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Anarchists' Self-organized Social Movement in Athens, during the Financial/ Social Crisis

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Declaration

I, Trifon Serafimidis, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree. Signature.....

Date.....

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Oslo 10 of May 2015
Trifon Serafimidis



Abstract

This study explains the role of Anarchism in the Athens during the Financial and Social Crisis. Through the definition of Direct Action as anarchism amalgams of tactics and strategies, the research tries to underline the alternatives of anarchism in the society. I will try drawing a picture of the above, through the description of Lela K. 37 squat, as a case study. It's one of the oldest housing squats in Greece, and its role throughout the last 30 years of anarchists' movement, is crucial. The city center of Athens is the physical and political center of Greece. As long as anarchism doesn't belong to any kind of State or Nation, the squat is part of a global anarchists' movement. The thesis underlines the challenges of anarchists' movement face before and during the crisis, from the State but also from the rising of the Far-Right ideologies.

Key words: Anarchism, self-organized movement, Direct Action, Spontaneity, Squatting, Self-organization

1. Introduction

[...]ἐγὼ δὲ Καδμείων γε προστάταις λέγω·
ἦν μή τις ἄλλος τόνδε συνθάπτειν θέλη,
ἐγὼ σφε θάψω κἀνὰ κίνδυνον βαλῶ
θάψασ' ἀδελφὸν τὸν ἐμόν, οὐδ' αἰσχύνομαι
ἔχουσ' ἄπιστον τήνδ' ἀναρχίαν πόλει.¹

The topic of this thesis is about the self-organized (anarchist's) entity and its



Pic1. Lela K.37 anarchists' squat building.

alternative culture during the 'Financial Crisis'. More specifically, it will discuss the political and social of the squat during this period and in parallel, it will underline the social crisis that's following the financial.

In the analysis, I will try to draw a holistic picture of the anarchists' political action in local level. More specifically,

this thesis will introduce the reader to the Direct Action Movement theory in Greece, viewed from the perspective of the Anarchists in Athens. Through the research questions, I will try to guide the reader through different aspects and in parallel, I will draw a general picture of

¹*'Even if nobody else wanted to attend the funeral, I myself will bury him and I'd take the risk that it will mean the burial of my brother. Not ashamed to act against defying the will of those in power'* Aeschylus-Seven Against Thebes (467 BC)

the society's reactions to anarchism. In the end, we will be able to have a general picture of the social 'warfare' in currently taking place in Athens.

1.1 Objective and research questions

The main objective of this research is the Lela K. squat and its role in the anarchists' movements during the financial crisis. The political material of those actions is identified as 'Direct Action' and 'Do-It-Yourself' sub-cultures of Anarchism.

The first research object is a house-squat, which was established by University students' immediate need of housing. Secondly, but not less important, the squat gathered also to protect and develop a practice of alternative way of living. In general, this way of living, reveals the ontology of the anarchists' culture against the current social-urban scene and its determined social contract identity (Birrell, R. 1997).

-Research Questions:

- What is Self-organizing according to anarchists' movement and how is it substantiated?
- What are the social conditions that lead to Anarchists' proposal of political struggle and activism?
- What does the current self-organizing/anarchists movements in Athens create of alternatives to State Authorities/institutions?

2. Methodology

2.1 Choice of Method

The decision 'Field observation research method' was my decision of this paper. The kind of the thesis' objective, an anarchists' squat with its semi-legal nature, but also, the participation of me in this political environment, were difficult challenges. As a student of Human Sciences, the 'Field Observation' was a great weapon that allowed me to be in the objective, following the squatters in their everyday life, and participate with them on the

decisions-making processes and, most important, due to anarchists' action as part Anarchism movement in Athens (Graeber, 2009)

The 'Field observation' consists in observing a behavior (or a phenomenon) within the environment in which it manifests itself. Alongside, the 'Field Observations' are indicated to investigate information that may not be assessed as significant by the respondent and therefore not listed in the process of discussion. (Kawulich, 2005). The flexibility of the researcher, in an unsustainable social environment such as a squat, is a very important weapon in researcher's hands. It allowed me, to gather information and data from different perspectives and through different circumstances. This is something visible during the data collection, but also during the examination of the causes of the research subject (O'Toole, K. 2012).

Some basic advantages of this method are:

- I've gain a better understanding of the group's culture and action's background.
- The daily participation in the squat, allowed me to deepen my knowledge about the political and activist history of the squat and the anarchism in Athens.
- The fieldwork touches the 'human face' of a political action, since it is a meeting point of many social and human sciences.
- Each research field was unique (the squat-building, the demonstrations, the actions)

However, a number of difficulties, challenges and obstacles are always part of a sociological research. I've face some of those limitations and problems during the fieldwork that are related with the research object but also with the research methodology:

- During the fieldwork, only small social groups or communities can be studied.
- Much depends in the ability of researcher to win the trust of the group's participation to the research.
- The possibility of the researcher is limited when important people of the social group under study, are not willing to cooperate.
- The emotional and psychological state of the participants affects the research in maximum level.

2.2 Research Design

This research is based on qualitative method. The approach was planned to be with semi-structured interviews. This gathered a flexibility of mine as the researcher. This flexibility was useful in this political environment with its unique characteristics such as: illegality and anonymity. By approaching the political environment of anarchism, someone has to change his plans again and again, as long as the researcher is moving towards a moving ground of illegality and suppression. In this case, the Lela K. squat was in turbulence season and the causes were the far-right rising in Athens, and the ‘militarization’ of the society due to ‘Sock Doctrine’ of austerity and offensive neo-liberal policies.

In my personal case, with my insubordinate identity for the State, it was illegal for me to be in Greece for this research.² From the other side, my goal was to gather a more relaxing way of interviewing in the squat. The culture of anarchism doesn’t response nicely to a disciplined and rigid process. I knew that a more flexible way of interviewing will let the participant to control as much as possible the interaction between an academic research process and interviewer. This helped later to collect more personal views and answers from the squatters. It is important to underline that a copy of the proposal and questionnaire is in squat’s archives. The same will happen to the thesis, after the presentation.

2.3 Research Participants

The participants are comrades who participate in squat. In parallel, some of the participants in the research were people from the neighborhoods around the entities. Their anonymity was a basic element for their participation. The interviews or the conversations happened during meetings and after a positive agreement between the comrades. For the squat, interviews include the outcome of the conversations and some semi-structured interviews with the squatters and some residents from the neighborhood.

² My choice not to serve the Greek military, as long as it is compulsory for the Greek citizens, resulted in concrete judicial punishments, such as: 1. Seven years of refusing entry to the country, 2. In case of entering the country, there will be trial and punishment, 3. Fine of 6.000 euro, plus 50 euro for each month that the fine remains unpaid. Although, I’ve complete my research without any further problem, avoiding the contact with the police or other authorities



Anarchists' meeting and debate in a squat. Source: athens.indymedia.center

In this point, I have to underline that my research plan was to approach some State official and the Police. Later, I decided not to include them in the research. Some of the reasons are:

- The State, as an institution is totally against anything that has to do with 'illegal'

squatting.

- It is difficult to approach State officials for this reasons, and it is difficult to do interviews, without avoiding bureaucracy and a suspicious attitude from them.
- Police, as a repressive force, has nothing to do with those ideas and philosophy. Its culture is underlined through repressive orders, far-right behavior and racist beliefs.

On the other hand, my personal profile and identity was not protecting me from further trials and legal procedures during my stay in Athens. The objectivity of the research was something difficult from the beginning. The nature of the topic isn't something easy to research and write about, if the State and its institution know about it.

2.3.1 Preparation and selection of participants, and the implementation of the interviews

This part of the research was the easiest one. I've sent the proposal and a small email presenting the thesis' main topics. Their responses were positive, with some recommendations. Anonymity was one of the most significant terms. Another recommendations were 'open processes'³ decided by the squatters. And the third was the free access to my work by them.

The participants of the research are people who participate in the squat meetings. They are the same people who run it and participate in their everyday activities.

³ Open process': Almost all members of the squat were present during the interviews or engaged in conversations

3. Theoretical framework and Context

3.1 Direct Action

In this chapter, we will try to highlight the term ‘Direct Action’. The fact is that we meet the definition ‘Direct Action’ in random aspects of public discourse, especially when referring to the political process that escapes ‘westernized’ -parliamentary represented democracy.

Below, we will present some of the major theoretically interpretive interventions of various radical political currents, and more specifically of the anarchist movements. The reference to anarchism, as the political movement that uses ‘Direct Action’ as a method of intervention and action, it’s not randomly chosen. (Carter, A. 1973). As we will see below, the ‘Direct Action’ is the par excellence methods used by anarchism, as the ideal method to achieve goals and with absolute consistence onto anarchism political philosophy (Suriano, J., 2010).

A general definition of the political term ‘Direct Action’ is given by the website Libcom.org. According to Libcom.org editorial ‘Direct action is: “...*when people take action to further their goals, without the interference of a third party*” is a rejection of the idea that we are powerless to change our conditions. Improvements to our lives are not handed down from above⁴

One of the first definition of ‘Direct Action’ as an individual political entity, was given in 1890 by *Emile Pouget*, the later vice-secretary of French Union GCL (General Confederation of Labor). Pouget’s was referred to as anarcho-communist during his early activist life, and he participated in the First International⁵. In 1896, he wrote the pamphlet ‘Direct Action’, demonstrating for the first time the political term ‘Direct Action’, as the path

⁴ “The site contains [news](#) and analysis of workers' struggles, [discussions](#) and a constantly growing [archive](#) of over 16,000 articles contributed by our 10,000+ users ranging from [history](#) and [biographies](#) to theoretical texts, complete books and pamphlets. We have [incorporated several other online archives](#) over the years, and in addition have hundreds of exclusive texts written or scanned by or for us. We are completely independent of all trade unions and political parties; the site is funded entirely by subs from our [volunteer administrators](#) and [donations from users](#).”

⁵ “Communist International, First (COMINTERN). Established in 1864, as the International Workingman’s Association by exiles from various countries (including Karl Marx, who expelled from his native Germany) for the purpose of advancing the cause of the workers. After the defeat of the Paris Commune in 1871, the International was dissolved” (Simkin, J. 1997)

of activism of the working class towards its political goals. The pamphlet reads as follows: *'Direct Action is the symbol of revolutionary unionism in action. This formula is representative of the twofold battle against exploitation and oppression. It proclaims with inherent clarity, the direction and orientation of the working class's endeavors in its relentless attack upon capitalism.'* (Pouget, 2009 p.2).

As indicated by Emile Pouget's statements, 'Direct Action' as a concept is relatively simple. It emphasizes the process by which the working class (the proletarians) should fight in the ongoing battle against its class opponent. At the same time, it emphasizes that the proletarians have nothing to expect from external factors, either individuals or authoritative entities. In particular, working class should produce and develop its own ways and forms of action.

During the decade of 1900s, the working class struggle against capitalism, revealed more and more political philosophers whose writings offered an even deeper analysis of 'Direct Action'. One of the most important political philosophers of Anarcho-syndicalism was *Rudolf Rucker*. As one of the influential Anarcho-syndicalist theorist, Rucker, in 1938 defined *Direct Action* as: *'... (Direct Action is) every method of immediate warfare by the workers (or other sections of society) against their economic and political oppressions.'* (Rucker, 2004 p.44). Rudolf Rucker's definition encapsulated several trends, structures and ways of 'Direct Action' that Anarchists use during their political process. Some of those, according to Rucker, are: *the strike, in all its gradations, from the simple wage struggle to the general strike, the boycott - sabotage in all its countless forms (occupations and sit-down strikes), anti-militarist propaganda; and in particularly critical cases, armed resistance of the people for the protection of life and liberty'* (Rucker, 2004 p.44)

As indicated here, the 'Direct Action' Movement, means that instead of getting some else to act for you (e.g. politicians), you act for and by yourself. The essential feature is an organized protest by ordinary people to make a change by their own efforts. Another anarchist activist, in 1912, Voltairine De Cleyr introduced a different approach to defining the 'Direct Action' movement. According to her: *'Every person who ever thought he had a right to assert [...] or jointly with others that share his convictions, was a direct actionist'* (De Cleyr, 1912).

As we saw above, and as we shall see subsequently, anarchist's activists in the early 20th century are expressing constantly the need for policy action without the use of intermediaries. As Castoriadis⁶ formalized it: 'No one can speak and act on behalf of the working class than the working class itself'. De Cleyr's work over the interpretation of 'Direct Action', offered some more examples and definition. One of the them was this: *'Every person who ever had a plan to do anything and went and did it, or who laid his plan before others, and won their co-operation to do it with him, without going to external authorities to please do the thing for them, was a direct action!'*. (De Cleyr, 1912).

'Direct Action' has been visible during all of humanity, as the underground and anonymous role in human actors. In political philosophy, we have a holistic and spherical definition of this autonomous human factor. Cornelious Castoriadis defined the fact of independency in every human object, not only to criticize Marx and Marxism, but also to construct an alternative to Freud into psychoanalytical factors that play their role for a revolutionary object.. (IEP, Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2015)

Another voice comes from anarcho-feminist activist, Martha Ackelsberg. She gives us a definition based on her view of the struggle of women in the Spanish Revolution: *"...if such actions are to have the desired empowerment effect, they must be largely self-generated, rather than being devised and directed from above"* (Ackelsberg, 1991 p.33) To sum up these perspectives, 'Direct action' could be defined as any form of activity through which people decide and organize themselves, and which is based on their own collective strength and does not involve getting intermediates to act for them.⁷

3.2 Theory and Practice of Direct Action

Direct Action is one of the most significant chapters of the libertarian/anarchism theory. However, its evolution, from a theoretical framework to a political method of

⁶ "Cornelius Castoriadis was an important intellectual figure in France for many decades, beginning in the mid-1940s. Trained in philosophy, Castoriadis also worked as a practicing economist and psychologist while authoring over twenty major works and numerous articles that span many of the traditional philosophical subjects, including politics, economics, psychology, anthropology, and ontology." (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy) [Available at: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/castoria/>. Accessed at: 29/03/2015]

⁷ However, there were plenty of different approaches and definitions for 'Direct Action' nature. Although, one of the most important was the one that Emma Goldman had expressed in the early 20th century. Goldman, as one of the most influential and important anarchist activist, underline with her actions and writing the importance of direct action as a crucial element of anarchism.

uprising, took years. Some of the problems were the role of upper classes in the lines of the revolutionaries. The Italian *Luigi Fabri* noted the development of a bourgeois power within the bosom of the anarchist movement, which gave more importance to the aesthetic value of the resistance. It characterized it as a *romantic gesture of defiance*. Thus, the rebellious motivation adopted as a conception of *action for action*. That, according to Fabri, was leading the political sphere of Direct Action to a defeat in the social field.

This finding is extremely important to understand the modern anarchist movements. First, because it eliminates the dominant obsession that direct action is mainly a massive and dynamic confrontation of practices against the riot police. It enlightens the crucial ideological goal of Anarchism that Direct Action is not only a counter-violence process, but also a more comprehensive insurrectionary procedure. In other words, the popular counter-violence profile of anarchists is the main body of the Action. Mainly and most important must be the programmatic objective of a revolutionary and anti-systemic measures to *self-institutionalize* the collective imaginary of society, at all levels. It is important to underline, that the counter-violence is still one of the most significant elements of Direct Action, especially in the political field of police-occupied ‘democracies’.

This important view has been challenged effectively in the past, by a traditional advocate of Direct Action, the French anarcho-syndicalist, Emile Pouget. In his writings in the early 20th century, observed: ‘*Some people, who have a lot of superficial understanding of things, exhaust the content of Direct Action in an orgy of broken windows. If you settle for such a definition it would mean that he adopts a much narrower way how to express the power of the proletariat*’. However, the anarcho-syndicalist interpretation of Direct Action is not able to meet the needs of the subordinate social groups in the streets of social struggle, as reflected in the period of neoliberal modernity we live.

Direct Action, as a theoretical ‘doctrine’ encompasses the emphasis of self-reflective action of the social subject (SEP- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2010). As a result of this event is to determine the form and content of Direct Action. Two different directions of the definition dominate the Anarchists' meeting during those years. It was the object of contention among anarcho-syndicalist and anarcho-communists'.

For the syndicalist', it was the meaning of the great proletarian general strike that 'would kneel capitalism'. In the other hand, it was the anarcho-communists who advocates of a generalized and violent uprising of the masses 'will sweep everything in its path'. We must overcome those ideological separations and draw the Direct Action framework in today's everyday life. Our case studies are some of those examples, of self-institutionalization of the revolutionary processes of a part of society. I end up to those cases for some reasons. I've tried to give a brief description of Anarchism in the Greek soil.

Both cases shares significant similarities such as the 'Direct Action' political culture, the total differentiation of the State's institutions, the revolutionary attitude and behavior. Although, there are some significant differences as well. They establish under different circumstances and in different political era. (Liu, Z. 1997). They faced different challenges during their first years. The main reasons behind mu thoughts to choose them, where those: Both together, could describe a holistic draw of anarchism in different years and different circumstances. The case of Lela K. was and still is one of the most important attempts of anarchism in Athenian space and in Greek soil. If someone wants to learn the history of anarchism in Greece, the last 30 years, Lela K. archives are the greatest way. It shows the advantage of 'Direct Action' in the everyday life. It underlines the necessity of self-organized culture in the political sphere. (Hamilton, G. 1984).

There's no more ideal example of practices of Direct Action, than in Spanish Revolution in 1936. History has shown, that in Spain, appeared on of the greatest libertarian revolutions of our time. Apart of the general framework of Spanish Revolution, one of the first elements in this significant historical period, was the existence of both 'branches' of anarchism (-communism, - syndicalism) as we analyses in the previous paragraph. For example, the declaration of a general strike was the immediate reply of CNT⁸(Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo- National Confederation of Labour) to the violent assumption of the fascist coup. The other anarchist's collectivity, FAI⁹ (Federacion Anarquista Iberica- Iberian Anarchist Federation) was closer to an armed resistance (among other actions) against the Franco's troops.¹⁰

⁸ C.N.T.- A Spanish confederation of anarcho-syndicalist labour unions.

⁹ F.A.I.- A Spanish organization of anarchists

¹⁰ The history of Spanish Revolution can give a great knowledge on every anarchist's movements afterwards.

Anarchist's attempts and political culture is referred to Spanish Revolution in every case, such as the reaction of the

3.3 Theory of spontaneity

The necessary condition for social revolution was always the existence of a mass movement with a long presence in all aspects of social life. Well organized, persistent and libertarian structures in coordination with clear and unambiguous understanding of the revolutionary institutionalization, are the starting point. The main goal remains the replacement of heteronomous¹¹ institutions of capitalism, with principles and constitutions with libertarian orientations.

The post-modernism followers of Direct Action have identified that spontaneity is the seed that will produce its own forms of self-organization and the collective self-defense. (Graeber, D. 2009). We could characterize it as a philosophical evolution based on the ideas of Spanish Revolution and its 'linear' process of anarcho-syndicalism or anarcho-communism (Stabb, M. 1994). Alternatively, we can describe it as combinations of advantages of both. It is very significant, to underline this evolution, as long as the main opposition is following its own processes of evolution.

Capitalism followed his own development process in terms of exploitation and oppression. The 'spontaneous' element of self-institutionalization has two forms of existence:

1. An innate and collective impulse that manifest unexpectedly after smoldering for years.
2. The non-premeditated manner and that which is absolutely impossible to reach via cognition processes.

Based on these two elements, it is finally possible for a movement and its political action, to perform the radical and social transformation. A deeper explanation of the role of 'spontaneous' in the social struggles, is useful. Spontaneity should not be confused with the illogical and unprocessed behavioral and emotional activity. Spontaneity is a behavior.

Syndicates, their roles, their defenses against Franco and their political program for an anarchist society. It can be said that Spanish Revolution and the role of Anarchism there, is the most important chapter in history of anarchism, in the 20th century.

¹¹ 'Heteronomous societies' is the opposite of the autonomous societies. According to Castoriadis, heteronomous societies are those who are institutionalized by metaphysical laws, such religion, un-democratic rules, hegemony and inherited culture without the ability of criticize them, destroy them and re-institutionalize their own societies through the process of the autonomous self-institutionalization.

3.4 The seeds of modern Anarchism's 'Direct Action' movements.

By talking about 'Direct action' and the Anarchists' movement, we have to go a step behind and analyze some preliminary issues. Some of those have to do with whether the new forms of activism that tries to challenge the neoliberal hegemony, it's better to be analyzed as anti-globalization movements only. Many activists and political philosophers have argued that this might lead to a trap of unnecessary analysis (N. Klein 2001, Buchanan 2002, Milstein 2002). The questions are: How will refer to those emerging and declining struggles? How we will discuss them, without misrepresent, their profess?

Such questions cannot be answered with simplicity and superficiality. However, some temporary assumptions are possible. Although, 'globalization' includes all the important aspects of capitalism, colonialism and the democratic accountability, it is also clear that these aspects do not cover the whole spectrum of resistance to the new world order. I think that they representing some issues inside a much more complex field which is the contemporary radical activism. By 'modern', I mean the activism of the late '80s to the early 2000s, without avoiding the roots of the social movements of the late '60s and '70s. The feminist movement, the movement for the civil rights, the anti-colonial struggles, the movements for the rights of gays and lesbians are some of those movements. In parallel, I'm referring to classical anarchism movements and secondary to the most radical Marxists' movements.

As radical activism, I mean the conscious transformation attempts, the blocking, the destruction and the reconstruction of the alternative structures, procedures, practices and identities. I focus primarily, on those movements who seek radical changes, who want to make visible not only the content of the existing modes of domination and exploitation, but also the forms that allow the birth of it. The contemporary radical activism, pushing beyond the capabilities and the limits of the liberal reform, while it's not completely devalues the efforts to change the current status-quo. We can never be sure about the value of a strategy or a tactics without referring the particular social, historical and political contexts.

The fundamental questions remains unresolved, that there is not only the enemy that anarchism has to fight against. There is a diverse group of struggles, which they much be

seen under the prism of their specification. On the other hand, the reality of globalized capital and the intensification of controlled societies mean that all these struggles take place in an increasingly common framework. I think I can frame all the above in the neoliberal project as a common background or context in which they are all happening. The neoliberal project involves the ongoing globalization of the capital, as well as the intensification of the societies' control. In parallel, this project is based and performs in changes of the States' organization by creating regional agreements such as TTIP (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership) or by assembling super-states such as the EU (European Union). I assumed that we cannot understand the State separately from capitalist exploitation and the controlled society.

The State sovereignty and the capitalist exploitation would be impossible, if the neoliberal societies weren't divided according to multiple lines of economic inequality or racist treatment of race, sexuality, abilities, age, countries of origin as well as the rule against the environment. When I'm referring to the neoliberal plan (project), I try to describe a complex network of institutions and practices that their result is the perpetuation and proliferation of various forms of oppression (Hooks 1984, Collins 1991). The result in the end is, that the populations are divided to be ruled, while in the everyday life, the capitalism accumulations, the rational and bureaucratic control, is immersed ever deeper (Foucault, 1991).

I think I have to use now some historical examples to explain the above paragraphs. The liberal capitalism in western developed countries, during the mid of 20th century, was based on a hegemonic relationship with the working class. We can identify that as the Keynesian welfare state. It was allowed the organization and struggle of the trade unions to improve the situation of the majority of workers, with an exchange of a guarantee to the capital, that strikes will be a ritual and strictly controlled. The State acted as intermediary factor between those two opponents, by taking money from the businesses by taxes and providing social services to the workers and businesses, as well. This relatively stable system was in place until the '70s, when it started set aside from the neoliberal model. Thus, capitalism sought to increase its profits by unlocking from the shackles of the State regulations and the working class resistance.

Privatization, deregulation, the cynical ‘right to work’ in parallel with the weakening of the labor unions, and the fanatical cult of ‘free market’ were very basic procedures. The governments of the global South, were pressured to ‘structural adjustment programs’, which they were, as in the global North, applied with equal vigor, but was more intensive and with much more devastating effect. Along with the new national and international institutions appeared a new common sense: ‘‘ those who are oppressed, they deserve it’’; ‘‘ all have to work longer’’; ‘‘ the less State intervention in the economy (excluding the business who bankrupted or the ensuring of free facilities and infrastructure and the right of the environmental destruction) the best’’.

Finally, the capitalist oppression not only exists, but is the result of conscious planning on the part of world economic and political elite. The only point that worth to study is this: ‘‘ How can we fight it, better?’’ One answer would be to try to establish a different hegemony, which will change the momentum in favor of the oppressed. This could mean a defense of the welfare State in the global North and the creation of it in the global South. However, with the above argument we still are in the logic of neoliberalism. It is the acceptance of hegemony. Marxist revolutionaries adopted this logic of hegemony, in their attempt to seize power, hoping to reverse the relationship of dominant-dominated. The liberal and post-Marxist reformists share the same logic as above. The main difference is that, instead of seeking the seizure of the state power, they trying to influence the social function for plural processes, either by cooperation or conflict (Laclau-Mouffe 1985, Kymlicka 1995).

Social centers, squats, Indymedia Center or the Black Block are some of the most significant movements with bidirectional connectivity with anarchism. All these groups and movements, their strategies and their tactics are helping us to understand the gradual replacement of power and hegemonic institutions and structure of neoliberalism. David Graeber has pointed that, a lot of today’s activists are rejecting ‘‘ a policy that calls in governments to change their behavior, but replace it with a policy that exerts physical intervention of the government, and in parallel, it expects another, completely different alternative, to replace the State’’ . (Graeber, 2002). The radicalization of the anarchist movement and ‘Direct Action’ is that they are less concerned with affecting the content of

the current forms of domination and exploitation and more by creating alternatives against those same forms. Some of the tactics of the anarchist movement and the squats are those: The exodus of the existing institutions; the overthrow of existing institutions through art; the obstruction of existing institutions through destruction of property; by blocking every capitalist existence; to display alternatives against the existing institutions.

A particularly interesting aspect of anarchists' movements is that many of the most effective tactics are not vested, that tend to spread like a virus and no one can claim ownership or copyright.

4. An introduction to the Athenian political environment- Historical framework of establishment and maturation of the Lela K.37 squat.

In the decade of '80, the Greek political environment was in significant changes. The first social-democratic government after the dictatorship, was elected in the early '80s. During the decade, the radical movement in Athens was growing, in order to defend against the 'socialist' government and the entrance of Greece in European Union. New policies to protect the capital, new methods of social security and modern ways of social control were introduced in the political scene of Greece.

Anarchism responds rapidly, by growing its participation to the streets, claiming different social structure, abolishment of the suppressive policies and self-organization political structures. Those were some of the causes during this period. The first housing squat started in this decade, in parallel with the magnification of the punk-scene and the DIY culture. Although, the occasion that drove some brave anarchists' to establish the Lela K., was the housing problem viewed by the university students of those years.

The housing problem, in the Athenian metropolis was and still is one of the most important and significant political, social, economic and environmental issues. Back in 1987, this problem, partially answered by those students. I mean that, the alternative of housing squatting didn't solve the whole problem. However, I believe, that the symbolism of such a move was crucial. Some of the reasons are those:

- The ‘socialist’ government was nothing different from the right/far-right governments of the previous years.
- The fall of the Soviet Union, was near and the post-Cold war, wasn’t far away.
- The dictatorship years were only 15 years before, and a lot of squatters’ families were affected by the coup. (Family member imprisoned, tortured etc.)

Those political events played crucial role for the awaking of the radicalization of the Greek youth, during the decade of ‘80s. It was that very decade, which the Anarchists’ movement grows up and started playing its role in political scene of Greek cities. It wasn’t any more an underground movement, with some hardcore followers. It started to be present in every important political act.

The decade of ‘90s, in the other hand, underline the maturation of anarchists’ movement. Significant radical movements took part in the political scene. The bourgeoisie realize that anarchism is something that growing up. To my opinion, in 1995, the Polytechnic school uprising and the street battles with the police forces accompanied by far-right members, was the most important political object of this decade.

As such, the next decade, found anarchism in Greece, in greater grown. The number of people, who identified themselves, was more than 50.000. This gave the opportunity to the movement, to establish more entities to gather its culture and in parallel their voice was getting louder, for an alternative way of thinking and living. December 2008, was to my opinion the most important circumstance of anarchists’ movement in Greece. It underlined, not only the experiences of anarchists’ movements from the previous decade, but also introduced the participants and the society to the new, not only financial but most significant, to the social crisis yet to come. It was at that month, that the whole movement realizes its power, re-establish old entities and create new alternatives and ways to defend against the social crisis.

Neo-liberalism wasn’t something new for the radical movements globally, with the experiences of South America such Zapatistas movements. The Seattle 1999 and the anti-globalization movement gave to anarchism new ideological weapons and new tactics in order to defend against the neo-liberal policies’ volcano.

4.1 The origins of the housing problem

During the first post-war years, Greece's development was based on a development model, identified by the accumulation of almost all industrial and economical activities in Athens. As such, an explosive internal migration, from the agricultural provinces to the metropolis of Athens, Thessaloniki etc. was huge. During the decades of '50s and '60s among 1.000.000 of population moved to Athens and other main cities. The emigrants, was the cheap labor of capitalist development in Greece, from the Post Civil War years to Post-Dictatorship period. As the emigration was following increasing trends, the housing problem became the number one challenge of this population. (Kalama V. 2013; Leontidou L. 1990).

A fast and inexpensive solution by the Capital was the construction of arbitrary houses, around the city-center. Areas of woodland, beaches and other fragile environmental compartments became residential areas within a few months. There weren't the necessary control and projects of the protection of the environments and its future inhabitants. Those problems are still affecting Athens and its population during the rainy periods or the summer season. In parallel, the infrastructure is still ineffective and serious problems and complications are present in the everyday life.

As economical surplus was the only criterion, a system created by landowners, contractors, technicians etc., who exploited the immediate need of sheltering among the new citizens, build each piece of land, transforming Athens into a vast concrete jungle. Intensive construction of 'cages' of cement, that gave a 'solution' to the constant demand of residing, was found at a turning point from the mid-'70s and began to decline only after the exhausting exploitation of every region around the city center.(Harvey D. 2001).

Simultaneously, with the recovery of the building trade and the increase of the prices of new houses, the natural population growth was creating a new pressure to the housing problem of Athens. The two main reasons were the increasing of the university students population and the significant (although reduced number) internal migration. For the overwhelming majority of tenants, the housing as basic human right altered to expensive commodity.

Here, it is needed to point out the significant housing problems of the university students in Athens. By the law, the University has to provide free housing and meal, to every

student. However, the most of the university institutions does not provide such a service to their students. In the cases, that new buildings are constructed for the student, were either not enough for the number of the students, or the services were poor. A small progress of this problem, were given after the Olympics 2004, were the rooms and the buildings used by the athletes or the press, was given in the Ministry of Education to accommodate students. Although, the problem is still existing.(Leontidou L. 1990).

So there is the absurd phenomenon, of thousand people to please or to pay exorbitant amounts to stay in wretched underground 'dungeons'. In parallel, the problem began to appear in the rest of country, outside Athens. Thousands of workers and pensioners are forced to spend the bulk of their salary or pension in rent. Simultaneously, they had to cope with the rising of the prices, especially in the late 70s and early 80s. The youth, without the possibility of providing shelter and because of its high unemployment is driven to the overall dependence on family.

The students and especially those from outside Athens were subject to unacceptable exploitation and blackmail as long they didn't had any alternative way. In many cases, students interrupted their studies forever, because they couldn't afford the cost of living in the capital. The housing crisis was permanent as a problem for an increasing number of the population and was developed as an acute social issue. Rents became dearer, thousands of people stacked in bad or miserable houses with unacceptably huge prizes, and a huge stress for the everyday survival. The economically weaker suddenly find themselves in the street, the threat of eviction worked out as a blackmail weapon in the hands of the owners. In parallel, the distrust of youth, students, underemployed and extended families was creating dimensions of racist attitudes. (Kalama V. 2013)

The fact is that a multitude of social division between people who suffer the effects of the housing crisis, prevent massive and collective self-defense. This alienation has made people vulnerable to extortion and exploitation of the trade of housing. How realistic was it to deposit the need for a solution to the bureaucracy of the State? It is known that every time the chronic housing problem, as any other social problem gets large headlines in the newspapers, is attempted by governments to rough handling of the problem, to give the impression of solution. For all those who are directly affected by the problem of housing, it

becomes increasingly clear in recent years that the public policies, it's one more parameter of a holistic austerity policy.

This very policy was widens the exploitation, speculation and deprivation at the expense of the weaker social population. In 15.07.1985, the Minister of Public Constructions stated that, only in Athens municipality, 200.000 empty houses existed. Half of them are fortunes of Banks, governmental organizations and Greek Church Authorities. Many of old houses, were allowed to ravage. In this way, it created a artificial shortage of housing that contributed to intensification of competitive relations owner-tenants, resulting the increasing of rents. It is obvious that the use of this building stock of 200,000 empty o houses, would be solve the problem for a large number of homeless people, students, youth, and workers.

The squatters in Athens and Thessaloniki by homeless students and unemployed youth have shown that an immediate solution could be provided. By occupying the empty houses, squatters claimed the right to housing. In parallel, they refused the speculation of house traders, and they manage their own needs, outside the bureaucratic political system.

4.2 Maturation- First Actions ('90s)- Social and Political Environment

The 90s were different. The collapse of Soviet Union and its allies, which until then were standing as references to the Left-wing politicians, started a new critic for the political world. Direct democracy, self-organization, the Federation, the local actions and ecumenical vision, the councils, the recallable representatives began playing the role of signified again. At the time, an important role played by Ecologists organizations, although there were unable to go further because their structures were only rhetoric and in a short time, exceeded. 'Loans' of ideas from the anarchist background, opening of squats, re-criticism of the State as an institution, and cooperation with the anarchist movement was the next stage, in order to come more easily to the social field.

The anarchists were unready to face the holistic of this cosmogony. Although, the anarchists, anti-authoritarian, libertarian as a political field, was the unique social pole of ideas and practices that couldn't be affected or touched by the bureaucratic political system. It was a period of redefinition, not only of anarchism but for every political ideology. Although, it was the culture of anarchism, that allowed the anti-authoritarians to provide a concrete and massive movement against the new world. A culture of the end of the

ideologies was in populist speeches, the end of Communism and other 'bloodless' political analysis. In Greece, although, the political experiences of the decade of '80, were still the most significant.

The political parties, weren't change their goals, theirs speeches etc., the public was focused in the Gulf War and especially in the Yugoslavian civil war. During this period, the anarchist movement and especially the squatting's, including LK37, were protagonists in anti-war protests, general strikes for the same political requests etc. The most significant moment of Anarchism in Athens, played in 17 November of 1995.

It was 10 years after the 1985 (the assassination of 15-years-old, Mixalis Kalteza, by police officer) that the socialistic government, trample the University Asylum, for first time after the fall of dictatorship. Some of 500 Anarchists, after the celebration the rising of the Polytechnic school in Athens, against the Dictatorship, fought against the Riot Police all night long. This battle was significant turning point, to show that the role of the State remains the same. Teargases canisters, violent prosecutions and sabotage of police, underline the role of this institution.

The media, in parallel (that were only 5 years old privatized) showed their role in the new era. This combination of State, Police and Media, will be present from now on, in every political revolt, movement and action of the anarchists in Greece.

4.3 December 2008

The 6th of December of 2008, played a significant role in anarchist movement in Greece. The squatter of LK37, among other comrades, applied the experience and knowledge, by two decade of war with the state and its repressive mechanisms. It was around 22.00 when the police officer Korkoneas, assassinate in the street of Exarchia, the 15 year old student, Alex Grigoropoulos. In a matter of 2 hours, the city center of Athens, were packed by demonstrations and protests against the violence of police. In the rest of the country, thousands of demonstrator, used direct force against the police stated the end of 'peaceful' period of the post-Olympics Greece.

The days that followed the December 6th were days of wrath, regeneration and large rebellious and liberal disposal. Immediately, universities faculties and schools occupied by their students. Apart from the classic shape of political organization and trade unions, added

to the demonstration students, non-aligned militants as well as political groups and individuals who are possessed by the wrath of the execution.

It is not only the murder of Grigoropoulos that mobilized large number of population into unprecedented confrontational demonstrations. A big number of youth population and mainly anarchists groups were shown the willing to choose to respond with violence to the violence of the State. Each demonstration was dominated by heavy fighting between the forces of repression and groups of protesters. The most significant action of the squatting was the spread of the fight, outside the down-town of Athens. When the conflicts decentralized, a reveal structural weakness of the repression mechanisms to act simultaneously in a large part of the urban space was obvious.

4.4 Action during the financial crisis

The political environment of the current time was important and with significant difference than any previous period. One to two years ago, the students mobilization of 2006-2007, much of the youth in the universities participation in demonstrations that suppress violently by the police. Chemicals and smoke grenade were thrown into the crowd of students, in every demonstration. The basic claim of this student rebellion was the non-revision of the law of the public education, which would legalize private universities with parallel deterioration of the public universities.

Greece is entering the financial capitalistic crisis in 2008. Individualism and consumerism are launching in the society of the spectacle, as a result of the reverse of capitalism to a financial bubble of materialized values. The conservative government in Greece was located in a storm of political and financial scandals, which the mainstream media tried to cover.

This is, in general, the picture of corruption that shakes the government, to the eyes of the public and sacred the right-wing political culture. The government responds by new laws of austerity, blatant and tremendous rape of income of the population, in particular the low-income workers, to benefit the capital. In all this, the State repression is increased; the doctrine of 'law and order' is becoming the dominant line of new social contract that includes most, only the suppression and throughout the consensus.

This direction will be reflected in later years of the Memorandum (Financial Crisis, European Union Austerity), where all social reactions will be dealt exclusively, by the swelling of state terrorism and the militarization of police forces. The following years, the society will feel the terry of the military doctrine of capitalist domination to enlist workers, dismantling strikes with police practices, extensive use of chemicals against thousands of demonstrators, serious injury of demonstrators by the police, suicides in the city center and throughout the country.

Chapter 5: Lela K. squat: An anarchists' oasis in Athenian metropolis



Pic 1: Map of Athens' city-center

The political center of Greece is definitely, Athens. Not only the government's authorities but also the main headquarters of the country's bureaucratic institutions are established in the city center. Following this, all the resistance and antiauthoritarian movements are mainly established in the city center or around that. The social processes of the previous century were

underlining this need of proximity among the political players. In contrast of today, where the proximity doesn't play the significant role as before 20 years due to different human or technological factors.

By this, I'm try to withdraw the profile of an anarchists' squat in the city center and its role. It's obvious that the challenges for the squatters and the State from the other site are numerous. The proximity to the political center was and still is allowing the anarchists' movement in Athens to respond almost automatically in every social, political or financial

act the take place in the capital. From the other side, other political factors such as the State's institutions (police etc.) are using this proximity to gather their own goals. By saying this, someone that watched in depth the Athenian political life and especially the anarchists' movements can easily underline the Neo-Nazis' groups political ground. Their action is targeted against anarchists among other.

The existence of an anarchist's oasis in Athenian metropolis is a straight reaction against the suppressive role of the Greek State and its institutions; it's a direct action manifestation through urban environment and for a lot of people a shelter of their ideas, their culture and their differences of the established social contract. As a summary, an anarchists' squat in Athens is a nail in State's neck. This chapter not only will describe the history of the squat but also will give to the reader a sample of squatting culture.

5.1 Definition of Lela K. and its establishment during '80s

Lela Karagianni was the leader of the anti-Nazi organization 'Bouboulina¹²', during the armed resistance against the German Nazis during the 2nd World War. Gestapo arrested her on July 1944, along with her comrades, and with five of seven children. The action of the organization consisted initially, the care and evacuation of allies and members of resistance during the German invasion and occupation of the Axis Forces. Later actions included espionage and sabotage of the enemy. About the espionage actions, she and her group were managing to spy the main services of the Nazi authorities in Athens.

¹² *"Laskarina Bouboulina is a Greek heroine who joined the underground resistance, fought alongside men and spent all her money fighting for Greece's independence at the start of the 19th century."* (Gammel, 2009) Telegraph

Following the arrest by the Gestapo, she was transferred to the Es-Es headquarters, imprisoned by wild torture methods. Although, she never revealed names or identities of other resistance fighters. After the prison and the torture, she was transferred to the concentration camp of Haidari, and finally executed with 27 more resistance fighters on the 8th of September 1944. The execution took place some weeks before the victory of the Greek Resistance against the Nazi Germany.



Lela Karagianni before World War 2.

Her house, a two-story detached house in the corner of Lela Karagianni Street, No.1, and

Stayropoyloy, was the headquarters of her resistance organization. The building by itself is a classic '30s building. In Athens's city center, we can still see buildings from different eras and architectural cultures. The neighborhood of Kypseli, belongs the municipality of Athens,



Pic 2: The Lela K. building. A classic 1930's building, just outside the then center of Athens. Kypseli neighborhood was an area of wealthy families and rich residence.

which includes the city center areas. It can be describe as one of the oldest neighborhoods. In the decades of 1920's and 1930's this area was the place of residence for wealthy and rich families. The proximity to the historical center of

Athens (4km from the old parliament) etc., it's still visible by some excellent

examples of art-nevus architecture. In this era belongs the building of Lela K. squat.

During my research visits, I was able to see in details the different approach of the engineers and architecture of that era. Huge glass windows, usually decorated with vitreous, marble steps in the building that guides you to the upper levels and unique details in every pillar or light fixtures. One of the main goals of the squatters was to keep this building contactless. Through the years that attempt was difficult. However, with the guidance of comrades who were architects and engineers, and with endless hours of hand labor, the building still represents its era, very beautifully. For obvious reasons the photographs in the

building isn't possible, although I will attach similar examples of other building of the same era and style.

In Lela Karagianni's testament, this very building was transferred to the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education for 'sheltering students'. For many of decades this building wasn't in any kind of use by the authorities. Although in 1987, some anarchist's students of the Polytechnic School of Athens based on Lela Karagianni's testament occupied the building. It's on this very legal framework that the squat it's still untouched from the official State or other institutions. In the first squatter's brochure we can find a whole analysis based on the previous framework which is still, today, active. The positive fact for the squat is that after 20 years of use, the 'occupiers' have the right of the property, according a Greek law.

Based on all those law 'windows', the squat is still alive and very active as it has to do with the anarchist movement in Athens. As I described in the beginning, it's a direct response to any repressive attitude of the State (through its institution) and the criminal gangs, including the far-right groups and parties. The whole neighborhood differs from other, in the scale of solidarity actions, sheltering refugees attempts and protecting comrades from fascist's practices.

5.2. Operating structure: Meetings and actions

5.2.1. Introduction

In this part, I will describe how the squat is ruled by the squatters, how the decisions are made and the general rules of Lela K. I will describe the processes of meetings, the pillar of decisions in the squat and the general rules that guide the participants. It was in one of those meetings, that I've send my research application and the thesis proposal to be accepted for the next four months of research in the squat. As an individual, it's a free entrance and process to gather the meetings. But for the purposes of an academic research and description of the squat, I'd have to give detailed form of the thesis and my goals to the meeting.

The process, started the same day, after my supervisor's green light for the topic. I've exchange some emails with the squat before my arrival in Athens, and I've visit the Lela K.

some days later. I've had my first chats with some of the people there, in the first day. We had some coffee and we spoke about general issues. The first, schedule meeting was the day after. I've present myself to the audience, some of them were old friends and comrades of mine. I've present my research in details and after some general information, the meeting participants discuss my presence there. Some of them where excited, the minority of them were scared or in deep thoughts about my goals. Some of them describe to me their fear of writing an academic paper for an anarchists' squat. I've gave them my answers and after everyone's 'Yes', I've start officially my research in the Lela K.

From this introduction, some elements of anarchists' meetings are visible. Progressive thoughts but also fear for the unknown. It's obvious that an existing alienation between anarchism and academia is visible, and part of my job was to find a solution for that. The most important weapon for that is the trustworthiness. In parallel, we can find evidences for the decision making process. There are no votes in the meetings. Those are replaced by a process that everyone has to expose his/her believes for the issue, and all those opinions are discussed one by one. The number of the positive or negative opinions has very small affection to decision making. It's very enough, even if one of the participants disagrees, then the process of analyzing his/her disagreement takes part. In the end, everyone gave his positive permission for this research.

5.2.2. Meetings

The meetings in a anarchists' squat is the most important element. Everything that has to do with the squat is decided in the meetings. Every action and every issue has to be decided or to be resolved through the meetings. The importance of those in an anarchists' community, is underlined by the rules that are unchained through the years and are very strong established.



Anarchists' meeting in a squat (not Lela K.)

The rules during an anarchists' meeting are very much the same with the general ethics of Anarchism. No sexism, no racism by any form and no hierarchy are acceptable. A

participant must be ready to express its own opinion by letting the rest of the comrades to criticize it. It's not a democratic process. Someone can describe it as a 'direct democracy' process. There is not a voting system that gathers to the final decisions. As I said earlier, the final result of the meeting must be discussed through every comment or thought of the participants. That's a time consuming process but let the squatters to decide the best resolution for a specific issue.

We can divide the meetings in three general types: 1. the schedule meetings; 2. Emergency meetings; 3. Meetings outside the squat.

1. Schedule meetings: Those are taking place, approximately, once per week.

The agenda is ready from the previous meeting. In case of adding new elements in the agenda, this has to discuss with the meeting in the very beginning. On those types of meetings, the agenda is discussed and a person keeps notes of the opinion's outcome. In the end of the meeting, those outcomes are re-discussed in case that a person has to add something. Only after a mass positive comment, the discussion is going to an end. The schedule meetings are very consistent. In the case of Lela K., Monday at 17.00 is the time and the day of the weekly schedule meeting.

2. Emergency meetings: Those are the meeting that took part in emergency occasions. It could be an attack at the squat, a police attack to other squats or other incidents. Usually, the participants are able to arrive at the squat within a hour. The comrades, who cannot be there during the meeting, are informed in the end for the decisions. With the help of the technology, those meetings are easier, nowadays. An example of such a meeting took place at the squat, when the building received a Molotov-bombs attack by Neo-Nazis. It was 4 o'clock in the morning at 3rd September. The most of the squatters were departed from the building and only a small number of comrades were sitting inside. The attack was very quick and in only 5' the front entrance was in flames. The comrades inside the building, with the help of fire extinguishers, control it. The front door, the original wooden door of the old building destroyed. (It is replaced by a iron gate, and the original is moved inside). In this case, text messages to every participant send it, by other squatters for an emergency meeting, two hours after the incident. Approximately, five hundred people were there, three hours after the

incident, and an emergency meeting took part to plan the next actions, the writing of brochures etc.

3. Meetings outside the squat: Those are taking place during revolts, general strikes or violent demonstrations. They are very rare for Lela K. specifically, because the squat's proximity to the city's political center. Although, in cases of occupations or revolts, the meetings were taking place in the occupied buildings or even on the street, by some of the squatter and other comrades. They're last less than hour, only to decide, the state of emergency and to gather medical support to other comrades or reaction in case of arrests.

All those kinds of meetings underline the flexibility of anarchism for direct action in case of emergency. A lot of those scenarios are usually discussed in scheduled meetings or general guidelines are given just before a demonstration or a revolt (if that's possible). The squatters are in close contact with each other, to provide protection or escape routes to comrades.

A very important element of the meetings, especially those that are taking place in squat, is that the participants are switch off their mobile phones. Its symbolism but also, the need to secure their debate and their actions is big. The feeling of secure against hacking or undercover policemen during mass meetings is very significant. The meetings are balancing on to a thin line, between security and open process. The squatter are open to new people at any time, but the new persons have to present him/her and the participant of the meeting has to be sure (as much as possible) that this actual person isn't a spy or an undercover policeman/policewoman or a provocateur.

5.3 Four anarchists' actions:

A sample of action will be present here. Those happened during my research trip. I've participate in 14 action during those months. I'm choosing the next four of them, because I believe that represent the culture, the matters and the logic of Lela K. for direct action.

As I mention in the previous chapter, everything that has to do with the Lela K. is debated and decided in the meetings. The actions are the political ‘face’ of the squat. We can divide the action in two forms: 1. the scheduled, 2. Emergency. The First and the Fourth belong to the first form and the Second and third are belonging to the second form.

5.3.1. Action 1: Collective kitchen



Pic 5: 'Collective cuisine in L.Karagianni 37 squat

In 24th of March, the squat decides to have a collective cuisine for immigrant, refugees, comrades and homeless people for the neighborhood. It was decided in the meeting of the previous week.

It has been 3 weeks since the last one, and we start prepare the action. First, what should we cook. We had a big stoke of pasta and some chocolate bars in the fridges, from a previous collective food exchange, the previous week. We decide to buy some red sauce for the pasta and some cheese. For the salad, we've visit every Super market in the area, and we collect 'expired' vegetables etc. The chocolate bars, were just enough for a choco-cake. In parallel, the fruits were enough for juices for the kids. The squat-bar provide with the rest: ice, beers and refreshments ¹³

The collective cuisine was planned, and from 10.00 in that Sunday morning, the first comrade came to the squat. Some of them arrived with the children, after their Sunday morning walk.

The building itself has a backyard that children can play there, without the fear of cars etc. The food was planned to be served at around 13.00. The preparations was slowly, although in such action, someone can barely see stressed comrades. Everything took its time to be prepared and at around 13.30



Pic 4: The buffet. A lot of food was provided by people who visit us that day.

¹³ All the products are from local producers. Vegetables were from collective farms around the country and the beers from micro-scaled factories. Not only the price is lower, but the support to those channels is very important for the alternative use of the market.

the food served. It was a nice company of around 30 people that start drinking and eating from a nice buffet. Music was there, since the beginning. Some nice punk songs in the morning, but during the lunch, some ethic songs were played. At some point, after the food, some comrade start played music with guitars and percussions.

The atmosphere can be described as a relax and chill moment, where people talked, smoked, sing and some dance together. A small family party took place. The kinds were running around, some of them were play with the dogs. We decide to have a meeting some hours later, for some political decisions and action in the future. The cleaning part took us 20' to be ready, as long as the people in the end where more than those in the beginning.

The majority of the participant left from the squat at the afternoon. There was an important meeting in another squat and a party later at night. Giorgos was asked to describe the action today: “ It was nothing special today. We had some food in the fridge and we had to use it before it rotten. It was couple of weeks after the last collective cuisine and we decide ‘why not?’. In parallel, we collect 50 euros from free participation, so we can pay some of the needs for the upcoming newspaper and to support some homeless people in the neighborhood with winter clothes. I want to thank everyone who helped us, and to invite them to the weekly meeting on Monday.” The economics, the amount of food that left after and other details had presented in the next meeting. It helps the squat to keep detailed catalogs of food stoke

5.3.2 Action 2: Demonstration against the State and its institutions

It was the night of 2nd to 3rd of April, when police arrest some comrades after a demonstration. I was not in the squat, but not far from that. We were in bar, when a friend of us inform us for the police action. Immediately, I called some squatters. They were not at the squat at that moment, so we arrange an appointment in the Lela k. within an hour. Some minutes before, I've been informed from the lawyers of the arrested comrades that there have been violations of the legal framework (lawyers didn't got permission to visit their costumers, no access to doctor for one of the arrested). There were rumors for 12 people that arrested, some of them where Greeks, although the majority were Kurds political refugees.

That was very important, because everyone knows that those arrests mean that the Kurds will be soon or later will be send to Turkey. It wasn't that late in the night, so some of us, in the squat, decide to call as many as possible comrades for a possible meeting. Indeed, 2 hours later, we've been 70-80 people altogether. The decision was to remain calm during the night, in the fear of more arrests and to call an new general emergency meeting for the next day at 13.00.

In this important meeting, almost 250 gathered there. We decide to demonstrate in front of police headquarters, and then demonstrate in the city center against the police violence and the law enforcement on political refugees. Some hours later, a massive demonstration of 1500-2000 comrades was in street of the city center. The target that day



Pic 7: A brochure of a similar demonstration. From the top to bottom: "State & Fascists assassinate. Lets gather to the street our anger. War now and here against every authority. Anti-fascist- Anti-State- Anti-capitalistic demonstration

was the police, but not only. Chants against the State and the banks were heard. Katerina, one of the comrades, told me this: "enough with the terror! If those people will be sending to Turkey, they will face imprisoning forever. They are Kurds political refugees and we cannot live police without answer to that. We heard that it might be some torturing methods yesterday. Enough with the fascists!". There were some limited clashes with the riot police forces, one or two Molotov bombs and some teargas, but nothing more.

Some of the squatter of Lela K. decide to call for a new meeting during the night, to secure the building. There were rumors of new police attacks in squats and self-organized building and entities. However, the rest of the night was quiet, and no further action took part. In the squat, we had conversations about the situation, the police tactics and how to avoid them, and other issues about State violence. Good news came the very next morning. I was already home, when a comrade called me: "they let them free, but a trial will be in 4 months".

5.3.3 .Action 3: Demonstration after Neo-Nazis attack to immigrants

It was end of April, two months before regional elections. It was a politically polarized period. Speeches in the media, newspapers full of interviews, political gatherings and meetings, and a lot of posters in the streets were an everyday agenda. The far-right parties tried to exploit the immigration problem by using racial and fascist tone. In parallel, the same period, an old building in ruins, occupied by homeless and refugees. They eventually became a target of all those far-right and Neo-Nazis groups.

During that month, in our meetings in the squat, we talked about immigrants. We tried to approach the situation, by direct action way, by collective clothes and food for the first days. Although, we release that the far-right groups started attacking the occupation, not only in the media, but starting organizing demonstrations in the area, pogroms and other racial attitude actions.

The decision of that week's meeting was to call a general meeting of all the anarchists' and anti-authoritarian groups of Athens, to choose some action to protect the occupied building and to throw the Nazis away from the city-center. Indeed, some days later, a general meeting was gathered in the Polytechnic school of Athens. The participation was huge, some 1500 comrades, came. Andreas, a friend and comrade, commended: 'Hey mate, this is amazing. Just two days after the first attack, and we are 2000 people in here. This will be big this time. Let's drive those fascists outside the city, back in their caves'' His rhetoric was a small sample of the atmosphere in the amphitheater at that moment.

The final decision was to organize a counter-demonstration, same day – same time, to repulse possible Nazis attack to immigrants, and to avoid them to demonstrate in the city center. Indeed, the upcoming Saturday, around 5000 people met two blocks far from the far-right groups. A huge number of riot-police and other police authorities, made a 'security rope' between us and the far-right. Nikos commented: 'Always the same... Why they came to us?'. Suddenly, two tear-gas shoots heard from the back side and people start running to one direction. All those people, start moving faster and faster to the direction of the Polytechnic school again. In five minutes, the whole demonstration was surrounded by

police forces.

In the meeting, we agreed, that the only direct action will be taken to the far-right groups, if we get in contact with them. We decided to avoid, if not necessary the conflict with the police forces this time. Although, we couldn't avoid that. The demonstration broke into pieces, some people started running through the alleys, and some tried to lock themselves to the Polytechnic Scholl. I was following some friends, and we were the last group of people who got in the University. And then, a small warzone, just outside the main gate started. Molotov bombs from one side, tear-gas canister all over the place and stones start falling all around. Unstoppable chaos for all of us, burnt eyes and a chaotic scene could describe the moment.

The conflict lasted until very late, when during the night, police forces 'open' some roads around the University for Demonstrators to leave. We heard some rumors about arrest, but later we found that it wasn't true. The images of the street fights were everywhere in the media this night. However, the far-right demonstration was a failure. They failed to reach the occupied building that time. Some groups of left parties made a 'human-chain' around the building. A lot of comrades were happy with the final result of the day, but we argued that we had definitely have a meeting the very next day, to analyze the outcomes of the demonstrations and other issues about far-right rising.

5.3.4. Action 4: Actions and activities for financial support of jailed comrades

The last 5 years were difficult for the anarchists, around the country. New tactics by the police, especially after the 2004 Olympic games, counter-terrorism policies and the rising of the far-right were among the main events, that brought more suppressive control to the radical elements of the Greek society. Many comrades faced trials and a lot jailed for their political actions. The political life in Greece was so intensive, that a lot of people suffered mainly because of their political activities.

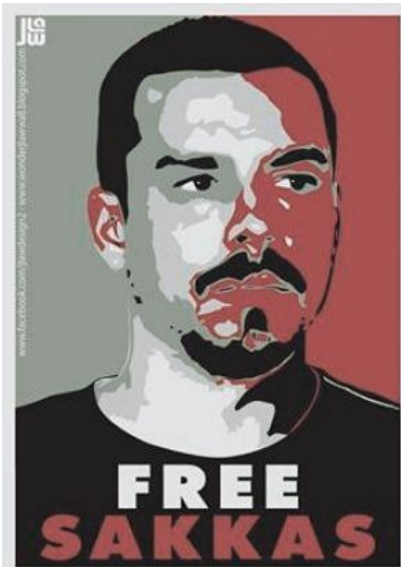
Anarchists' comrades, usually with incomplete trials were jailed. In many occasions media covered their action with their usual dialect of terror and fear. Police brutalities and

illegal trial's methods were in, almost, every occasion. The whole movement was active and every supportive in any person that faced trials. Demonstrations and other actions were very common during the last decade in Greece. A lot of them happened, during my research trip and I've been attended to a very crucial meeting for that.

Kostas Sakkas was a comrade that faced jail after a 'fast-track' trial. His lawyers spoke about 'trial scandals'. After the first arrest, the squat decides for an emergency meeting in the building. After a brief analysis of the evidences so far, the participant decide to call for a bigger meeting the very next day. It was in the first week of May, 5th.

The trial expenses were huge for Sakkas, and one of the first decisions of the meeting was to contribute as much as possible. Further action include attendance of the squat, just outside the court during the trial, radio broadcasting to inform other people, demonstration in the street during the trial days and a party.

This party was something special. It was organized by the squat, to collect money for



Pic 9. Kostas Sakkas picture. This poster was in Athenian streets during his trials. Some street art, were influence from this picture.

Sakkas financial support. In this day, a collective cuisine took place in the squat, and later in the afternoon some bands start the concert. It wasn't a happy party, I have to say. The purpose was to gain courage for the days to come, to give our strength to Sakkas for those difficult days of trial and to gain as much as possible for the trial expenses. Six punk-rock bands contribute in the concert, all them coming from the DIY culture. A small book market was established, with the 50% of the money,

targeted to Sakkas' case. The financial contribution of the people who visited the party was voluntary. A box was in the entrance for everyone to give whatever he wants. The food and the drinks were at the lowest costs, also by giving the 50% of the them for the trial expenses. In the end of the party, we count 570 euros from free contribution and 350 from the food/drinks. It was a good support for our comrade, indeed. Anna, the bass-player of one of the bands commented: ' ' If we don't support Kostas, who else will do it? The State? They are his enemies. The Left parties are only support their members. Let's do something by

ourselves now!’’. Maria, an elderly woman who lives next to the squat said: ‘’ Pure kids, we left you this cruel country, only to suffer! I have to apologize for my generation!’’ She was helping the squat, the last ten years. Many of the old squatters found shelter to her house, during revolts and street battles.

Those kinds of parties or gatherings are very common, because the need of supportive actions to comrades is very common in Greece. The political environment is so polarized that the anarchists’ movement is facing new challenges every day. Kostas Sakkas story is only one example of how the Greek State works, how it deals with the movement and the politics behind the use of suppressive institution against the movement.

6 Lela K. squat and anarchists’ movement in Athens: An analysis and conclusion of the research.

During my research trip, I’ve face challenges that made me understand, in depth, the movement’s characteristics. Especially, the squat life for those 4 months helped me to realize some weaknesses of the struggle in the Greek political life. This small chapter will try to analyze the final outcome, as I understood it. Furthermore, I will pave the way for further research in the future, after the finalization of the thesis and the master in general.

Anarchism in Greece, nowadays, is a very active political entity. Meetings with huge participation, actions (violent or not) are in every day agenda. Comrades are fighting in every level, the totalitarian governance of Eurozone and its austerity. From the past years, before the last financial crisis, anarchists talked about the political and economic cliff that was coming fast. A deep analysis of capitalism, not only by classical anarchism, but also by the newest political movements teaches us to be ready for the catastrophe to come.

One of the first weak points of anarchism action in Greece is its very characteristics. The ideas and the movement are created by a small group of people. A form of sectarians can be sought here. Some say that these are product of fear to the outsiders. In many cases in the past, provocateurs destroy actions and movements, not only in Greece. By that, a lot of comrades were afraid to express in public their goals and their tactics.

Another weak point of the movement was and still is the difficulty of the public to trust anarchism to answer its questions. The mass majority of the society believes in stereotypes that produced by the media. In parallel, the 'utopian' environment around anarchism is something that a lot of people don't understand, or they have different view about the society. Personally, I believe that Anarchism is the less visible political movement in Greece, even though its tactics were copied by many activists: collective cuisine by municipal authorities, demonstration and direct action by groups of pensioners, antifascist movements by group of doctors and many others.

In parallel, the intellectual work on anarchism became very developing in Greece. A lot of book translations, but also New Greek analysts are published their works during the last decade. Internet and Indymedia played a crucial role for the movement, as well. In general, more people are involved in anarchism in current times. The financial crisis for a lot of us isn't just an economic crisis. It's definitely a crisis of social and political system of capitalism and especially neo-liberalism. From the classical analyses of Bakunin and Proudhon, to new movements such as Zapatista and Rojava, anarchists describe in great detail the character of the system. In parallel, anarchism creates dams to defend against these waves of political orders.

Lela K. squat is a very important sample of anarchism and its activities in Greece. Establish 20 years before, is still very active in every significant direct action. It produced political maturity to thousands of comrades. Furthermore, is an alive element of classical anarchism and its view for today, how people can live together, in a free society, free from every authority and every suppressive entity. The most important though is that its existence, underline the anarchists' movement in Greece, during this period, where the far-right raised. The snake's egg is growing fast and its only one political entity that defend against the 'children of Hitler'. That's why, Lela K. has to be there, forever. It directs the society to an alternative where the social justice.

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