new government will do concerning privatizations. According to the most recent negotiations (at the end of February) with the debtors, completed privatizations will stay untouched and privatizations in process will continue according to the law. And the privatization of Hellinikon has been in process since 2012. So I have to say, that I'm very anxious about the future of Hellinikon, but also about other state-owned assets. In 2014 a contract has been signed between the Privatization Fund (HRADF) and Lamda Development, a Greek-based large real-estate company. This contract has still to be approved by the Greek parliament.

Although the Troika is pushing hard for further privatizations, I doubt that the project of Hellinikon will be an easy case for them. I think it is not just a matter of parliament approval. The process is very complex in legal terms and at the same time local urban movements will strongly oppose. So even though SYRIZA has accepted to continue with the ongoing privatizations, my hope is that they will silently leave it aside.

What makes judging the current situation even harder is the diversity of the statements by different ministries. The Minister of Reconstruction of Production, Environment and Energy declared that the privatization of Hellinikon will stop immediately. On the other hand, the new Minister of Economy, Shipping, Tourism and Infrastructure stated that the government will investigate ways to keep the privatization process going with different terms. So among the members of the government there are contradictions and different approaches.

If SYRIZA fails, the other side, which is one hundred percent in favor of privatization and wide real estate development, will regain power; this is a very scary scenario. I know that we will continue with our struggle for the metropolitan park regardless of which party rules, but I think it will be much more difficult if SYRIZA fails.

How do you, as an initiative, react to all this confusion?

It is too early to state a full set strategy. Just as the situation is confusing, we also are very confused. Well, we are not confused regarding our goals and visions about the site. This is something very clear to us. What we are confused about, is the political landscape, which developed in the last weeks in Greece.

Concerning our recent efforts: We have already met the vice-minister of environment and discussed with him. We have already sent letters with our demands to members of the new government. It is very important that several members of the new government have actively participated and supported our struggle against the privatization of Hellinikon during the last years. It means that they know that the process of privatization as it has been organized by the former government and the Privatization Fund (HRADF), is a big financial, environmental and social scandal. These people are aware of this scandal – and in my opinion this is very important. I believe, that in the end of the day, they will reject this process of privatization.

Apart from that, we will continue with actions. We plan to organize an open event in the next weeks, where we will invite representatives from the government and from all the political parties. This is a way to push the public debate in our direction.

In general, everything is very new and fluid right now in Greece and we will develop our strategy step by step according to what the government will do next. Although, the central government is a centre of political power by default, our hope is that the new government won't be an enemy, which the last government clearly was. Since it is not easy to change the mode of thinking from having an enemy to having a partner in the government; especially for people struggling their whole life against the government. But this doesn't mean that we will not oppose the decisions of the government. We have a very clear vision for the site of Hellinikon and we will struggle for that as a part of the wider struggle for defending the right to the city, no matter what the new government decides to do.



"OUR WAY OF ACTING IS GOING SIDE BY SIDE WITH OF THE SOLIDARITY MOVEMENTS AND NOT IN FRONT OF THEM."

Interview with Tonia

Solidarity for All as an umbrella organization for solidarity initiatives and being funded by Syriza, is in a way torn between social movements and party politics. What is the idea of Solidarity for All and how is it connected to Syriza on the one hand and to the social movements on the other hand?

When Solidarity for All started two years ago, our main purpose was to be helpful in any way. We did not want to produce solidarity activities from top down. Our way of acting is going side by side with of the solidarity movements and not in front of them.

At the beginning we focused on the promotion and the presenting of the initiatives. So we helped them being visible and to spread their message through newspapers, we are connected with. We created a network, in form of a website, where the initiatives could share their experiences, coordinate their work to be more effective and of course communicate their actions. Those were the main things that we were doing at that time and this was done without any involving of Syriza.

We also supported the strike of the cleaning women. Everyday we brought them food, so they could constantly keep on protesting and striking in front of the parliament; what they did for months.

Has Syriza tried to take advantage from campaigns like this?

No, they are not trying anything like this. Through the campaigns everyone is representing themselves. We are independent. Only the names of the solidarity groups are visible. No companies, no parties, no individuals.

The only way we are connected to Syriza is on the level of funding. They never tried to impose some kind of political orientation on to the solidarity movements. The funding is working via proposals. A proposal to fund a certain initiative goes to a committee, which includes members of the parliament, members of Syriza and members of Solidarity for All. This committee of 15 members has the final decision over the funding. Up to now every case we proposed was supported.

What critique is coming from the movements or the party and what are you struggling with on these two fronts?

Up to now, we are connected to about 300 initiatives. I don't think that they are skeptical concerning our work. They have a good connection to us. We are really helpful for them, since we don't work in a bureaucratic way. We listen to their problems and they don't have to wait long for an answer on their proposals. The only thing in which they could be skeptical about, is our concern with the money, since we want every Euro to be spent usefully. The initiatives are working with very few money and with our help they could multiply their results. With the money

to provide about 500 families with food for a whole year, the initiatives manage to support around 8000 families! So you see how they create a lot out of almost nothing.

There is critique mainly coming from the anarchist movements, because of our role as an umbrella organization and our financial relation to Syriza. They don't criticize any specific action, I think it's something more general.

Concerning Syriza, of course most of the people, especially the members coming from the social movements, would like to be more visible and represented in our actions. But this is not acceptable for us. We are trying to be very careful and of course people know that Syriza gives a good support to the solidarity movements and this should be enough.

The creation of this solidarity movements is form of resistance against the austerity measures and the politics. As your slogan says resist, solidarity and change. Now that the government changed, what are you resisting against?

The interesting thing is exactly because the government changed, a lot of the initiatives have replaced the last word of that slogan. Now they say resistance, solidarity and self-organization, which means, we are looking to the next step of change, which is a social step. Now we have to start communicating with the state, and sometimes also against the state.

The movements have to create an agenda about the things that should be done, so that the government can work on what can be done, always having our vision and the true needs of society in mind.

Do you think that through the influence of Syriza there will be a decrease of solidarity initiatives or a reduction of their influence and possibility to grow?

I think that, if Syriza manages to cover some of the structural needs of society, the solidarity initiatives will not be useful in this fields anymore. But still there is a lot to do and we will find other fields, which will not be covered at the moment, so we will go beyond, we will go one step forward.

The state structures have not only failed because they didn't have money, they failed because an overload of bureaucracy and corruption. The good purpose is not enough for a fundamental change. I think the relation and communication between society and state is essential for a proper change.

Are you achieving a major social change and can Syriza be helpful to this?

I cannot say if Syriza is going to achieve a broader social change. Having the power and being in government is something that can change things, as it already happened in the past. We have to keep that in mind. But what makes me optimistic is that the big percentage of Syriza members, that are now involved in the government, are people that are not coming from the historically middle and upper class, from the lobby that used to govern this country. They are coming from the society, from the movements, from the working people, and that

is something very good for the start. Something we can build on. It makes me think, that it can be different this time.

If Syriza fails in fulfilling the promises they made, might it be because of EU, might it be because of Syriza itself. What would be the consequence?

As a friend, who is member of Syriza, says 'Syriza has to go left, otherwise it will fail'. The consequence of failing due to an outside pressure will make them even stronger, because society will recognize who to blame. If they would make compromises so that the austerity measures will continue, they will not find acceptance from the people and it will be very difficult to find excuses for such a decision.

So I think it is important for Syriza to stick to their program, otherwise there is a danger of growing right-wing opposition and the possibility of them taking back power in society. In general, the failing of Syriza would be a big problem.

Through solidarity and selforganization you managed to create a social system that is working beyond a state-given structure. Could that be a working alternative, even in case of the failing of Syriza?

Sure, in a way the structures we built, would work as an alternative. But for assuring this we have to keep on working and should not believe that the new government could solve all our problems. And one thing is for sure, if Syriza purposely decides to break with their promises, the solidarity movements will take the position of resistance again as they have already done in the past.

"IF WE ARE REALLY LOOKING FOR FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE, WE HAVE TO USE THE SPACE GIVEN TO US NOW TO PRACTICE LITTLE BY LITTLE HOW TO TAKE OUR LIFE BACK INTO OUR HANDS."

Interview with Yavor and Danea from Alpha Kappa

What are your main concerns with the new Greek government as members of a collective rooted in anarchist and antifascist struggles?

Danea: For me, the first problem with SYRIZA, is their collaboration with ANEL, a right-wing party, to take power. This is not the first time in modern Greek history, our parents and grandparents have seen that, but from a left-radical perspective, this should be very alarming. But practical, there was no other party for SYRIZA to cooperate with on economic issues and this is what they were voted for. The only other leftist party in parliament is KKE - the communist party - supporting Stalin...for god sake, they really support Stalin.

Yavor: Personally, I don't think that this is a huge problem. In the first place, ANEL is a young and populist party, mostly concerned with conspiracy theories. Their discourse is dangerous, but they don't have the power and experience to enforce it too much. What is more disappointing to me is that SYRIZA abandoned their focus on participation from below.

They are a neo-keynesianist government, that maybe can win on some points, like the rise of the minimum-wage and so on. But in their first election campaign in 2012 their slogan was „SYRIZA - This is you“ and they organized common assemblies in the squares and other grass-rooted activities to reinforce peoples participation. This time, it was changed to the populist and meaningless slogan of „SYRIZA - The hope is coming!“. This is a much more Obama-like propagandistic version which mainly focuses on the emotions of people, playing with their hopes rather encouraging them to really speak up. For me, this is a symbolic moment for a change of character in SYRIZA and one reason definitely lies in the growing influence of former PASOK-members pouring into the party.

Therefore, the social movements have to react quickly now. SYRIZA will not bring a more participative political system, they didn't even promise that. They focused mainly on economics and as far as the situation in very bad, this is also the peoples primary concern.

SYRIZA was, as you said, voted to power mainly for their economic program, but the pressure from all sides is high and their actual possibilities limited. How realistic is a real change of people's situation under this government and which dangers might a failure of this program entail?

Yavor: From the very beginning this neo-keynesian approach of SYRIZA was doomed to fail. It's an idea which worked in the 60s and 70s in the US and Europe, mainly because the state had a much stronger role to play. While nowadays, even in comments of SYRIZA official, you see the market, the holy market, being their point of reference. At any moment, a powerful state will be resurrected, the capital will flee from the country in seek for "better conditions". And

the problem is, that if SYRIZA fails with its experiment here, all the other parties - like Podemos in Spain for example - will have a very big question to answer. Greece could in this case become a powerful example for all right-wing parties to point to. As long as the Greek government is very alone in an environment of neoliberal governments, at one point or another they will have to abandon their neo-keynesianist dream and adopt more and more neoliberal policies.

Additionally SYRIZA revitalized the hope in a system of representative democracy which people started to loose. If they fail now the only force in terms of representative democracy which in a way still has some credibility will be "Golden Dawn", since they never took power.

Danea: From a movement's perspective, the victory of SYRIZA first of all gives some breathing space to us. The cops don't come here and attack our spaces and Nazis are not that brave any more to take to the street. So now, its the time for us to go beyond this traditional forms of practices, like showing solidarity or any other symbolic action. We have to be active for example in building up more networks of solidarity economy and to start creating initiative, that are able can sustain communities economically. We need to establish economical relations from the bottom up in which the products stay in the use of the community which produces them. I think this is a good moment now since the level of repression decreased. And there are already many anti-authoritarian types of collectives and cooperatives in Greece, as well as for example in Spain, and we have to focus on strengthening and networking between these initiatives in order to sustain a larger amount of people.

The people were hungry and desperate and despite the hope, SYRIZA will not be able to change this situation fundamental. But on the other hand, people are also fed up with big words, of how the production or the society will look in the far future, which is not available to them. They need results here and now and if they see that their neighbors managing and surviving the crisis maybe they will follow their example. In times of crisis people are not willing to follow beautiful but empty promises - so we have to show them, how this can work now for them. Otherwise they will put their hope again in a strong nation-state, in fascism or any other of the horrors they already know.

Do you believe in social movements taking this role at the moment or do people still rely too much on SYRIZA solving their problems?

Danea: At the moment the majority of people supports the government. And of course in a way they expect them to solve their problems. But if we understand "the problem", meaning the devastated conditions people live in, as a result of a capitalist way of production, SYRIZA will not and is even not able to solve this problem. SYRIZA is not a revolutionary party. This is no pessimistic assessment, but it would be insane to believe this. A revolution can be successful if people decide to take their live into their own hands and not with a party telling them to do so. This is one point where our collective differs from others anarchist group. We don't think, we could convince people for a revolutionary course, but they

have to be convinced by their own will and we are not more specialists in this than anybody else is.

What the social movements can do now, is pushing for a wider space for people not only to breath but to have the concrete experience of auto-organization. In the production of goods for example we can try to push the idea of direct producer-consumer relations. Obviously this is nothing we can demand from governments or capital. In the international market system we live in, capital gains profits from the surplus value and they will ever insist on that. Therefore workers auto-organization will never go hand in hand with capitalism. As social movements we have to push for this different understanding of labor as a social relation and not just as one part of the production process besides resources, machines and so on. The products belong first of all to the people producing it and not to the capital.

And can SYRIZA be supportive in opening up these spaces?

Yavor: I think that this is one of the things SYRIZA could manage in one way or the other. They can in fact do a lot to support the creation of alternative ways of production, the social economy as they call it. They are giving more space to the movements by decreasing the repression and this is the time for the movements to reorganize itself.

As always, and this does not change with the new government, the social movements have to push from below. I don't believe in a revolutionary change in the sense of a sudden fundamental change and I don't think that this is something we even want to see. If there would be a revolution tomorrow the day after tomorrow would be horrible, as long as people are socialized in a capitalist world of social cannibalism. There is a need for people to learn that the basic step to a better living is participation and this is a long and slow process. The problem is that SYRIZA's victory for many people seems like a victory of representative democracy, but in fact - in term of participation from below - nothing has changed. If we are really looking for fundamental change, we have to use the space given to us now to practice little by little how to take our life back into our hands. You don't learn it simply by reading books - you need to practice and experience it.



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all interviews from february 2015 in athens

published in march 2015

1. edition: 500 german, 500 english

layout: derausmvierten

cover design: Ares Serhildan

supported by:



