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# “When a dam bursts”: an anarchist approach to social movements

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*Don't tear gas us any more  
We cry on our own.*

- Friends of Alexis

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## Introduction

“The era of riots has started” ... These were the words of Blaumachen, a Thessaloniki-based communist group, in the wake of December 2008 when Greek society was shaken by almost a month of civil unrest, demonstrations, occupations and uncontrollable riots. Looking back almost four years later this assessment, as well as many of the slogans of that period – “this rage is ours”, “we are an image of the future” – read almost as a premonition. The expectation of increasing civil unrest across Europe in the wake of global economic crisis is now commonly accepted by policy-makers and commentators alike and has been increasingly borne out by a series of urban disturbances, labour struggles and the growth of anti-austerity movements in the years since December 2008. Through the Arab Spring, to the *Indignados* of Spain to student unrest and 2011 riots in the UK it appears a great many more states have since got their taste of “Greek-style” insurrection. In spite of this, to outsiders (including myself) at the time, the events of December violently shattered the illusion of a stabilised Western polity transmitting images the likes of which had arguably not been witnessed on European soil in more than twenty years. There had certainly been incidents of mass protest in the immediate period – gatherings against financial summits (1999 - present), globalised demonstrations against the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (2001- present), and the similarly youth-based Anti-CPE movement in France (2005-6) –but these had been a mostly peaceful and civil affair, far closer, in the UK at least, to the traditional peace movements and coalitions of the Left and, for political commentators, a very familiar terrain. December, on the other hand, appeared to present something qualitatively different. On the 6<sup>th</sup> December 2008 Greek society exploded as, in response to the shooting of a 15-year-old student Alexis Grigoropoulos by police, cities and towns across the country were set ablaze in almost 48-hours worth of unabated rioting and civil unrest. Two, three, four days later riots continued, in fact it would take the Greek government almost a month to regain full control of the streets. In the meantime university and education institutions, trade union centres and municipal buildings had been occupied, local and neighbourhood assemblies formed and thousands had taken to the streets to clash with the police on an almost daily basis. For a month Greece was close to, if not in, the throws of a social insurrection.

Undoubtedly the initial, and popular, presentation of the unrest was of chaos and disorder, of senseless destruction provoked in reaction to an equally senseless, and tragic, murder. It didn't take much, however, to see that there was much more going on here. Through the filtered news commentary - of images of Athens's burnt-out downtown streets, of youth attacking police stations and smashing banks - an altogether different message seeped through. The romantic slogans chanted by angry youth, the circle-As hastily sprayed on street corners, the black flags, masks and

burning barricades evoked more of the spirit of '68 than any other recent, comparable outbreak of urban unrest. These were *political* riots.

December also understandably prompted a lot of questions, for both activists and commentators<sup>1</sup>. Why now? Why at this scale? And where had this come from? It was with enthusiasm then that, when asking a Greek friend studying in the UK for any relevant materials, I received a copy of a collection of essays commissioned in early 2009 by the Hellenic Observatory of the LSE concerning the topic of the December riots<sup>2</sup>. This was the first academic treatment of the December period to surface in the English language. While these essays were correct in singling out a central problem – that initial analysis had struggled to explain both the scope and the timing of the events - I found myself completely disappointed with the results. The essays were, admittedly, policy-orientated and, as such, criminality and state responses were key themes. Contributors included professors and economists from the UK and Europe, journalists, professional analysts and even a few radical theorists. The explanations were varied, of December as the awakening of a democratic “multitude” (Gavriilidis, 2009), a mass psychological display of youthful rebellion (Dafermos, 2009), a nihilist glimpse into a bleak future brought about by the “failures” of Greece’s political system (Mouzelis, 2009; Pagoulutos, 2009; Papagiannides, 2009) or even, quite incredibly, a case for more privatisation and freer economic markets (Papadimitriou, 2009). In spite of the detail of the analysis, however, not one of the authors chose to give those participating in the rebellion a voice – either by interview or even in the form of reference to a movement slogan or text<sup>3</sup>. They were ultimately reductive in their analysis attributing singular presentations, causes and explanations. There was no nuance, complexity, no sense of engagement or any real attempt to gauge intent. Neither was there any deeper appreciation of how the problems identified – that traditional approaches had struggled to explain the unrest - could cast doubt on our social and political pre-conceptions as analysts. There appeared far more detail, context and meaning in five minute clips snatched off Youtube and poorly translated communiqués than in all of these treatments. Later attempts didn’t prove much better. While some were right to highlight key underlying and contextual factors (Sakellaropoulos, 2010; Sotiris, 2010) – and offered deeper insight in respect to the history and traditions of political radicalism (Karamichas, 2009) - rarely was there any meaningful engagement with the actual groups

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<sup>1</sup> Not least for the fact that the key protagonists – left, anarchists, anti-authoritarians, students and the anti-capitalist movement – had no real history in publishing materials or documenting their activities in anything other than Greek (a situation more unique when compared to other Europe groups). With the exception of a few blogs and independent news sites information, in the English language, from participants themselves was certainly hard to come by.

<sup>2</sup> Economides, S. and Monastiriou, V. (eds.) (2009) *The return of street politics? Essays on the December riots in Greece*. The Hellenic Observatory, The London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK.

<sup>3</sup> Something that seems strange in light of the traditional approaches to institutional political actors is to do precisely this.

and initiatives active over this period and, at worse, they wholly misrepresented them and sought to be condemnatory (see, for example, Bratsis, 2010)<sup>4</sup>. Overall, and in spite of their limitations, it was the accounts of activists themselves – TPTG, Blaumachen, Occupied London and the Void Network being the most noteworthy examples for English speakers – which provided the clearest insight into both the full extent of the activities throughout the December unrest and the aspirations of the participants.

This dissatisfaction with established approaches to what the literature typically identifies as “social movements” and the work of social movement theorists was not a new experience. While preparing research for this thesis, for example, the account of McAdam (2002) and his encounters with the social movement theory of his day felt very familiar:

my first exposure to the academic study of social movements came in 1971 when, much to my surprise, the professor in my Abnormal Psychology class devoted several weeks to a discussion of the topic. I say “surprise” because, as an active participant in the anti-war movement, it certainly came as news to me that my involvement in the struggle owed to a mix of personal pathology and social disorganization (McAdam, 2002: 2).

Of course social movement theories have moved on considerably since this, rather unfair, highly conservative characterisation. Nonetheless I too felt a disconnect with my own observations and experiences when first reading social movement literature and discovering that, for example, contemporary social movements were post-materialist, cultural, single-issue and concerned principally with civil society alone. Undoubtedly *some* groups acted this way, but not all of them and certainly not the groups that really interested me – those groups that participated in social struggle and strived for political change. The politics I had seen practised didn’t seem to match the politics I studied and this seemed only to point to deeper problems. Conventional approaches were not only unable to explain and account for certain types of political behaviour but, more crucially, were found wanting in the face of those moments of social and political crisis, conjuncture and transition that so inflame the political imagination. This was a concern only re-confirmed by the inability of existing approaches to really make much sense of December.

It was largely outside of academia, or at least outside of social movement studies, where I was able to point to the kind of rich, incisive studies I felt were worthy of emulation. Among these I could list

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<sup>4</sup> The only real exception was a paper presented by Nikos Lountos at the “Alternative Futures and Popular Protest XV” Conference in March 2010. Lountos is a graduate student at Panteion University, an activist and member of the Socialist Workers Party in Greece he was a participant in the December unrest. His paper is very much a reflection of his involvement in the unrest and, with the exception of the Leftist framework I believe weakens his account, is notable for the level of engagement and credit given to the participants themselves.

Brinton's (1970) *The Bolsheviks and Workers Control*, Arshinov's (1923) *History of the Makhnovist Movement*, Rabinowitch's (1968) *Prelude to Revolution* and the many invaluable interviews and biographies by Avrich, among others. What was so successful in these was not only in capturing – usually through tireless investigation and research - the composition, ideology and objectives of the movements they documented but also the conflicts and struggles they were imbedded within. These weren't just histories of social movements; they were equally histories of social conflicts – of Greens, Reds, Blacks and Whites. This literature also shared another characteristic – they were broadly libertarian in their intent (or at least aimed to use their enquiry to challenge and look more critically at received understandings of the subject). Similarly in respect to December it was libertarian Marxists and anarchists who provided the richest analysis – TPTG and Blaumachen's chronology and history of the movement, the statements issued by the occupations, social centres and squats. Their approach - that seemed to derive normative aims and judgements *through* and not prior to their studies and personal accounts of the unrest – appeared to deliver a greater degree of authenticity. That's not to say that they were also flawless. The nature of the material - principally aimed at participants and sympathetic movements and individuals – meant they often lacked the kind of rigorous methodological expositions that would be expected of academic literature; something that would prove useful in seeking to replicate this kind of approach<sup>5</sup>.

That is not to say that anarchists have never sought clarification on these issues. There is an, albeit limited, body of anarchist literature on social movement studies and some of the writings of Kropotkin and Proudhon elaborate anarchist perspectives on science, knowledge and epistemology. There has been, however, overall a general disconnect between theory and aims when it comes to contemporary anarchist research in this area. For anarchist academics the general consensus in the literature is in favour of co-participative/activist research. These types of approaches were, however, conspicuous in their absence when concerning the December unrest and in spite of a great deal of international anarchist interest in the events<sup>6</sup>. Even movement insiders who documented their own experiences did not really come close to the kind of methods that activist researchers advocate<sup>7</sup>. That is not to say that such problems are limited to anarchist research specifically, the little that does exist (Amster et al., 2009; Graebar et al., 2007; Graebar, 2009b), rather a general disconnect between theory and aims, method and ontological commitments is evident within a wider body of

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<sup>5</sup>A factor which, despite its methodological weaknesses, social movement literature is stronger for in this respect.

<sup>6</sup> Void Network (whose materials are referenced throughout this thesis), for example, held a "sold out" speaking tour across North America concerning the Greek Riots and their impact.

<sup>7</sup> Something which I believe to be indicative of the weaknesses of this method of which will be addressed further into the thesis.



critical literature that seeks to play a role within social movements. Why was it, for example, that I was finding a reliance on the same concepts and the same singular narratives and explanations as frequently in activist research as in the main body of social movement literature? Why was there an equivalent lack of account for social process, conflict and historicity? This was about more than just method. The studies I held in high esteem had something much *more* embedded in their perspective, something that required investigation and elaboration, than simply a physical proximity, commitment to the autonomy of the research-subject or shared research goals. They seemed to present a vision of the political, and by extension methods of political study, that was wholly distinct from the approaches traditionally associated with this field.

It was through this that I came to realise that the principle problem wasn't the inability of existing approaches to reach an adequate understanding of social movements, although this was certainly a reflection of the problem, but that the representation of the political internal to all of these perspectives was problematic. Moreover, I came to think that the reason extra-institutional political behaviour proves difficult to account for is because it challenges and undermines this representation. Returning to anarchist literature in a more sustained and critical way provided me with both the means to understand, in the form of the objections to idealisation, abstraction and determinism in political thought, as well as the foundations to address, in the objectives of a de-alienated intellectual enquiry and a unique view of the political, this issue. It also provided the outline for the development of a unique methodology, set out in chapter three, to the study of extra-institutional political behaviour. It was through this that I aimed not only to establish new and better methods for documenting and analysing social movements but also seek to apply this to the December unrest in an attempt to provide a richer, more holistic account of these events.

The thesis, consequently, stands broadly in two parts; a theoretical analysis of extra-institutional behaviour and its relationship to anarchist ontology and epistemology and a case study in which the resulting approach is applied and developed. This structure had the benefit of allowing a degree of clarification and fine-tuning of methodology through the experience of compiling the case study. It also stands as a model of methodological practice to be further emulated, criticised and developed – something that I believe is lacking in comparable studies. Moreover a key theme re-surfacing throughout the thesis is the need for consistency between ontological commitments, epistemological assumptions, normative aims and research method. The structure, subsequently, is under-pinned by a desire for such a unification of theory and practice.

My central contention is that the study of extra-institutional behaviour exposes critical issues for the accepted understanding of the political in social science. This is a view that follows into a critique

of existing radical approaches to social movements and the need for a deeper re-assessment of the underlying ontological assumptions that structure understandings of the political world. The writings of anarchist theorists present a means to address this problem in their correct identification of the prevalence of abstract and idealised constructs in political thought, something which is underpinned by a longstanding criticism of the way power – particularly the power of the state – structures social discourse and the representation of social life. This perspective stems from a unique materialist framework – influenced and developed in relation to Marxism but also critical and distinct from it – structured by anarchist priorities. Anarchists present a vision of the political ontologically centred on the individual, the forms and models of behaviour they are embedded within and the capacities for transformative action available to them. More importantly, and following from this, the anarchist vision of autonomous counter-power – in conflict with the political practices associated with the state – presents an account for the unique contexts for extra-institutional political behaviour and the activity of social movements. A number of existing methodological approaches appear consistent with this framework and in some cases have been advocated by anarchist researchers – most notably dissident Marxist and co-participative/activist research. I will argue that while these present a number of worthy methodological provisions, their weaknesses can be resolved by appeal to an anarchist epistemology. An epistemology that stresses an internal perspective, a developmental analysis and ecological approach to research, all of which anticipates anarchist criticisms of representational, necessitarian and deterministic perspectives on social change. This methodology, alongside a review of existing notable studies – Brinton’s (1970) *The Bolsheviks and Workers Control* and D. Denham and the C.A.S.A. Collective’s (2008) *Teaching Rebellion: Stories from the Grassroots Mobilization in Oaxaca* – puts forward a clear structure and approach that forms the basis of the organisation of my case study.

A primary motivation behind this research is to contribute an insight into the December unrest worthy of the initiatives, ideas and movements active over this period. It is an attempt to seek a true record of the events that sought to represent its potentialities, and also its imperfections, beyond the reductive views of conservative and radical commentators alike. It was also an attempt to develop a critical method of political scholarship that, while being both modest and seeking to stress the limited role and function of an outside researcher, sees the power, hope and inspiration that can be generated from a careful, respectful and meticulous analysis of moments of political transition and change. Capturing the transgressive nature of December, the true “spirit” of the revolt - the moment, as one participant in the unrest stated, “when the striking teacher will be lighting the rioting students’ Molotov” – was a central concern. I also believe it stands as an example of an applied anarchism, demonstrating the ability of an oft-marginalised and widely misunderstood

political philosophy to enrich our understanding of social life. My hope is to provide some answers for anarchist researchers, for critical theorists but also to speak to the concerns of political theorists in general. Many questions concerning radical and critical research are long-standing and I hope to offer some solutions here on how and in what way research can play a part as a progressive tool for those who wish to use it. Criticisms of social movement literature are equally long-standing and the first chapter, at least, intends to move the debate beyond the methodological concerns that have frequently been the fixation of debate to a more thorough re-assessment of the theoretical content of social movement theory. Although it should be clear from the offset that I see my approach as ultimately moving beyond a recognisable social movement studies. "Social movement" is sometimes used as a means to express an accepted understanding of the priorities and areas of study here. However, as is clear in the thesis, I find both the label and the idea of social movements as a distinct concern for political science to be problematic. The central issues that are raised – of authenticity of representation, on the nature and character of the political and the way that ontological and epistemological assumptions translate into method – are concerns that I believe are shared by all political theorists.

## Chapter 1 – The Problem with Social Movements

“What are the mix of factors that give rise to a social movement?” This is a question that McAdam, McCarthy and Zeld (1996) have described as the “oldest, and arguably the most important, question in the field” (7), when it comes to social movement theory. Yet in spite of its foundational nature, and as I will argue in the following chapter, it is also a question that social movement theorists have failed to adequately answer. Typically the issue has been addressed in methodological terms, of developing alternative strategies and research techniques for better conceptualising, framing and interacting with what are labelled as “social movements”. Here I intend to level an alternative critique. I believe a thorough critical review of both the intellectual origins and the continued representation in the literature of “social movements” reveals a distinct political *content* which is the true origins of the failure to truly account for extra-institutional political behaviour. This critique also has a normative dimension in that the “social” in social movement implies certain proscriptive frames of behaviour favourable to the rule of elites and that social movement theory effectively accepts an institutionalised understanding of extra-institutional behaviour in terms of the representation of social movements as some variance of social citizen. This is not a problem unique to social movement studies and, as I will argue, has much deeper origins in the traditional construction and presentation of the public sphere. Likewise this critique of social movement literature has much broader implications in terms of the ability of existing approaches to capture any form of extra-institutional behaviour, whether in a movement or not. Social movement theory, in other words, is both reflective of wider and deeper problems within political analysis and neatly exposes the issues that any critical researcher must grapple with when attempting to formulate an alternative approach. Nonetheless in respect to the study of “social movements”, it is the intention here to point to representation, and particularly how representations of social movements are tied to (often unacknowledged) normative and ontological stances, as both a key problem for social movement theory and the foundation upon which an alternative anarchist approach is developed. In establishing and elaborating the implications of this I lay the groundwork for the distinctiveness of this approach when compared to the existing approaches within the field, its critical purchase in terms of the more authentic reading of social movements and, in critical-normative terms, its desirability for critical researchers.

I will begin by contending that there is more at stake within debates in the social movement field than the differences between alternatives methods and intentions of research. I will argue instead that disputes develop from the fact that contemporary social movement theory has internalised specific normative, and conservative, assumptions concerning the nature and purpose of politics (particularly in respect to the relationship of the social citizen to the state). This will point to more foundational issues concerning the nature and structure of political discourse and particularly the

way that the changing nature of social movement studies is reflective of the inability of an ultimately inflexible mode of social enquiry to adapt to an ever changing political environment. Clear evidence of this is provided through reviewing key approaches in the social movement field – Pluralism, Political Opportunity Structure, Resource Mobilisation Theory, New Social Movement Theory and Post-Structuralism – which show the presentation of ideological and historical narratives (usually related to the growth of specific movements) as fixed and generalisable categories. Internal to these are also, rarely acknowledged, normative assumptions concerning the appropriate and legitimate means for political change. In spite of the conflicting views on social movement I argue that there is a common thread that runs through all these approaches in the essentially stable presentation of relationships within the political community. In order to understand this more clearly it is necessary to look wider at the role of the state in politics itself and, particularly, how changing forms of social management have shaped our understanding of “public” and “social” life. This will be shown through analysing the construction of the “public sphere” as the space for legitimate political participation and the means by which involvement within this has historically been restricted by status and remained in the control of dominant social groups. This has been reflected in an underlying myth of Western political philosophy: the idea of the attainment of universal, rational goals via the intervention of an external master. This is a construct that has, over time, established itself in varying guises - whether in the divine providence of religious authority, the unquestionable legitimacy of the state – but, nonetheless, retained a common quality: the deference of the processes of social mediation and cohesion to political power. The construction of the contemporary “public” will be analysed as conforming to specific frames of political behaviour favourable to the conservation of bourgeois social norms, particularly a code of “civility” and enforced pacifism. I will argue that this is all reflected in the common vocabulary of social movement literature and that the presentations of social movements broadly conform to a demand-led (and state-centric) model of social citizenship common to modern liberal democracies. Finally, I will point to the areas of theoretical development that this critique opens up and point to an alternative based (close to that of the movement-based theorists discussed) on the anarchist proposal for a de-alienated political enquiry.

### **Social Movements and Academics**

As Pallister-Wilkins (2008: 1) observes, “People say to me: ‘Your research is concerned with socio-political activism. Then you must be a social movement theorist?’”. Yet as fitting as such an observation may seem within the context of contemporary political science, the idea of “political

activism” as a field for scholarly research is a relatively contemporary phenomenon. More commonly the study of political activism has not been of serious concern for academics, seen as a deviation from the practice of “true” politics and principally conducted by political activists themselves, usually outside of an institutionalised context. This has been due, in part, to what this political activism has historically been in aid of - excluded, marginalised, socially and economically oppressed groups, those of the working class, but also of women, ethnic minorities, sexual minorities and indigenous peoples – but also because self-reflection and movement theorisation is an activist practice in its own right<sup>8</sup>. This social movement theory (as it would now be commonly referred to) was, understandably, motivated by different aims and objectives compared with those commonly associated with academic research. For these theorists, writers and activists their research largely concerned the practice of their respective “social movements”, i.e. theorising the means by which their group or movement would be able to practically realise its stated political objectives<sup>9</sup>.

The formation of an academic, social movement field is to some degree reflective of an appropriation by academics of these approaches with origins outside of academia or, in some cases, the professionalization of activists themselves (see Baker and Cox, 2002 for an overview). There has also been a tradition within political science that, while not chiefly concerned with social movements, has nonetheless been concerned with the issues that gives rise to them. This has also resulted in the development of a more orthodox approach to the study of social movements that, while often accepting the framework outlined by revolutionary writers and movement activists, has also aimed to eject the normative and subjective dimension to their writings (see, for example, Zeitlin, 1968). It is likewise possible to locate the work of many leading social movement theorists within this body of “positive” social theory - a tradition with its feet firmly grounded in the romantic, conservative reaction to the French revolution and the writings of Weber, Durkheim, Mannheim and Von Stein. In both cases the broad aims of social movement theorists have been closely aligned with conventional social scientific concerns for the need to establish social movements as a generalisable

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<sup>8</sup> Strategic and tactical questions will naturally arise in relation to a movement’s political and social objectives and addressing these questions requires some critical self-reflection.

<sup>9</sup> In this sense many critical scholars, whose works are now chiefly considered to be works of political philosophy, should justifiably also be considered to be “social movement theorists”. A central objective of Marx’s writings, for example, was not just to provide an ethical critique and framework for understanding the underlying contradictions of capitalism, but to rectify what he perceived to be the failures of a working class movement of his period in its failure to understand the social system it hoped to overturn. In this sense his theoretical contributions should be considered to be essentially programmatic. Likewise one can only appreciate the full meaning of questions arising from his writings in relation to the practice of the movements they addressed. When Marxists, for example, debate Marx’s late claim that Russia, through the peasant *mir*, may develop immediately to a communist society, what is principally at stake is not our correct understanding of the appropriate dynamics of economic development, but rather questions concerning the practice and goals of socialist movements operating both within this and similar national contexts. Comparable observations can be made concerning the composition of the proletariat, the role and function of the state, the position of other classes like the peasantry, whether capitalism can be a progressive force and a whole range of other theoretical questions that will have a direct impact on how, where and to what end a working class movement should organise.

social category within an objectively observable political environment, generally, in the process, accepting reformist and state-centred, or at least state-mediated, models of social change (for example, Jenkins, 1985; McCarthy and Zald, 1973; Mcadam, 1982; Tilly, 1984).

As the latter indicates, this has not simply meant a change in the priorities that ground research, i.e. the improvement of academic knowledge of a specific social phenomenon, but a move to more traditional normative assumptions concerning the nature and purpose of politics<sup>10</sup>. In this respect it is important to recognise equally essential ontological assumptions, issues that go far deeper than the intention and application of this research, within the writings of revolutionaries, radicals and activists. Foremost amongst these are claims concerning the transformative capacity of the individual (or social collectivity) and their ability to challenge and alter their political environment. The radicalism of writers such as Bakunin, Kropotkin, Proudhon, Marx et al., for example, was not simply that they produced a critical analysis of existing social institutions and ethical objections to their practices, but that they also showed them to be human institutions, and therefore to not be fixed, but social, temporal and contingent and, most importantly, open to change. That is, to not just outline how society worked but how it was *produced* and, consequently, how it could be organised in a different way.

One could be forgiven for overlooking this. With few exceptions, particularly in the case of anarchists, these foundational assumptions are largely un-theorised within the works of their chief proponents. This was in part due to the context through which this body of thought developed, where establishing the ontological and epistemological framework that guided research was considered secondary to more immediate, practical tasks. But also, as I will outline later in my research, it would have not have been considered a particularly necessary point to make given that the practices advocated by these theorists, and the circles they were active in, already implied a commitment to and faith in *revolutionary* action and, in this respect, the divergence between their systems of thought and that of dominant political

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<sup>10</sup> Of course this is not to claim that revolutionary and radical writers have not, historically, valued scientific method in respect to their research. It is easy to find comparable concerns for the need to establish clear, analytical schemes by which one is able to better understand the social world. Indeed, for many this is inseparable from polemical or agitational work, as rational study allows for the possibility of understanding, and ultimately exposing, the real forces that operate in society (and the interests that they serve). The fact that many approaches – Marxism, feminism, post-colonial studies, gender theory, post-structuralism – which originated within movements or from writers outside of the academy are so thoroughly integrated into mainstream political study is a testament of their ability to do this. The distinction, however, is that these approaches are not, as they were originally intended to be used at least, aiming primarily to establish common patterns or “laws” governing social behaviour, but are also theories of *social struggle*. Accordingly this necessitates not just an understanding of the particular forces that give rise to political structures but an understanding *and normative stance towards* the political power contained within them and the interests it serves.

philosophy would have felt to be obvious<sup>11</sup>. It is only in retrospect, as academic and “movement” theories have become increasingly intertwined - and this is a process that goes both ways, more so with the increasing availability of academic works - that it is necessary to re-address the underlying assumptions that clarify this distinction.

In spite of appearances, however, it would be overly simplistic to identify such difference with the institutionalisation of political knowledge alone, i.e. with the role of academia and academics. Such a generalisation is problematic for a number of reasons, not least for brushing over a great deal of complexity and contradictions within the practice of academia itself. It should be acknowledged that, in spite of theoretical limitations, social movement theoreticians have made methodological contributions that at the very least highlight central issues and concerns when studying and analysing extra-institutional political behaviour. These do deserve careful consideration. Equally, it is possible to point to, for example, many of the dominant traditions of Marxism, which have been typically, in spite of their origins outside of academia, far more closely aligned to the methods and goals associated with academic study<sup>12</sup>. No institution should be regarded as neutral, but academia cannot be considered in isolation and some account needs to be made of the way in which it also reflects, as well as reproduces, a much wider political landscape (see for example, Lynch and O’Neill, 1994; McDowell, 1990; Oldfield et al., 2006); as can be similarly argued with Marxist movements and their writings (Mattick, 1983).

Typically attempts to address the disparities between “movement-based” and social movement theory have been made on a methodological basis. In its most radical expression this has led to the development of co-participative or activist research which attempts to effectively synthesise both the study and practice of extra-institutional political movements (for an overview see Fine, 1992). Whatever its merits as a method of research (this will be more thoroughly reviewed later) I believe the problem necessitates an analysis that appreciates the way political discourse, and methods of political study, are reflective of relationships of political power (and the extent to which, despite their claims, the majority of social movement literature fails to do this). That is not just how or what social phenomenon

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<sup>11</sup> Sociology and social science were also very much in their infancy at the time and, as such, there was little need to establish a distinction between how they approached their research and how professional academics would later come to study these subjects.

<sup>12</sup> Of course one could also argue, as Graebar (2009) does, that Marxism is also, “probably the only social movement invented by a man who had submitted a doctoral dissertation” and, similarly, point to the high density of Marxist writers who were also professional academics. Nonetheless, I believe that the point still stands that the general research practice and intellectual methods of Marxist groups tends to operate in similar ways to the academy, and be informed by its method, irrespective of the presence of professional academics.



are studied but the ontological framework and assumptions, the vantage point in effect, that the theorist adopts when analysing social life, which in turn is reflective of, often far more deeply embedded, assumptions about the political.

### **Language and power: Von Stein and the social movement problematic**

The chief obstacle is that “politics”, as it is traditionally presented, is primarily a product of ruling class discourse and therefore overwhelmingly reflects, and by extension reproduces, the power relationships it serves. This is something that Marx acknowledged when identifying the ontological inversion – a system that presented social relationships as things and things as social relationships – at the heart of capitalism, but was also recognised by anarchist writers such as Bakunin and Kropotkin in pre-capitalist societies, systems of religious belief, tribal rituals and indeed any social system that depended on the hierarchical division of labour and command. In the contemporary period it is also possible to point to scholars of political identity who have come to question more thoroughly the received vocabulary of their field and been led to similar conclusions that gender, race and sexuality are social constructions involving comparable ideological processes.

Broadly, all of these identified within the dominant strands of political philosophy a method of representing political subjects which was complimentary to the rule of social elites. That is, they not only provided rationales for the continued rule of those elites – for example, the divine right of Kings, the moral authority of the church or the state, the inherent superiority of Whites or men – but also reproduced a general vocabulary for subjects within these systems which generally precluded the possibility for either individual transgressions or general social transformation. Most commonly via the presentation of lived behaviour and experiences in the form of static social categories within objectively viewed, and equally static, social systems – a process Marx identified within capitalism as reification, the “thingification” of social relations. In the present period such an approach is reflective of more fundamental components of bourgeois ideology which attempts to identify the reproduction of hierarchical relations - the state as autonomous, neutral and functioning in the interests of a wider “civil society”- with the reproduction of society in general.

The actual practice of politics, however, presents an unending challenge to this discourse as both movements and ideas continually trouble the boundaries of these closed understandings of social life. The study of collective action in particular (or social movement studies specifically) presents a most extreme expression of this problematic in its attempts to resolve, in its fullest expression, this continuing and underlying conflict within political thought. That is it is an attempt to reconcile

fundamentally alienating political language with practices that produce the exact opposite. In other words, if traditionally social scientific theory has been characterised by inflexibility, by the absence or denial of any space outside of mechanisms which govern or control, then how can we find a basis for the articulation of actions and ideas that challenge these very processes?

Appropriately, this is something that Von Stein, widely regarded as the first “social movement theorist”, recognised quite clearly and attempted to address in his seminal work, *The History of the Social Movement in France, 1789 – 1850* (1850). Von Stein’s work is important in illustrating the tensions underlying bourgeois attempts at appropriating extra-institutional activity for a number of reasons. This is not least because his research is situated in an important historical juncture - between a time when radical theories, particularly materialist ideas prominent within European socialist and communist circles, were starting to be considered more seriously (and the social problems they highlighted more pressing) by bourgeois thinkers and their eventual reformulation in the form of positive, social theory (see Singelmann and Singelmann, 1986)<sup>13</sup>. This process is even evident in Von Stein’s work itself, as the later editions of his *History of the French Communist and Socialist movement, 1789 – 1850*, crucially including the new theoretical introduction on the phenomenon of the “social movement”, are re-drafted as *The History of the Social Movement in France*. In a move which would become quite typical of social movement literature, the latter changed a presentation, albeit a hostile presentation, of proletarian movements and their ideologies to a theory which argued these movements as a *symptom* of the economic inequalities – the “social problem” – prevalent in industrialising societies. Most importantly, Von Stein integrated his understanding of the antagonistic ideas and practices of socialist and communist organisations into a general representation of society that was consistent with the orthodox view of the then primary place, and historical permanency, of the state. Social movements were presented as protagonists of a wider conflict between the “principles” of “society” – particularistic interest – and the “state” – the general good - that would play out in the form of cyclical conflicts. As a result, “bondage was viewed as a necessarily permanent social phenomenon” as “neither the principle of state nor that of society could not permanently win without destroying the presuppositions of both” (Singelmann and Singelmann, 1986: 444). His “solution”, in effect was - while recognising that the study of “society” had presented problems for existing political theory, that this had revealed politics to be permeated by conflicting interests and that this conflict could even cause changes in social and political institutions - to nonetheless, present the underlying relationships of political communities as unchanging.

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<sup>13</sup> Hence, von Stein’s claims in the introduction to his work that, “the present generation has begun to observe certain phenomena which had formerly remained unrecorded in everyday life” and that “powerful events” have now revealed “society” to be “a force permeating the life of nations and of individuals” (von Stein, 1850, p. 43)

Von Stein's ideas may appear now to be overly simplistic but his essential outline of the underlying causes of political change, and the essential stability of political communities, is broadly consistent with not only contemporary social movement literature but political science more generally. Moreover this notion of establishing "paths" or "opportunities" for political change by social actors, in his case legitimacy crises caused by corruption and the institutionalisation of class interests within the state, is a common research focus (for example, McCarthy and Zald, 1977; Tarrow, 1996). Subsequently many key approaches within social movement theory will be underscored by normative claims concerning the appropriate and successful conditions and means for achieving social and political change - many of which can be identified with the composition, ideology and programmatic demands forwarded by popular social movements over the period of their creation. It is possible to illustrate this even with seemingly divergent approaches to the study of extra-institutional political behaviour. In a contemporary context, the approach closest to Von Stein's original ideas – of social movements as symptomatic responses to wider social conditions - is that of Pluralist theorists.

### **Contemporary approaches**

As a criticism of the narrow focus of institutionalist scholars, pluralists, introduced a field of political study, and a whole host of new actors, which had previously been marginalised in political research. While social movements would rarely be a primary focus of pluralist scholars they would represent a by-product of this expanded theoretical framework. Accordingly they have been the subject of several early, and noteworthy, studies. Central to pluralism was the notion that the US, and by extension other liberal democracies, were political systems open to many interests and characterised by relatively accessible channels of negotiation and compromise between different groups (Jenkins, 1995: 9-12). As a result of this supposed accessibility and responsiveness, guaranteed by institutionalised political channels, pluralists considered extra-institutional forms of political action to be either the result of political "deviancy" brought about by a "sick" political system or that the movements were anti-democratic in character (see for example, Kornhauser, 1959; Smelser, 1963). The implications were clear, if the existing system provided open channels for the negotiation of public goods then either social movement actors were too irrational to appreciate this fact or they were opposed to the workings of the democratic system itself. Occasionally these two conclusions would merge as some studies would seek to establish a psychological grounding to the authoritarian social and political beliefs of individual actors. Kornhauser (1959), for example, would speak of the psychological "vulnerability" to demagogues and totalitarian movements of

individuals as a result of the alienating effects of “mass society”. Hoffer (1951) would go even further, introducing a typology of “mass movement” personalities that would include “Misfits”, “The Inordinately Selfish”, “The Bored” and “The Sinners”.

The Pluralists contention of the illegitimacy and corruptive influence of “mass” and “totalitarian” movements, however, was foreshadowed by the orchestrated political repression by ruling elites of existing “mass” movements such as the American Communist Party over this period (Gibson, 1988). American sociologists Krugman (1952) and Selznick (1952), in particular, were to devote a great deal of analysis to this particular organisation which they characterised as a “highly deviant group”, membership of which they assessed was the result of personality disorder brought about by psychological maladjustment in the face of the conditions of modernity. Lipset’s “Democracy and Working-Class Authoritarianism” (1959), argues familiar themes - that it was the lack of sophistication, greater suggestibility and the anxieties of working people that drew them to authoritarian movements such as the Communist Party (although it should also be noted that Lipset described McCarthyism in similar terms).

The emphasis was therefore on “extremism” and marginality as a common characteristic of dissenting political actors and as a cause of their deviation from the approved courses of political action. At a macro-sociological level pluralists tended to emphasise the transitory character of social movements and as indicative of a failure in the existing channels of representation brought upon by rapid social change and/or a breakdown of the social order. If the stability of the Western democratic regimes was guaranteed by the openness of their political process, then social movements much therefore be a product of a breakdown in this process and imbalance between participation and consensus. Pluralism, in short, was an ideological defence of existing structures of political participation against the challenge posed by extra-institutional movements (for social movement theorists on the limitations of classical pluralism see Mcadam, 2002; Jenkins, 1985).

The general hostility towards social movements (its treatment isn’t considered particularly influential to modern social movement theorists) makes drawing links between the ideological and normative goals of the period and their subsequent representation of social movements particularly easy. Nonetheless, it is possible to detect similar processes even in those who claim to consider the activities of social movements more seriously.

“Political Opportunity Structure” (Eisinger, 1973; Jenkins, 1985; Mcadam, 1996) and “Resource Mobilisation” (McCarthy and Zald 1973, 1977; Oberschall, 1973, Fireman and Gamson, 1979) theory, for example, can similarly be seen to be an attempt to rectify the Pluralist treatment of social

movements. While many pluralists had been content to dismiss early manifestations of “mass movements”, by the early 1970s the impact of the civil rights movement, feminist, gay right, and anti-war movement *inside* of the institutional political sphere exposed the inadequacy of existing approaches. Clearly there was more political clout in these movements than political scientists had been first willing to attribute to them. The entrance of activists from these very movements into the academic sphere itself would also prove to be particularly influential. For example McAdam comments that,

My first exposure to the academic study of social movements came in 1971 when, much to my surprise, the professor in my Abnormal Psychology class devoted several weeks to a discussion of the topic. I say “surprise” because, as an active participant in the anti-war movement, it certainly came as news to me that my involvement in the struggle owed to a mix of personal pathology and social disorganization. But, reflecting the dominant theories of the day, those were the twin factors emphasized in the course. (2002: 2)

Over the coming decade a number of key contributions sought to develop a richer understanding of social movement activity and to challenge the existing dominance of pluralism in this field. What emerged was a growing theoretical consensus around an economic model of social movement activity with different actors vying for increased access to public goods through a variety of strategies.

However, In spite of the critique of pluralism that both of these approaches developed from they nonetheless proceeded from the shared assumption of the state as, “the arena of routinised political competition in which class, status and political conflicts... are played out” (Tarrow, 1996: 44). RM theory and POS theorists correction to the pluralist’s framework was of size, that social movements should be considered as seriously as other “interest groups” in their political influence, not of the underlying relationships outlined in the model. In this respect it is also probably of little coincidence that movement activists who eventually became theorists in this field, like McAdam, were members of organisations with a largely reformist focus (the Peace and civil rights movement) and that there activity was subsequently directed at having their grievances recognised by the state.

The emergence of “New Social Movement” (NSM) theory was likewise in response to the emergence of “new” extra-institutional movements and ideas that failed to fit into existing explanatory models (Cohen, 1985; Melucci, 1980; Parkin, 1968; Touraine, 1982). As opposed to the more

institutionalised route of Pluralism, RM Theory and POS, NSM, was influenced by a more varied mix of the thoughts of existing movement activists, the increasing influence of the understanding of the West as a Post-industrial society amongst radicalised sociologists (and the corresponding composition of movements over this period – increasingly students and non-industrialised workers) and Leftist scholars whose principle point of reference was (the inadequacies of) Marxism<sup>14</sup>. For example, it was following his experiences with radicalised American Students through the late 1960s that Touraine, widely considered a key architect of NSM, founded the Centre for the Study of Social Movements in Paris.

The traditional narrative of the birth of NSM theory derives from the perception that over this period traditional Leftist scholars, principally Marxists, found themselves unable to explain “the emergence” of student, ecological, feminist and ethnic movements as part of a new wave of Western social radicalism. Quite simply, Marxism was unable to explain why students not industrial workers had become “the vanguard of protest” throughout this decade (Pichardo, 1997: 412). In reality the inability of existing scholars to form an adequate understanding of these movements was less an “empirical issue” – even a cursory study of the history of social protest reveals female liberation, environmentalism, race and ethnicity and education have played prominent roles (see, for example, Calhoun, 1991 and D'Anieri et al, 1977) - and more an ideological one with the seminal influence of Orthodox Marxism, and in Europe particularly the Stalinist Communist Parties like the PCF, over Leftist writing and research; something which had arguably been the case since the Russian revolution<sup>15</sup>. This tradition of Marxism had always considered the industrial working class and their “institutions”, primarily the trade unions, the Social Democratic and Communist Party, as the principle unit of study, and in terms of their normative aims, were considered the primary progressive forces, almost to the exclusion of all other forms of social struggle. Inside of Marxist organisations this took on a fiercely ideological dimension where minorities had to fight tooth and nail for their concerns to be taken seriously. In the academy the issue was less politically loaded and presented itself as an “intellectual” problem - as new proletarian movements, composed from different social strata, embraced issues previously associated with “identity” and even found

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<sup>14</sup> There is a degree of diversity here, as Buechler notes,

Even though new social movement is a critical reaction to classical Marxism, some new social movement theorists seek to update and revise conventional Marxist assumptions while others seek to displace and transcend them. (1996: 442)

<sup>15</sup> Dissident (non-Leninist) traditions within Marxism have always existed; before the 1960s this was largely in the ideas of Council Communist writers and the German and Dutch Left. These were, however, always minority traditions. That was until an intellectual revival of these themes came about roughly over the same period of the development of NSM and roughly in relation to the emergence of the same movements as new intellectuals, increasingly disillusioned with Orthodox Marxism and engaged with new proletarian movements, began to re-access core foundational assumptions.

themselves increasingly in conflict with existing proletarian institutions, how to explain what were ostensibly “progressive” organisations and ideas within a framework that denied them these characteristics?

However, instead of challenging the received wisdom that placed (usually male) industrial workers as the vanguard of social progress, emphasised identity as a “new” component of social struggle and, equally, overlooked historical conflicts within many working class movements – between leadership and rank-and-file, revolutionary and reformist ideas – NSM theorists instead argued a paradigmatic shift between, what they considered, “old” and “new” social movements (Buechler, 1995). Consequently there emerged a body of literature that sought to distinguish the characteristics of the working class movements of “old” – which were retrospectively attributed the characteristics consistent with a very narrow Marxist understanding of them - with those that had recently developed. As Barker and Cox argue, this was often done in relation to a shifting political content;

in the 1960's its point was often an alignment with the revolutionary movement of “1968” against orthodox denials of its political potential; by the early 1980s the point was often to support the development of Green parties and the “greening” of the Left wing of social democratic and orthodox communist parties. In the course of the 1980s and 1990s, “social movement theory” - itself often written in relation to some of the same movements – started to become aware of this literature, which (having lost its political significance with the “mainstreaming” of Green political parties) now became worth recuperating. (2002: 9)

As a result, it is possible to detect assorted influences within the body of NSM literature from the actual ideological commitments and representations of the many movements over the period of its development (for example, commitments to grassroots and horizontalist forms of organisation), the compositions and goals of the broad Fems, Greens and Peace movements who in some cases did “straddle class divides”, an awareness of wider changes in the social fabric of Western societies (with Social Democracy in an ascendant phase and many groups criticising the role of bureaucracy in this process as well as changes in general class composition, increased access to further education and rising living standards) to common representations of the aspirations within the social upheavals of the late 1960s<sup>16</sup>. Along with, of course, the understanding of the history of working class movements as primarily forwarding narrow, economic demands (Canel, 1992) - a view that was reinforced by

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<sup>16</sup> Although it should be emphasised that in terms of “defending the spirit of ‘68” many of the most influential currents were actually very “old” movement – variants of Marxism and anarchism.

the way working class dissent had been so effectively channelled into trade unionism and parliamentary reformism over the period in question (Jenkins, 1995).

Ironically, NSM theorists and Orthodox Marxists, despite the former's critique of the latter (for example, Touraine, 1981), really have much in common in this respect. Both represent the working class in the same way and, moreover, both replicate the notion of a historically determinant group as a progressive force (in the case of Orthodox Marxism the industrial working class, in NSM the new social movement as embodying the structures and values of "post-industrial" society). Nonetheless, since NSM appeared to at least partially correlate to some existing movements, and some participants in these movements internalised the assumptions of NSM theory, it appeared to have, at least temporarily, some explanatory value. What really resulted, however, was an account of sets of ideological assumptions, and the structures around them, that had mobilised certain actors over a specific historical period and had, consequently served to challenge the grounding principles of existing theory (which these activists had considered an obstacle to their own mobilising narratives).

In a contemporary context most social movement theorists will tend to utilise a framework of "multivariate probabilism" – an amalgamation of the key variables outlined in the above approaches in an attempt to theorise a general movement schema. The recent influence of post-structuralist scholarship, however, has also meant an increasing recognition of cultural and ideational factors within this framework (Kurzman, 2008). The integration of post-structuralism, similar to most theoretical developments within this field, builds from recognition of perceived weaknesses of the structuralist tradition; foremost the absence of an adequate account of "discourse" and interpretation as a factor in influencing the behaviour of political actors. In a much broader sense post-structuralism also, intuitively, would seem to suggest a more critical approach to the normalising assumptions of the bulk of social movement theory; especially considering its criticism of essentialism, foundationalism and the teleological designs implicit within some structuralist understandings of social change. Indeed, many post-structuralist accounts of social movements proceed from the understanding that existing theory presents an overtly state-centric view and overlooks the way that dissident social discourses, cultures and movements open up "space" outside of existing political practices (see for example, Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Newman, 2007). If any approach is to address the limitations of existing political discourse to wholly address social movements – limitations that come as the result of a fixed and inflexible vocabulary – post-structuralism would appear to be the best candidate.

The extent to which post-structuralists adequately address more foundational issues concerning theory and political language deserves greater clarification and will be taken up more fully later. In



terms of the presentation of social movements by post-structuralist (or post-structuralist influenced) scholars, however, there is actually a surprising degree of intersection (in some cases key terms and assumptions are used interchangeably) between post-structuralism and long-standing assumptions of social movements established by NSM theory - that social movements are primarily social or cultural, straddle class-divides, are influenced by “post-materialist” values and are in contrast to the narrow movements of old. In some respects this degree of continuity is not surprising. In the academy a post-modern Leftism has increasingly filled the gap identified by NSM theorists as the inadequacies, as well as the waning influence, of a highly deterministic Orthodox Marxism. The extent to which post-structuralism represents an overhaul or just an “update” of the essential approach of the dominant approach to social movements since the 1970s is, therefore, open to question. Indeed many theorists still retain the core assumptions of NSMs as a still relevant descriptor of contemporary protest movements (see, for example, Woods, 2003; Carty and Onyett, 2007).

Where post-structuralism has been applied most explicitly it is in emphasising those features in contemporary protest movements closest to its core assumptions (see, for example, Gamson, 1995; Gallaher and Froehling, 2002) – that identity, and the de-construction of identity, is a key mobilising factor, that practices are de-centred and do not seek to capture political power but subvert existing practices and political programmes and strategies are rejected as reductive. This is while also providing accounts more suitable to contemporary anti-Neoliberal mobilisations, identified widely in the literature as the “anti-globalisation movement”, and the supposedly unique characteristics associated with these. Of these the EZLN (*Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional – Zapatista Army of National Liberation*) is often heralded as the seminal example, with Burbach’s (1994) assertion that this was the first “postmodern political movement” gaining surprising traction amongst both Western intellectuals and the mainstream media at the time (see Nugent, 1995 for a critical overview). This has likewise been accepted as a legitimate frame of analysis for the anti-authoritarian and anti-capitalist movements that emerged as part of a general upswing in global protest through the 1990s to early 2000s. Of these the EZLN was often cited as a key point of reference (see Gordon, 2007 for example in the case of anarchist movements over this period). Moreover, the influence of post-structuralism on these movements has also meant that movement practice and discourse appears consistent with these assumptions. The research of Holloway (2005) and Day (2005), for example - who argue that it is possible to construct alternatives to capitalism within the existing social system - are based on studies, and the popularity of this idea, within movements and initiatives emerging within these recent anti-capitalist mobilisations. However their works are also popular amongst activists and serve an equally important role as “movement texts”.

In the case of Greece, for example, Eutopia cite academic author Jason Adams (who writes on the topics of “post-anarchism” and the potential intersections between anarchist praxis and post-structuralist assumptions) as an influence on the anarchist movement there and “the way anarchist groups conceive their action and practice” (2009: 1). In short, and in a comparable way to NSM theorists and their relationship to the protest movements of the 1970s, post-structuralists have provided accounts of certain contemporary movements which are, at least to some degree, sustained empirically via the internalisation of these same narratives by movements themselves.

Reviewing key approaches within social movement literature reveals both the persistence and continuing influence of *historically produced* narratives consistent with (or in reaction to) the growth of specific social movements. This is problematic for a number of reasons, not least because these representations are supposedly neutral, general and scientific. What were largely tactical and contingent issues for movement activists – the form of organisation, its political goals and orientation, its routines – or simply a matter of social composition – its social basis and class orientation, its cultures – are variously combined into a distinct and universally valid model of political activity codified as “social movements”. Not only does this make it necessary to unpick the historical characteristics of social movements from the ideological presuppositions that have framed academic perceptions towards them, but underlying all of these approaches are implicit normative stances towards the legitimate means and methods of social change.

This does, ultimately, lead towards more foundational, and also more familiar, debates concerning the ability of the researcher to separate the normative act of political enquiry with the codification required of scientific research and how normative aims subsequently inform both a researcher’s perspective and the representation of their subject. Nonetheless, however valid these questions may be, a more critical appreciation of the common political content of “social movements” reveals that this is not simply a question of academic method. Baker and Cox (2002), for example, are correct to highlight the way academia has appropriated the theories of social movements often with little consideration for context (or normative content) or understanding of the way social movement activity is often better characterised as a shifting and transformative *process* (and, therefore, defies rigid codifications). Even if certain approaches within social movement literature appear successful in capturing the characteristics of specific social movements the historically situated nature of this theorising exposes critical limits to its explanatory scope.

Yet, the most common and persistent trait that runs through all of these approaches relates not so much to what is stated but what isn’t. That is, akin to Von Stein’s original attempt to resolve the problems posed by the “social question”. There is an assumed stability to the political relationships

underlying all of these approaches, e.g. the demand orientated relationship between citizen and state. Even within literature that criticises the state-centred bias of social movement theory (for example, Van Dyke et al., 2004) there is a reliance on an ontology in which existing political institutions, and the underlying relationships contained within them, are uncritically accepted as a permanent, static feature of our political environment. That is a political practice largely characterised by “representativeness” and, even in the absence of the state, an essential commitment to practices confirming to civility within a demarcated public sphere. The result is an absence of understanding that what are often characterised as “social movements” are equally often challenges to dominant social practices and institutions, and, as such, simply cannot be accommodated within a frame of analysis that understands politics in terms of the ability of the state to mediate the interests of social groups. Political institutions are not neutral but have been created to enforce and perpetuate specific social interests. This is reproduced in the fundamental orientation of our political language with the state as a central and defining feature. In terms of the understanding of social movements specifically this is reflected in the traditional perceptions of the scope and role of the social sphere – something intrinsically tied to bourgeois sociability.

### **Social movements, the public, the social and citizenship**

Why is it, for example, that “social movements” are typically analysed to be something distinct from other “political” activity like lobbying, voting or the activity of parliamentary political parties? Why didn’t Marx, Kropotkin, Proudhon etc. identify the working class initiatives and tendencies they both studied and were active in as “social movements”? The root of this is in two interrelated concepts – models of civility and the role of the civic sphere – both of which directly relate to models of legitimate and illegitimate political behaviour. Through analysing the historical development of this construct - from its origins in the exclusion of women, children and slaves from public life in antiquity – it becomes clear that it has not only acted as a tool of ruling elites but also established a much more general vocabulary which has perpetuated the notion of politics as a practise exclusive to dominant social groups and made legitimate through their practices. Below I intend to argue that a theory of “social movements” serves tacitly to accept these demarcated and exclusive practices, impoverishing both our understanding of them and, ultimately, all forms of political behaviour<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> To a large extent this can be attributed to the prominent role that these ideas play in almost all aspects of political theorising and, in this sense, the issue is not exclusive to social movement theory but simply more acute within it (given that “social movements” frequently challenge these frames of behaviour). Nonetheless the general reliance on an *a priori* approach to movement theorising, something prevalent within the literature, is also likely to mean an increased reliance on these dominant constructs concerning “social”, “public” and “private” behaviour.

The oldest, and most persistent, manifestation of this model of specific areas for political (and “non-political”) activity is in the categorical distinction between the private and public sphere. Weintraub (1997: 1), for example, states that, “the distinction between “public” and “private” has been a central and characteristic preoccupation of Western thought since classical antiquity”. The origins of this divide can be traced back to the Aristotelian notion of the “polis”, a sphere of public deliberation amongst free and equal citizens, and as contrasted with the “natural” inequalities (between man and woman, master and slave, parent and child) of the citizen’s private life in the home. While Weintraub (1997) is also keen to emphasise that this divide has come to be utilised by many different theorists to mean different things, he also acknowledges that such differences are “neither mutually reducible nor wholly unrelated”. It would be justified, therefore, to categorise the public/private divide as one of the “grand dichotomies” of Western thought (see also, Pateman, 1983, on the public/private divide and the structural subordination of women).

Its modern usage can be traced within popular discourse from the mid to late eighteenth century and particularly in the language of the bourgeois revolutions of Europe. La Vopa, for example, argues that,

It was in eighteenth century Europe, and particularly in England, France and the German states, that the “public” first assumed a recognisably modern shape and became a powerful ideological construct ... To appreciate the semantic shift, one need only consider how the meaning of “opinion” changed as it was paired with “public”. As late as mid-eighteenth century, “opinion” usually connoted the fickleness and narrow particularism of prejudice, in contrast to the unchanging universality of truth. By the end of the century, however, opinion in its “public” guise was endowed with a rational objectivity opposed to the blind advance that traditional authority commanded. (1992: 79)

Although, as Kocke is also quick to recognise, from the outset the “public” construction has been multi-faceted combining, “normative, and descriptive, analytical layers of meaning” (2004: 68). While the development of a recognisably “public” space reflected real socio-economic changes – the increasing freedom of the press, the urbanisation of domestic populations, the expansion of trade routes and the growth of arenas for public discourse – such developments equally cannot be separated from the hegemonising of bourgeois ideas from this period. Enlightenment thinkers of this era sought to undermine absolutism through the promotion of this free, civil discourse, arguing for areas where the state’s intervention was considered unwelcome, e.g. in private life, in the free market. As a result, Enlightenment thought brought the representatives of absolutist power – the

Crown, the church and the aristocracy – into an area of political contestation that had previously only been viable through the use of existing channels of social and religious standing<sup>18</sup>.

In spite of the changing articulations of the “public” throughout this period, particularly in relation to Enlightenment thought with a supposedly more open and pluralistic conception of the role of the public sphere, social status remained a key indicator for inclusion, or exclusion, from political life; a characteristic which has been retained since antiquity. Participation in the Greek polis, for example, was conditioned not by civic reputation or wealth but by one's place as an unlimited master of an *oikos* (household). Throughout the Middle Ages Habermas (1962) identifies a “representative publicness”. That is, a “public” defined by rigid, often inherited, social status typically marked by demonstrations of grandeur to commoners who were often participants, but ultimately spectators to political power. Representatives of the bourgeois class, whose power was based on economic power and not pedigree, pushed for different eligibilities for participation in public life – usually in the form of private property qualifications.

At least in theory, the aspirations of the Enlightenment would seem to suggest different, less exclusive, rationalities governing power than those associated with absolutist regimes. Enlightenment discourse sought to “de-personalise” state authority by arguing for freedom of conscience and the equality of citizens before the law (restricting the arbitrary capacity of state power and the elimination of all rights by birth). Participation in the civic sphere was often formally restricted, but theoretically state authority held its origins to be in “public agreement”, by free and equal citizens engaged in critical debate. For example, while Kant's concept of “tutelage” was reserved for the educated and the propertied, he also argued that nothing barred any hard-working, learned person from entering public life, regardless of their origins. The dual ideals of meritocracy and prosperity were argued to be the foundation of civic virtue, ideals that were intended to be open and inclusive.

Yet despite these egalitarian impulses, there was also a profoundly anti-democratic side to the Enlightenment. While educated elites saw it as a civic duty to improve the level of public debate,

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<sup>18</sup> That is not to reduce the ideas emerging over this period to simply an articulation of class interests, but rather to talk of, criticism grounded in a new kind of social communication or, in current parlance, in a new ‘sociability’ extended to the aristocracy but given its ethos by an educated and propertied bourgeoisie (La Vopa, 1992: 89).

they would also simultaneously restrict certain types of knowledge as the preserve of the privileged. More than often this meant to,

administer a safe dose of Enlightenment – one that would purify but not eradicate traditional religious beliefs and that would avoid a dangerous inflation of popular expectations by limiting the lower orders to “useful” knowledge of direct relevance to their inherited occupational spheres (La Vopa, 1992: 95).

This result was what Habermas (1962) describes as a “non-public opinion”. This was a form of civil discourse that allowed for a level of participation but was simultaneously impoverished by the maintenance of hierarchies of knowledge, and with the growth of media, the active manufacture of opinion favourable to sections of the ruling class. Moreover, the establishment of “private law” debarred certain social issues, largely the distribution and maintenance of private property, from the public sphere. This measure would attempt to insure that economic inequality would never become an issue for popular deliberation. As Horowitz (1982), notes,

By creating a neutral and apolitical system of legal doctrine and legal reasoning free from what was thought to be the unstable redistributive tendencies of democratic politics, legal thinkers hoped to temper the problem of “tyranny of the majority” ... private law came to be understood as a neutral system for facilitating market transactions and vindicating injuries to private rights. (1982: 1425-6)

For women, the practice of the Enlightenment held even less promise for emancipation (for an overview see Coole, 1988). While the majority of women were excluded from formal channels of power during the proceeding period this would largely be the result of an individual’s pedigree and/or religious status. Many social groups were barred from participation in state affairs and this was the case regardless of gender (for example, the peasantry, religious minorities etc.). The “micro-publics” that Habermas describes as early expressions of bourgeois republicanism were, however, more often than not exclusive to men. As Landes explains,

The collapse of the old patriarchy gave way to a more pervasive *gendering* of the public sphere. Despite the excessively personal and patriarchal character of Old Regime monarchical power, women of the period participated in and influenced political events and public language. (1988: 2)

The bourgeois “public”, however, re-affirmed the “natural” divisions between public man and private woman as laid out in antiquity. Republicanism, and the economic forms that accompanied it, depended on women’s domesticity while silencing “public” women from the aristocratic classes. This re-affirmed a long-standing relationship of women as a pre-condition but not principle participant, on their own terms at least, in political life.

Even in the case of the existing systems of hereditary and religious privilege, in practice the spread of Enlightenment ideals generally meant some form of accommodation with, and not overthrow of, the old order. Granted, a move to a formally open model of political participation undermined a key mechanism of monarchical rule, “the capacity to act arbitrarily both in conducting negotiating and in using force” (Mann, 1987: 341). But in practice it was repression combined with divide-and-rule negotiations with corporate groups that proved to be most effective in allowing societies to “claim universal membership while preserving their partiality” (Landes, 1988: 2). Consequently, as Mann (1987) argues, the rise of bourgeois power in Europe rarely meant the end of hereditary privilege with most cases social elites were able to meet some form of constitutional compromise.

In all these cases, the activity of the “public” generally denoted the practice of particular privileged strata and, in this sense, there was – in spite of the changing rationalities underlying this power – an essential preservation of the notion of “political” and “non-political” beings. However, increasing levels of literacy and the access of the lower social classes to channels of political knowledge meant that the maintenance of “non-public opinion” was a difficult strategy for ruling elites to maintain. Eagleton, for example, notes the growth of an insurgent “counter-public” sphere in England from the late-eighteenth to early-nineteenth century;

In the corresponding societies, the radical press, Owenism, Cobbett’s “Political Register” and Paine’s “Rights of Man”, feminism and the dissenting churches, a whole oppositional network of journals, clubs, pamphlets, debates and institutions invades the dominant consensus, threatening to fragment it from within ... under the pressure of mounting class struggle in society as a whole, the bourgeois public sphere is fissured and warped, wrenched with a fury which threatens to strip it of ideological credibility. (1984: 36-7)

The answer to the “social question”, as Von Stein and his contemporaries put it, was not to rely on status (although this was undoubtedly also a good indicator for inclusion in political life) but *frames* of behaviour. In this sense the history of the “social”, as a distinct concept within the social sciences,

is also a history of appropriation, of changes in the social fabric and the use of the state as not solely a mechanism of repression but increasingly as a tool for the management of social demands. The contemporary understanding of social movements as demand-led enterprises or, alternatively, triggered by failures of this management apparatus is rooted in this understanding<sup>19</sup>.

Marshall's (1950) outline, although undoubtedly proceeding from a different theoretical premise, regarding the changing models of citizenship over this period is particularly illustrative in this respect. Marshall sketches essentially three forms of citizenship as broadly represented in the three centuries from the Enlightenment. The first, "civil citizenship", are those changes broadly associated with the bourgeois revolutions of Europe throughout the eighteenth century. That is,

rights necessary for individual freedom – liberty of the person, freedom of speech, thought and faith, the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts, and the right to justice (Marshall, 1950: 10).

These were the formally open, but essentially still exclusive, models of civic engagement already discussed. "Political citizenship" emerged broadly throughout the nineteenth century (in some instances later), that is,

The right to participate in the exercise of political power, as a member of a body invested with political authority or as an elector of the members of such a body.  
(Marshall, 1950: 11)

Largely this meant the extension of the franchise and, as a result, the promotion of electioneering as the legitimate means of political engagement. Before this rioting, freeing prisoners, plundering and burning the houses of the rich, theft, sabotage, undemocratically spreading strikes through going directly to other groups of workers and terroristic bombings were the popular weapons for waging class warfare and winning improvements in social conditions. While many early Industrialists took the view that they could, "hire one-half of the working class to kill the other half" (a phrase frequently attributed to the American financier Jay Gould), the growing weight and proportionate influence of proletarian organisations, and the insurrectionary strategies employed by them, meant such a settlement was unlikely to last. Repression alone was cumbersome and costly (and as incidents like the "Sheffield Outrages", demonstrated potentially put capitalists at great risk, see, for example, Pollard, 1971), a better strategy was to resort to more traditional techniques of the combined threat of violence with the recuperation of corporate groups to stabilise the social order.

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<sup>19</sup> The limitations of which become particularly evident when concerning events such as December 2008, where actions cannot be linked to demands or where movement goals cannot be incorporated, or at least adequately understood, within a framework of social management.



Politicians and early industrialists, for example, quickly recognised the opportunity to buy social peace at the expense of working class representation. The trade union bureaucracies and parliamentary representatives could be relied upon to enforce the necessary work discipline on their membership while mediating escalations in class conflict through improvements in the workplace and concessions through the social wage. Subsequently, trade union recognition, suffrage and the social wage were all important steps towards the "domestication" of the proletariat, of a general trend from the uncontrollable mobs of the 18th Century to the passivity of the modern Labour Movement (Wildcat, no date). The full extension of this settlement can be identified with what Marshall labels as "social citizenship", reforms associated with the welfare state and changes in social policy throughout the twentieth century. As Marshall describes it,

the whole range from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilised being according to the standards prevailing in society. (1950: 11)

In spite of its limitations, Marshall's typology is useful for understanding the emergence of "social" demands within the body politic, as well as the means by which social grievances were successfully channelled into the existing political apparatus through the promotion of different models of citizenship (or acceptable frames of political action)<sup>20</sup>. In this respect, he is correct in his understanding of citizenship and the civic sphere as a highly effective tool of class warfare; that different models allowed for the representation of interest groups and individuals before the state but, critically, not social classes. In this respect, changes in citizenship effectively converted,

the head-on collision of massive antagonistic social classes into conflicts that were less class-defined, more limited and complex, sometimes more orderly, sometimes more erratic. (Mann, 1987: 340)

Throughout the twentieth century, the failure of universal suffrage, "political citizenship", to address both the continuing inequality, and as a result of this, the continuing instability of capitalist society has led to "social citizenship" or changes in the "social wage" to become the key mechanism for the maintenance of bourgeois democracy (Marshall, 1950; Turner, 1986: 118-120).

Representation alone was never going to prove to be the solution to grievances born from systems of social inequality rooted in the existing social and political process. What was really required was

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<sup>20</sup> Mann (1987), for example, argues that this is an essentially anglo-centric model which side-lines other strategies for the reconciliation of social conflict into citizenship, for example, the perseverance of constitutional monarchies, state Communism in the East and fascism.

amelioration. The early architects of social theory – Weber, Durkheim, and Comte et al. – those who, in the words of Landes (1988), “discovered society”, recognised this. They understood the need to legitimise a democratic system that was almost everywhere exclusive while simultaneously not ignoring the “social question” and instability caused by an industrialising economy. Weber’s writings, for example, on the conditions for the legitimate use of authority, which anticipated many of the features of the modern bourgeois state - competent bureaucrats and politicians, rational planning etc., are particularly illustrative in this respect (O’Connor, 1979). They also reflected a new “sociability” – frames of social and political engagement - which extended to the proletariat but, nonetheless, embodied the values of the bourgeoisie.

At the heart of the notion of “social” life is the attempted regulation of social conflict. Civil society, from the *societas civilis* in Aristotelian thought, has always referred to issues of coexistence, “to community beyond the purely particular and to the general and the political” (Kocke, 2004: 66). The normative content of this position has been to convert structural conflicts – those pertaining to institutionalised economic, sexual or racial inequality – into managerial responsibilities for the ruling elites, thus retaining status, the division of political responsibility and monopolies on legitimate violence over the community as a whole. Consequently the content of social conduct has always been orientated towards passivity, towards channelling grievances into channels of representation and away from corporate acts of violence or insurgent behaviour. As Kocke (2004) explains, “social” behaviour is generally;

Orientated towards non-conflict, compromise and understanding in public.

Stresses independence and social organization.

Recognises plurality, difference and tension.

Proceeds non-violently and peacefully.

Is, among other things, orientated towards general things, that is, it works actively for the common good based on the particular experience and interests of each individual.

(Kocke, 2004: 68-9)

Consequently activity that does not conform to these civil and pacifistic norms is traditionally considered “non” or “anti-“social. In the case of December 2008 in Greece, and later in relation to anti-austerity riots and acts of civil unrest, the limitations of this perspective are readily apparent. The requisite space for “social movements” allows no room for acts of dissent and resistance that

seek to break these frames as part of a more fundamental process of re-addressing the structural inequalities that they preserve.

The activity of the social sphere is one based upon particularity, distorting the unity of class interests and common conditions in systems of social oppression. It is also an arena of enforced pacifism. This “civility” not only acts to dampen the most common and effective act of immediate resistance, that of violent action, but also disguises the fundamentally coercive and violent sources of state power under the rubric of a “reasonable” and inclusive discursive space. Moreover, from a historical perspective, this civility has been extended to include violence against objects, for example against property, state architecture, technology, once a common and accepted feature of civil disobedience, as also a transgression of civil norms. The result is, as Graebar (2009b) argue, the enforcement of highly prescriptive routines;

In fact, what we call “the public” is created, produced through specific institutions that allow specific forms of action – taking polls, watching television, voting, signing petitions or writing letters to elected officers or attending public meetings – and not others. These frames of action imply certain ways of thinking, acting, deliberating. (Graebar, 2009b: 528)

The implication of this is that anything that falls outside of this repertoire is not the actions of “the public”. In respect to my research, it is possible to discern this in relation to the common presentation of the December 2008 unrest as a “riot”. This was a perspective which, as will be discussed in greater detail later, served a largely de-legitimising role – serving to emphasise that repertoires were chaotic and prompted by irrational motives but also seeking to separate the body of rioters from a civil and more reasonable “public” negatively impacted by the riots. The result is that those who become involved in rioting, or even other activity attached to the unrest, become a kind of “non-public”; or at least their motives and aims are not presented on equal terms to legitimate, more representational conceptions of political practice.

### **What is a social movement?**

What is a social movement then? Through this analysis it is possible to recognise a wider historical narrative within the emergence of the understanding of “social movements” than simply those tied to the growth and development of specific movements. A process that starts with the identification

of the “social” problem by early bourgeois thinkers and ends with the development of “social citizenship” as a contemporary method of social management. A shift that has meant elites favouring corporate negotiation with favourable groups and state reform as a more preferable strategy for dealing with political dissent over outright repression (although it should be clear that there are still clear barriers within this, principally in terms of the limits imposed by capital). Social movements, subsequently, despite an acknowledgement of their existence outside of institutionalised channels of representation are still conceived to fit into an essentially institutional relationship between the citizen and the state. This is also likely the reason why the US civil rights movement or the modern feminist movements, for example, are considered “social movements”, whereas historical organisation such as the Wobblies or the Diggers (to use an older example), despite operating in a similar extra-institutional setting, are generally not; the difference being that the former were recuperated by the state while the latter were simply crushed.

What are commonly labelled as social movements present a problem for political science in that they do not strictly fit into the existing institutionalised channels of representation, they are outside of the “public”. Nonetheless, social movement theory presents this extra-institutional behaviour in a way that is consistent with a state-centric conception of political practice – politics as defined by *representativeness* and representativeness being a concept consistent with the long-standing idea of politics as the preserve of specific privileged groups.

It is possible to see this in the way that, particularly in traditional social movement theories, movements are represented retrospectively by their successes within the spectrum of state-capitalist management. The Civil Rights movement in the US, for example, often heralded as an archetype of modern social movement activity, is generally presented as a growing, peaceful mass movement whose aims were eventually incorporated into state reforms through the practice of civil disobedience. A more detailed examination, however, reveals the struggle for Civil Rights in the US actually follows far more traditional patterns of escalating, and increasingly uncontrollable, political violence followed by eventual domestication via the recuperation of sections of the movement most favourable to the ruling class (those sections who were most pacifistic and disposed to liberal democracy, not necessarily those that were most popular within the movement). Gelderloos (2007), for example, cites the case of the events that preceded key changes,

In the Spring of 1963, Martin Luther King Jr’s Birmingham campaign was looking like it would be a repeat of the dismally failed action in Albany ... On May 7<sup>th</sup> in Birmingham, after continued police violence, three thousand black people began fighting back, pelting the police with rocks and bottles. Just two days later, Birmingham – up until

then an inflexible bastion of segregation – agreed to desegregate downtown stores, and President Kennedy backed the agreement with federal guarantees. The next day, after white supremacists bombed a black home and a black business people rioted again, seizing a nine block area, destroying police cars and injuring several cops ... A month and a day later President Kennedy was calling for congress to pass the Civil Rights Act. (2007: 12)

Moreover, organisations of the same period acting on similar grievances, over racial prejudice and inequality, for example those in the Chicano “brown power” movement or the indigenous American peoples, but were less successful in mobilising such widespread collective violence found themselves largely excluded from the “gains” of the civil rights era. Radical anti-segregationists - “Wobblies”, socialists, anarchists and those around the American Communist Party - whose activity laid the groundwork for the larger Civil Rights movement but whose aims were ultimately in conflict with those of Martin Luther King have been similarly excluded from popular history (see Gilmore, 2009)<sup>21</sup>. These complexities fit awkwardly into an established narrative reflective of the understanding of the reproduction of the “social” sphere as an arena of demand management – of the incorporation of particularistic interests into an evolving understanding of the “common good” (a common good made material through the actions of the state). Consequently what is being told is not necessarily the history of a movement, but an account of a section of that movement’s successful incorporation into the state. Moreover this done in a way that both mimics and re-confirms the behaviours of the state by presenting representational practice as both the more successful and most legitimate means of achieving political change.

That is not to say that all social movement theoreticians present social movements in such a reductive fashion, rather that this typical presentation is also consistent with a generally accepted understanding of political practice as defined by a relationship with the state. The idea that social movements are better understood as a process by which principles, tactics and strategic choices coalesce into mass organisations is rare. That these principles and tactics may not just be plural and diverse (and shifting) but based on models of political interaction not compatible with dominant models of political practice – as politics as synonymous with representation – is even rarer. That is not to say that what are often identified as social movements never conform to institutional norms, e.g. put forward representatives, attempt to win public support, campaign for social reform etc. Indeed critical writers have long recognised that the state is more than just a set of political institutions and equally exists as a socialisation, a way of perceiving and understanding our social

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<sup>21</sup> “Wobblies” – members of the syndicalist union the Industrial Workers of the World.

environment; in other words, the fact that political behaviour exists outside of institutional channels does not necessarily mean it is free from state control.

Rather, what is missing in traditional accounts of social movements is an antagonistic and open-ended *dimension* within their representation of extra-institutional behaviour; the acknowledgement of the practical possibility of autonomous action within political processes that – particularly prevalent in the case of social movements - often rely upon un-mediated (non-representational) communication, deliberation and action. And likewise the way that extra-institutional political action can break the monopolies of both communication and mediation reserved for the state, as Schwarz explains;

What the State requires, in order to maintain power, is the prerogative to decide, in increasingly, minuscule spheres of life, what is allowed and what isn't; to decide the course of the country and *post facto* legitimate and regulate the initiatives taken by the capitalists. And when some social power contests the reigning order, the State must be involved in the resolution ... the governments strong suit is communication. It is to occupy the central position, the role of mediator and protagonist, in any decision. It will make itself feared if it has to, but above all it survives by making itself heard and making itself necessary to the point where people cannot imagine a solution to a social problem that is not tailored first and foremost to the needs of State. (2010a: 193)

In this respect, the alleged distinctiveness and radicalism of many social movements may actually be ill-founded. Social movements are often conceived as distinct due to the fact that their mix of principles, tactics and strategic choices are in antagonism to dominant institutionalised ones (for an overview see, Diani, 1992). If, however, we are to discard the problematic relationship of social movements to existing understandings of the state it is possible to see that often their practice is indistinct from many institutionalised political, social or cultural routines. They are only distinct to the extent to which these routines have failed to, in the words of Graebar (2004), fully “ossify and harden”. In light of this, it makes more sense to not talk of social movements as distinct entities underlined by set normative goals, but to recognise that all mass movements will have a spectrum of principles and routines some of which will be antagonistic to dominant political practices.

### **Provisions for a theoretical framework**

This points to a much broader scope of enquiry beyond the remit of social movement studies, one that takes a critical and deconstructive view of all social and political practices – an approach, I

believe, very close to the original theoretical conception of “social movements” (if that is an appropriate label at this point) as understood by the “original” movement activists discussed earlier.

The rejection of a distinction between the political-social, private-public etc., for example, by revolutionary thinkers was precisely on the ground that such a segmentation obscured the holistic nature of social life and, consequently, not only allowed the ideas and practices of elites to become mystified from everyday experiences but also de-legitimised the practice of politics outside of institutional channels. As a result it is just as necessary, if not more so, to study the environment within which dissident political movements arise than the movements themselves. As Cox argues,

situations of passivity and institutionalisation just as much as situations of activity and unconventional practices need to be seen as part and parcel of an actively generated and maintained dynamic tension between opposing social forces. (1998: 5)

Rather than attempting to resolve the problematic position of extra-institutional behaviour to the existing understanding of the state - a relationship that has been presented in the form of the accommodation of social citizenship to social movements, but is ultimately partial and inaccurate - the unit of study should be models of social interaction and how these pose critiques and open alternatives (or in some cases don't) to the existing organisation of our societies and the logics of capitalist democracy. Moreover, what is really crucial in this respect is an acknowledgement of the forces that produce conflict within political communities, and hence give rise to “social movements” – the maintenance of particular systems and channels of social interaction that benefit privileged elites.

This, ultimately, requires a re-assessment of our understanding of both politics and how we come to understand politics. It also requires a much deeper enquiry into how the language of state-power is not only apparent within the study of this particular social phenomenon, but has penetrated almost every aspect of political discourse. This is along with the consideration of the response of critical theorists – particularly anarchists – to formulate a de-alienated form of political enquiry. The following section will address this drawing on the ideas of key anarchist and Libertarian Marxist thinkers to outline a distinct approach to the political. This is an approach that I believe deserves not only to be taken seriously on its own merits, but outlines an alternative means for understanding transformative ideology and organisation and the behaviours of extra-institutional political movements.

As has been highlighted already, the key here is seeking some account of social movements that does not fall into the common trap of representation *a priori*. Anarchism, I believe, is in a good

position to answer these concerns with explicit, and ethically grounded, criticisms of abstraction and idealisation in political thought as well as proposals for anti-representational alternatives. Moreover, consistent with my contention that a theorist's ontological and normative stances have important implications for their representation of political behaviour, I believe the ethical and ontological positions underpinning the anarchist perspective are key to understanding its alternative provisions for a social movement methodology. In particular I will point to the anarchist analysis of the autonomous and autonomy as a better means of conceptualising the context in which extra-institutional behaviour happens. In addition, the questions and challenges that anarchist organisers faced in relation to their praxis, and commitment to the development of autonomous social forms, have parallels for the questions facing social movement researchers and point to a number of provisions for an anarchist framework. The methodological commitment (developed later), for example, to an "internalised" researcher stance derives directly from these questions. As stated from the offset the concern here is for a holistic approach, drawing a direct line between ontological commitments, epistemological stances and research method and the ultimate benefit derived from normative clarity exercised within all three.



## Chapter 2: Getting to grips with the political: Anarchism and Libertarian Marxism

*We do not boast that we possess absolute truth; on the contrary, we believe that social truth is not a fixed quality, good for all times, universally applicable, or determinable in advance ... Thus our solutions always leave the door open to different and, one hopes, better solutions. - E. Malatesta (1921)*

From the above it is possible to see how an anarchist perspective opens up a certain avenue of enquiry in relation to the faults of social movement theory, particularly in relation to the representation of the political and the need to move beyond the application of a “generalisable category” of social movement (or at least be suspicious of the normative consequences of this). What do, however, anarchist approaches *offer* to the study of social movements? What solutions do anarchist writers propose, both theoretically and methodologically, to the problems identified? Foremost, if a principle problem with social movement theory is in its presentation of the political as a broadly stable, and frequently state-centric, civic space then it is possible to point to anarchism as a viable alternative to that representation. My contention here is that anarchists not only hold to an ethical objection to the state, capitalism and social hierarchy, and the preference for an autonomous society organised on the basis of free association and mutual aid, but that they also forward an understanding of politics that;

- Radically departs from existing discourse (and its reliance on reified social categories).
- Presents a richly informed, empirically grounded view of the social world.
- One that is consciously and pointedly empowering for social subjects.

All of which form the bare outlines of what can be identified as “libertarian materialism” – an attempt to formulate a de-alienated system of political thought and practice. The resulting approach is something, I believe, both informed by this rich tradition while also putting forward substantial provisions for further theoretical, and crucially, field research as original developments in this area. My contention is that such an approach is not only valuable on its own normative terms, but that anarchism *needs* to be taken by any social or political historian attempting to understand processes of political transition and change. In relation to the study of extra-institutional movements specifically, I believe this approach not only speaks to the weaknesses in social movement theory, but provides an alternative framework for deriving rich and engaging research into extra-institutional behaviour.

The first part of this analysis will focus on the ontological assumptions that ground the anarchist framework. Initially this will mean contextualising the development of anarchist ideas in relation to the chief theory which anarchism defines itself against – classical Marxism. Analysing the alternative choices that anarchists took in relation to the development of critical social philosophy – and why – gives the clearest understanding of the kind of open, anti-teleological, but nonetheless, materialist framework anarchists eventually outlined. Having done this I will look to the more recent contributions of post-structuralist theorists in this area, how their theories challenge, what they identify as, “classical Anarchism” and the alternative provisions they offer in terms of “post-anarchism”. Here I will argue that post-structuralism raises a number of important, critical issues for anarchist theorists, questions that require clarification and elaboration of anarchist assumptions, but are nonetheless sufficiently addressed within the terms established by anarchism’s chief elaborators. While acknowledging the utility of some contributions of post-structuralist anarchists I reject any proposals for fundamental revisions (or a need to “go beyond”) foundational anarchist assumptions. Finally, I will outline how these ontological assumptions, and a unique perspective on the political, draw into an alternative understanding of extra-institutional political behaviour. Moreover, that extra-institutional behaviour has always been a key point of reference in respect to the development of this framework. I will argue that autonomy is a central concept within anarchist thought and critical in delineating the alternative contexts that institutional and extra-institutional actors find themselves in. By utilising the framework of autonomy I believe it is possible to bypass unresolved debates concerning what a social movement “is” and move to a more holistic understanding of autonomous and extra-institutional behaviour as a constituent part of political life. As already stated, such an approach not only answers the criticisms of social movement theory, but presents its own constructive, alternative vision of “social movement research” in its own right. It also highlights clear provisions for an anarchist research methodology which will be developed in greater detail in the following chapter.

Thus far, I have discussed very little of Marxism as a potential alternative “social movement theory” (indeed many SM theories are premised as “post-Marxist”). Writers such as Cox (1998), for example, have argued explicitly for the need for some adaptation of the historical materialist framework within the body of social movement theory and the convergence of aims and objective of Marxists and certain social movement researchers. Likewise in respect to the concerns identified over representation, language and power the work of post-structuralist writers would appear to offer an equally viable route of enquiry (even if post-structuralist accounts of social movements have been

shown to be limiting)<sup>22</sup>. The preference here, however, has been to point to the correct problems that both classical Marxist and post-structuralist theorists have identified, while nonetheless looking principally to anarchism for the most complete solutions. In respect to the development of classical Marxism this is to point to an alternative solution to the “idealist” dilemma – in terms of attempting to formulate a conception of political and social practice free from reified categories - facing early radicals in opposition to that which was originally developed by Marx. In respect to post-structuralism it is to argue for the existence of a tradition of libertarian analysis that both anticipates, and in some instances actually pre-dates, post-structuralist critiques of political discourse while still drawn from within a materialist framework.

### **Laying the groundwork: Anarchism, Classical and Libertarian Marxism**

An immediate problem presents itself when speaking of an “anarchist theory” in terms of the ability to draw from an established understanding of what anarchism actually is. Anarchism, right from its origins, has been a much abused and misused political concept<sup>23</sup>. Popularly associated with chaos and disorder - something also indicative of a long-standing inability within mainstream literature to articulate politics outside of the state - it has been subject to a great deal of confusion by detractors and even supposed adherents alike. Whose and what ideas, then, am I actually referring to when I talk of an “anarchist” approach to political theory? It is necessary to establish a clear definition of the ideas concerned here not only for theoretical clarity, but also because in tracing the historical development of anarchism in the anarchist movement it is possible to situate its claims in the correct context. The purpose of this section is, therefore, to argue that anarchism is a modern tradition of socialism that grew out of strategic and philosophical debates in the labour movement. In light of this, it is also best understood, not as a variant of liberalism as some have claimed, but in relation to its “class-struggle-cousin” Marxism, which is both a principle point of reference, an influence (particularly in the area of economic theory) and a point of critical divergence. In studying the theory

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<sup>22</sup> In spite of the important early contributions of Marx on this subject and seminal works by Marxists - Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness* (1920), Korsch's *Marxism and Philosophy* (1923) – this arguably an area where Marxist theory is otherwise lacking.

<sup>23</sup> Cahm, for example, documents the reluctance of even the Bakuninists to attach the label “anarchism” to their social and political programme, largely because it was primarily used as a term of abuse by statist to discredit the ideas of anti-authoritarians within the First International but also, perversely, because “anarchy” was primarily associated with the followers of Proudhon and therefore considered a reformist political philosophy. Early anti-authoritarians would, therefore, often write anarchy in its hyphenated form (an-archy) to,

underline the Greek derivation meaning ‘without government’, in opposition to the notion of disorder with which anarchy was usually associated. (1989: 37)

and practice of the anarchist movement, and in spite of the diversity of the tradition, it is possible to outline key philosophical stances that can be identified as uniquely anarchist. Elaborating these concepts reveals a rich political philosophy that goes significantly further in its content than simple opposition to the state. Moreover, it suggests that opposition to the state may in fact be a poor indicator of anarchism. As a part of this enquiry I will also look at a Libertarian tradition within Marxism that has shared much with anarchism, assessing the potential points of convergence and the degree to which it is “true” to Marx’s original theoretical vision. In doing this I lay the groundwork – the normative priorities, historical and class basis of this position – for the unique ontological position concerning extra-institutional political activity contained within the anarchist framework.

Academia has never been particularly successful at defining anarchism (for a full overview see Van Der Walt and Schmidt, 2009), principally because writers, in a move that they can perhaps be forgiven for given the etymology of the term, have proceeded from the assumption that the foundational claim of anarchists is opposition to the state. Consequently works of anti-statist philosophy - objectivism, egoism and free market capitalism being common culprits - that share little if any connections with a historical anarchist movement are often joined into a vast, and incoherent, tradition understood to be anarchism. This has also been true of socialist critics and artists who have held loosely anti-authoritarian values but showed little to no engagement with either the works of anarchism or anarchists of their period. This confusion in identifying what anarchism is, as Schmidt (2010) observes, is often, “then taken as evidence of anarchism’s own internal incoherence”, with seemingly contradictory standpoints such as anarchist communism, free market capitalism and, most bizarrely, so-called “National-Anarchism” (a variant of Third Position fascism) all being attributed with a common ethical framework. This is in addition to the difficulties in situating the historical development of an anarchist philosophy via such varied sources as the pre-modern thought of Laozi to the “post-modern” thought of Foucault.

Such difficulties are to some degree symptomatic of the level of marginalisation that anarchists have unfortunately always suffered within political philosophy with their contributions often invisible to even most radical political intellectuals<sup>24</sup>. This situation is also not aided by the fact that

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<sup>24</sup> In fact many radical scholars have been the worst culprits when it comes to misrepresenting anarchists and anarchist ideas. Hobsbawm’s (1959; 1973) analysis, for example, of anarchism as both a “primitive” and “Millenarian” philosophy has proved particularly influential (for a critical response see Kaplan, 1977, in the case of Andalusian Anarchism, and Wellbrook, 2009, in the case of Italian Anarchism).

many of the key proponents of anarchist theory are largely represented as militants, propagandists and pamphleteers. For thinkers such as Kropotkin, Malatesta, Magon, Berkman, Goldman and Makhno it is largely newspaper articles, speeches and biographic materials that survive. Systematic treatise widely available in print such as Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid* or Bakunin's *God and the State* represents the exception as opposed to the rule. Thinkers such as Goldman displayed a rich philosophical background, identifying Wollstonecraft, Emerson, Thoreau and Nietzsche as key influences on her thought; however, they also found their writings under constant pressure from censorship and confiscation, as well as periods of imprisonment and exile<sup>25</sup>. In contrast, Marx, Engels, Lenin, Gramsci and many other key Marxists, including more libertarian writers such as Cleaver and Thompson, all had at least some experience of higher education (or had worked in academia)<sup>26</sup>.

The failure of anarchism to be incorporated into academia is equally attributable to the fact that anarchism is as much defined by its organisational practice, if not more so, than its proponent thinkers. This in contrast to the more typical presentation of intellectual works as the product of, what Graebar and Shukaitis (2007) label, "heroic thinkers". In the case of French critical theory, for example, they argue that despite clearly owing it's heritage to the events of '68, a great deal of theorisation both inside and outside of political movements and undoubtedly hundreds of formal and informal discussions concerning revolutionary theory and practice at the time, it is still largely represented through a select group of authors. Marxism is likewise often described through its authors and chief strategists – Leninism, Trotskyism, Maoism, Gramscianism, Althusserianism etc. – with little acknowledgement of the debt that, for example, Marx owes to radical circles of French workers, the early socialist movement or his activity within the First International. In contrast, anarchist authors felt that they were not describing anything new or unique in their writings; rather they were simply elaborating tendencies they observed in the activity of the movements of their time or could be identified historically. Consequently, anarchism

is not defined so much by it's loosely defined canon of theory as it is by a repertoire of practices: direct action, the general strike, direct democracy, collective ownership, co-operation, federation etc (Cohn, 2006: 14-5).

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<sup>25</sup>For example, records of the series of public lectures that Goldman gave on Nietzsche were lost during police raids on the offices of *Mother Earth* (a journal she co-edited) (see Starcross, 2004).

<sup>26</sup>In contrast Goldman's education was almost entirely independent and self-directed. Her father took her out of school during adolescence and, in a famous incident, threw one of her books into the family fireplace proclaiming, "Girls do not have to learn much! All a Jewish daughter needs to know is how to prepare gefilte fish."

As Graeber (2009a) also notes, schools of anarchism tend to therefore emerge from organizational principle and forms of practice, e.g. Anarcho-syndicalism, Insurrectionism, Platformism, Mutualism etc. That is not to say that anarchism has no theoretical contributions, or indeed that theory is as “loosely defined” as Cohn suggests, rather that it’s theoretical contributions emerge from strategic questions, derived from the desire to free the popular classes from all forms of political authority as well as lessons derived from this praxis. Historically this has led to the development of two key points of principle that are shared by all strains of anarchism – an understanding of the state, and by extension all social hierarchies, as a source of inequality and a restriction on personal liberty and, secondly, and related to this, the inseparability of political “ends” and “means” in striving for socialist goals.

Foremost it is important to emphasise that the anarchist objection to the state is far more substantive than simply the rejection of centralised state power (a position shared by many non-anarchist thinkers), but to all forms of *political* authority. As Wieck explains,

Anarchism can be understood as the generic social and political idea that expresses negation of *all* power, sovereignty, domination and hierarchical division, and a will to their dissolution; *and* expresses rejection of all the dichotomising concepts that on the grounds of nature, reason, history, God divide people into those dominant and those justly subordinated. (1979: 139)

In short, anarchists oppose all forms of power as “dichotomising”, not just that which are concentrated in the state apparatus. Historically this has meant opposition to,

capitalism, landlordism, the state and of unequal social power relations in general whether gender-based, rooted in racism, colonialism or other forms. (Schmidt, 2010)

Cohn (2006) argues that at the heart of this critique of power is an opposition and desire to move beyond all forms of “representationalism”. This includes attributes we would recognise to be typically employed in the use and justification of political power, what Cohn labels “patronizing”, “labelling” and “identifying” representation, for example;

Practices that appropriate the power to represent the others interest ... suppos[ing] that the representative has capacities the represented lacks. (2006: 42)

Also, practices and systems of thought that may be internalised by political subjects, for example, in the normalization of specific sets of social practices or the division of subjects into “identities”, and

even systems of control that may not be apparent in the immediate behaviour of political institutions, for example, in the manipulation of language.

This is in contrast to much of the socialist tradition from which anarchism developed, which despite sharing much with anarchist analysis, still presents an essentially *representationalist* course of future political action. For example, as Cohn explains, in the case of classical Marxism;

Where the Marxists pronounce the proletariat as a universal class (representation of humanity, by virtue of its relation to the means of production) and themselves a universal party of the proletariat (representative of the representative, as Lenin declared, by virtue of its possession of an accurate theoretical representation of history), anarchists insist on a non-hierarchical society as an end and non-hierarchical organisation as the only appropriate means to that end. (2006: 201)

Such a stance encapsulates a critique of power that goes far deeper than not only that of the other socialist and communist traditions, but traditional approaches to political philosophy which have always employed the state, citizen and the bounded community as both essential tools of analysis and means to articulate their positive vision of a political community<sup>27</sup>.

This has subsequently extended into a focus on the “micro-political” - on social behaviour, politics as a living practice and the importance of alternative and dissident frames of sociability - and had a profound effect on the anarchist conception of the political. Anarchists are resistant to the “naturalisation” of social and political ideals and institutions that has occurred in other systems of

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<sup>27</sup> The practical result of which has been a historical tradition of initiating experiments in anarchist living designed to create counter-cultures, alternative publics, orientated towards both promoting and practising real-world examples of the anarchist ideal. Moreover, these initiatives are designed not only to re-affirm the practical viability of social organisation without hierarchy, but are often conceived as the seeds by which an alternative, autonomous political culture can grow. As Schmidt explains,

The broad anarchist tradition ... had, and continues to construct, concrete projects aimed at dissolving centralist hierarchical coercive power, whether of capital or state, and replacing it with a devolved, freely associative and horizontally federative counter-power ... anarchist counter-power creates a haven for revolutionary practice which serves as a school for insurgency against the elites, as a beachhead within the mainstream from which to launch its assault and as the nucleus of a future radically egalitarian society. As the Spanish militant Buenaventura Durruti so famously stated, “the new world in our hearts”. (2010)

There are many examples of this throughout the history of the anarchist movement from the modern school movement, the direct democracy and rank-and-file militancy of syndicalist unions, communes and co-operatives, social centres, radical libraries, workingmen clubs and union houses and, perhaps more controversially, the “propaganda of the deed” of the anarchists of the late nineteenth century, among many others. This kind of prefigurative activity is an attempt to create both social agency and an autonomous sociability through collective action in a way that does not rely upon external hierarchies but the active self-activity of the mass of the people.

thought – the historical permanency of the state, racial or gender divides, the rationality of market exchange, the virtue of leadership etc. Rather they seek an understanding of social life that aims to deconstruct i.e. analysing the historical and contingent basis of these institutions, but also ultimately see beyond, these dominant institutions. Moreover this commitment to move beyond representational categories equally goes deeper than the level and extent of critique applied. It is also a naturally self-reflexive position. Anti-representationalism derives from a prefigurative ethic - a commitment towards the inseparability of political means and ends - which likewise informs not only the purpose and application of research but also researcher stance and method. Accordingly the notion of any kind of separation, or division, between ethics, ideals and research practice is strongly resisted. In relation to analysing processes of social and political change this has meant an explicit move away from the kind of *a priori* techniques evidenced in other approaches and more in favour of an engaged, richly empirical standpoint. This is a standpoint that aims to not only more effectively capture social movements, by relying on inductive techniques as alternatives to determinist and substitutionist readings of political subjects, but also, more importantly, to reach value-judgements from a position of equivalence with research subjects, i.e. comparable levels of immersion, contextualisation, etc .

Before elaborating on this further, however, it would remiss not to also acknowledge the debt, as well as the key differences, that anarchism owes to its chief competitor – Marxism. The anarchist approach to history, the role of the intellectual, knowledge, among other concerns were developed in reaction to Marx's eventual synthesis, as well as considerable elaboration, of the materialist ideas popular in the socialist movement of his period. Following Marx's death, this methodology - dialectical/historical materialism - would become the dominant method of study for almost all of the socialist movement (as well as being slowly appropriated by Leftist academics). While many anarchists, such as Berkman, would argue that Marx was in the debt of Proudhon for many of his key ideas - and that, therefore, historical materialism was as much a product of anarchism as it was of Marx - nonetheless, key questions within anarchism are frequently defined on the terms by which anarchists and anti-authoritarians have both appropriated as well as sought to distance themselves from Marx's framework. Clarifying the relationship between the two not only provides the basis for the ontological and epistemological differences in their respective approaches, but also the potential grounds for convergence in the form of libertarian Marxism.

The relationship of anarchism to Marxism has historically been framed by the split in the First International and more specifically, the tumultuous relationship (and eventual bitter personal rivalry) between Marx and Bakunin (for a balanced overview see Mehring, 1918). The narrative,



therefore, has overwhelmingly been one of schism and conflict. While exchanges between Marx and Bakunin throw up some important points of principle that would come to define the divides between statist and anti-authoritarian socialism, it would also be hasty to write off Marxism as a continuing point of reference for anarchist theorists. As Schmidt and van der Walt (2009) note;

As the other major class-based socialist ideology, classical Marxism both influenced anarchism and was the primary ideology against which anarchism defined itself ... the relationship between classical Marxism and the broad anarchist tradition is not necessarily as stark or polarised as sometimes assumed; the two are deeply entangled. (2009: 83)

The political points of divergence between anarchism and Marxism are fairly clear – parliamentarism, the use of the state, the role of leadership and the form that transition should take to a communist society – in the context of intellectual practice. However, what is more useful is how these positions subsequently informed and shaped the philosophical basis of anarchist and Marxist study, particularly in the case of the alternative “materialisms” that have underlined this perspective. In this it is possible to clearly de-lineate the different “representations” emerging from each framework, their alternative accounts of movement (and the role of the intellectual/researcher in relation to movement) and the normative positions that underscore these.

Central to understanding the philosophical basis of Marx’s approach is a need to appreciate the intellectual context in which he, and many other radical intellectuals, operated in and the challenge that faced them as a new generation of critical theorists - principally the attempt to transform the existing philosophical treatment of human development into a critical theory of society suitable for a growing socialist movement. Prior to this, throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth century “society” had typically been conceived on the terms by which the individual was able to ensure their material security or prosperity. It was largely regarded as a sphere of “physical necessity” (Singelmann and Singelmann, 1986), conceived in abstract terms and considered an obstacle to the true priorities and concerns of philosophy – the pursuit of reason. Having witnessed the political and social upheavals of Europe over this period and the emergence of a new political antagonism in the form of the laboring classes, a new generation of intellectuals were attempting to find a means to re-apply this social philosophy. Central to this was the influence of Hegel.

Hegel conceived the development of human society as based upon a series of contradictory forces that were bound to reach resolution. Crucially, a radical reading of his philosophy implied that social

“truths” were not objective and whole (as had been previously understood) but partial and temporary. They represented but one negative phase in the unfolding of truth which would reveal itself in the destruction and succession of that phase. History could be conceived as revolutionary, sweeping away outdated and outmoded concepts. Such an appropriation of Hegelian ideas not only provided new ways of understanding social activity but also had deeper consequences for the epistemological status of philosophy itself. By outlining a system whereby the movement of history was the central current in human development Hegel had attempted to shift the priorities of philosophy. The analysis of history and human activity, not reflection, was presented as the means by which humanity was capable of realising the true content of reason. Therefore,

Philosophy itself thus made direct application to social theory and practice, not as to some external force but as to its legitimate heir (Marcuse, 1941: 257).

For radical Hegelians, Marx included, the dialectic could be utilised as a method of radical, social critique precisely because it held no historical condition to be permanent. The state, political authority, class society all represented instances of dialectical interplay to be carried to their antecedent stages by the new mode of philosophical discovery – socio-historical practice. Such a perspective not only implied a revolutionary critique of the existing social order but also revolutionising the objectives of philosophy itself<sup>28</sup>.

For Marx, it was humanity's desire to not only master and resolve the contradictions which impeded its material satisfaction but also to resolve and supersede alienation as a result of its place as *subject* of philosophical thought. Humanity had to transform itself from a passive element in history to an actor of its own history. Just as material poverty had to be brought into negation by the collective activity of an organised proletariat, the same social forces were to bring about the negation of philosophy itself through an active appropriation of its own historical practice.

A central tool throughout classical Marxist analysis has, therefore, been the use of the dialectic, or dialectical analysis, in the study of social history. The place and intended purpose of this within Marxists discourse has, however, been a source of a great deal of controversy. This is not aided by the contradictions within Marx's own writings. The critique of alienation and reification above, for

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<sup>28</sup> As Marx (1845) famously stated, “The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it” (423).

example, is largely a product of Marx's early writings and in contrast to the economistic and deterministic pronouncements of *Capital*<sup>29</sup>. Moreover, as Schmidt and Van Der Walt note,

Marx's most voluntaristic works – dating mainly from the mid-1840s to the late-1850s – were not published in his lifetime; the public persona of Marx stressed scientific Marxism (even if his political strategy involved a fair degree of voluntarism). (2009: 95)

Marx himself, in comparison to some of the other issues he would devote his analysis to, rarely addressed the weight and import that should be attributed to the dialectical method in his works. He would devote a chapter of his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (1844) to a materialist critique of the Hegel's philosophy and emphasise the utility of the dialectic as a method for comprehending the reproduction of humanities alienation by labour. He would also raise this again in his critique of Proudhon in *The Poverty of Philosophy* and the dialectical character of economic development would continually resurface as a metaphysics of political economy throughout his works. However, the ontological status of this dialectic was largely unqualified aside from a few short remarks in his correspondence with Engels.

Marx's elaboration in the afterword of the Second German language Edition of *Capital* proves to be particularly insightful in respect of further developments in classical Marxist thought. In this he asserts that both,

my dialectic method is not only different from the Hegelian, but is its direct opposite. To Hegel, the life-process of the human brain, i.e., the process of thinking, which, under the name of "the Idea," he even transforms into an independent subject, is the demiurgos of the real world, and the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of "the Idea." With me, on the contrary, the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought. (Marx, 1873)

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<sup>29</sup>Marx also displayed a tendency throughout his lifetime, despite his insistence on the need for an explicitly communist movement, to articulate reformist (political) demands, i.e. those later associated with the parties of Social Democracy. So, for example, the programme of *the Communist Manifesto* includes, "a heavy progressive or graduated income tax", "free education for all children in public schools" and the "centralization of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the state". In attempting to account for this dual personality, Crump (1976) points to the commentary of Engels in *Marx and the Neue Rheinische Zeitung (1848-9)* as a possible explanation to their "pragmatic" stance on issues of political practice;

If we did not desire to take up the movement from its already existing, most advanced, actually proletarian side and push it further, then nothing remained for us to do but to preach communism in a little provincial sheet and to found a tiny sect instead of a great party in action. But we had already been spoilt for the role of preachers in the wilderness; we had studied the utopians too well for that. We had not drafted our program for that. (1884)

But also that this dialectic;

in its rational form it is a scandal and abomination to bourgeoisdom and its doctrinaire professors, because it includes in its comprehension and affirmative recognition of the existing state of things, at the same time also, the recognition of the negation of that state, of its inevitable breaking up; because it regards every historically developed social form as in fluid movement, and therefore takes into account its transient nature not less than its momentary existence; because it lets nothing impose upon it, and is in its essence critical and revolutionary. (Marx, 1873)

In these two remarks contain the seed of a theoretical and ideological rift that would continually trouble the Marxist movement. In the former, Marx articulates that he is attempting to transform the dialectical system of development outlined by Hegel into the material realm. The latter claim is concerned with an appropriate comprehension of existing historical formations and the utility of the dialectic as recognition of historical motion and, in this, the inevitable breaking up of social categories. As they stand these two statements do have a level of congruity. In the former we see Marx outlining his metaphysical conception of political-economy, in the latter the engine, so-to-speak, that drives this process. Yet, again, the ontological status of these claims remains unqualified. Is Marx claiming that the material world *is* dialectical or merely that it displays certain characteristics that can be usefully described as dialectical? Similarly, should such an analysis be limited to purely a comprehension of political economy or is it a quality of the entire material realm?

It was Engels, not Marx, who attempted to reach a more positive resolution on these issues in *Anti-Dühring* (1877) and later in his posthumously published *Dialectics of Nature* (1883). This was the first articulation of what came to be known as, “dialectical materialism”. This meant, as Callinicos (1976) explains,

interpreting the dialectic not simply by providing the structures specific to Marx's analysis of social formations like capitalism, but as actually representing the laws immanent in all reality, natural as well as social and in the reflection of thought ... For Engels, then, the dialectic laws Hegel had discovered were the general governing nature, history and thought. Marx's worth was the triumphant application of these laws to history. (12-13)

Politically, such an interpretation, served as a legitimising discourse for the social democratic programme of the Second International. The intellectuals of the German SPD in particular – Bernstein, Kautsky and Plekhanov – who exercised a great deal of influence over the Western

European workers movement, were able to utilise Engel's formulation to justify an incremental and reformist strategy. If “dialectic laws” predicted the inevitable victory of the proletariat through a pre-ordained course of historical development the task of the Marxist party was to forward the so-called “bourgeois revolution”, even if this aim happened to conflict with that of the proletarian class. Moreover, such an analysis effectively absolved Marxists of the task of organising within the workers movement since, “the laws of the development of the capitalist mode of production would inevitably lead to socialism” (Callinicos, 1976: 14). The impact of the Bolshevik victory in the Russian revolution and Lenin's (1909) thoughts on this issue, which he effectively borrowed from Kautsky, was only to transform it further into orthodoxy, while dialectical materialism would later serve as a central tenet of CPSU policy (see, for example, Stalin, 1938) and practice both domestically and internationally within the Comintern<sup>30</sup>.

By attributing so-called objective and scientific laws to the social realm Classical Marxists failed to acknowledge, or in cases that were more politically motivated actively denied, proletarian struggle as the *originator* of the rich discourse from which they draw upon. In this respect there has always been a tension within Marxist discourse between effectively two ontological frameworks one that places the class actor and their material struggles as the dialectical motor of social change, the other “history” itself, comprised as it is in its various stages. It is the latter that has proved to justify the classical Marxist position of theorists as “scientists” of these social forces, with the principle task of the Marxist to assume leadership of the worker's movement and to guide class forces to their correct application.

As a consequence the representation of movements within Marxist scholarship has often had an equally, disharmonious, two-sided character. That is, while there is clearly, as Schmidt and Van Der Walt note, a voluntaristic Marx (and by extension a voluntaristic Marxism) and this has informed deeply engaged and richly empirical study (some noteworthy approaches will be reviewed in the following chapter), nonetheless, there is a tendency towards the presentation of political actors as largely produced or as instances of wider historical processes. Underpinning the notion of Marxism as a method of ‘scientific’ study (articulated most clearly by Engels) was the desirability of uncovering the objective laws that “proved” or “confirmed” the subjective struggles of socialists (Holloway, 2005: 118-139). Anarchists argued, however, that such a view only obscured understandings of the social world by bringing deterministic judgements to bear on highly subjective and flexible processes (particularly in the case of movements for social change). They questioned that such a separation could be made between history and the continuing struggles of the oppressed

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<sup>30</sup> Even Marxist critics of the Soviet regime would rarely criticise this foundational notion, e.g. Trotsky (1939).

and that the practical outcomes of such analysis were often conservative and reactionary. They also argued that social struggle is often transgressive in character and cannot be understood completely by only analysing its historical development.

That is not to say that anarchists were not confronted with the same intellectual problems that led to Marx's eventual appropriation of the Hegelian dialectic. In fact they were initially attracted to similar solutions. Hegel, for example, would have a great deal of influence on the writings of a young Bakunin (see Leier, 2006: 83-4) and he would likewise famously declare himself a "materialist" and also expressed admiration for Marx's *Capital*, which he offered to translate into Russian. There was, however, much in Marx's framework that anarchists were moved to reject – his teleological view of history, his economic reductionism, functionalism and determinism. This would later lead to the common accusation of anarchism as idealist and, in essence, failing to break from the pattern of Enlightenment thought that Marx had hoped to undermine with his historical materialist critique. The differing approaches, however, as Cohn explains, are not best characterised as of change and continuity but of alternative solutions to the same intellectual problem;

The problem, crudely stated, concerned how to construct a movement for social transformation that would not be limited by the sorts of idealist illusions that had constrained such movements in the past - the divine mandates, the national destinies and racial essences that had been called on to legitimate and ground all revolutions in the past. Marx's solution was to immanentise the transformative power in history itself, conceived as a definite development, so that freedom would emerge from and out of necessity. The anarchists immanentized the transformative power, locating it within nature, proposing that nature formed a matrix that made freedom possible and desirable but not necessary. (2006: 79)

By "nature" here, Cohn is not referring to some innate, hidden force (in a Platonic sense) but of existing and historical human capacities exhibited through our behaviour. As Rocker explains;

For the anarchist, freedom is not an abstract philosophical concept, but the vital concrete possibility for every human being to bring to full development all capacities and talents with which nature has endowed him, and turn them to social account. (1949: 15)

As a result, in contrast to the classical Marxist approach the anarchist vision of change is open-ended and “non-necessitarian” (Cohn, 2006: 79), unconstrained by the historical and economic development of human history. That is not to say that anarchists would not acknowledge the constraints that history and economic structure may have on these capacities. Rather they see them as affected, but not wholly determined, by them. Consequently anarchists argue that;

Economic factors shaped society in a range of profound ways, but cannot be taken as primary and determinant in every situation. Bakunin ... argued that Marx ignored “other factors in history, such as the ever-persistent reaction of political, juridical and religious institutions on the economic situation.” (Schmidt and Van Der Walt, 2009: 107)

Moreover, as well as acknowledging the ways that other, non-economic institutions had shaped, and in some cases retarded, the development of capitalism, anarchists would reject Marx’s base-superstructure distinction that would place, or indeed just separate, the material world from that of ideas. As Cohn argues in the case of Proudhon;

Proudhon expresses it this way: “the fact and the idea are really inseparable”. This formulation in no way ratifies Marx’s caricature of Proudhon as a Hegelian idealist who believes that ideas are prior to or more real than facts. At the same time, principles, ideas and intellectual representations are themselves social “facts”, in that,

- a) They are collectively constructed and circulated.
- b) They are sometimes capable of motivating action in the world, thereby acting as social forces in their own right; and
- c) They are implicit, either as actual forms or potentialities within social structures. (in press)

Consequently this led to a much more careful consideration, to be discussed more fully in the following chapter, of the political content of the theorists own ideas and how abstractions could indicate an alienating, and therefore politically reactionary, ontology. As Bakunin (1871) was keen to stress;

History is made, not by abstract individuals, but by acting, living and passing individuals. Abstractions advance only when borne forward by real men. (Bakunin, 1871: 40)

Kropotkin, for example, explicitly rejected the methods of the metaphysical and dialectical philosophies of his day, and criticised Marx specifically for engaging in metaphysics, being drawn instead to the methods of inductive and deductive scientific study. As he argues;

When the anarchists are told, for instance that – as Hegel says – every development consists of a Thesis, Antithesis and Synthesis ... they, too, simply shrug their shoulders and wonder how, at the present development of the natural sciences, old fashioned people can still be found to believe in words like these and still express themselves in the language of primitive anthropomorphism (the conception of nature as of a thing governed by a being endowed with human attributes). High-flown words do not scare the anarchists, because they know that these words simply conceal ignorance – that is, uncompleted investigation – or, what is much worse, mere superstition. They therefore pass on and continue their study of past and present social ideas and institutions according to the scientific method of induction. And in doing so they find, of course, that the development of social life is incomparably more complicated, more interesting for practical purposes – than it would appear from such formulae (Kropotkin, 1912: 150).

This was an approach applied with the emphasis on gauging social values and of attempting to discover both latent and existing capacities in individual's beliefs and social practice, all developed through the course of research and with few assumptions brought *a priori* (and even then emphasising that these assumptions were open to critical revision if the evidence suggested otherwise)<sup>31</sup>.

As well as being informed by sound epistemological reasoning, such an approach also had a deeper political content. What distinguishes anarchist theory in this respect is that is founded upon a presupposition of “the absence of power”. That is, it says nothing “positive” about the content of the relationship between persons<sup>32</sup>. As Wieck explains,

That the individual is the basic social reality ... that the assumption of power or submission to power in any sphere of human activity is a negation of the fundamental reality of individuals, a negation intrinsically incapable of offset by other considerations. (1979: 146)

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<sup>31</sup> See, for example, his posthumously published *Ethics: Origins and Development* (1924).

<sup>32</sup> Or as Honeywell (2007) describes it, “an agency-centred vision of freedom as developed by the action and choices of the individuals in the present” (239).



Kropotkin not only had good reason to reject metaphysical categories because they “concealed ignorance” and lack of engagement but also because it was essentially substitutive - it outlines institutional definitions of human behaviour in line with their position as subjects of or executors within systems of social domination. In contrast, anarchists challenge the dominance of the state and hierarchical institutions as both “natural” features of a political society and even an adequate means of understanding that society. In this respect, anarchist theory is both “negative” and holistic. It is an effort to direct critical attention to and, also ultimately, think beyond the categories presented in dominant discourse with the aim of reaching a more genuine understanding of personhood.

The anarchist view of progress is also illustrative in this respect. Due to Marx’s understanding of freedom emerging from the “realm of physical necessity”, classical Marxists will tend to conceive social development in a linear fashion and history, consequently, as a hierarchy of developments that has led up to the present moment<sup>33</sup>. Likewise when they refer to moments of crisis or opportunity, they tend to speak of time as accelerating or history progressing at greater speed<sup>34</sup>. In both these instances it is history that is changing foremost, in turn providing greater opportunities for action. Anarchists, on the other hand, immanentizing the transformative role of human capacity, have a radically different relationship to time. They put forward a conception of history in which events can be recomposed, relived and fought anew in varying contexts, where the potential demands and desires have remained consistent across the ages and only the battlefields have changed. History, in other words, is a varying context in which, human capacities and potentialities,

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<sup>33</sup> Marx’s comments on British colonialism in India are quite starkly revealing in this respect, in which he both criticises and decries the damage inflicted by Imperial rule while going on to qualify that,

whatever may have been the crimes of England she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about that revolution. Then, whatever bitterness the spectacle of the crumbling of an ancient world may have for our personal feelings, we have the right, in point of history, to exclaim with Goethe: ‘Should this torture then torment us, since it brings us greater pleasure? Were not through the rule of Timur, Souls devoured without measure?’ (1853)

<sup>34</sup> To take just two examples, Rader, for example, defines a crisis as;

A dynamic state, but it differs from a dynamic equilibrium in exhibiting uncoordinated rather than co-ordinate development. When there is grievous disturbance of equilibrium, producing a terrifying acceleration of the historical process, and little co-ordination among societal elements, here is a genuine crisis. (1979: 190)

Likewise Debray makes a similar assessment of time;

Political time moves faster in periods of crisis, and stagnates in times of recession: we learn more in a week of revolution than in years of status quo. (1973: 90)

e.g. the desire for freedom and equality, will remain consistent. The realisation of libertarian communism is not, therefore, a matter of “objective” and “historical” forces coming to fruition, but of a mixture of human will, structural capacity and fortuity. As Colson argues,

The anarchist movement has often been reproached with its untimely character, its refusal of historical laws and determinations, of necessary stages. ‘Everything, immediately!’: such could be the motto of the libertarian movement, in the eyes of its blinder detractors, with regard to its most intense moments of affirmation: from the general strike of the end of the 19th century to May ’68, including, in a more tragic way, the events of Munich in 1918, the Russian and Spanish revolutions, or the proclamation of libertarian communism in a certain number of Andalusian villages during the winter of 1932. It might appear at times that anarchism endorses the idea of progress, this illusion born in the 19th century and killed off in the disasters of the following century. But in its practices as well as in the imaginary that accompanies them, its relation to time has always been radically different from that of all ‘progressivisms,’ whether revolutionary or bourgeois, material or moral ... [A]narchism is a stranger to the linear conception of time. The time to which it refers and which defines it is a multiple and qualitative time that has to do with the duration of beings, with that ‘reality of things that endure’ of which Bernard Rousset speaks, and with the relations of composition, recomposition, and decomposition which increase, decrease or destroy the power to act of these existing things. (2001: 99-100)

Accordingly, while the challenges put forward in terms of the modern state and advanced capitalism has changed the context and character of revolutionary struggle, and that anarchism as we understand it has emerged as a movement in relation to these historical developments, this should not stop the drawing of parallels between present struggles and those of the past.

Such a framework not only shapes an understanding of present and future behaviour, but implies the need for a re-evaluation of critical moments of history of the past. For, if the development of political society - monarchs, the church, Empire, nation-states and capitalism – is to be considered one “story” of human progress, as the “evolution” (to use Kropotkin’s language) of a particular capacity, it would be fair to speak of another equally credible, anarchist account of human behaviour, of the struggle against power, authority, hierarchy and representation in whatever form this happens to have taken. As Kropotkin states,

We endeavour, first of all, to free the histories of revolutions up until now from the partisan, and for most part false, governmental colouring that has been given them. In these histories hitherto written we do not yet see *the people* nor do we see how revolution began. (1912: 186)

Resulting from these alternative immanentizations of materialist philosophy Marxists and anarchists have also promoted radically different visions of the role of the intellectual and their research. Although providing extensive and highly critical economic, social and political criticism Marxism has overall failed to distance itself from the dominant vocabulary of political power. That is, despite Marxists self-professed revolutionary aims for the creation of a free and libertarian communist society and thought free from reification, their method has generally failed to break away from a more entrenched, highly conservative tradition of Western philosophy that has at its core the attainment of rational, progressive goals via intervention of an external power – whether this happens to be God, the state, historical forces or the proletarian party. This is a trend which is undoubtedly related to the Marxist conception of political change where socialist action, and therefore also the desire for a de-alienated intellectual praxis, is determined by material and historical development and not, as would be the case with anarchists, pre-figured in the practice of socialists.

Marxism, as represented by some of the political movements of Marx's day, the Second International and the Leninist and Trotskyist parties has principally been a movement of leadership. It is a leadership that may be theoretical (in the form of expertise and scientific enlightenment) or practical (in the form of the decisions of the vanguard party), but nonetheless has a clear purpose: to act as a unifying force *from above* which is able to transform an economic class into a political class capable of taking power. All of this is ultimately based on the privileged position Marxists claim to have in understanding historical and social forces. Of course, along the way this notion has been re-formulated and subject to deviations, there is obviously a great deal that lies between Marx's assertion that "the emancipation of the workers must be brought about by the workers themselves", and Lenin's that "only the political party of the working class, i.e., the Communist Party, is capable of uniting, training and organising a vanguard of the proletariat and of the whole mass of the working people". Nonetheless, these concerns – for intellectual leadership, political organisation and representation of the class – have remained dominant. Moreover, as Ojeili (2001) argues, this has not only been the orthodoxy for the socialist movement, but the central focus of a post-

structuralism keen to differentiate its politics and theory from the authoritarian consequences of socialist statism.

There has, however, also been a tradition of libertarian Marxism that has distanced itself from the more deterministic aspects of Marx's framework, rejected the progressive role of the state, centred upon the constructive role that proletarian struggle and emphasised the voluntaristic capacity of proletarians within the historical materialist framework. It is from this tradition – broadly identified as Libertarian Marxism - that it's possible to outline a potential point of convergence, or at least a degree of congruity, between the classical Marxist and anarchist framework. Although undoubtedly also facing some outstanding contradictions from their principle point of reference, Libertarian Marxist writers provide a more intellectually rigorous approach – largely due to the more academic applications - to research that can and have helped to augment and enrich anarchist approaches to social study<sup>35</sup>.

Libertarian Marxism, akin to anarchism, has been a tradition that has similarly eluded clear definition. Guérin (1969) attributes the origins of a “libertarian” Marx to the experience of the Paris Commune and Marx's subsequent address to the international Working Men's Association (later published as *The Civil War in France*)<sup>36</sup>. In this speech Marx exposes the problems associated with the working class taking hold of the existing state machinery and appears to at least partially revise the programme of the Communist Manifesto. According to Guérin, Bakunin (amongst other anarchists) was to take a more sceptical view of this change of heart writing at the time that,

[the Paris Commune] had such a great effect everywhere that even the Marxists, whose ideas had been proven wrong by the insurrection, found that they had to lift their hats respectfully to it. They did more; contrary to the simplest logic and to their own true feelings, they proclaimed that its programme and aim were theirs too. This was a farcical misrepresentation, but it was necessary. They had to do it - otherwise they would have been completely overwhelmed and abandoned, so powerful was the passion this revolution had stirred in everyone. (1969)

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<sup>35</sup> Largely by virtue of the fact that Libertarian Marxism has generally been a more “academic” tradition, especially when compared to anarchism.

<sup>36</sup> Another potential, and less widely known, source of a “libertarian Marx” is in his later writings, particularly those on the Russian peasantry which appear to break from his more rigid, teleological view on historical development. For debates on this subject see: Shanin, 1984.

Bakunin's implication was that *The Civil War in France* (1871) was nothing more than an exercise of political manoeuvring within the International and was generally inconsistent with the rest of Marx's writings.

There has likewise been a long-standing anarchist critique of Marxism which has argued that many of Marxism's theoretical innovations were pre-figured by the intellectual practice of working class movements, are a kind of proto-anarchism developed by Marxist writers with distorted, or sectarian, views of anarchism proper or are simply a politically opportune appropriation of libertarian ideas. In the case of Autonomist Marxism, for example, McKay (2008) observes that;

The key role of class struggle in invalidating all deterministic economic "*laws*" was expressed by French syndicalists at the start of the twentieth century. This insight predated the work of Castoriadis and the development of Autonomist Marxism by over 50 years.

Moreover,

some Marxists have taken on board many anarchist ideas and have forged a version of Marxism which is basically libertarian in nature. Unfortunately, such forms of Marxism have always been a minority current within it. Most cases have seen the appropriation of anarchist ideas by Marxists simply as part of an attempt to make mainstream, authoritarian Marxism more appealing and such borrowings have been quickly forgotten once power has been seized.

The implication of this is that the "voluntaristic Marx" spoke of earlier is generally inconsistent with the core of the tradition and that Marx's chief contribution has been to outline a highly rigid, deterministic and teleological framework (and by extension an understanding of social movements).

Nonetheless even if a historical case can be made that this was representative of a popular application of Marxism, there has been an identifiable current within the Marxist tradition that has shared much of the anarchist ontological commitments outlined. Moreover, the idea of working class self-activity, in this case the Paris Commune, prompting Marx to revise the more deterministic and fatalistic qualities of his thought does not have to be necessarily judged in the cynical way that

Bakunin (and other anarchists) viewed it. Perhaps these working class practices did prompt genuine corrections in the Marxist canon that proved to be valuable in their own right? Moreover, such a scenario is also not all together inconsistent with the general development of this tradition. Despite their eventual affiliation with Leninism, the early work of Gramsci and Lukacs was clearly influenced by the “syndicalist mood” and the formation of worker’s councils in both Italy and Hungary<sup>37</sup>. For the thinkers of the Dutch and German Far-lefts it was the failure of the Russian revolution combined with the domestic experience of worker’s councils that was to cause them to abandon the old orthodoxy of the centrality of the party. The wave of European radicalism from the 1960s to late-1970s, identity struggles and mass activity against the traditional Communist party and trade union apparatus again rekindled this tradition in Italy, France, Germany, the UK and the USA.

Undoubtedly there are a great many differences between the groups and intellectuals associated with these events and many went a great deal further in their libertarian commitments than others. Many Marxists broke with Classical Marxism by degree and few would embrace the kind of “non-necessitarian” framework advocated by anarchists. In their commitment to Marx’s original framework, there has always been a tension, even in the more open, libertarian strains of Marxism, in the attempt to resolve, as *Ta Paidia Tis Galarias* put it,

The theoretical conception of the antagonistic practice that seeks the self-abolition of the class itself in the abolition of the relation that constitutes it. (2010: 16)

Consequently, as Aufheben (1995) observe, two conflicting visions of capitalism continue to emerge from this framework – one which sees capitalism as a transitory system (and its decline in the self-emancipation of the working class) and another which sees socialism as a transition within the management of capitalism. The latter view is not only politically regressive, as Aufheben explain,

by seeing socialism as a the rationally planned development of the forces of production – and opposing this to the anarchy of the market of capitalism – classical Marxists ended up adopting the perspective of Capital. It was this perspective that allowed the Bolsheviks to take up the tasks of surrogate bourgeoisie once they had seized power in Russia, since it committed them to the development of the forces of production at all costs. The logic of this perspective was perhaps developed most of all by Trotsky who, through his support for the introduction of Taylorism, one-man management, the militarisation of labour and the crushing of the rebellion at Kronstadt, consistently

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<sup>37</sup> For an account of Gramsci’s early, “voluntaristic” Marxism see Levy, 1999; for Lukacs writings on the Hungarian revolution of 1919 see Lukacs, 1973.

demonstrated the need to develop the forces of production over and against the needs of the working class. (1995: 66)

It also presents the kind of closed, rigid understanding of social structure – capitalistic relationships as static and permanent within the political community with only their management structure open to change and transition – that had prompted challenges to classical Marxism in the first place.

Nonetheless, neither Marxism nor anarchism are closed systems and there is a great deal of cross-pollination of ideas between the two (Van Der Walt and Schmidt, 2009: 83-120). Cleaver (1992), for example, cites the work of anarchist theorists such as Kropotkin, Bookchin and Zerzan in his writings while historically many anarchists have utilised the economic categories elaborated by both Marx and, more recently, autonomist Marxists. Where Libertarian Marxism has proved most valuable is in its shared emphasis on the socially transformative capacities of working class action (particularly autonomous action or “self-valorisation”). This has been commonly augmented by an economic focus on the struggle for unalienated labour and the importance of the commodity relationship to the continuing function of the class system. Such a concern is orientated, much in the same way as Kropotkin’s study of pre-modern societies, towards the regularised, inter-relationships of working people as opposed to the meta-narratives typically associated with classical Marxism. Research by the Italian school into production lines of the FIAT factory, for example, uncovered the informal communication networks that allowed workers to preserve experiences of struggle outside of trade union organisation along with the small scale acts of daily sabotage that accumulated to mass resistance against the discipline of the production process (see Wright, 2002: 57-61). Brinton (2004), in a similar vein, in his analysis of the Russian revolution is keen to stress the failure of the factory councils, and the revolutionary economic and social relationships they contained, to overcome Bolshevik repression as key to understanding the failure of the revolution. In spite of the underlying variances between anarchist and even libertarian Marxist ideas there is enough shared ground here for a degree of convergence. Moreover, the methodologies of these studies provide good guides for operationalising anarchist orientated research in ways that are more systematic, and informed by contemporary concerns, than, for example, Kropotkin’s (quite naive in retrospect) claims of the inherently progressive role of inductive social science.

In outlining the development of libertarian Marxism and anarchism in relation to classical Marxism it is possible to trace the development of a materialist framework distinct from both Orthodox understandings of historical materialism and the existing idealist philosophy to which historical materialism was counter-posed. This presents a non-necessitarian view of history which, while based in a materialistic framework that stresses a degree of structural determination, rejects the fatalism

and teleology associated with Marxism. Anarchists, and to some degree libertarian Marxists, present an understanding of the social world based on a focus on models of social interaction - shaped by material and ideational factors as well as, particularly in the case of modern societies, power and the interests of elites - and the potentialities and capacities that these may allow. Research is structured by normative goals – opposition to political authority, a commitment to a pre-figurative ethic - but rejects progressivism as a useful analytical construct asserting that only conscious human endeavour will shape better, future societies. This has had important implications for both the type of research that anarchists have embraced – those best suited to gauging models of sociability and the capacities that exist within them, but also those which take a more critical approach to hierarchies that may exist between research and subject e.g. anthropology, “grass-roots” history. It also relates to a criticism that anarchists have forwarded towards abstraction and idealisation in traditional political discourse/study; a stance which is also related to the prefigurative commitment of anarchists and is reflected in standards of research that does not wait for philosophy to be revolutionised, but stresses the need for revolutionaries to practice and embody their ideals in the present.

### **(Anti)politics and the post-structuralist challenge**

To a contemporary critical theorist many of these concerns and critiques may seem familiar. Not only are these long-standing, traditional concerns for social scientific research, albeit the proposed solutions may be very different from those more commonly proposed within the mainstream literature, but the growing influence of post-structuralist theory within academia has meant that all theorists have to take issues concerning discourse, representation and the normativity of academic method more seriously. Moreover, anarchism’s general absence from academia, and the popularity of post-structuralism amongst contemporary leftists and social critics, has meant the convergence in certain instances of post-structuralist criticism with anarchist political sentiment. For these, so-called, “post-anarchists” (Call, 2002; May, 1994; Newman, 2010; Rouselle and Evren, 2011) anarchism provides an admirable, but ultimately inadequately theoretical, approach to critical study which can be significantly updated by the contributions of post-structuralists. The “post-” claim in “post-anarchism” is subject to some controversy (Cohn and Wilbur, 2003; Franks, 2007) and will be touched upon in the following section. Nonetheless a degree of engagement is necessary with this literature on the grounds that, even if its portrayal of “classical anarchism” may prove inadequate – something which is undoubtedly related to the common perception of anarchism as inherently “un-academic” – on the basis of the priorities outlined above it is necessary to establish whether, first,



post-structuralism offers any additional or more beneficial insights to those already within the anarchist framework? And second, the potential benefits and drawbacks of embracing a post-anarchist ontology? In answering these questions it is possible to not only further clarify the outlines of the anarchist framework but to demonstrate that, in spite of their portrayal, anarchism actually anticipates, and pre-dates, many post-structuralist concerns. Moreover that it does so in a way that rejects the normative dichotomies presented by post-structuralists – an “authoritarian” (deterministic, functionalist etc.) historical materialism, on the one hand, and an “anti-authoritarian” (open, anti-essentialist) post-structuralism on the other - retaining a commitment to a materialist, but nonetheless non-necessitarian and anti-teleological, outlook.

Within anarchist discourse, (anti)politics has been frequently used as a term to distinguish between politics, and political participation, as traditionally conceived – where “politics” is generally centred on or around the state or some management of political power – and the type of political, e.g. debate and deliberation over social issues, but nonetheless non-hierarchical practices that anarchists have traditionally advocated (Franks, 2006: 355)<sup>38</sup>. In its popularised form, (anti)politics has been largely polemical serving to delineate the inclusive, participatory and non-hierarchical characteristics of anarchist and libertarian Marxist praxis, particularly in comparison to those of the Social Democratic and authoritarian-Left. On a deeper level, it can also be seen to be reflective of a position internal to anarchist and libertarian Marxist discourse which is ontologically centred on the social individual, sees self-activity as the driving force of social change and autonomous activity as the lever of revolutionary transformation.

Contemporary post-structuralist anarchist (“post-anarchist”) scholars have, however, attempted to further extend the notion of an (anti)political tension as a dynamic inherent within all political discourse<sup>39</sup>. According to this view (anti)politics is not only a normative position adopted by

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<sup>38</sup> Social anarchists in fact pre-date the employment of this distinction by socialist post-structuralists and autonomist Marxists, for example, Mouffe,

By “the political” I mean the dimension of antagonism which I take to be constitutive of human societies, while by “politics” I mean the set of practices and institutions through which an order is created, organizing human coexistence in the context of conflictuality provided by the political. (2005: 9)

<sup>39</sup> Franks identifies the “post-“ anarchisms as conforming to roughly three different types,

a strident, Lyotardian Postanarchism, that rejects traditional anarchist concerns, and instead proposes the adoption of new critical approaches and tactics that lie beyond the remit of anarchist orthodoxy, using as their basis those poststructural theorists that are antipathetic to traditional anarchism ... a redemptive postanarchism that seeks the adoption into anarchism of poststructural theory to enrich and enliven exiting practices, one which sees ‘anarchism’ as it currently stands as lacking, but amenable to change ... finally, a

anarchists in antagonism to dominant social practices but is also a useful tool for comprehending the narration of a political society itself. This sees the “political” as in permanent conflict with the (anti)political and emerging from the tension between subjects and systems of social dominance. “Politics”, under this understanding, is never complete. Rather, it represents the defined boundaries of social organisation and political activity over a period of time, the rationalities that accompany a particular social hierarchy. (Anti)political expressions of dissent that exist outside the terms of these settlements, or challenge them, are seen to be deconstructive, opening up the possibilities for alternative means of social organisation. Thinkers such as Newman are also keen to emphasise this to be a *permanent* feature of all political societies<sup>40</sup>. As he argues, there

Is a dimension of antagonism and conflict at the heart of social relations – which threatens to destabilise the established public order, and which therefore must be domesticated.

(Anti)politics therefore,

Refers to the moment of both ethics and utopia, in which the boundaries of our political reality are challenged. (2010)

Graeber’s (2009b) analogy is to (anti)politics as “the imagination” of the political, a factor which typically leads projects for social transformation to be denounced as “unrealistic”. Moreover, it is on this contradiction, this collision with its opposite current, that the political must continually reconstruct itself. This permanent disturbance is the mechanism by which political elites are able to continually renew and refresh the legitimacy of sovereign institutions. As Newman explains,

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postmodern anarchism (which corresponds to the last version of post-Marxism), that reapplies anarchist analyses and methods to the new globalized, post-Pruitt-Igoe political economy, and concentrates on the actions of oppressed subjects. (2007: 137)

For the purposes of this section, and as concerning the elaboration of (anti)political construct, the “post-” label is largely in respect to their application of post-structuralist categories – as commonly found in the writings of Foucault, Guattari and Deleuze – to traditional anarchist thought.

<sup>40</sup> Newman is clearly influenced by the writings of Laclau, particularly his notion of “radical equivalence”. The political/(anti)political divide that the (post)anarchists discuss can easily be seen as a more normative expression of Laclau’s writings on ontological difference and the development his theoretical categories of inside/outside. Laclau similarly, although ultimately at odds with much anarchist theory, provides a useful framework for the conceptualisation of the partial and exclusionary qualities of the political dimension in his work on signification (see Laclau, 1996).

Politics cannot do without anti-politics and vice versa. The two must go together. There must always be an anti-political outside, a utopian moment of rupture and excess that disturbs the limits of politics. (2010)

Moreover, this notion of an “internal” and “external” dimension of politics, an (anti)politics and politics, has been related directly to the position of exclusion that many “social movement” actors find themselves in. Political society often presents certain closed frames of behaviour and (anti)political activity, which challenges these frames, serves to not only challenge these specific frames of behaviour but disturb the rationalities underlying political society itself. What Newman et al. are effectively arguing, therefore, is the existence of an “anarchism”, or an “anarchist tension” as Bonanno (1996) would have it, in the absence of anarchists. As he further explains;

A recurring desire for life without government which, in a sense, haunts the political imagination. A rejection of political authority in the name of equality and liberty that will always be a part of the vocabulary of emancipation. (Newman, 2010)

This in itself is an idea which is not altogether alien to, what “post-anarchists” identify as the, classical anarchist tradition. Bakunin, for example, had talked of the spontaneous destructive urges of the masses and invested a great deal of faith in the revolutionary instincts of the oppressed, whereas Rocker argued that some variant of anarchist ideas could be found in almost every period of known history. Where the “post-“anarchists analysis is unique, however, is in the situation of this tension not only in the human experience and anti-authoritarian practices but also in the *dominant* discourse of political society. They argue a dimension not only of inconsistency but impossibility within the commitments of the political itself. Liberal democracy, for example, invites a utopian dimension through the fact that it’s commitments to egalitarianism and liberty cannot be delivered via the mechanisms of the market or the state. What results, therefore, is a permanent tension within political society itself between what is and what ought to be<sup>41</sup>.

Underlying the “post-“ in “post-“ anarchist philosophy is a critique of Western political philosophy as derived from post-structuralism, largely its opposition to humanism, of which it sees Marxism and

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<sup>41</sup> The extent to which it’s possible to resolve this tension and the extent to which they break from the ultimately conservative prognosis of post-structuralist thought is unclear from the current contributions of “post”-anarchist scholars.

anarchism to be intrinsically bound<sup>42</sup>. Marxism is brought to task for being economically reductionist, and therefore viewing power as purely related to class domination and, subsequently, having a strategic approach to social change (the failures of which are seen to be consecrated in the horrors of the Soviet Union). Anarchism is similarly seen to be tainted by what is interpreted as a deficient understanding of political power (as purely the repressive activity of the state) and the reliance on classical humanist claims about human nature. In addition to this, many “post-“ anarchist scholars, akin to post-Marxism and NSM theory, are keen to emphasise new subjects and models of social resistance based upon (anti)political challenges. All three of these assessments have been subject to a great deal of scrutiny in the wider literature.

Franks, for example, argues that “post-“ anarchists are guilty of collapsing the entirety of the Marxist tradition into Leninism and that, in fact;

Marx’s political project has more in common with the multiplicity and irreducibility associated with post-structuralism. The standpoint of *Capital* is an explanation of how individual subjects meet their invariable and irreducible desires through a vast array of creative endeavours (use-values), but that the circuits of capital seek to impose singular exchange values on these myriad diverse use-values ... Indeed, the very (anti)politics of the most bitter critics and rejectionists of “Marxism” ... are actually consistent with Marx. (2007: 137)

Choat (2009) is drawn to a similar conclusion arguing that it is in fact Marx in the pages of *Capital*, not in the anarchist tradition, that we see the earliest exposition of the constitution of political subjects through the intersection of various relations and practices (what would be later refined in post-structuralist theory). Indeed, the very objective of Marx’s economic analysis is to show not merely that capitalism should be opposed nor only that it is a repressive social system, but to demonstrate how it reproduces itself through the individual roles and social categories it creates. Undoubtedly Marxism has produced perspectives that are economically reductionist, teleological and authoritarian. However, Marx presents an incredibly broad theoretical framework of which, as the work of Libertarian Marxists demonstrate, there have been a number of approaches that aim to reject exactly these characteristics.

Cohn and Wilbur (2003) also present similar problems with “post-“ anarchist readings of traditional anarchist theory arguing that they present simplified readings of interchangeable and complex terms

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<sup>42</sup> As May (1994) puts it,

If poststructuralist political thought could be summed up in a single prescription, it would be that radical political theory, if it is to achieve anything, must abandon humanism in all its forms. (May, 1994: 75)

such as “power” and “authority” in the works of Kropotkin, Bakunin et al. to suit their normative aims. Moreover, “essentialism”, a highly contested word in itself, is not intrinsically tied to the anarchist project. Rather,

Like Foucault, Kropotkin was striving for a new form of subjectivity, but for Kropotkin, in contrast to both Nietzsche and Foucault, this subjectivity would be fundamentally social, an individuality *pro sibi communisticum*, made possible through practising the highest communist sociability. (Morris, 2004: 216)

Consequently, it is human *potential*, not human essence which is central to the anarchist project. If anarchist thinkers, like Kropotkin, have displayed a prevalence for studying primitive societies it is not because they see their behaviour as “the result of any closeness to an authentic human nature” (Cohn, 2006: 58), rather they see in them powerful examples of the *consequence* of life in common and, subsequently, a dimension which all human societies have the capacity to develop. After all, if anarchists did believe the only obstacle to the “flowering” of a genuine human nature was the absence of political authority they would have not have historically invested so much into the education and organisation of the popular classes.

Anarchists have also had a long rich, history of engagement with social struggles amongst communities that were long considered less important, even illegitimate within other political movements (see for example, Van Der Walt and Schmidt, 2009: 297-334). This has infused anarchist thought and practice with a multitude of perspectives and political identities that have often been absent or side-lined in mainstream approaches (the very “outside” to which post-structuralists often refer). The history of anarchism throughout the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century displays a concern with a diverse range of conditions – from race, ecology, nationality, within and across class divides – as well as a desire to oppose seemingly “neutral” sources of social and political domination (for example, Ferrer on education, Kropotkin on literature, Goldman on aesthetics, marriage and monogamy). It is, in fact, very rare for anarchist’s to talk purely of the repressive power of the state or to approach class struggle from a solely “strategic” perspective. Rather, a multitude of social hierarchies are presented (including as amongst anarchist themselves) of which the state and the class system is argued to be the most pervasive in the maintenance and sustainment of all other systems of social domination. In this respect the idea of movements and ideas “outside” of the political is quite alien to the kind of socially inclusive praxis embraced by the anarchist tradition.

Finally, the assignment to certain political movements of (anti)political qualities, as opposed to viewing it as more in common with traditional anarchist understandings of autonomous action,

typically displays a bias towards certain contemporary Western anti-authoritarian movements, sidelining the relevance of continuing struggles over material scarcity and those originating in “traditional” sites of working class dissent such as in the trade unions or the workplace (who are seen to be somehow tainted by their association with Leftist ideology). As Franks (2007) argues, in “rightly rejecting Leninist economic reductivism”, post-structuralists risk rejecting class analysis altogether, a position that either collapses into a “naive liberalism” or “asserting an inappropriate, and often elitist, alternative agency” for social change. It is, as with much other social movement theory, groups and individuals who have already internalised the ideas presented by post-structuralist theory who are identified as conforming to the (anti)political model.

Nonetheless, post-structuralists do highlight legitimate concerns over the dangers of our existing political vocabulary and this is the case regardless of whether you accept the underlying ontological and epistemological claims. A more useful perspective, therefore, is that presented by Adams who argues that,

“Postanarchism” has emerged recently as a term that could be used to describe the phenomenon whereby this radically anti-authoritarian post-structuralist theory has developed and mutated and split off into dozens of hybrid critical theories over the past three decades, finally coming back to inform and extend the theory and practice of one of its primary roots. (2004)

Such an analysis is certainly consistent with the historical development of anarchist philosophy which has always involved a cross-pollination of national variations and a general development within a global community of activists. Cohn and Wilbur, for example, point to an alternative application in the form of Colson’s writings which,

While it has recourse to some dubious poststructuralist rhetoric (in phrases such as “rejecting all mediation”), seems to illustrate some of the more interesting intersections between 19<sup>th</sup>-century anarchist ideas and practices, on the one hand, and Deleuze’s “strange unity... which never speaks of the multiple” on the other ... Colson places the two discourses in dialogue, allowing each to illuminate the other in its turn. (2003)

From this perspective, the impression overall is of a wider body of critical theory, including Marxism, anarchism and post-structuralism, that while may have reached divergent, often contradictory theoretical positions, due to its common heritage allows a level of shared discourse. Such a conclusion suggests not a “post-“anarchism, as in a “going beyond”, but anarchism in critical relation to these other perspectives. From this it is possible to acknowledge that (anti)politics provides a

useful illustration, inspired by *both* post-structuralist and anarchist concerns, of the tensions and contradictions within existing discourse and the political imaginary while also understanding post-structuralism as a critical approach prompting greater clarifications (and a terminology through which to articulate them) of anarchist ontological claims. This is while rejecting, on sound political grounds, the normative assumptions of post-structuralist theorists.

### **Politics against the state: anatomy of autonomy and beyond “social movements”**

Extra-institutional political behaviour – what are traditionally identified in the mainstream literature as “social movements” – has always been an important element in both the history of the anarchist movement and in the development of anarchist ideas. Indeed anarchism, as a body of thought, is the product of a “social movement” and, in many ways, follows the logic of a tradition whose priorities are invested in the extra-institutional sphere, i.e. outside and against the state. Key to this is the deconstructive role that autonomous political behaviour, and more constructively the development of de-centred cultures of counter-power, grow and conflict with the existing and dominant institutionalised channels of class power. Central to this understanding is the way in which anarchist analysis extends into a more holistic picture of transformative action and political change. In this final section I will outline how this theory of autonomy provides an understanding of extra-institutional behaviour, and ultimately social change, that goes beyond the idealised categories of social movement theory. Moreover it does so in a way that implies a distinct research strategy while, by virtue of its open and anti-teleological commitments, avoiding the traps of either representing the characteristics of social movements *a priori* or disregarding the unique context in which extra-institutional behaviour takes place.

“Social movement” is not a common term within anarchist or Marxist discourse - for all of the reasons already outlined - when it is used, however, its alternative meaning is illustrative. On the surface the associations are very familiar, both contemporary anarchist and Marxist commentators, where they do refer to “social movements”, will typically mean the kind of broad-based movements, or “mass organisations” to use anarchist terminology, that would typically have a more diverse character and content than say a union or specific political organisation<sup>43</sup>. In this sense some of the

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<sup>43</sup> Organisational dualism - the operating practice of making a distinction between the function, role and ideological character of militant minorities and mass movements - has been a long-standing tradition within anarchism and often framed as an alternative to the Leninist vision of an educated vanguard directing mass movements. It was Bakunin who first stressed the need for a well-organised, disciplined and specifically anarchist organisation (a militant minority) that

characteristics, at least, normally attributed to social movements will be to some degree accurate. However, underlying this assessment is very different normative assumptions concerning the status of the “social” in political life. Broadly, the orthodox understanding of “social movements” is of political groups that operate in a “social”, essentially a civic, sphere. In contrast, anarchists see politics as an inherently antagonistic practice – permeated with systems designed to maintain class privilege – and, as such, will typically contrast “the social” with “the political”. That is a social movement is often presented as the potential site of the “social” as a space for co-ordination, deliberation and organisation – things we normally attribute to politics - *in antagonism* to the representationalist practices of political society. Social, in this sense, really stands for the idea of sociability - for directness, face-to-face relationships, de-centralisation, self-organisation and other de-alienated practices. That is not to say that anarchists place these assumptions on social movements *a priori*, but that they recognise in their extra-institutionalism both a potential threat to monopolies of state-power (by locating politics outside of its sovereign spaces and opening up mediums of communication and co-ordination that do not rely on representationalist practices) and also the capacity for autonomous centres of counter-power.

It is important, however, to also recognise and separate the ontological and normative claims that ground this position. Criticisms of, what are often presented as, anarchist beliefs in the “natural” propensity of people to rebellion or the inherent goodness of human nature are quite familiar. From these it would be quite easy to assume that the anarchist understanding of political dissent/rebellion/insurrection – and by extension extra-institutional political behaviour - is of humanities “natural” attributes rising against the repressive power of the state; that “the anarchist tension”, in other words, is not just a useful way of illustrating possibilities that arise in recurring conflicts over political authority but is, in essence, a metaphysical reality. Likewise, works like Kropotkin’s *Mutual Aid*, taken out of context, seem to support this idea of anarchism as natural law<sup>44</sup>. The weakness of criticisms of anarchism based on its alleged humanism and essentialism have been dealt with already. Nonetheless in spite of this there is a need to clarify the status of autonomous practice – particularly in relation to its understanding of extra-institutional political movements – within the anarchist framework.

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could act as a, “vehicle for mobilising and politicising the popular classes” without becoming a “substitution for popular action” or “the instrument of a Blanquist-style dictatorship” (Schmidt and Van Der Walt, 2009: 249).

<sup>44</sup> Of course, the point Kropotkin was attempting to make, or rather refute in relation to the growing influence of the Social Darwinists, was that mutual aid and co-operation were *equally* naturally occurring patterns of behaviour as fierce competition. He didn’t deny that competition played a role in the evolution of species, but rather argued that co-operation had been unduly under-emphasised.



Undoubtedly anarchism attributes its origins to an autonomous dimension within the historic struggles of the popular classes. Makhno et al. (1926), for example, argue that anarchism is unique in the sense that it did not develop from, “the abstract reflections of some scientist or philosopher” but was born in “violence” and “the class struggle”, out of the “direct struggle waged by the working people against capital” their “needs and requirements”, “psychology” and “desire for freedom and equality” (9). In other words, many central tenets of anarchist politics – a commitment to prefigurative practice, objection to political authority, direct action and even many of the tactical repertoires such as the use of free association and federalism – emerged as practical responses to the challenges that faced the popular classes in organising their own struggles. Moreover, anarchists – and in contrast to many other branches of socialism which insisted the proletariat was lacking in education - would always stress the existing capacity of the popular classes to self-organise (and their inventiveness in doing so), and argued that even the most experienced militant could derive new lessons from spontaneous outbursts of social struggle. It is a living philosophy in this sense, composed of the experience of the struggles of the popular classes for socialism. Nonetheless, anarchism was always more than simply the faith in autonomous action and anarchists brought their own – often quite sophisticated – answers to questions of social transition, education, revolutionary organisation, the form a post-capitalist society would take, among others. While it may be possible to locate the origins of anarchism in such a historical experience, the standards it brings to social life are, nonetheless, universal. As such it is possible to look at, for example, the studies of Scott (2009) on stateless peoples in Southeast Asia with “anarchist eyes”, to see not only how close they come to a modern understanding of anarchism but also how they confirm, via a very different historical route, a long-standing anarchist critique that the state is not a necessary nor desirable by-product of civilised society. The solidification - by which the chief contributors have elaborated and extended the underlying logics of autonomous working class responses to social oppression -, in other words, of historical experience into a political tradition has created a unique discourse with a distinct outlook on human history that goes significantly beyond the context that inspired its development. It is necessary to acknowledge, in this respect, the distinction between the anarchist *preference* for autonomous action and the acknowledgement of autonomy as a significant, but often ignored, force within political life and the, undoubtedly related, anarchist normative project of the transformation of these latent tendencies and social trajectories into libertarian centres of counter-power<sup>45</sup>.

Moreover, anarchists argue that the role of autonomy has not only been unduly marginalised in understanding major transitions and upheavals but even, supposedly, incremental changes in

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<sup>45</sup> Much in the same way that Kropotkin argued co-operation was an oft over-looked dynamic in the study of nature.

societies – largely because autonomy is a challenge to representationalist ideology and the state as chief arbiter of social goods<sup>46</sup>. Consequently anarchists not only reject the idea that change based upon social hierarchy is undesirable but argue that most social change, particularly changes that may have benefitted the popular classes, will be the result of popular, autonomous action. Malatesta, for example, argues that,

When a dam bursts, it is either because the pressure of the water has become too great for the dam to hold any longer or because the gradual disintegration of molecules for which the dam is made. In the same way revolutions break out under growing pressure of those forces which seek social change and the point is reached when, by process of internal pressure, the forces of conservatism are progressively weakened.  
(1924: 81)

The belief is that while social elites, governments, even religions, may adapt and change their behaviour over periods of time this is understood to be largely a *reactive* force.

In spite of the rhetoric of ruling elites – which may appear progressive – the ruling apparatus is ultimately grounded in interests which will retain at all costs the essential structures of class privilege. Even in the rare instances that a Left or progressive party is able to capture political power, international elites will frequently discipline that particular government, either by capital flight or military intervention, for even the liberal reforms it intends to make (McKay, 2007: 375-378). Hence the fact that many supposedly progressive governments will ultimately reach some accommodation with international elites, as is the case with contemporary Cuba and Venezuela, or be simply overthrown by them, as was the case in Allende’s Chile. The state, in short, is primarily an organ of class rule and its actions need to be understood principally on this basis (Kropotkin, 1897). Moreover, anarchists would argue that this is not only a matter of interests, but that also the content of state-power – the fact that through its history the state, capitalism and social inequality have developed “supporting and reinforcing each other” (Kropotkin, 1995: 94) - means it can *only* be used on this basis. Hence, Kropotkin (1995) would proclaim that, “state bureaucracy and centralisation are as irreconcilable with socialism as was autocracy with capitalist rule” (185).

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<sup>46</sup> This analysis does not lead from the assumption, often attributed to anarchism, of all human beings as naturally pre-disposed towards autonomous practice, but a social context in which systems of class domination are pervasive and their role and function largely normalised. In other words, underlying such an assessment is the view, later shared by Foucault, that resistance is a corollary to the exercise of political power. Particularly where that political power put limits on the ability of the majority of human beings to guarantee their future material and emotional well-being.

If this is the case, then how would anarchists answer the charge that states implement reforms which appear to be counter to the raw interests of capitalists and state bureaucrats? They would answer that when faced with the threat of escalating social disorder, reform is a more preferable route than repression (Richards, 1965: 78-82). Repression is, ultimately, costly and potentially far more politically destabilising. Moreover, reforms normally come at the expense of certain sections of the ruling elite and not the system-as-a-whole. In fact sometimes they can be positively beneficial in preserving the ruling apparatus in that they reinforce the monopoly of the state over the management of all aspects of social life. Hence, Malatesta (1891) was to stress that one of the primary functions of the state was the *appropriation* of social power in the interests of elites;

For us, government [or the state] is made up of all the governors; and the governors . . . are those who have the power to make **laws** regulating inter-human relations and to see that they are carried out . . . [and] who have the power, to a greater or lesser degree, to make use of the social power, that is of the physical, intellectual and economic power of the whole community, in order to oblige everybody to carry out their wishes. And this power, in our opinion, constitutes the principle of government, of authority. (Malatesta, 1891: 19)

Likewise Rocker was keen to emphasise that the “rights” and “privileges” of modern bourgeois societies, contrary to popular faith in the incrementally progressive role of the state, were largely gained through great, and often quite violent, confrontations with the state;

Political rights do not originate in parliaments, they are, rather, forced upon parliaments from without... The peoples owe all the political rights and privileges which we enjoy today in a lesser or greater measure, not to the good will of their governments, but to their own strength ... What hard struggles, for example, had the workers in England, France, Spain, and other countries to endure to compel their governments to recognize the right of trade union organisation... Only after the workers had by direct action confronted parliament with accomplished facts, did the government see itself obliged to take the new situation into account and give legal sanctions to the trade unions. (1938: 75)

Dolgoff (1980), similarly, saw the rise of welfare statism in the US as primarily the result of shocks, and working class resistance, facing the capitalist system following the Great Depression and the state’s ability to arbitrate between different capitalist interests to ensure

the preservation of the system as a whole (in this case at the expense of “private capitalism”). Likewise these reforms, despite coming at the expense of certain sections of the ruling elite, had the benefit of more thoroughly integrating the popular classes into systems of class privilege via welfare dependency; allowing the state, in effect, to present social power (“the physical, intellectual and economic power of the whole community”) as both its own product and responsibility in the form of social welfare.

Anarchists argue that the threat of autonomy has been a historically significant force when attempting to understand the adaptation of the state to extra-institutional challenges. They also argue that autonomous action differs from traditional political practice. Bookchin (1982), for example, stresses the types of relationships that extra-institutional behaviour engenders. Organisational structures that arise from autonomous action, tend to be based on “direct, face-to-face, protoplasmic relationships” and in contrast to the “representative, anonymous, mechanical relationships” associated with the state. Moreover, by allowing forms of social co-operation and political action to flourish outside of the frames of state sovereignty there opens up a dimension for a positive, “peopled” (as Bookchin describes it) vision of political life. As Bookchin argues,

To exercise one’s power of sovereignty – by sit-in, strikes, nuclear-plant occupations – is not merely a “tactic” in bypassing authoritarian institutions. It is a sensibility, a vision of citizenship and selfhood that assumes the free individual has the capacity to manage social affairs in a direct, ethical and rational manner. The dimension of the self in self-management is a persistent call to personal sovereignty, to roundedness of ego and intellectual perception, which should conjoined terms such as “management” and “activity” often overshadow. (1982: 436)

The idea of autonomy allowing space for the development of independent capacity and the propensity for self-management (or personal sovereignty) is similarly reflected in many of the tactics that anarchists have historically advocated. These are tactics, it should be added, which are no means exclusive to the anarchist tradition. Anarchists in the labour movement, for example, advocate “direct action” as the most effective means of economic struggle. According to Rocker,

Every form of immediate warfare by the workers against their economic and political oppressors, including strikes, workplace sabotage, boycotts, antimilitarist activity, and in peculiarly critical cases the armed resistance of the people for the protection of life and liberty. (1938: 78)

These were strategic in the sense that they aimed to wield what anarchists considered the popular classes' most powerful weapon – political and economic sabotage – against elites. However, they also had a political dimension in that they challenged rationales of representation by arguing that individuals – in collective strength – had the capacity to not only improve their conditions, without the need for leaders and representatives, but also organise themselves. Hence anarchist intervention within the socialist movement has often not been ideological but based around the advocacy of specific organisational repertoires. As Nettlau (1996) observed in relation to the First International;

Since we wanted to gain converts for the anarchist cause, [we] emphasised decentralisation, the autonomy of groups, free initiative, both individual and collective, while the Marxists, being authoritarians as they are, wanted to impose their ideas by majority strength – which was more or less fictitious – by centralisation and by discipline. (Nettlau, 1996: 131)

It was about establishing a context where anarchist sensibilities, through the experience of self-organisation, had the capacity to grow<sup>47</sup>. In light of this, the absence of a “social movement” category, or a desire to establish one, within anarchist writings is clearer. Such a move would both run counter to the open-ended way that anarchists conceived of autonomous and extra-institutional practice as well as the insistence of the viability of politics outside of the frames of conduct established by the state.

Of course things were not always this simplistic, and anarchists do not see extra-institutional political behaviour and the growth of an autonomous political culture as necessarily synonymous (although undoubtedly the content of extra-institutional action, particularly that which was waged against ruling elites, had the greater potential of developing towards a culture of counter-power). Indeed the sophistication of the anarchist position, in contrast to the economic determinism of Marx, was in recognising the complexities and inconsistencies between ideas and practices. Bakunin,

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<sup>47</sup> Moreover, the contributions of post-structuralist anarchists suggest that even elements of mainstream political discourse contain their own “utopian moments”.

for example, saw the contradictions inherent within the Russian peasant communes of his time - democratic and self-organising communities (something that attracted hostility from the authorities and was eventually abolished through the Stolypin agrarian reforms) that were, nonetheless, in many ways ideologically conservative. As Schmidt and Van Der Walt explain;

Consistent with the emphasis on ideas as the key to changing society, he asserted that the *mir* itself must change if it were to play a revolutionary role; it must overcome its “shameful patriarchal regime”, lack of individual freedom, “cult of the Tsar”, isolation from other villages and the influence of rich landlords on the village. (2009: 97)

It is a testament to the state’s grip on the political imagination that many organisations, even those who operate extra-institutionally - replicate the representationalist practices, and systems of social privilege, inherent within the social establishment<sup>48</sup>. Accordingly the anarchist analysis of extra-institutional movements has always been essentially developmental in character (Cohn, 2006). While Marx (see Shanin, 1984), in his analysis on the same subject, only saw economic challenges facing the further development of the *mir* – and assumed communist consciousness was either determined because of this or was soon to follow – Bakunin identifies numerous ideational and material forces acting both in favour and against the development of these extra-institutional practices into a fully-fledged, autonomous counter-power<sup>49</sup>. He identifies a form of “proto-libertarianism” in their practices but also the decidedly un-libertarian way these practices are narrated. On a broader level this method meant establishing certain vectors of analysis whereby the content, composition and ideas, and the potential capacities that exist within all of these, could be established in any the given culture. It also presumed an imbedded position capable of grasping all the complexities of an organisational culture. As a result, the traditional task of the anarchist militant has not only been intervention, to organise and agitate amongst the popular classes, but also of social insertion, to learn from their ideas and practices. In this respect it is of no surprise that Kropotkin, for example, perceived both zoological and anthropological study as inherently anarchist methodologies given that both these, like the organisational practices of anarchist militants, required a prolonged commitment to engagement.

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<sup>48</sup> The anarchist commitment to prefiguration is, consequently, aimed to unify these two components – to bring together both libertarian ideas and practice.

<sup>49</sup> Likewise, and perhaps in contradiction to his later views on the Russian *mir*, in Marx’s (1853) analysis of the “Asiatic” communities of India he saw these “little communities” as “contaminated by caste and by slavery” of which “revolution in the social state of Asia” (i.e. a break up of ancient society and full implementation of capitalist social relations) was the only immediate remedy.

The anarchist framework involves centring analysis on the form and content of social behaviour as well as the ideological frames that animate these. The task for the anarchist researcher, therefore, is to chart both the *potential* practical outcomes of expressions of collective action (and its relationship to the wider structure), while simultaneously attempting to gauge the value of the traditions, beliefs and culture that sustain this action (and whether they open up a libertarian alternative). In respect to social movements specifically this implies a highly engaged methodology, developed in line with the historical practice of anarchist militants and able to take on the imbedded position through which a militant was able to grasp both the complexities, and potentialities, of a movement.

Attempting to see the world from the vantage point of collective actors, or acknowledging a potential plurality of beliefs, does not imply a political relativism. While anarchists have their own normative preferences in relation to the goals of their analysis, they do not fall into the trap of other social movement theorists of presenting the characteristics of extra-institutional organisations *a priori*. That is in attempting to derive, from their studies, a generalisable form – imbued with certain material and ideational characteristics – understood to be a “social movement”. Rather, they recognise in the extra-institutional a distinct context for political behaviour that does not have the equivalent constraints as in the state sphere and, therefore, a much more open-ended capacity, but, a context, nonetheless, that does not determine the ideas and practice that are in fact formed<sup>50</sup>. Accordingly this approach is as appropriate to the highly conservative Russian *mir* as it is to, as I intend to argue in the following chapters, contemporary instances of dissent and unrest such as Greece through December 2008.

## Conclusions

Anarchism puts forward a highly flexible and open-ended vision of social movements distinct from any other established approach in the field. This can be principally attributed to the anarchist rejection of representationalism and, specifically, by-passing the “civic” conception of social movements by rejecting the state as either a necessary precursor or defining element of political practice. An anarchist framework rejects the characteristics of idealization, representation and normalization in idealist political thought. In terms of the need to establish social movements as a generalisable category of social behaviour, by immanentising the social capacity available to an actor

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<sup>50</sup> Moreover Malatesta’s analysis concerning the exploitation of “social power” suggests that the autonomous may actually play a larger part in political life than we give credit for. Augmenting this approach with the (anti)political critique of idealist political theory suggests both material and ideational utopian “moments” in both dominant social relations and their accompanying social discourse.

in the immediate present anarchist priorities are shifted away from the search for positivist and determinist accounts of this behaviour (although as the following section will make clear such accounts still have a part to play in forming a holistic account of social movements) and towards contextualising and gauging the content of the actions that are taken and the social and political cultures they stem from. Bookchin, in his description of libertarian institutions, characterises them as fundamentally *peopled* - as based upon direct, face-to-face relationships. It is likewise possible to characterise anarchist study as an effort to forward a suitably *peopled* political science. One that concerns itself principally with the fundamental values embodied in a society's social practices. As Kropotkin explains,

The question then which anarchism puts to itself may be stated thus: "What forms of social life assure to give a given society, and then to mankind generally, the greatest amount of happiness, and there also the greatest amount of vitality?" "What forms of social life are most likely to allow this amount of happiness to grow and develop, quantitatively and qualitatively, - that is, to become more complete and more varied?" (from which, let us note in passing, a definition of *progress* is derived). (Kropotkin, 1912: 153-4)

While both Marxism and post-structuralism identify central concerns in relation to forming a liberatory method of study, and particularly how political discourse can serve to naturalise or obscure existing systems of privilege, anarchist writers answer these concerns while still maintaining a commitment to move beyond *a priori* and abstract theorising in relation to social struggle. The anarchist conception of the autonomous and the unique context of extra-institutional behaviour also introduces an important dimension to social movement study rarely acknowledged in accounts that are underlined by the relationship of the individual to the state. The outcome of this framework are a number of provisions for an engaged methodology based on the historical practice of anarchist militants, something which also relates strongly to the anarchist insistence on the inseparability of ethical concerns, theory and practice.

Progressive – empowering, liberatory etc. – approaches to the study of social movements are by no means new. In fact, as the next section will argue, in many cases the adoption of certain methodological tools has come before, or in place of, a more thorough re-assessment of the ontological assumptions (which as I have argued will have normative implications) that ground the researcher's perspective. Nonetheless, certain approaches – namely the practice of the "grassroots historians" and the co-participative research model – do emerge as strong candidates for fulfilling



the methodological provisions outlined. They imply a degree of internality for the researcher, critical reflection on their role, an acceptance of a plurality of views and beliefs, rejection of teleological, deterministic and necessitarian models of social change and are guided by clear normative aims. The purpose of the following section, therefore, will be to initiate a critical enquiry of these approaches in reference to the criteria already outlined. This will lead me to return to key themes in relation to the anarchist critique of political discourse, how this informs an anarchist epistemology and the type of methodological framework this implies.

### Chapter 3: 'Clarifying from within': constructing a libertarian research ethic

The challenges associated with representing the ideas and motives of political actors in both an accurate and ethically consistent way continues to be a key issue academics grapple with when conducting their research. For socially critical researchers - although it should be noted that there is an equally sound empirical case for accurate representation - traditionally underlying these concerns is a normative position in favour of the autonomy of the research subject and their right to self-definition (Fine, 1994; Naples, 2003). Building from these common assumptions this chapter will attempt to outline the building blocks for an anarchist approach to research methodology. Developed via the contributions of Kropotkin, Proudhon, Cohn and Colson, this will stress the unique, internal perspective granted to the anarchist researcher. It will argue that while critical researchers will often favour more empowering research methods, e.g. co-participative or activist research, they will typically leave their essential assumptions about the nature of political knowledge unchallenged. It will argue that the basis of a truly libertarian approach is in a distinct set of methodological choices structured by a solid, anarchist epistemology. Such an epistemology will move substantially beyond concerns for subject autonomy to anarchism's unique understanding of what constitutes the political and the desire for a de-alienated intellectual praxis.

The chapter will be structured in the following way; first I will review two existing methodological approaches which I believe offer themselves as good candidates for the methodological provisions I have highlighted - what I call "dissident" Marxist research methodologies and what has come to be understood as co-participative research, activist research and/or critical ethnography. Moreover, as the review will outline, these are commonly advocated approaches for those who either share, or are considered to share, the underlying normative concerns associated with anarchism/libertarian Marxism. I have also chosen these specifically for their contrasting strategies concerning approaches to the field. Broadly one advocates a position for the independence of the researcher while the other insists on active involvement, advocacy and accountability in field research. A critical overview of these approaches will lead me to the "ecological" framework sketched by anarchist philosopher Cohn. Subsequently, I will argue that the weaknesses of the above approaches can be rectified by an anarchist methodology drawn primarily from the ideas of Kropotkin, Bookchin and Proudhon. Finally, I will outline two existing studies which I believe closely approximate examples of this method in practice – Brinton's *The Bolsheviks and Workers Control* and the CASA collective's *Teaching Rebellion: Stories from the Grassroots Rebellion in Oaxaca*. This will lead to a more concrete outline of the shape and form the case study will take.

## Dissident Marxist research – the British Marxist historians and the Workers' Enquiry

Broadly from the 1950s there emerged from within the European and North American Marxism dissident circles of intellectuals that would come to re-define the Left over the following decades<sup>51</sup>. Despite their varied origins, the British Marxist Historians, the Italian intellectuals of *Operaismo* and both researchers and activists in the USA and in Eastern Europe began to produce a frame of analysis that shifted priorities away from the highly economistic and functionalist methods associated with the Marxism of the period towards one (even if the reference points were not always the same) that prioritised proletarian subjectivity, experience, and particularly in the case of the British Marxist historians and Dunayevskaya, a humanistic dimension to Marx's philosophy. Many debates emerged out of these both in relation to the orthodox socialist movement and amongst the New Lefts themselves. For the purpose of this enquiry, however, I will be concentrating on the methodologies promoted by these intellectuals and the extent to which they fulfil libertarian priorities (as well as their utility as research tools in their own right).

Although undoubtedly interrelated in both style and content, broadly it is possible to identify the emergence of two new research practices over this period – “grassroots history” and the use of the “Workers' Enquiry”. Grassroots history is a method developed principally within the British Marxist Historians and, most prominently, in the works of EP Thompson and his seminal contribution *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963). The notion of a Workers' Enquiry was a proposal originally put forward by Marx (in the form of a one hundred question questionnaire) in 1880 to the

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<sup>51</sup> Labelling the works of the British Marxist historians, the intellectuals of *Operaismo* and other advocates of the “workers' enquiry”, besides the great many differences in both tradition and in context between these groups, as “dissident” traditions of Marxism is far from an uncontroversial move. Principally because many of the chief proponents didn't consider their work as great deviations from Marxist orthodoxy but rather reconstructions and reclamations of the Marxist project in the spirit of Marx's original aims. Moreover, the very idea of “Worker's Enquiry” that would feature so heavily in the intellectual projects of *operaismo*, and, in spite of the absence of a comparable reference point, be clearly reflected in the priorities of the British Marxist historians, was orthodox Marxist in the truest sense, i.e. it was a proposal originally drafted by Marx. Nonetheless, a common thread runs through all of these approaches in that they are born from the experience of political opposition to the highly determinist Marxist framework that was reflected in the dominant Stalinist and social democratic organisations of the period. Similarly, commentators and detractors alike would recognise the heterodox priorities that grounded this new wave of Leftist criticism. The contributions of the Johnson-Forest tendency, for example, were criticised as “anarchoid” (Panzieri quoted in Wright, 2002: 24), while Thompson talked of the work of CLR James as infused with an, “instinctive, unarticulated anarchism” (Rosengarten, 2008: 26). This was while Thompson would identify himself as a “libertarian communist” (a term often use interchangeably with anarchism) and a, “historian in a libertarian Marxist tradition” (Thompson, 1980: 166). Gianfranco Fiana (an influential figure in early *operaismo*) would likewise organise amongst both the Marxist and anarchist movement. All of the above, I believe is sufficient qualification for the label “dissident”.

socialist journal *La Revue Socialiste* for an investigation into the general condition of workers<sup>52</sup>. Nonetheless the Italian Marxists of *operaismo*, influenced by the work of the Johnson-Forest Tendency and *Socialisme Ou Barbarie*, enthusiastically re-initiated his idea of a review as a means of not only re-connecting with working class experience but, in some instances, radical intervention. In both cases I will argue that, in spite of the valuable contributions both make to the formulation of a libertarian research methodology, and the empirically rich studies produced by each, they are ultimately undermined by their preservation of classical Marxist assumptions – particularly in relation to the role of the intellectual to the research subject.

### British Marxist Historians

There is a risk, as Palmer (2002) has argued, when speaking of “the British Marxist historians” (referred to as BMH from this point on) to generally over-state the homogeneity of the theoretical and political perspectives that emerged from this group. Accounts tend to focus on certain key figures, e.g. Thomson (1968), Hill (1972), while marginalising many others whose careers stemmed from the Communist Party Historians group and even including figures like Hobsbawm whose allegiance to the values of what later developed into the British New Left are far from established. Nonetheless, the body of work that emerged out of the post-1956 split in the Communist Historian Group and would appear in the pages of *The Reasoner*, *The New Reasoner* and *The New Left Review* do display some common ontological and epistemological commitments. Kaye and McCelland (1990) summarise three paramount contributions:

1/ the extension of class struggle analysis. That is to adopt as a working hypothesis that “the history of all societies hitherto, is the history of class struggle” (254) and to further extend and re-evaluate this framework by applying it to societies that do not easily fit so easily to the mould of Western industrialised society. As a part of this auto-critique, studies also frequently seek out tendencies of rebellion and resistance that present alternatives to the existing historical narratives of both the Left and the Right.

2/ to conduct history “from the bottom up”. This involved drawing out voices that had been barely heard or otherwise silenced by history, but also an alternative approach to the conception of social structure. That is, in spite of their commitment to the centrality of certain social categories, e.g. class, (the key being that this was always a “working” hypothesis”) research was not conducted

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<sup>52</sup>There is no record of any response he may have received to this proposal. He also died three years after its publication so there is likewise little evidence of how a review would have fitted into his existing writings.

deductively from the *a priori* notion of class society. Instead historians like Thompson and Hill sought to assemble mechanisms of class struggle and a process of revolutionary tradition *through* the recorded experience of the lower classes. In essence, they held to the principle that experience must always precede theory, as Thompson argues;

However elaborated the inner mechanisms, torsions and autonomies, theoretical practice constitutes the ultimate in reductionism: a reduction not of “religion” or “politics” to “economics”, but of the disciplines of knowledge to one kind of “basic” theory only... In disallowing empirical enquiry, the mind is confined for ever within the compound of the mind ... That then, is the system of closure. It is the place where all Marxisms, conceived of as self-sufficient, self-validating, self-extrapolating theoretical systems must end. (Thompson, 1978: 167)

3/ the recovery and assemblage of a radical, democratic tradition. This emphasis on experience led them to reject both a conservative, “Whig” interpretation, which denied the existence of any indigenous revolutionary tradition, and Leninist interpretation, which considered the working classes alone unable to break from trade union consciousness, of British history. For Thompson, in particular, the key was not in uncovering what was hidden or obscured, but to show what had existed and had been lost and, consequently, how that can re-shape and re-define our understanding of the possibilities for the present. As Inglis (1999) explains, Thompson sought, “a new past to live from” that would prompt “changes” to “the social memory so that, differently understanding how the present came about, the agent thinks forward to a new set of possibilities” (199). In other words, it was not simply about setting the record straight on working class history but imbuing that experience with a degree of social agency.

Accordingly, for the BMH the re-appropriation of this radical past was justifiably a political act in itself. Thompson, for example, wrote *The Making of the English Working Class* with an audience inside the labour movement in mind (Merrill, 1976: 7). The BMH also chose to embrace, albeit with their alternative socialist goals, a very liberal tradition of the intellectual embodying both an expression of public conscience and fulfilling a duty as independent social critic. This was a stance taken in opposition to the dominance of right-wing criticism inside the academy, particularly in relation to the presence of New Right philosophy in public intellectual and political debates, but was equally in relation to the rest of the socialist movement. While the BMH rejected the Leninist formulation of the intellectual as sole carrier of communist consciousness, they nonetheless valued

the independence of their work and stressed its critical value; subsequently, the writers saw their work as independent from the ideological line of the communist movement<sup>53</sup>.

This is an interesting articulation of the Marxist position towards social movements in relation to what has been discussed so far. The critical value of independence here is not so much an appeal to objective knowledge or a privileged access to certain social processes, as is genuinely associated with orthodox approaches, but the importance of independent *judgement*. The extent to which these dissident Marxist approaches, as will become clear, do break with this orthodox framework is open to debate. Nonetheless this notion of viewing study as an exercise of independent judgement in relation to a movement, as opposed to principally seeking to represent it or “reveal” a more authentic understanding of it, is an important dimension of critical study and worthy of further exploration.

The BMH’s approach converges on a number of libertarian concerns – analysing competing forms of social mediation, charting minority traditions within, and alternatives to, the existing political culture as well as an emphasis on social agency. Thompson et al. argue that it is necessary to understand alternative roads, projects crushed, to come to the fullest understanding of *how* and *why* we have arrived at the present. There is an implication of both openness and choice within this understanding of social history, that while advanced capitalist society may have been the product of social development to this point, it was equally not a necessary outcome of this. It was simply the most successful amongst many potential and competing models of social organisation. Likewise, just as the historical consolidation of capitalism was contingent, the future of capitalist society is equally uncertain. As Thomson argues,

When we look backwards through the bars of our own time, to Assyrian man, Athenian man, Aztec man, we gain a sense, not of human tedium but of human unexpectedness. Society can stagnate for centuries: it can assume monstrous shapes in the pattern of

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<sup>53</sup> The Frankfurt school shared a similar conception of their research over the same period. Adorno, for example, argues to the charge of “political resignation” that such accusations underplay the role thought has to play in itself in informing and extending political activity. Moreover, that the demand for “activity” has served to silence critical minds;

The uncompromisingly critical thinker, who neither superscribes his conscience nor permits himself to be terrorised into action, is in truth the one who does not give up... such thinking takes a position as a figuration of praxis which is more closely related to a praxis truly involved in change than is a position of mere obedience for the sake of praxis. Beyond all specialised and particular content, thinking is actually above and beyond all the force of resistance, alienated from resistance only with great effort. (1978: 168)

mental myths; but men can and do, almost without warning, take “short cuts”. Can we be sure that 20<sup>th</sup>-Century-television-man is here to stay? (1957: 35)

Working backwards from these claims (accepting the principle that ontological commitments precede a set of epistemological possibilities) it would appear to lead far closer to the kind of “open-ended, non-necessitarian” (Cohn, 2006: 79) understanding of agency held by anarchism and not the historical determinism typically associated with Marx. Yet, as a more critical investigation reveals, the analysis is still framed within the terms and priorities of classical Marxism and forwarded with highly “political” goals. While Thomsson’s et al.’s framework would seem to imply a degree of compatibility with the methodological provisions already outlined in relation to the study of social movements, a great deal of their normative concerns were actually articulated on a very familiar political terrain – namely in relation to constructing the correct “movement” to capture and modify state-power. This, consequently, has implications for their representation of social movement and the extent to which these normative aims shaped their perceptions of extra-institutional action, i.e. a re-emergence of the teleological and *a priori* claims of classical Marxism.

In spite of the commitment, and acknowledgement of, an indigenous tradition of social radicalism and its emphasis on working class experience as a precursor to socialist theory the BMH method was framed primarily by classical Marxist concerns; principally the importance of imbuing socialist consciousness to the working masses and the notion of intellectual intervention as a tool of social transformation. The experience of the stagnation of the CPGB (Communist Party of Great Britain), subsequent break with Stalinism and embrace of “socialist humanism” did lead them towards a far more libertarian framework, one more closely aligned to the method and practices of anarchist and libertarian Marxist scholars (although they’d never acknowledge this). Nonetheless, the single-mindedness of this critique, and the fact that it was always set within the terms and limits of Marxism, also led to a general failure to challenge more critically the core assumptions of their original framework. As a result, their research method - directed at attaining the agency and subjective experience of collective actors – did not always completely marry to their methodological practice - maintaining the distinct role that an intellectual played in analysing, presenting and producing this knowledge.

Matthews (2002), for example, argues that the BMH approach was not far removed from the practice of the rest of the Left. In texts such as *Revolution!*, *Revolution Again!* And the *May Day manifesto* the critique was primarily directed at the reformist politics of the Labour party and the poverty of international communist strategy. This led, Matthews (2002) argues, to an equally determinist position framed largely by the new role of intellectuals:

Given the increasing tendency of the working class to become integrated within capitalist structures of thought and practice, it was now dependent upon an independent socialist intelligentsia to assume the role of mediator between culture and the working class. With the working class trapped within the prison of capitalist hegemony, intellectuals would now appear as the ultimate agent of social change. (Matthews 2002: 24)

Despite their emphasis on English working class experience they would willingly conflate the organised left with the activity and aspirations of the working class in general. This was an assumption that wasn't that removed from the standard Leninist formulation of party as representative of the class, as representative of history.

Despite a more critical articulation of the role of intellectuals to movements and the importance they placed on the agency and motivations of social actors, they did ultimately seek to make "objective" claims about actors best interests. There was some blurring, in short, between the idea of independent analysis, on the one hand, and independent *and therefore* authoritative analysis, on the other. Cynically one could see the libertarian commitments of their framework as merely a by-product of attempts to seek better methodological understandings of working class consciousness than the obviously inadequate formulations of Stalinism. That they intended to claim nothing more than that to understand socialist consciousness it is not enough to treat people merely as "embodiments of social-economic functions" (Ollman, 1993: 150). Kenny, for example, is led to conclude that,

socialist humanism is more accurately understood as a historically specific project which enabled sections of the British intelligentsia to escape the confines of Stalinist Marxism. (1995: 83)

Thomson and many other intellectuals of the New Left also favoured gradualism as a key component of socialist strategy and part of his work was forming the justification for such a "radical, democratic" tradition inside the English experience. This, of course, raises the issue as to the extent to which this critical independence, the intellectual conscience that they so highly valued, is compatible with a truly consistent representation of transformative movements. What are the implications, for example, at looking to the Levellers and not the Ranters, or indeed the Royalists, as authentic expressions of English working class consciousness?

It was these concerns, concerns that largely emerged in reaction to the solidified intellectual practices of the New Left, which led many to reflect more critically on the notion of an objective



distance between social actors and intellectuals. Eventually this led to a critique that argued both the impossibility of intellectuals maintaining such an independent position, while also stressing the need to be up-front and clear about one's normative claims. This, in turn, fell in line with a particular conception of research as embedded inside praxis and research that is framed not by social scientific goals but practical ones in which critical objectivity is just a smokescreen for normative goals that should be pursued openly and honestly. Moreover, research is not seen as independent to social actors but a potentially important tool in strengthening both their, and the researchers, understanding of their movement, their goals and their activity.

### *Operaismo* and the Workers' Enquiry

On the surface the practice of workers' enquiry would seem to anticipate many of these criticisms. Facing a similar intellectual barrier to the BMH group - in the form of the increasingly stagnant and politically conservative formulations of Stalinism - the work of the Italian intellectuals of *operaismo* proposed a much more radical project for the re-connection with working class experience. From the 1950s, and later through the pages of the communist journal *Quaderni Rossi*, intellectuals set out to find a synthesis between Marxism and an emerging radical sociology, a synthesis that they hoped would redress the "profound 'structural separateness'" that had come between "the class and those bodies – parties and unions – that had come to represent it" (Wright, 2002: 24). The result was a re-imagining of Marx's original proposal for a workers' enquiry.

Unlike Marx, however, rather than presenting a survey of working class attitudes and experiences there developed the proposal for a form of co-research conducted directly with workers themselves. In its most radical form, as Wright (2002) notes, this,

went so far as to portray organic sociological enquiry as the means to establish a new "organic" relation between intellectuals and working people, based upon the joint-production of social knowledge "from below". (Wright, 2002: 22)

Influenced by the work of the Johnson-Forest Tendency in the US and *Socialisme Ou Barbarie* in France - and particularly the first-hand accounts, and autobiographical materials, these groups had published on Taylorism from the factory floor - they set out to replicate these detailed, empirically-rich studies of the daily experience of workplace life<sup>54</sup>. Moreover this research were not just aimed at registering and exposing marginalised experiences within capitalist society, but also aimed to

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<sup>54</sup> Noteworthy pieces include the diary of Renault militant Daniel Mothe and CLR James' pamphlet on the condition of workers in the US.

tease out the subjectivities and potential for militant action that lay within them. The *Kolinko* group (a contemporary collective that still practices workers' enquiry), for example, describes it in the following terms;

Inquiry is, on the one hand, the way in which we get ourselves together: collective discussions, going to work, interviews, theoretical debates ... on the other hand it is our relation to class reality: experiences within daily exploitation, attempts to escape from it, intervention, collective struggles ... Inquiry means understanding the context between the daily co-operation of the workers and their forms of struggle and finding the new (communist) sociality within. (Kolinko, 2002)

Due to their embedded position this search for subjectivities becomes essentially a co-participative activity between researcher and research subject. Through their methodology *Kolinko* aim to not only collapse their perspective into that of the subject of the study, but also to draw a positive relation between the types of informal every day, often investigative and critical, discussions and activities that workers engage in and the activity and perspectives that emerge in the process of enquiry.

Admittedly *Kolinko's* presentation is quite a developed form of the concept. As Thorne (2011) highlights there have been varying interpretations/applications of the enquiry and, for very early practitioners, like Bologna and Tronti research had a far more instrumental and strategic dimension – accessing new class compositions and searching for the most militant sections of the class to which revolutionaries could devote their organisational resources. Moreover, as Lumley's (1998) account of the experience of a female union activist's contact with *Quaderni Rossi* reveals, they were also far more comfortable in drawing a separation between the role of the workers (to outline their experiences) and researcher (to "draw the political conclusions") through this process. Nonetheless, the practice of workers' enquiry does display some strength in respect to the criticism of the BMH method. There is an emphasis on a plurality of experience and subjectivities being derived through these narratives. An epistemological position which, as will become clear later, is closely related to the anarchist perception of knowledge as not just fluid but internally valid. Contrary to the underlying vision of the BMH, which saw the work of intellectuals as potentially a new source of class consciousness, the enquiry is not about assembling traditions from an external understanding of experience, but using the narratives and practices available to establish the context (capacities and potentialities) for transformative action. There is also an acknowledgment that critical investigation and elaboration are part of social contexts and that people will, to some degree, attempt to make sense (and also challenge) their social roles. The position of the researcher, in this

respect, is one of co-participation and augmentation to this process, not as the un-masker of unknown realities.

This dialogical conception of both the practices and purpose of research is a valuable alternative to the didactic approaches more traditionally associated with Marxism. It also speaks to anarchist critiques of representation and the desire to move beyond approaches that claim to “speak on behalf of” and, often by extension, “to imagine or present that the representative has capacities that the represented lack”. It likewise appears, understandably given its use by Marxist militants, quite close in methodology to the anarchist praxis already outlined.

In spite of these strengths, however, workers’ enquiry is still, ultimately, and in a similar way to BMH constrained by its classical Marxist framework. As one reviewer notes, in spite of the commitment to a co-participative relationship it is easy for research to revert back to more traditional, didactic roles:

The Marxists get jobs in a call centre in order to find out what is going on and relay it back to the workforce, but stop short of giving any practical advice of how to advance struggles. To a limited extent, this seems to be a mirror image of the crude “Leninist” form of “intervening” in a workplace from the outside and giving lectures on the lessons of history, i.e. the revolutionaries see themselves as separate from the workforce and with different objectives, using their enquiry to inform their own theories, understand how the working class resists and to help them(selves) reflect on the world. (Staunton, 2008)

However embedded the researcher may intend to become the potential for a conflict of aims within the context of “workers’ enquiry” is great. As useful as an elaboration of the composition and attitudes of the workforce may be, equally, these are also likely to be very familiar to any worker who has been there for a sustained period of time. In contrast, the activities and practices that would likely prove most useful are those which would invalidate the study, i.e. actively seeking to improve the conditions of the workforce. In reality, the enquiry is really most beneficial to those outside of the workplace and this separateness naturally extends to a very traditional, classical Marxist distinction of the intellectual and the class and the notion of Marxist strategist with a privileged access to independent knowledge<sup>55</sup>. Despite the initial commitment to a co-participative

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<sup>55</sup> Some noteworthy alternatives emerged from this tradition that did aim to address such a separation. Bologna, for example, cites the practice of his *Primo Maggio* group;

We aimed to change the status of the rules of disciplines; we were interested in innovating in the areas of history, sociology, economics and political science ... on this premise the role of the political intellectual

practice the synthesis of aims that occurs through this methodology is essentially based on a false premise - that the researcher and researched share the same objectives or interests in the research.

The alternative propositions offered by contemporary practitioners of (non-Marxist) activist research are insightful in this respect. They would argue that there is an essential step missing in the workers' enquiry in terms of the lack of any negotiation and agreement of joint research aims. Moreover, the entirety of research, including reflection on data and conclusions reached, needs to be a joint exercise. Accordingly the very notion of enquiry is perhaps the wrong approach and that what one really needs is a research *process* with shared objectives and aims. All of which stems from a much more thorough deconstruction of the traditional roles that researchers, and research subjects, adopt in relation to field research.

### **Co-participative (activist) Research**

There are a number of intellectual traditions through which it is possible to attribute the basis of a "co-participative research" model. It's development has occurred across the social sciences (indeed an inter-disciplinary model of study is something it promotes) and is better judged, not as a school of thought but as a broad convergence upon certain methodological commitments – primarily, a cyclical model of planning, evaluation and re-evaluation with research subjects towards a specific shared goal - within a number of fields via a varying mix of the contributions of feminism, post-structuralism, behavioural and social psychology and post-colonial anthropology<sup>56</sup>. Accordingly some applications have been more explicitly radical in their aims than others<sup>57</sup>. For the purposes of this study, however, my main focus will be on what could be labelled "research activism", that is co-participative research applied within the context of communities taking political action or inside what are traditionally labelled "social movements". Fine (1994: 24) summarises activist research as broadly exhibiting three characteristics;

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needed to change too, from having a new Lenin or a new Robespierre, into being a "service provider" for the decentralised movement, capable of offering the movement a better understanding of itself, of opening up new possibilities. (2002)

While an even more innovative example would be the Swedish group *Kämpa Tillsammans!* who rather than conduct lengthy interviews (which can often prove alienating and reinforce the divide between "intellectual" and "worker") have workers document their own, often humorous, work experiences.

<sup>56</sup> It should also be noted that many contemporary anarchist researchers have exhibited a preference for this methodology as most "consistent" with anarchist principles (see, for example, Shukaitis and Graeber, 2007)

<sup>57</sup> For example, throughout the 1990s there were a whole host of participatory studies on poverty orientated towards policy-makers (see, Brock and Mcgee, 2002).

- 1/ The author is explicit about the space in which she stands politically and theoretically – even as her stances are multiple, shifting and mobile.
- 2/ The text displays critical analyses of current social arrangements and their ideological frames.
- 3/ The narrative reveals and invents disruptive images of “what could be”.

Two and three are, of course, common commitments found in most critical research. The first point, however, does distance research activism from, what Haraway (1988) describes as, the “epistemological fetish” with detachment exemplified through the traditional research practice of social science. This is a stance made not only to reject what is seen as the totalising and universalising method of Western political philosophy in favour of individual subjectivities, what Haraway describes as the,

God trick ... that mode of seeing that pretends to offer a vision that is from everywhere and nowhere, equally and fully. (Haraway, 1988: 584)

but one that also wishes to expose how the illusion of independence and detachment can serve to disguise (or deny) the real “privileges, interests and politics of researchers” (Fine, 1994: 14). The implication is that in order to move beyond the representational dimension of social research researchers must engage in a more critical deconstruction of their own role. This is both in terms of the way that research is “positioned” in relation to the research subject, i.e. as “independent”, “scientific” or “objective”, but also the real-world privileges that a researcher may have that will put them in an advantageous or dominant position in relation to those that they study.

In spite of its varied influences, this has led some to cite feminism as a key influence on this type of research (for example, Wilkinson, 1986). The reflexive and self-reflexive emphasis on experience in feminist writings naturally lends to a more situated and embedded research method in practice. This is to move beyond the traditional relationship of “researcher” and “subject” to an understanding of a shared research *experience*. This is a process in which, ideally, both parties should be reflecting upon how they have changed and what they have learned. Activist researchers would, therefore, reject the idea of “objective” interests that require un-veiling to research participants. Rather, researchers will frequently approach communities before they commence their research to agree shared aims. Stoecker (1999), for example, argues that an important objective of activist research, aside from strengthening bonds of solidarity between individuals with common political goals, is to produce future self-sufficient researchers and activists within the community itself. Consequently the aims of research are broadened from simply research as an act of producing knowledge to a

form of practical intervention that seeks to impart skills and empower communities. This appears desirable for a number of reasons, not least because this appears to be a pro-active way of rectifying any imbalance of power between representative (researcher) and the represented (research subject). In addition, by sharing and negotiating research practice the model, in theory, moves beyond the more traditional practice of a researcher “speaking on behalf of” a particular group towards a shared, collective experience of the study, i.e. one on more equal terms.

Research should, therefore, not be seen as a goal in itself, but a method which can be applied to achieve movement-defined goals. Nonetheless, while activist researchers do express concerns over the representative roles filled by academics, and equally want to reinforce the self-defining capacities of the community, this is not to say that they do not wish to play any mediating role. While it is important to acknowledge that “voices”, the raw narratives of the research participants, should be considered the foundation of the study it is also fair for the researcher, through their subjective experience, to illustrate how these can be multiply situated and even contradictory. Voices, in other words, should be treated as “an interpretation and in need of an interpretation” (Fine, 1994: 21). It is the task of the researcher, therefore, to simultaneously aspire to reach the most authentic interpretation of the actor’s beliefs and motivations (usually through an extensive process of re-evaluation and consultation with research participants), while also seeking to theorise a critical dialogue (exposing variety, dissent and alternative narratives within this discourse) in line with the communities own normative goals. Moreover, such a process should not be seen to deny the legitimacy of the “raw” qualitative data, rather, as Fine argues,

It is meant for us to worry collectively that when voices – as isolated and innocent moments of experience – organise our research texts, there is often a subtle slide toward romantic, uncritical and uneven handling, and a stable refusal, by researchers, to explicate our own stances and relations with these voices. (1994: 22)

Activist researchers argue that detachment is not a corollary of critical independence. In reality, detachment only serves to disguise the full character of the critique, either by painting political criticisms as objective or by failing to acknowledge the potential prejudices and positions of privilege that may exist towards the research subjects on the part of the researcher. Instead it is preferable to be critical within and inside the community as a partner in dialogue. Moreover, it is more ethically consistent with the aims of critical researchers to employ a method which aims towards the empowerment of research subjects and negotiates shared goals.

Activist researchers are justifiably concerned with the colonialist legacy of anthropological research, particularly in the case of ethnography (Pels, 1997). This, along with a desire to more thoroughly challenge white, male and class privilege, has led researchers to question their role, and the role of their work, in maintaining systems of dominance and oppression. Critics such as Graebar (2009a), however, have come to question whether such a stance is truly reflective of the position that many radical academics find themselves in today. He argues,

To mediate on one's own power is not going to offend anyone (in fact, it's something of a classic upper-middle-class preoccupation), and even if it does, there's likely nothing those who are offended can do about it. The moment one returns from the field and begins writing, however, the power relations are reversed. While one is writing his or her dissertation, one is, typically, a penniless graduate student, whose entire career could potentially be destroyed by one impolitic interaction with a committee member. While one is transforming the dissertation into a book, one is typically an adjunct or untenured Assistant professor, desperately trying not to step on any powerful toes and land a permanent job. (Graebar, 2009a: 103)

A study by Cancian (1993) has similarly found that academics using activist research models routinely experience mild to severe conflicts over their work with their departments, have greater difficulty publishing and are less likely to experience career advancement. While activist researchers may justifiably be concerned by the legacy of ethnographer as a tool of colonialism, the real experience of attempting to forward critical research in the context of the modern University is one of hostility regardless of how much they have reflected upon their own social privilege. Furthermore, over-concern can amount to an effective over-statement of intellectual power, affording the researcher's views and perspectives a disproportionate place in the narrative to the multitude of views and opinions expressed, and more importantly the actions, of their research subjects. A sense of perspective, therefore perhaps even some modesty is required. As Patai argues,

It cannot be a coincidental that at the very time such extreme personalisation of everything is occurring, academics have reached new heights in their pretence that the world's ills are set right by mere acknowledgement of one's own position. (1994: 67)

In other words, while researchers should seek to reflect on their own stance in relation to their research, it should also be acknowledged that these are concerns that are overwhelmingly catered towards the interests, and anxieties, of other academics.

The movements and communities that activist researchers are able to involve themselves also serve to limit many applications of this approach. The cyclical model depends upon a relatively stable, homogenous group of collective actors; it is not easily adaptable to moments of social unrest and upheaval. For example, the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas has been a common subject of study. Yet, Chiapas is an unusual case in the relative stability of the communities given their explicitly radical goals – grassroots, horizontalist organising, anti-capitalist, anti-state rhetoric etc. - and is a notable exception to the general trend of activist research studies<sup>58</sup>. Overwhelmingly, studies that activist researchers do engage in are orientated towards localised, reformist groups - those who can serve to benefit from added credibility established by an academics presence. Ironically, the radical, activist researcher's methodology is most ill-equipped to deal with moments of rapid and radical change. In revolutionary situations, where organisational expressions of new social forms can spring up almost overnight and disappear just as easily it is unlikely that a researcher will be able to practice the kind of imbedded techniques nor open up the kind of dialogue they would normally advocate. And again, even if such a situation was able to present itself, revolutionary groups are less likely to see the value of academic research within the context of their movement's goals.

It could be argued that some form of intervention after the event could gain an equivalent insight, providing of course that some point of entry can still be negotiated. It is rare, however, for activist researchers to step outside those case studies that provide such an easy fit for their model. Looking at the challenges associated with my case study, for example, exposes critical weaknesses to this method of study. Often extra-institutional action comes in the form of a "social explosion", i.e. it is spontaneous, multi-sited and shifting in content, and this was the case with Greece in December 2008. Even long-term domestic political activists were to express their surprise at both the speed and intensity of the initial mobilisations. Given this what hope does an outsider have in negotiating access to these kinds of events? Is it even possible to anticipate the importance of something like the Greek December three or four months before it has happened? In the face of this the full provisions of co-participative research seem largely impractical.

Moreover, as critics such as Cox (1998) have argued, such concentration on the discourse of actors, especially in situations where they have been part of moments of rapid change, can serve to disguise prediscursive and extra-discursive practices that may be an equally valuable part of their activity. For example, in the case of an economic relationship Cox explains,

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<sup>58</sup> This is largely due to the geographical isolation of the indigenous communities. Although it should also be made clear that the situation is by no means completely peaceful, individuals from the villages still find themselves routinely under threat of violence from the state and political militias.



A “mode of production” as an active, collective (and conflictual) *way of doing things*, something learnt and developed over time and by implication something open to challenge. (Cox, 1998: 6)

However, there is also a risk that as these practices becomes routine they slip out of an individual’s vocabulary. That is, they become,

prediscursive through retraditionalisation, in the sense that they are sufficiently institutionalised no longer to need verbal explanation, and in some cases form such a part of “taken-for-granted” common sense that they become abstracted from communicative contexts all together. (Cox, 1998: 6)

The result is that practices that could form a substantial part of actors’ everyday routine are simply not featured in a discursive account of their own actions.

The task of the researcher, therefore, should not only be to expose alternative narratives and contradictions within that provided by the community but to also critically engage with the absence of certain concepts and attitudes in line with their behaviour. This implies a degree, of what Graebar (2009b) calls, “utopian extrapolation”. This goes beyond a set of shared goals between researcher and participants and instead aims to tease out,

the tacit logic or principles underlying certain forms of radical practice, and then, not only offering them back to those communities, but using them to formulate new visions. (Graebar, 2009b: 112)

Both Graebar and Cox’s comments are framed by a deeper criticism of activist research that questions the centrality of “activism” to understanding deeper processes of social change. “Activism” is only really present inside specifically constituted communities whereas conflicting forms of social mediation are situated through the prevalent ideas and practices of society as a whole. A collective of activists may stand for, or hope to embody, a particular form of social organisation, e.g. grassroots, anti-sexist, nationalist etc., but why should social movements be seen as particularly unique in this case? They are not “occasional blips”, as Cox (1998: 5) puts it, on an otherwise “passive or institutionalised landscape”. They are developed within the context of more general conflicts and contradictions, amongst forces that may often not find such a clear organisational expression, that make up a wider, social whole<sup>59</sup>.

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<sup>59</sup> In this sense traditional research questions are perhaps focused on the wrong social phenomena given that the true task of social science, as Brinton highlights, should be to establish;

This is by no means a new criticism for participatory, qualitative research. Lewis (1999: 3), for example, criticises ethnography in general for allowing researchers to become “hypnotised” with the “dazzling brilliance of the ethnographic present”. In other words, the priority afforded to the community and the researcher’s subjective experience through the fieldwork can leave accounts de-contextualised, void of historical parallels and disconnected from a wider context. Failure to ensure historical verification of content can lead research to over-look not only those behaviours that have been “retraditionalised”, i.e. that were once present but have become absent from vocabulary, but systems of power that have inculcated seemingly rational and consistent justifications within the discourse. Lewis (1999) gives the following example;

The dynastic traditions of the Soli of Zambia are instructive here. A recurrent theme is that the origins of the Soli dynasties are traced to legitimate foundlings who, for reason or another were abandoned and then rediscovered and reinstated. John Argyle (1971) has been able to demonstrate that this is in fact a myth for political usurpation. This has suggestive implications with a whole host of other similar dynastic myths or origins of the “Moses in the bull rushes” type, including the Oedipus myth, Romulus and Remus and many other heroic “legends” (or myths) from classical antiquity. One could obviously not begin to know that these were essentially rationalisations for contemporary political legitimacy, unless was able to establish that they were not historically accurate and, indeed, deliberate distortions of historical truth. So the encapsulation of the present can only be elucidated by reference to valid knowledge of the past. (Lewis, 1999: 23)

It is only by looking across communities, at humanity as a whole – as Kropotkin, for example, hoped to show in his study of ethics – that we can draw any meaningful conclusions on a communities current and future practices. My contention here is not that activist researchers are not drawn towards these kind of value-claims, undoubtedly they are, rather the means by which they get to them is not structured by a holistic, historical approach. Moreover, it is in fact very common for collective actors to seek meta-theories – to look to wider historical and political traditions - to accompany and evaluate their activity, why then, is this not the case for activist researchers? Consequently any anarchist approach to social movements has to be adequately historicised, setting forth a comprehensive view of the social terrain and principle political traditions that are drawn from.

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not why the starving individual steals or why the exploited individual strikes, but why the majority of starving individuals do *not* steal, and the majority of exploited individuals do *not* strike. (1970)

Finally, and related to this, there is one last concern for activist research that is rarely addressed in the literature. Researchers operating with these critical, normative goals – concerns for social justice, anti-sexism, anti-racism, anti-capitalism etc. – are greatly concerned to be “on the right side” when it comes to conducting their research. Activist research goes further than any other methodology in seeking to accommodate this aim by explicitly seeking shared goals with research participants. However, what of the situation in which research, and the communities they cater for, could benefit from being on the “wrong side”. Thomsson, for example, in his history of the English working class is just as keen to stress the “Church-and-King mobs” as much as an embodiment of the English experience as those who were motivated by more economic or socialistic goals. Not only does it make little sense to study a body of collective actors without analysing those with which they compete, but it could be positively valuable to, for example, a communist researcher to understand the motivations and beliefs that frame the attitudes and behaviour of an anti-Communist league. It is difficult, but certainly possible, for a researcher to seek some adaptation of the embedded, qualitative research methods used in activist research in these cases (see, for example, Blee, 2002; 2007). It is also possible for them to be consistent with the kind of “thin” account of activist research provided by Fine. It is not, however, consistent with the kind of cyclical methods practised by the majority of activist researchers and certainly does not feature high on the research agenda for the majority of the field.

### **The anarchist alternative: An “ecological” approach**

In reviewing these approaches it is possible to identify a number of recurring themes, or areas of concern, in relation to the desire to move towards a more critical and liberatory research method, principally critical independence/detachment, normativity and positioning of research. There is a general self-awareness and concern for the role of the intellectual in field research, the method by which they accumulate information from this research and transform it into knowledge and the importance of the “voice” of a research subject. A number of methodological provisions outlined appear to converge with anarchist concerns – dialogical method, deconstruction of the researcher role, co-participative practice and empowerment of research subjects. These are not, however complete solutions. Dissident Marxism, for example, raises a number of theoretical issues related to the retainment of the classical framework. The dialogical credentials of co-participative research can likewise be brought into question with the disproportionate place that a researcher has within the narrative, albeit for supposedly liberatory goals, as well as a number of practical concerns over both the viability and the scope of this research method.

In order to appreciate the problem more fully, however, a re-assessment of priorities is in order. All of the approaches so far have focused principally on the researcher-researched relationship, a move which appears justified considering the concerns outlined at the beginning of this chapter. Dissident Marxism, for example, is best understood as a method judged against, and developed via the perceived inadequacies of, the relationship between researcher and subject articulated in classical Marxism. Similarly co-participative research affords a great deal of priority to the moment of intervention in research practice and the need for greater reflection on roles. These concerns are important and both approaches offer a number of important guidelines.

An anarchist perspective, however, opens up a line of enquiry that cuts to the core of these methodological concerns reflecting instead on the *medium* by which politics is represented. That is, while it may be justifiable to look at representational practices of researchers as problematic, acknowledging the representational *content* of political and social discourse (and alternative formulations to this) provides a much more fruitful line of enquiry. For anarchists this means establishing the boundaries between abstracted and de-alienated political constructs as they exist within both the conceptualisation and practice of research. Only by doing this it is possible to outline the desired content, and subsequently the preferred methodologies, for an anarchist methodology. That these commitments will shape the *content* of research *in spite* of the varying methods applied.

My contention is, in short, that while it may appear valid when addressing concerns over the authenticity and critical value of social movement research to look principally at methodological concerns, normative/theoretical questions have a more profound influence on the shape and character of research. This is particularly the case in relation to theoretical presuppositions that shape and define the assumed capacities of social actors. In this respect the drive towards representation is actually a far deeper concern for anarchists than simply the conduct of a researcher and rooted in the conception of the political itself<sup>60</sup>.

As outlined in the previous chapter, at the centre of a libertarian framework is the notion of the centrality of the individual as the “basic social reality”, the rejection of substitutive understandings of social behaviour and of processes of idealisation and normalisation inherent in both political thought and practice. Colson, for example, argues that the rejection of substitutive categories is synonymous with the notion of “internality”:

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<sup>60</sup> Given how central this is to established conception of politics this should not be surprising.

The meaning, value and *determination* of things are always internal to the *beings*, the *situations* and the *events* themselves ... everything that takes place is internal to things, beings, and their encounters with one another. Nothing comes from an external source (God, State, Laws, Ideals, Constitutions); everything is internal. (2001: 154-5)

An anarchist epistemology, therefore, according to Colson, is not an effort to “see things from the outside” but to “clarify them from within” (Colson quoted in Cohn, 2008: 5).

Accordingly the preference of early anarchist writers, such as Kropotkin, for inductive methods was frequently seen as a guarantee against the transcendental character of existing theory and, more specifically, the abstractions and normalising tendencies inherent in bourgeois political philosophy<sup>61</sup>. The constructions of political science – the state, the economy, society – are considered primarily as embodiments of real relationships between individuals and their representation in other political philosophy criticised as alien from human experience. As Proudhon argues,

The transcendental concepts of substance, cause, space, time, soul, life, matter, spirit, that we place like divinities at the summit of our intelligence are mere products of the analysis that we make of our own experience. (1858: 80)

Inductive methods are, therefore, a means to gain an internal perspective to these social structures, to see them from the vantage point of what Kropotkin describes as “the people”.

Cohn (2006) describes this approach as “ecological” - as a means to reconcile this immanent conception of social agency with structural accounts of human behaviour as a whole. It is, in essence, an attempt to comprehend the internal beliefs and behaviours of human beings whose regularised encounters form, to the social scientist, hermeneutically useful structural categories. Accordingly, Kropotkin argues,

Anarchism has approached the study of the State in exactly the manner the naturalist approaches the study of social life amongst bees and ants or among the migratory birds which hatch their young on the shores of subarctic lakes. (1912: 180)

The analogy to the naturalist sciences is important in drawing out the relational character of this approach. An eco-system is, after all, composed of a web of inter-related, species-specific and system-wide “logics” and routines of which it is possible to draw certain inferences from direct observation. Most importantly, these are sets of behaviour that are continuously in a state of transition, conflict and change. Cause is also multiply situated. It would be appropriate to talk about

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<sup>61</sup>What Proudhon (1858) describes as a form of “hygiene for the mind” (22).

certain structures having a much more persistent influence –the health of the water, for example, or the air – but, no real structural mechanism that dominates “in the last instance”. A drastic change, for example, in the ecosystem may contribute to one specific cause, but will also contain within this varying influencing factors and multiple potential outcomes.

In terms of understanding political behaviour, there is still a relationship of cause and effect to a certain degree but it exists within a matrix of potential actions that are within a social actor’s capacity. It is grounded in an open-ended, non-necessitarian understanding of change. A researcher, will therefore, not say what a social body is, but how it is currently *constituted* and what potential transformations are currently available to it based on both its own resources and the opportunities available to it (as embodied through its own practice and the practice of others around it). This situates the knowledge gained from particular research subjects within a wider web of relations that extends into the past, but that equally could take alternative trajectories into the future. As Cohn elaborates,

Without collapsing the distance and difference between the human and the natural sciences, it seems to me that an anarchist hermeneutics treats the social as parallel to the ecological, and insofar of our knowledge of ecology is a knowledge of development – not reducible to a Newtonian billiard table model, but still in a sense a study of cause and effect, conditions and consequences, potentialities and actualisations – our knowledge of the social will always be developmental in character ... On these terms, to ask what X means is to ask two related questions:

- 1) What is X a development from (i.e. what does X stem from or portend)?
- 2) What can develop from X (i.e. what are the uses of X and what might affect it)? (2006: 84)

The real problems being negotiated here go much further than traditional concerns over structure and agency. This perspective is derived from attempts to resolve the difficulties presented by transcendent (abstracted or alienated) and immanent (de-alienated) social constructs. This is a concern not totally removed from the approaches already outlined. Both BMH and research activism forward their own critique of what Proudhon (1858) would call “the absolute”, a factor which makes them, at least partially, consistent with certain key commitments of an anarchist framework. The justification for BMH’s “history-from-below” shares many of the normative concerns of anarchist theory, on the need to establish social agency as the driving force behind historical

constructions such as class. Similarly, research activists' critique of the distance between subject and object is made on the basis of objection to the abstracted and universalising nature of "research". However, while these claims are important they also fall short of a fully libertarian approach, a form of proto-libertarianism if you will.

BMH's critique of Stalinism/Marxist-Leninism is largely empirical, based on the clear discrepancies between Marxist research and the actual experiences of working class people under capitalism. Certainly it has a normative element as well, Thompson et al. see such deterministic theory as a mechanism by which authoritarian groups and States can legitimise unquestioning political obedience. However, their critique of Marxist method does not lead to an equivalent critique of Marxist ontological categories, of an "external" approach (as Colson would put it) to the social subject or a conception of social agency that is still largely reliant on the "objective" forces of history. Research activism emerged as a response to what is seen to be the alienating practices of the New Left, practices that disguise the privilege and normative beliefs, i.e. abstract the researcher from the research process - an approach which does appear to be consistent with the kind of "internal" perspective that anarchists would advocate (and, in fact, many anarchist researchers have been drawn to this practice). Its failings, however, often amount to another form of abstraction, where the presupposition of the researcher's privileged position is present in the form of their relatively dominant place in the narrative. For each tradition the concern is primarily with abstracted theoretical practice, the need to seek essential consistency with normative aims that aspire to inspire political action and, therefore, should stress social agency. However, in both these cases, the response has largely been methodological. The anarchist approach goes far deeper than these enquiries attempting to cut to the core of the actual disputes that are taking place here.

The concern for the influence of "the absolute" on social thought is a topic that features heavily in Proudhon's monumental, six volume study on justice, *De la justice dans la révolution et dans l'Eglise* (1858). Proudhon considers "the absolute" to be a result of the original influence of religion on political and social thought, a factor that many of his contemporaries were attempting to challenge during the period of Enlightenment but had failed to decisively break with. He objected to the fact that many modern political philosophies were essentially replicating the alienating practice of theology in a secular context. His contention was that atheistic science (including the early social sciences) did not go far enough. Atheists attempted to ignore "the absolute" by concentrating solely on outlining rules and predictions concerning "the relationship between things". This method, however, neglected the totalising character of all social thought. Proudhon argued it was not

possible to talk of any relationship existing between two elements without, at the same time, being drawn into some assumptions over their place in a social totality. For example;

Analysis demonstrates that metaphysical concepts, i.e. ideas of things that go beyond the senses and that reasoning makes us induce from the relations of the phenomena, are necessary forms of thought; that because of these forms, given in the understanding as soon as the image of the object arises to it, something ultra-phenomenal is always induced in our most positive of findings, whereas it is not possible to study physics, for example, without assuming and naming matter; zoology and botany, without assuming and naming life; geometry, mechanics, history, without assuming and naming space, force, time; nor, finally, anything, without assuming a meaning for each order of phenomena - a subject, object, *en soi*, a substratum or an absolute - which never leaves us. (Proudhon, 1858: 26)

Attempting to deny the absolute, Proudhon argues, simply leads to a form of latent absolutism, where ontological claims are smuggled in or left unsubstantiated within the character of the theorist's epistemology. Moreover, these very concepts often have the kind of alienating form that they had originally hoped to avoid. They have served, in effect, to give birth to new gods, secular gods who act in the name of science or progress in lieu of humanity's eternal salvation. So, for example, in response to the positivism of Comte, Proudhon argues,

Comte apparently imagined that it is sufficient to tell the metaphysical: Go! And theology: Go away! For them to slink away. Unfortunately that is not so ... The proof is that he fooled himself, and that by metaphysicking without knowing it, he ended up theologising without perceiving it either. (1858: 25)

The atheists had made a mistake in a) believing that the issue could be rectified by method alone or b) that the issue revolved around the totalising quality of the discourse. However, it was not the step towards the universal which was the problem; this was a logical component of all social thought. Rather it was the abstract, alienating nature of universalistic concepts in the majority of political philosophy. The issue was that all of these systems of thought created social categories independent of human experience and capacity. Accordingly anarchists, Proudhon argued, should not be atheists, but *anti-theists*. They should make war on all Gods:

the God of *all* as well as on the God-Humanity, on the God-Christ, make war on all the absolutes that have been produced, all the living and reigning Gods, in the name of Justice and truth. (Proudhon, 1858: 37-8)



The key, therefore, was not to deny an “ultra-phenomenal” knowledge, but to formulate a libertarian conception of the “absolute” that argued this knowledge to be fundamentally social in character, to re-affirm that no notion existed alien to human experience and to challenge the validity of any knowledge that claimed to be beyond human capacities. The methodological implications of this is a research practice where the over-arching claims of a study are formulated through a process of internal clarification via social study. Abstractions, then, only emerge from the embedded position of the researcher within that research context.

Equally central to such an “internalised” perspective, and foregoing the need to be drawn into theoretical abstractions, is acknowledging the fundamentally pluralistic character of social thought, to recognise the validity, consistency and value of certain belief systems internal to themselves. It is then from this internal perspective, from “seeing things from the inside”, that the researcher can seek to clarify the logic of these values and tease out within them the seeds of libertarian practice. This was the practice Proudhon advised when he spoke of discovering the “logic of things”, as Cohn (2008) explains,

The assumption behind the “the logic of things” is that a “logic” is *internal* to the things themselves, that each particular community or culture, each specific phenomena or event, has its *own* rationality. This is quite different from the assumption governing Hegelian or Marxian hermeneutics, for which the true meaning of any particular is immanent to the ideal or social totality (“the true is the whole”); it has far more in common with the anthropologists ethic of respect for differences. In short, a hermeneutic immanence: the assumption that knowledge is to be found by a process of clarifying the logics immanent to particular patterns of action in the world. (Cohn, 2008: 10)

It should be emphasised also that such an “internal” approach does not substantially alter its ecological character also. Taking the internal values and belief systems of a particular group or society on its own terms does not, for example, foreclose being drawn to other sources, historical, economic etc. Or even alternative value judgements. Such a pluralistic account does not imply the kind of relativism that you would find in similar claims made by post-structuralists. Cohn (2008), for example, qualifies it as a “limited pluralism” – one that accepts not all descriptions of the world are equal, and indeed that many may be, in practical terms, better than others or even outright falsehoods. Accordingly he identifies Proudhonist hermeneutics as, akin to those of Nietzsche, Marx and Freud, as also a “hermeneutics of suspicion” (Cohn, 2008: 12). Indeed, such a critical position is the basis of Proudhon’s opposition to the absolutist ideas of the Church and State and his polemics

against theological constructions such as probabilism. Anarchists, accordingly, recognise that while social and cultural values may appear “self-evident” to those who hold them they may also disguise real systems of domination and oppression and contain internal contradictions. Likewise, the fact that they may appear self-evident to these communities does not by any means make them permanent, all knowledge is the product of conscious human activity and, as such, is always open to challenge and transformation.

This does, of course, generate certain methodological challenges. The key is to balance criticism and method in a way that is both sensitive and intrinsically tied to the experience of the research subject without foreclosing the value of a stance differentiated, or critically counter-posed, to that experience. In this respect the problem with determinist approaches is not necessarily their aspirations – making individuals think more critically and holistically about their experiences – but the assumptions that generally came with this. Namely, that this was a process that negated (or at least didn’t principally build from) researched experiences or that could only attribute meaning by assigning place within a wider “whole”, i.e. from the relationship to an externalised/abstract source.

Graeber’s proposals in *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology* (2004) are particularly instructive in this respect. Graeber, like Cohn, sees anthropology as a potentially important methodological toolkit to draw from in the process of developing a “non-vanguardist” approach to social research. The methodology discussed in his “fragments” also stands very close to Proudhon’s advice for pursuing the “logic of things”. He is particularly interested in, for example, the parallels that can be drawn between the study of so-called primitive societies and modern political movements (including social movements). His argument is essentially that the ethnic and racial labels that are synonymous with early anthropological studies actually disguise the political values that lay at the base of most social identities. Ethnic difference is, in fact, a smokescreen for often quite sophisticated ethical judgements that come to shape the organisation of a community. In this instance, he argues,

One is dealing with something very much along the lines of what we’d think as a social movement; It is just that in the absence of broadsides, rallies and manifestoes, the media through which one can create and demand new forms of (what we’d call) social, economic or political life, to pursue different forms of value, were different: one had to work through literally or figuratively sculpting flesh, through music and ritual, food and clothing, and ways of disposing of the dead. But in part as a result, over time, what were once projects become identities, even ones continuous with nature. They ossify and harden into self-evident truths or collective properties. (Graeber, 2004:56)

Such a perspective also has obvious parallels with Kropotkin's studies of the development of ethics through Western societies and naturally occurring expressions of co-operation in *Mutual Aid*. Graebar, like Kropotkin, also advocates a deconstructive approach to the study of existing societies; one that attempts to tease out what Kropotkin called the "law of mutual aid" –instances of self-organisation and co-operation – against the "law of mutual struggle" which has dominated narratives of human history to this point. Accordingly he argues,

The moment one stops insisting on viewing all forms of action only by their function in reproducing larger, total, forms of inequality of power, we will also be able to see that anarchist social relations and non-alienated forms of action are all around us. (Graebar, 2004: 76)

Such an approach goes substantially further than the framework provided by Proudhon. For while Graebar, and other anarchists like him, are concerned with the abstracted nature of certain forms of social knowledge they also, specifically, wish to challenge abstract thought as part of a revolutionary process. This relates to a broader point in terms of Proudhon's relationship to the wider anarchist canon. For while Proudhon elaborated many of the key principles of anarchist theory and practice, and was also famously the first to declare, "*Je suis un anarchiste!*" (1840), as Schmidt and Van Der Walt argue, Proudhonism has its own qualities that mark it as distinct from anarchism:

For there was much in the mutualist tradition that the anarchists could not accept. Anarchism, argued Bakunin, was Proudhonism greatly developed and taken to its ultimate conclusion". From Proudhon anarchists took the notion of the self-management of the means of production, the idea of a free federation, a hatred of capitalism and landlordism and a deep distrust of the state. (Schmidt and Van Der Walt, 2009: 83-4)

In terms of difference, however, Proudhon believed it possible to re-appropriate peacefully sections of the capitalist economy through free federations of workers' associations and co-operatives. His mutualist system was one based on contractual reciprocity and this, ultimately, was reflected in the course of his philosophy. Accordingly, Proudhon saw the victory of collective reason over the absolute as a slow, evolutionary process, a process brought about by a newly evolving social order that would eventually supplant capitalism and the state. Anarchists, however, recognised that abstracted thought – the absolute – was not only a product of the development of church, state and

capitalist society but was actively, and violently, reinforced by them as a means to maintain their political authority. The path towards truly libertarian though was not, therefore, a matter of restoring balance to the existing social order but to initiate a revolutionary reconstruction of the current society. This required going a step further than that which was advocated by Proudhon as McCauley argues, for example:

Forging a free and ecological society is not just a matter of overthrowing the state. It also requires the creation or recovery of liberatory institutions (like those Kropotkin celebrated) and the reconstruction of human relationships on communal bases. The further step is necessary because the state has colonised and absorbed social life, just as it has bureaucratised and politicised the economy. The state is not simply a complex of political, military, or bureaucratic institutions; it also has a psychological history and fosters a distinct epistemology or *a state of mind* that derives from its own bureaucratic or militaristic form of organisation. Its emergence – a form of evolution rather than a sudden eruption or revolution – was predicated, as Kropotkin had argued, upon the reworking of organic or traditional cultures and customs into forms that allowed for social domination. Its appearance was prefigured by the rise of warrior societies, priestly corporations and political professionals. (1998: 315)

Proudhon's vision lacked this antagonistic dimension - the autonomist *praxis* that is so essential to both anarchist theory and activity. It is necessary, therefore, to augment his analysis, his denunciations of the corrosive effect of the absolute on systems of knowledge and principled opposition to any expression of political authority with a more radical application that emphasises not gradual reconstruction of the social fabric but conflict and violent rupture. This is what Graebar (2009b) refers to when he assesses the role of the researcher as not only one who is able to discover the "logic of things", but also engage in a process of "utopian extrapolation", using the values of the community to formulate alternatives and present them back as "gifts", as new visions for transformative action (112).

## Examples

Turning specifically to the study of social movements I believe it is possible to identify a number of studies that run close to the model outlined. Interestingly, and in contrast to the approaches reviewed so far, these are not principally “academic” approaches but represent the work of activists attempting to expand and clarify issues that relate to their activity. A benefit of this, I believe, is that the “internal” perspective advocated by Proudhon et al. features quite prominently (largely because it is an authentic expression of the writers relationship to their material). A drawback is that the absence of academic priorities means both are limited or lacking in methodological exposition. Nonetheless, both throw up methodological examples of the epistemological positions outlined and, with a little elaboration, it is possible to tease out the processes of operationalisation that have occurred here.

### Example 1: *The Bolsheviks and Workers Control* – M. Brinton

In terms of methodology, an event like the Russian revolution would at first glance appear to present all manner of obstacles to the framework outlined. Not only is there the obvious problem of its historicity, which would appear to make any find of “internal” purchase impossible, but there is also in this particular case the additional factor of a whole host of competing (and politically loaded) narratives concerning the correct interpretation of the events. Brinton’s – not strictly an anarchist but a highly sympathetic libertarian communist – study, however, does nonetheless succeed in not only putting forward a thorough and insightful account of key episodes but also in drawing out the most important political and social trends through the existing narratives. Unlike Leninist and bourgeois histories that either attempt to vindicate or ostracise events “after the fact” or in reference to a grand social narrative, Brinton’s focus is instead upon deriving *intentionality* and *meaning* through the available archival material. As he argues,

On all sides people seek to use the Russian revolution with a view to integrating it into their own propaganda – only maintaining of it those aspects which happen to conform to their own particular analysis of history, or their own particular prescriptions for the present. Whatever was new, whatever seemed to contradict established theories or break out of established categories, has been systematically “forgotten”, minimised, distorted, denied. (Brinton, 1970: 296)

The study, as the title suggests, draws out “worker’s control” as a pivotal discursive construction in the mobilisation of different groups around specific economic and political goals. As he explains;

We hope to dispel some of the confusion by recalling how at critical stage of history, the advocates of different conceptions of “worker’s control” confronted one another and by showing who won, why they won and what the consequences were to be.

(Brinton, 1970: 293)

He, therefore, employs both a historical and economic analysis augmented with a critical study of the discursive content mobilising groups and individuals within this time frame. As such, figures such as those in the leadership of the Bolshevik party – Lenin, Trotsky, Kamenev – are considered as key architects of particular political narratives. However, this is not his primary focus. What is really central to the conflicts that Brinton describes is the outlining of competing forms of social, political and economic organisation through this period. Accordingly, the seminal contribution of Brinton’s work is his analysis of the “worker’s control” pursued by the Bolshevik party in contrast to that which was fought for by the factory and peasant committees.

Overall, this approach displays a libertarian, non-necessitarian approach to political history. He holds the position that the Russian revolution was at no point, or given an alternative mix of variables, neither doomed to failure nor guaranteed success<sup>62</sup>. Rather, it developed as a result of the ideas and forms of organisation pursued by its key protagonists (who were influenced by the opportunities available to them). To cite a common argument for example, economic under-development may have had a degree of influence on the political outcome, as Brinton suggests as a possible cause for the lack of national unity in the factory committee movement, but this equally, as a causal factor, cannot be separated from the campaign to undermine the committees pursued by the Bolshevik party. Brinton, likewise, perceives the danger of an account of which the sole focus is discourse alone, as he argues;

It is the danger of becoming entangled in the very legend one is seeking to destroy. Those, for instance, seeking to “demolish” Stalin (or Trotsky or Lenin) may successfully achieve their immediate objective. But they may “succeed” at the expense of not seeing, sensing or recording the most fundamental new features of this period: the autonomous action of the working class seeking to totally alter the conditions of its existence. (Brinton, 1970: 297)

This also bears a very strong resemblance to Kropotkin’s criticisms of the Jacobin histories of the French revolution and his emphasis on the autonomous activity of the workers and peasants. Brinton’s study, however, goes further than a simple historical corrective; it is “ecological” in nature

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<sup>62</sup> A position that, I would argue, should equally be applied to Greece in December 2008.

- situating specific events, narratives and organisational tendencies within a matrix of social actions of which the most libertarian expressions are critically judged to be superior. Accordingly it succeeds in being both “internal” - taking the vantage point of the actors involved – critical and holistic at the same time.

What is perhaps most surprising is the simplicity of the method that is being applied here, something which I believe parallels my own choices. The history itself is presented as a straightforward chronology of events interspersed with occasional analysis. Despite the nature of the events being covered the presentation could easily be compared to the notes of an anthropologist working in the field. Yet, Brinton is not applying any particularly special approach to his archival research. There is no attempt to “immerse oneself in the field” nor auto-ethnographic treatment here, just a particular epistemology applied to the documents that are available. Brinton sees no need to agonise over his own stance in relation to the research material; his goals are clearly stated, as are his normative preferences. Granted he is someone who isn’t a working academic and, therefore, less troubled by the common anxieties. The events have also long passed so there is less concern for a relationship between research and research subject. Nonetheless, the parsimony of his approach displays a degree of humility largely absent in much social scientific literature. His chosen role is, ultimately, not as a director, leader or theorist but as an elaborator of autonomous, working class experience.

Example 2: *Teaching Rebellion: Stories from the Grassroots Mobilization in Oaxaca* – D. Denham and the C.A.S.A. Collective

Denham and the CASA Collective’s study of the popular mobilisations occurring in Oaxaca, Mexico over 2006 shares very similar priorities to Brinton’s study. The CASA collective, again working within a non-academic context, are keen to document an episode of autonomous working class experience in an environment where it has been, either nationally or internationally, misrepresented or simply outright ignored by the corporate press. Unlike Brinton’s work, however, this study is developed from the experience of activists deeply and actively involved within the social movements in question. The richness of the interview transcripts throughout the book attest to this. Yet despite this, there is still some ground between this study and the kind of “research activist” approach adopted by many academics in similar circumstances. This study is also augmented by extended historical, cultural and economic analysis that intends to situate these accounts within their appropriate context. The interviews are, also conducted with a great number of different

organisations and individuals (of various political and religious affiliations). This methodological choice, however, is something other than an effort towards verification. Granted there is a general convergence on key themes and events within the interview transcripts but there is also, displayed through the diversity of their sample, a degree of acceptance of a plurality of experience. There is no attempt to forge a single narrative across these accounts. What we have in place of this is an extended political analysis focusing upon what are considered to be the most valuable lessons emerging out of the mobilisations, particularly the new forms of social organisation emerging out of the varied cultural and political context. The CASA collective occupy a very conventional position as “insiders” of this movement, akin to a field researcher. This, however, does not preclude them being drawn into the multiplicity of “insides” – of self-evident narratives – displayed by their participants nor to be led to disregard their own independent, critical judgement.

There is also an element of, what Graebar calls, “utopian extrapolation” evidenced within the authors analysis. As Esteva (2008) states, for example,

We’re in transition from a conventional power structure to an alternative form of social organisation. In order to construct the alternative we need to finish dismantling the old regime and reorganise society from the bottom-up... what we’re doing now in Mexico is to appeal to sociological and political imagination. (Esteva, 2008:334-6)

A testament to the success of this study is the degree to which one is able to perceive the process of development, in the Kropotkinist sense, occurring through these narratives, of change in attitudes and levels of (in)tolerance for the political status quo. The authors not only share these transformative goals but recognise the seeds of something particularly valuable in the autonomous relationships that their co-participants have been forming. They go beyond content alone to look at the substantial character of the popular mobilisations.

The structure of the study, despite not consciously being outlined in this fashion, and in a similar way to Brinton, is highly anthropological in character. It is divided into interviews, two analytical pieces (one intending to set the context of the movement, the other its political consequences), a chronology of events, photographs and a study guide. These sections are successful in capturing the multiple layers of the distinct experience of being a participant in the Oaxaca uprising. That is while still acknowledging the diverse ways in which participants found meaning in these events. As already stated, the book is not designed for an academic audience, hence the inclusion of a study guide. However, the themes that the study guide encourages readers to develop – on the importance of religion, culture, tradition, community co-operation and cohesion – provides a good summary of



themes an academic treatment could develop. What the study lacks in theoretical rigour, therefore, it makes up for in the depth of understanding it has with the situation and the individuals involved.

### Summary of methods

The two examples given raise a number of important issues in relation to the design of an anarchist social movement methodology. Interestingly, and contrary to what would be expected of these cases, the proximity of the researcher appears to have no great impact on the applicability of the approach. This I think answers some of the concerns already raised in relation to co-participative research and the practicalities of any critical/liberatory method. In line with my expectations it is not, in fact, the particular adaptation of research tools that proves most valuable (although the CASA collective to demonstrate how such concerns can add an additional richness to a piece of research). Granted, a level of negotiated access is required in each case. But both studies fall short of the kind of deeply embedded approach that anthropological researchers in the field would practice (even “insiders” like the CASA collective). Rather, the anthropological quality of the studies stem, not from a particular application of methods in the field but a certain perspective towards research materials.

What is important to conclude from this is that “internality” does not hinge upon a level of physical proximity to the research subject (although this may be highly beneficial as the CASA collective demonstrate well)<sup>63</sup>. Rather, it is a *process* of attempting to comprehend and understand ones counterparts, to attempt to know what they value and why they act. It is, of course, the expectation of much co-participative/activist research to in fact do this. However, and in a similar way to the weaknesses of the workers’ enquiry, even negotiated goals can prove to be an artificial construct, or in worst cases, simply a barrier to study. In place I believe it is preferable to adopt a form of lesser, or maybe “virtual” participation, where there is a need to consider and register views very different from one’s own but which, as both studies demonstrate, also does not preclude the exercise of independent, critical judgement.

In respect to the wider body of social movement literature, it is this key component that is often lacking. Looking back to the examples of the first chapter and the existing accounts of the Greek unrest there is clear evidence of a lack of engagement (to the point that participants own perspectives and views are almost entirely absent from studies). That is not to say that there is not a

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<sup>63</sup> Indeed in the contemporary context, in the West at least, the increasing use of the internet and social media networks makes gaining such an internal purchase even easier; compare, for example, the challenges that faced Brinton in uncovering and contextualising archived leaflets and texts to say someone who wished to study the UK riots of 2011 who can access the communication of the rioters as they occurred in real-time.

need for the exercise of “independent judgement”, along the lines sketched by the BMH, of a researcher. This criticism, however, needs to be an “internalised” practice. It should be derived from a process of first attempting to come to the closest possible understanding of, ideally even reach, the same original context by which participant’s views are formed (and the most authentic understanding of the views they do in fact hold). Only on these grounds should criticism be levelled - as a partner in dialogue, not as an author or commentator. For example it is very rare that, particularly in the case of political movements, participants will not have created their own ideas and frames of analysis to make sense of their actions. These are the building blocks of any study. The works of Brinton and the CASA collective, for example, are not packaged principally as a tool of militant intervention nor do they claim to present themselves as bringing something especially unique (or beyond the capacities of their subjects) in their research, an approach, perhaps ironically, which tends to prove to be quite popular with activists. They by-pass the need for representation – usually derived from the understanding that intellectuals have tools and capacities that are otherwise absent or that their research subjects lack – and instead present their work, more modestly, as the product of a concerted and methodical approach to a particular area of research interest. In this respect, there is value in, instead of attempting to synthesise the goals and priorities of researchers and activists, a more parsimonious approach of intellectual work as simply a logical extension of the kind of critical and analytical activities that will occur in almost all political contexts.

Finally, what is eminently valuable in both these studies is in their ability to capture the *content* of political action. This is a judgement, as my overview of the literature outlines, which is typically pre-judged in social movement studies, largely in the form of the representation of “social movement” that is brought to bear on the material. As inspiring and insightful as many of the stories generated through the research may be, what is absolutely essential is the ability to capture processes of conflict, constitution and change within attitudes and actions. That means contextualising the environment by which certain actions become desirable/undesirable necessary/unnecessary. It also means, importantly, relating to and extending the narratives that already exist and engaging, as a partner in dialogue, in the kinds of “utopian extrapolation” that Graebar describes.

## Provisions for a methodology

In spite of the lack of methodological exposition both the CASA and Brinton study do provide good guides for how to structure an anarchist methodology. As stated in the first chapter, much activist research does often conform or come close to libertarian goals, it is just that methodological decisions are often dealt with in purely practical terms, and therefore, often lack a theoretical dimension. In synthesising the best practice of these studies, the anarchist framework and the concerns raised by critical analysis of other approaches with comparable ethical concerns it is possible to form the outline of an anarchist social movement methodology. Subsequently the choices made below are based on two inter-related concerns - operationalising an internal perspective (from which it is possible to draw strong examples from both of the above studies) and situating this within an ecological approach (preserving a holistic and historical view in the aid of capturing an “ecology of struggle”). This is in addition to allowing space for critical reflection and independent judgement. In both cases immersion and contextualisation are key and methodological choices – such as mapping out the terrain and tradition – reflect this. These choices also often serve a dual purpose as both a means of structuring findings in a useful way to the reader (who gains a deeper appreciation for the primary materials and analysis by situating them in their appropriate context) as well as a research aid in itself (as a process of reaching that internal standpoint). To illustrate this more clearly it is useful to look at the needs specifically arising from my case study (although I maintain that these also have a much wider and broader application).

Before any case study lays a political, economic and social terrain, understanding these is a prerequisite to coming to terms with events in their most basic terms<sup>64</sup>. This is the case even for seemingly spontaneous uprisings such as the Greek December. This is, in essence, the process of answering the basic questions - Why here? Why now? Why in this form? – in ways that point to specific situational or, in the case of traditions, ideational factors. Consequently when turning to Greece we can say that, while being equally wary about claims of exceptionalism, what arose, as Schwarz (2010a) comments, “arose out of a specific culture and history of struggle” and only in understanding these key traditions and experiences is it possible to start to appreciate how and why December happened. Analysis should, of course, not be limited to this. The key is also going a step further – to present these not just as a backdrop or causal chains but, as *living things*, that will continually recur in the fabric of the culture, identities, experiences, goals and images that are invoked through political practice. As an outsider trying to understand this process the task required

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<sup>64</sup> This much is acknowledged in the mainstream literature and is evidenced in my review of articles about December in the introductory chapter.

is not just a linguistic (although often this is necessary too!), but a cultural translation aiming to derive social and political context. In the case of the Greek December, this meant a deeper appreciation of the experience of the education system, police violence, corruption and clientelism and unemployment and their connection to the social struggles that merged and generalised into the revolt.

“Traditions” is similarly about outlining existing repertoires and frames of resistance. In this particular case this was largely in the form of the ideology of native traditions, their practices, the social weight of their ideas and where they historically have had influence. The strong presence of the anti-capitalist and student movement on the streets made understanding their respective histories all the more essential. From a more embedded perspective, part of the analysis also involved not just accounts of these ideas and practices but how they changed through the experience of December. In other words how they modified, and were in turn modified by, the content of the political action. This was a concern which was likewise shared by many movement participants seeking to reflect on their own political practice.

There is, undoubtedly, a degree of intersection between a “social terrain” and its respective “traditions”. In the case of Greece, for example, radical traditions have redefined and altered both the experience and perception of education through an ongoing culture of resistance in the education system. Equally aspects of the “terrain” cannot be understood in isolation of the subjectivities they produce and “tradition” is likewise punctuated by the political context. Nonetheless, these complexities, however difficult they may be to navigate, do not detract from the overall objective of the exercise - to set a frame of reference that prepares a richer understanding for the more detailed analysis into the initiatives and actions occurring over the period of study. In fact in many ways an appreciation of the complexities of this interaction sets a more detailed picture of the real position of militants and activists in relation to their choices.

Finally, “terrain” and “tradition” seeks to address some of the concerns raised already in relation to ethnographic study and the problems of retraditionalisation. For example in relation to my case study the 17<sup>th</sup> November, the legacy of the Junta and the Civil War are infrequently cited in movement texts. This is reflective of the fact that these shouldn’t really be considered immediate causal factors in relation to the unrest. Nonetheless they are components of a more engrained tradition – a tradition, more importantly, that would be largely taken for granted in communication

by participants amongst themselves - of political dissent in Greece. Occasionally, and especially during periods of intense political activity, these traditions become “re-animated” (and this is evidenced to some degree in the texts and image archive). Reliance on this, however, is insufficient and raises additional problems in that the immediate influence can be over-stated, when they are just re-animations, or that they simply appear as alien constructs to the outsider.

As stated in the introductory chapter some refinement to the methodology occurred through the process of assembling the case study. The appendices, for example, are largely what would be traditionally labelled as “archival materials” (although these do include interviews, eye-witness accounts and auto-interviews by participants as well as communiqués, records of activity and pieces of analysis). Some field work was done, however, in terms of participation and dialogue with activists following the events. In this particular case, field work was very much an extension of the process adopted in relation to the gathered texts in that it was a means to secure and achieve clarity on some of the materials already generated (and in some cases it generated additional sources and lines of enquiry). The relative importance of fieldwork, however, is something I have not explored in great detail here and I think could potentially vary greatly from study to study. In all cases the rationale was building confidence in the authenticity of my presentation and, ultimately, achieving clarity in both the context and the ideas emerging throughout the events (especially before any kind of critical analysis was brought to bear).

Finally the ultimate goal of the study, and a point of critical difference with traditional social movement approaches, was the application of a developmental/ecological analysis. Here the key was to move towards an appreciation of both the real content of ideas and practices as well as a relational understanding of their growth and fluctuations during the unrest. The kind of pre-judgements that are typically drawn in social movement literature – what “social movements” are, what they stand for, what they are symptomatic of – was explicitly rejected in this case. Moreover, it was equally not enough to simply characterise, for example, Greek extra-parliamentarism and outline what these particular groups were responsible for through the unrest. The more meaningful issue, in this case, was what did extra-parliamentary agitation actually mean in terms of the social practices it produced, how did this challenge dominant institutions and what lessons can be generated from this for future struggle. To re-state the formula outlined by Cohn (2006), “what is X a development from (i.e. what does X stem from or portend)?” and “what can develop from X (i.e. what are the uses of X and what

might affect it)?” (84). In relation to the December unrest in particular these are questions that cannot only be made of the existing political traditions but of the insurrection as a whole.

In summary then I believe it is possible to outline a number of general provisions emerging from the methodology as applied to my case study. For clarity I have divided these into three categories, although as my commentary noted the process by which each are applied is inter-related, these are – terrain and tradition, assembling the experience and vectors of analysis. This organisation also reflects the presentation of the materials in the following chapters.

➤ Terrain and tradition

Moments of political unrest/transition and change, the growth of dissident traditions and social movements, no matter how alien and unexpected they may seem to appear to the outsider, will be always rooted in a wider social and political context. These political traditions will extend into the narratives, repertoires and choices of political actors and are the foundations of the subjectivities that emerge out of political and social struggle. The primary task of the researcher, therefore, is to engage in an orientating process to familiarise themselves with the cultural context in which political behaviour takes place. That is to account for both the “seen” and “unseen” events, narratives and practices that mark out a particular social context. It is a responsibility here to also gauge expectations and potential gaps in the existing accounts. Internalisation should not preclude looking across cultures or being drawn to general judgements via a materialist framework, e.g. the expectation of struggles routed in the activity of elites and the existence of social class. It is simply that these judgements need to be reconciled within the internal standpoint.

I have divided this into two categories, which hopefully also captures a degree of interactivity and dialogue between the two - terrain and traditions. Terrain is aimed to capture those deeply-rooted structures that permeate political life, what traditional social scientists would simply identify as “structure”, but, contrary to the orthodox understanding, also the social agency that emerges in their constitution. These are, understandably, often concepts permeated with political power, e.g. class, race, nationhood, and, as a result, are best understood as sites of struggle than as determining social forces (although that isn’t to claim that they aren’t determining, but that such constraints result from the power and interests of groups that perpetuate these social arrangements not the arrangements themselves). Tradition aims to capture more explicitly the ideologies and movements that

operate in this terrain. Traditions contextualise the political landscape in the sense that, especially in terms of social movements, they will frame the subjectivities that emerge from dissident and extra-institutional political action. They provide actors with a tradition – a means of making sense of the world and their actions as well as a set of explicit aims – and, especially in times of crisis, ideological leadership.

➤ Assembling the experience.

It is paramount to reach the most authentic understanding of the social and political experience. That is not to say that this is *one* particular authentic experience and acknowledging diversity here is by no means unproblematic. Nonetheless some broad account needs to be made of the experiences, attitudes and behaviours provoked by that event (particularly those unique to the event). Both Brinton and the CASA's collective use of a chronology as a starting point to the study I believe is useful in this respect. There is value, although obviously there will always be some degree of selection bias (in this case that which is most relevant to the practices of the movements), in presenting an un-mediated account of events as they unfolded. In my case study first-hand accounts were prioritised. However, a degree of cross-referencing was also applied both across accounts and in terms of the reporting of more traditional commentators, e.g. news media. In my particular case study there were no great disputes over the narrative. In the case that this did happen some adjudication between the sources would perhaps be necessary; however, it would be preferable to acknowledge these disputes in the chronology (as they are often a source of analytical interest in themselves). The over-arching aim of the chronology is to provide an essential back-bone to the study. This is followed by research into visual and first-hand accounts and existing analysis. This could involve the use interview data and direct participation (if possible)<sup>65</sup>. Many movement texts have been, again, presented in an unmediated form. The objective here is not to develop an interpretation of these experiences but attempting to come to the most authentic understanding of them and the logics that produce them. In my case study the selection of movement texts was based on a combination of factors including how representative they were of currents within the unrest, whether they were of analytical interest, i.e. exposed points of conflict and

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<sup>65</sup> In the case of this study this involved an initial interview with a selection of participants in the December unrest, followed by some time "in the field" – visiting anarchist, anti-authoritarian and student initiatives, talking to activists and participating in demonstrations (among other things) - over February 2010.

difference and whether they included accounts of motives, objectives, composition and aims.

➤ Vectors of analysis – building a developmental analysis

At the heart of a developmental approach to social movements is the ability to capture motion – processes of conflict, transition and change – and the subjectivities (the possibilities and capacities) that emerge as part of this process. In order to come to the most thorough account of this I have divided this into specific vectors of analysis (all of which are intended to register change). These are composition (the ideological make-up and demographics of the movements), content (the political ideas and practices they contained) and development (the extent to which they conflict with dominant social and political practices). As I have already stated, the perspective adopted here is closer to that of an organisational praxis – analysing the challenges and opportunities that face a movement from the internal perspective of their beliefs and movement goals. It is also intended to reflect the unique context, and potential trajectories, that anarchist writers outline in relation to autonomous/extra-institutional behaviour. However, as has also been mentioned such a pluralistic account should not forfeit the ability to make critical, normative judgements. Accordingly this section will not just be empirical but also analytical seeking to derive political judgements from the body of research as a whole.



## Chapter 4: A Greek December

*Note: research materials are referenced in text with a code which corresponds to their place in the appendices, e.g. “2b10”-Appendix 2b (Image Archive), Image 10.*

### Part 1: Pathways - Terrain and Tradition

“We are an image from the future” was a popular slogan of the Greek insurrection. Social commentators had warned that a global economic recession could return social unrest to Western democracies and, just as foretold, less than a year after financial markets had collapsed on December 2008 Greece exploded. In fact it was only weeks before the riots that Dominique Strauss-Kahn, then chief of the IMF, had warned governments of the West to, “step up action to stem the global economic crisis or risk delaying a recovery and sparking violent unrest on the streets” (Balakrishnan, 2008). Of course the focus of the riots, when they did come, was not principally economic but were sparked by outrage at the murder of a teenager, Alexis Grigoropoulos. Nonetheless, this did not prevent international media commentators from announcing their anxieties that “Greek-style-riots” could quickly spread and infect other European countries hit hard by the credit crunch (see for example, Athanasiadis, 2009; Crumley, 2008; Haven, 2008; Popham, 2008) nor quickly drawing the links between the predominantly young people expressing their anger on the streets and the plight of the so-called “seven hundred Euro” generation.

In retrospect such a narrative is certainly compelling. Not least for the fact that escalating unrest since December - in Ireland, Spain, UK, France and, once more in Greece in 2010/11 – means that the 2008 riots increasingly appear as a first episode, a prelude to recurring struggles over austerity. Especially when, talking from the UK experience, images of hooded rioters and youth clashing with police – the mark of the “known unknowns” which seemed so novel to foreign commentators in 2008 - have, in recent years, become more familiar. To locate the cause in the very immediate experience of economic crisis, however – as valid as this perspective may be in limited terms – is ultimately to also limit the meaning of the Greek revolt. This is not least because this overlooks the most unique and important aspect of the December unrest that, unlike the Paris riots which preceded it and the London riots that followed it, there emerged out of this social unrest a *political movement*. This was a political movement, moreover, that was not just characterised by disillusionment with existing social and economic conditions, but aimed to foment an insurrection against the *institutions* of State and capital.

The issues that have been focused on in the following section both serve to better illustrate and contextualise the movement texts - for example, the historic role of the Communist Party, persecution of the Left and contemporary struggles in education - as well as elaborating social and economic conditions through which it is possible to better understand the orientation of participant's praxis - for example, in the education system, precarity or unemployment. A degree of depth of analysis is obviously required with such wide-ranging issues and, as such, in all cases analysis is prompted, but not limited to the perspectives of participants.

## **The Terrain**

Note on the choice of frames: As already outlined, settling on the frames that animate a political "terrain" is by no means a self-evident process. The starting point here, as would likely be the case with many comparable studies, was with movement texts and the accounts of participants themselves. In some cases frames have been prompted by reference but no clear (or lack of a complete) exposition in texts (and therefore the need for "cultural translation"), in other instances they stand as widely understood and acknowledged features distinct to the political process (e.g. corruption and clientelism). Often these were not a primary motivating factor but nonetheless present a backdrop for the prevalence of certain, more unique, attitudes. In this particular instance there was nothing glaringly absent from participants own accounts (although education and the student movement were generally under-featured). In cases where expectations of certain sources were absent I would argue that would warrant an enquiry, and if proving compatible with the evidence, an additional frame.

### *Police violence*

The murder of Alexis on the night of Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2008 was the spark that lit the December rebellion. Within hours hundreds had taken to the streets attacking police, police stations and other symbols of state and capitalist authority. "These Days Are For Alexis" became one of the defining slogans of the growing movement, a rallying cry against both police brutality while also an expression of the youthful spirit that gripped the unrest. From the burning streets of Greece's cities, to the neighbourhood assemblies and the occupied municipal buildings, and later, when people took to the streets of Italy, Spain, Germany and London, Alexis, or his spirit at least, was proclaimed to be

everywhere. This was, however, unfortunately not the first incident of its kind within the anti-capitalist movement.

Dating from before the Civil War, the historiography of the Greek Left is dominated by violent resistance to the state. The death of young dissidents in the contemporary period is - from the 24 killed at the gates of the Polytechnic in 1973, Iakovos Koumis and Stamatina Kanelopoulo during clashes in 1980 and, finally, Alexis in 2008 – an unfortunate appendage to this history. It was no coincidence that, as had been done by protesters in 1985, during December activists chose to re-name Stournari St. (the location where Alexis was shot) in the boy's honour (2b10). Like the December days, then Greeks had also taken to the streets to express their outrage at the death of a fifteen year old, this time Michalis Kaltezas, shot by a police officer during clashes around the Polytechnic that year. The date of Alexis' murder now marks another date of commemoration for the "unrest season", as it is known, an annual period of protest in Greece that is marked by this legacy, starting with the commemoration of the November 17<sup>th</sup> uprising.

State violence, and resistance to it, continues to not only be a strong feature of the historical and ideological narrative that forms around the Greek Left and anarchist movement but is reinforced as a continuing reality, in the form of intimidation, arbitrary arrest and police brutality, for contemporary activists. Exarchia, the Athens neighbourhood where Alexis was murdered, is a centre for this libertarian and anti-establishment culture hosting many social centres, squats, neighbourhood assemblies as well as anarchist and "DIY" projects and community initiatives. The neighbourhood is also host to the Athens Polytechnic. The site of the student-led uprising against the Junta, it is building long considered a symbol of resistance to the military dictatorship and remains a space for student occupations and a hub for anarchist, far-left and anti-fascist activity. As a result, the Police have long favoured a strong presence in these neighbourhoods and incidents of police brutality against residents are not unusual<sup>66</sup>. Mass evictions of squats and social centres as well as mass arrests and beatings are all regular responses to outbreaks of protest in this and the surrounding area<sup>67</sup>. The residents, for their part, often target banks, police stations and other symbols of the state and capitalism during demonstrations. It is no coincidence, therefore, that the

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<sup>66</sup> An Amnesty International report of March 2009, for example, referring solely to the policing of peaceful protests throughout December, listed allegations of excessive use of force and firearms, torture and ill-treatment, arbitrary detention and denial of access to lawyers as part of a "pattern of human rights violations" on the part of EL.AS (Amnesty International, 2009)

<sup>67</sup> For example, following the murder of a police officer outside the Ministry of Culture, an act claimed by urban guerrilla group "Revolutionary Struggle", on the 4th January 2009 Athen's Polytechnic was ordered closed and police cordons set up around the Exarchia neighbourhood. In some cases police rounded up drinkers from local bars. They detained 72 individuals in total. This was along with allegations of police brutality and illegal house raids. All 72 detained were later released without charge. (Libcom, 2009)

area where the murder occurred, what Karamichas (2009: 291) describes as a “culturally reproduced site of youth rebellion”, saw such a rapid and mass response to the shooting.<sup>68</sup>

In certain cases anti-state sentiment claims deeper historical roots than the experience of dictatorship, namely the social and political legacy of Communist defeat in the Civil War. The institutionalisation of the Communist party and the many other organisations of the Left following the fall of the dictatorship are seen by some on the far-Left as a deliberate betrayal of the armed guerrilla movement (and underground resistance) that preceded the establishment of a liberal capitalist regime in Greece. The result is, they argue, a cultural context in which political violence is perceived as a more legitimate act of dissent than within other European states (see, for example, Pavlos and Irina, 2010). This logic also informs the urban guerrilla groups, such as the “17<sup>th</sup> November” organisation, who claim to act in the “continuing spirit” of the Civil War (see Kassimeris, 2001).

More generally, the popular memory of the Junta era continues to shape public attitudes towards Greek policing across the political spectrum. For example, as part of the security preparations for the 2004 Olympics (the first games to take place after 9/11), the Greek state rolled out a programme of modernisation aimed at bringing its security apparatus in line with Neo-conservative norms implemented throughout the rest of the Eurozone (and in line with the expectations of a post-9/11 international community)<sup>69</sup>. Most politically contentious of these, as part of the 1.2 billion additional investment, was the erection of 1,283 microphone-equipped CCTV cameras at key Olympic sites across the centre of Athens. Objection to the post-games use of the “Olympic cameras” is a popular cause, opposed not only by anarchists, anti-authoritarians and the Left but also labour unions, academics, NGOs, civil liberties groups and even some on the right (see Athanadis, 2004). For many Greeks obvious comparisons can be drawn between contemporary state surveillance technology and the infamous *fakeloi* (files kept on citizens designed to build a socio-political profile and assess “national loyalty”) and other methods of social control (networks of police informers, for example) employed during the Junta era (Samatas, 2008). Opposition is fuelled by a general distrust of all forms of police monitoring; feelings that are all the stronger for a generation who had first-hand experience of the post-civil war dictatorship. Accordingly, “many Greek citizens identify the police with oppression” rather than, as is more typical of the standard justifications for the enforcement of ‘law and order’, “the provision of security in a democratic country” (Hugh-Jones, Katsanidou and Riener, 2009: 7).

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<sup>68</sup> However, the geographical diversity of the riots also necessitates looking beyond this.

<sup>69</sup> On the relationship between new police surveillance technologies and Neo-Liberalism see; Coleman (2003); Wacquant (2001).

It is, however, also necessary to be cautious about the emphasis that should be placed on this popular history and the primary motivations and political traditions drawn on by those who participated in the December unrest itself. Undoubtedly both the Civil War and the Junta have left a strong political and cultural legacy for many Greeks (see, for example, Penourgiá, 2009); one factor in understanding why anti-police sentiment may have been more sympathetically received within certain sections of the wider population. However, the more influential political currents during December, particularly the anarchist and anti-authoritarian movement, have little, if any, formal roots in the pre-Junta Greek Left (see below). Undoubtedly the imagery and language associated with both the Civil War and Junta were drawn upon both during and following the December unrest. However, these are also part of a much wider tradition that narrates Greek political dissent – a tradition through which many actions, events and organisations – including many traditional, liberal institutions - have found expression. November 17<sup>th</sup> is, for example, an observed holiday in Greece with many schools holding commemorative services and it is traditional for students and politicians to lay wreaths on the monument within the Polytechnic. This is in addition to the annual march to the US embassy.

The students (and recent ex- students), who made up one of the largest groups of those on the streets throughout December, will have been more likely influenced by their own first-hand experiences of police violence as a result of clashes between 2005-7 as a result of a widespread policy of criminalisation towards organised resistance to education reform. Migrants, another well represented group, also expressed grievances reflecting a contemporary climate of hostility and criminalisation<sup>70</sup>. Alexis' murder was also felt, as reflected in some of the mainstream media

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<sup>70</sup> Greek policy towards immigration has long been one that has primarily favoured policing and detainment, with regularisation measures coming relatively late compared with many other European states. This is an approach which is indicative of a wider public discourse that has promoted a model of Greek national identity that has defined 'Greekness' largely in terms of linguistic, ethnic and religious background and displayed a "hyper-sensitivity" about "who belongs and who does not" (Antonopoulos et al., 2008: 364). The little that subsequent legislation (the 1998 and 2001 laws allowed for some limited applications to work permits) has done to change original policy has failed to have any real impact on the common experiences of the majority migrants of this system, as Baldin-Edwards explains,

The entire legal framework for immigration, of *entry* (in an overseas consulate), of *legal work* and *stay* (formerly with OAED and now with local government) and of *legal residence* (formerly the Ministry of Public Order and now the Ministry of Interior), is fundamentally hostile to immigrants and beset by corruption. There is a continuous history of systematic corruption and abuse by Greek state officials, in consulates, ministries, the police, and other agencies – this also includes the trafficking and sexual exploitation of women by state officials. (2004: 57)

The result is that in many of Greece's urban centres "sans papier" migrants are forced to live a clandestine existence, often in a state of near destitution, supported by informal protective collectives which provide the employment, housing and

commentary, to be indicative of a level of incompetence and corruption within the Greek police as a whole, a view reinforced by contemporary instances of clientilism and corruption within the government (see below).

In respect to police conduct, while recent studies have, unsurprisingly, found the common ideology and self-image of Greek police to be largely conservative (Papakonstandis, 2003), during the late 90s there were a number of high profile allegations, originating from a newspaper interview with PASOK Member of Parliament and Minister for Public Order Georgios Romaos, over connections between the security services and the far-right political party *Chrysi Avyi* (Golden Dawn). More recently, in 2004, the centre-Left newspaper *Ta Nea* also ran an exposé on an alleged internal investigation which had concluded good relations and contacts with members of the far-right group within the Greek police. The links are denied by both the government and *Chrysi Avyi*. However, allegations of the collaboration of fascist groups with sections of the police resurfaced during December, some instances of which were well documented, for example, in the photographs captured by a blogger in Petras of officers standing beside non-uniformed individuals carrying clubs and bats (2b20).

There is, however, a need to be careful when talking about the Greek police as “exceptional” in analysing the extent of force police choose to use in carrying out their duties. The murder of Alexis was obviously an exceptional act in comparison to the everyday interaction of Greek citizens in relation to the police, including those on the far-left. It may be possible to point to more acute experiences of police brutality within the national context. However, this should not obscure a clear understanding of the essential function of the police in relation to the employment of violence to maintain social order. There is nothing uniquely “Greek” about police brutality in this respect<sup>71</sup>. Rather, what we have is an experience felt more acutely, (in the case of students, migrants and the far-left), or more sensitively (in relation to the wider socio-cultural context), by certain sections of the population which is otherwise experienced universally as part of the maintenance of the social order. The bulk of the movement texts are also clear on this issue, largely criticising the experience, and opposition towards, police brutality not as anything unique to their experience but as an

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social assistance they need. These “haunts” (as they are known within the activist circles) routinely come under eviction, followed by mass detainment and deportations of their residents.

The racist and prejudicial attitudes of Greek police towards migrants, regardless of their legal status, have also been well documented. For example, a study conducted in 2002 into the attitudes of Greek detectives found that migrant communities, particularly Albanian, were widely considered hotbeds of crime and racist violence against these communities not viewed as a significant problem, in many cases as acts of “self-defence” by Greeks (Antonopoulos, 2006).

<sup>71</sup> One could, for example, equally look to a string of high profile cases in Britain – Blair Peach, Harry Stanley, Sean Rigg, Jean Charles De Menezes, Ian Tomlinson - involving the death of protesters and/or accusations of institutional racism.

essential mechanism within a wider social order they oppose (see, for example, 2c11). Police violence is the most direct expression of a social condition in which the control of private property and reinforcement of class relations are always underlined by the threat of violence.

Finally, it is also worth acknowledging that this will also be subject to different interpretations depending on the social and political context. Anti-authoritarians and anarchists, for example, generally have a very different attitude towards police brutality and imprisonment than the traditional Left (who will tend to see themselves as subjects of victimisation). One anarchist comments, for example, that;

With the Left, or with workers, they don't believe in fighting back if the police beat them, they don't believe in self-defence. The anarchists have the absolute opposite mentality. We don't wait for the police to attack us, we attack first. The Left only debate self-defence. In their view they are the ones being beaten. They have a victim mentality. They play the victim so that society will sympathise with these poor people beaten by the cops. (Kalamaras, 2010: 15)

Calls for prisoner solidarity/support from anarchist groups, for example, will often explicitly reject the logic of defence on the grounds of innocence, humanitarianism or political victimisation. Rather they stand by an individual on their basis of their opposition to the state, e.g. "because they are a comrade". Likewise violence against the police is justified on the basis of their role in protecting private property and class privilege and, therefore, a legitimate act of political dissent regardless of whether the act itself is prompted by provocation or brutality. Consequently the anarchist presence on demonstrations – usually in the form of the Black Bloc - has become infamous for its confrontational and militant approach to the police.

Considering the events that triggered the December unrest it is understandable that objections to police brutality would act as a catalyst for participation for many. Aside from objections to the murder itself, however, the above analysis reveals a general increased "intolerance" to the attitudes and behaviours of police, particularly in terms of their regulation of political dissent. Attitudes that can be situated historically in relation to the violent episodes between Left and the state, practically in terms of the conduct and ideology of the police forces and, particularly, more immediately in terms of the heavy-handed tactics employed against young protesters and migrants.

### *Corruption and Clientelism*

Allegations of government corruption and clientelism are not new in Greece. Both have been repeatedly cited by political commentators as key factors in accounting for the country's relative instability and economic under-development when compared to the rest of Europe. Tsoucalas (1978) attributes the causes early in the nation's development, with a dysfunctional transition – a process, he argues, overly dependent on the intervention of the state - from a largely agrarian to modern capitalist society delivering a bloated and politically compromised civil service. Transition has also been central for other writers who have been keener to highlight the influence of more recent history, for example, inadequate reforms to the state apparatus following the military dictatorship and, more recently, Greece's attempts to modernise itself away from a peripheral society and towards a more competitive level of economic development in line with its European partners<sup>72</sup> (see, for example, Sotiropoulos, 1995; Charalambis and Demartzis, 1993; Hallin and Papathanasopoulos, 2002). Others have situated the phenomenon within a broader cultural context highlighting familialism as a strong social trend within Greek society and a means of legitimising the widespread practice of individuals and families securing resources and income by "extra-economic means". Similarly, the legacy of the dictatorship is cited as fomenting widespread distrust in the state, leading to an absence of "social solidarity" and, subsequently, a lack of the civic values needed to entrench universalistic welfare provision (Petmesidou, 1996). Nonetheless, wherever one attributes the specific cause, there is a degree of consensus within the political scientific literature; in spite of the expectations of many analysts, privatisation, anti-corruption legislation nor membership of the EU has resulted in any significant changes to the level of corruption within the political establishment<sup>73</sup>.

The extent to which this situation is reflected in the everyday experience of Greeks is marked. The underground economy, a relatively safe indication of levels of corruption, measures as high as 30% of the country's GNP (Schneider and Domenic, 2000). Activities encompassed within this will range from high profile cases of bribery, tax avoidance and embezzlement practised by higher state functionaries, the avoidance of import duties on smuggled goods to the more routine solicitation of additional income by public servants for better or more efficient access to public goods (for an overview see Koutsoukis, 2003). A number of studies have also sought to document public perception in relation to these practices. In terms of European perception, Transparency

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<sup>72</sup> A history also shared by Southern European states that record similarly high levels of corruption and clientelism.

<sup>73</sup> Tsoucalas' (1986) early work on Greek society, in which he characterises the relationship of the Greek state to society-at-large since the Second World War as a "clientelistic corporatism", is still largely considered an appropriate assessment of the workings of the contemporary state.



International (2001), in a survey based largely on the attitudes of business people and the staff of international organisations, rated Greece highest in its corruption evaluation of twenty democracies. Although there is a lack of sustained research in this area, this is a picture confirmed by investigations that have been conducted into the perceptions of ordinary citizens. For example, a survey of June/July 1998 of a stratified sample of 1375 individuals found that when asked whether they believed politicians entered politics for their own benefit, 20.8% “agreed”, 62.5% “strongly agreed” (Andreas Papanderou Institute of Strategic and Development Studies, 1999; also see, Dobratz and Whitfield, 1992 and Lyberaki and Paraskevopoulos, 2002). Neither is this phenomenon limited to the use and procurement of government resources, there are also significantly high levels of market-based corruption and clientelism. The most politically contentious of this relates to the illegal procurement of land by property developers who engage in deliberate acts of arson on the boundaries of public property (see, Alexandria and Esnault, 1998: 44) - a situation which was widely attributed as the cause of the 2007 forest fires<sup>74</sup>.

At the intersection of these two spheres of influence (state and market) lies the media. Newspapers are routinely used as a means for industrialists to exert pressure on the political parties in order to gain preferential treatment (although it should be noted that this is a situation not unusual for many other European nation-states). Interests in shipping, travel, construction, telecommunication and oil dominate media ownership in Greece (Hallin and Papathanasopoulos, 2002: 3). Public broadcasting and regulation are also more heavily incorporated into the political party apparatus with the management of news divisions changing with governments. As a result, news casting is routinely used to support the government’s political agenda with,

news and editorial judgements ... expected to be in close agreement with, if not identical, to government announcements across a whole range of policies and decisions. (Hallin and Papathanasopoulos, 2002: 5)

A 1998 survey asking professional journalists whether they felt that they could practice their profession freely had only 7.9% responding positively, with 65.7% claiming they were subject to intervention and 24.3% that they felt the need to censor themselves (V-PRC Institute, 1998). This situation was also aptly demonstrated in December by the attempt of *Eleftheros Typos* to censor images taken by its staff of a policeman drawing a firearm on protesters in Palaio Faliro (the image was later leaked to the international press; see, Tsironis, 2010). In light of this it is of little surprise that December saw groups occupying newspaper offices, television and radio stations (in many cases

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<sup>74</sup> Alexandria and Esnault (1998) also note, “in 1983, the Greek parliament adopted a law aimed at legalising the houses built illegally on burnt lands. There then followed a wave of fires of doubtful origin.” (44)

to broadcast their own message). Freelance journalists were also a supportive group throughout the unrest.

More broadly, some analysts have been led to conclude that the persistence of clientelistic network and government corruption has caused the Greek state to suffer from a “latent crisis of political participation”(Charalambis and Demertzis, 1993: 30). This is a situation, Sotiropoulus (1995) argues, that has led, in recent years, to “social movements” filling the “representational gap” left by parliamentary party dominance of the media and civil service, something which would, theoretically, place the Greek state in a position of heightened vulnerability to legitimacy crisis while also, in terms of December specifically, simultaneously explains the strength of the immediate organised response to Alexis’ murder. Bratsis, who cites corruption as a major cause of the December unrest, argues for example that;

The Greek state has always been prone to periodic crises of legitimacy and has often resorted to heavy-handed attempts to coerce consent, as was manifest in the Metaxas dictatorship of 1936–41, the Civil War of 1946–49, the Junta of 1967–74, and many other less extreme examples. (2010: 191)

Yet, as convincing as this explanation may initially seem, such analysis tends to evoke the image of, as *Ta Paidia Tis Galarias* (2010) also note, “a colonial banana republic ruled by the mafia than the reality of a rising capitalist state in the Balkans” (6). Undoubtedly corruption and clientelism are cited as common sources of political alienation by many Greeks, however, the extent to which clientelism is an indicator of under-development or a source of systemic weakness is often overstated in much analysis. In fact, and as the situation in Greece demonstrates, corruption and clientelism can play a stabilising role as an alternative strategy for incorporating social classes into the state-political apparatus. As Bratsis (2003: 12) acknowledges, corruption and clientelism are a problem only to the extent that they are an, “articulation of categories of bourgeois political ontology”. That is, as he further explains, they indicate,

the breakdown of *normative* [my emphasis] roles and responsibilities that are promoted as the appropriate attitudes and behaviour of citizens within the ‘body politic’. (Bratsis, 2003: 12)

This is not to say, however, that these normative “roles and responsibilities” are necessarily an all encompassing strategy for the legitimisation of bourgeois power in every social/economic context. Clientelism, for example, is a highly effective means for ensuring that interactions with the state are

differentiated and individualised and not based on “corporatist solidarities” (Patmesidou, 1996: 329). It “cuts across and prevents the development of horizontal, class-type political organisations”(Mouzelis, 1980: 263) ensuring that, in the words of Tsoucalas (1985: 11), “the political role of the state and its forms of intervention in the class struggle are mythologised and obscured”. Clientelism in Greece also does not simply serve the interests of the political elite. The middle strata also have much to gain from this system as party loyalty is typically rewarded with state subsidies and employment opportunities in the civil service. There is a need to be wary, therefore, of portraying clientelism and corruption as such a strong source of popular contention and, as such, the case for an underlying legitimacy crisis. In reality it is almost exclusively the lower working class who bear the brunt of this system, often lacking connections to central or local government or the income to afford a bribe. Moreover, there is also a need to be more critical of the extent to which clientelism and corruption can be argued to accentuate social and political inequalities compared to other Western democratic states<sup>75</sup>.

Certainly the establishment of rational, legal norms in public policy allows for greater scope for the representation of interests other than those that currently dominate the political establishment. However, such “norms” will also be structured by the limits imposed by capital accumulation and still, ultimately, dependent on the ability on those not represented to muster sufficient resources to manufacture political capital. As Hallin and Papathanassopoulos argue,

These forms of social organisation certainly did not eliminate the interference of capital on public policy; indeed the effect in many ways was precisely to institutionalise it.  
(2002: 13)

A democracy like the US, for example, has simply legalised (or never rendered it illegal anyway) a certain degree of clientelism, in the form of lobbying and campaign funding, to allow for the competitive expression of interests. It is possible to identify, therefore, political systems with lower incidents of government corruption that have higher levels of social inequality and/or are host to welfare systems that are far more exclusive to the working population (even accounting for the added economic burden of bribery).

In relation to December specifically then, clientelism and corruption certainly fed into the general discourse of the movement. *Vatopedi*, *Diaplokes* and other recent national scandals, such as the government’s perceived incompetence during the 2007 forest fires (as well as its toleration of arson

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<sup>75</sup> This is also not to overlook the fact that clientelistic relationships exist to a certain degree in all modern societies (see, Legg, 1975).

by property developers seeking to build on ravaged land), were all referenced in movement literature. The evocative slogans and proclamations found on the placards, banners and walls of Athens reflected general feelings of estrangement from the political establishment<sup>76</sup>. It is also clear that, even before the shooting, for certain sections of the population feelings of alienation were felt more acutely due to their exclusion from clientelistic channels. However, the extent to which this became a primary motivation of those most active in the movement, as analysts such as Bratsis have claimed, deserves greater scrutiny.

The Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRZIA), for example, was the most keen to play up the idea that the December unrest was a crisis of political accountability as it allowed them to present themselves as a viable electoral alternative to the existing parliamentary parties<sup>77</sup>. The fact was that the December unrest had a decidedly extra-parliamentary character. SYRZIA were a minor player throughout December (both practically and ideologically)<sup>78</sup> and although often presented as the mouthpiece (or in some cases responsible) for those on the streets by the mainstream media, in terms of their involvement in the organisation of squats, occupations and street actions their influence was negligible and more often than not openly criticised for attempting to manipulate the movement to their own political ends<sup>79</sup>. Conversely, the sentiment that resonates through the movement texts (along with the actions of the participants) is overwhelmingly not one that wished to see the re-affirmation of democratic principles (a kind of Greek 'Orange Revolution'), but articulated a radical, often revolutionary, alternative to it. In other words, what were being presented were not demands for reform of the existing system but a position criticising democracy as a function of capitalist control. Where texts talk of alienation and lack of power, they do so in the context of the representational qualities inherent to any democratic system, clientelistic or otherwise. Corruption, therefore, may have been a feature of the popular sentiment that fed into

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<sup>76</sup> The banner, for example, over the occupied town hall of Aghios Dimitrios, "WE ARE DISGUSTED BY YOU! WITH YOUR CRONYISM BETWEEN POLITICIANS, THE CLERGY, MASS MEDIA, JOURNALISTS, JUDICIALS, BIG SHOT LAWYERS, COPS, PIMPS AND DRUGLORDS, YOU HAVE CREATED A BOUNDLESS **CESS POOL WE SPIT ON YOU, YOU ANIMALS!**" (2b30)

<sup>77</sup> This was true of the Communist Party as well, although their immediate hostility to the movement placed them in a slightly different position.

<sup>78</sup> Gourgouris comments,

It goes without saying that the official parties on the Left were completely uninvolved – decidedly suspicious from the outset and, with few individual exceptions in the ranks, ultimately opposed to the movement in ways so typical to be banal. (2010: 367)

<sup>79</sup> The mainstream media was particularly keen to play up the "political" element of the unrest as it had a distinctly reformist solution – elect a new government.

the December unrest, but certainly wasn't the extent of the critique, or the alternative, carried within it.

Appreciating the characteristics of corruption and clientelism in the domestic context reveals that Bratsis' analysis of a recurring legitimacy crisis in the Greek polity may serve to over-emphasise its destabilising influence. Certainly political mismanagement creates and accentuates social and economic problems, of which the working population will be effected detrimentally. However, in a broader sense it is better to see corruption and clientelism as merely an accentuation of existing economic and social inequalities. The real winners are the upper middle classes and the ruling elites and the persistent losers the working class and those not tied into the political party system. December did produce certain challenges for state-monopolies, but this was more of a product of the unrest itself than state mismanagement per se. Rather it would be more appropriate to see corruption and clientelism as a specific manifestation of class injustice through which a movement like December, which was premised on the idea of social justice and inequality, could gain traction. That said, it is equally important to note the content of the movement itself and its principle aims in relation to these issues: while corruption and clientelism may explain greater anti-state sympathy, and certainly objections to corruption were articulated by participants, this should not lead to a mischaracterisation of the demands raised by the December unrest as a need for a re-affirmation of the principles of democracy. In fact in many cases the opposite occurred with democracy, particularly in the case of the assemblies and student occupations, being identified as a system intrinsically tied to capitalist management and elite interests.

#### *Youth: Education, Precarity and Unemployment*

A consistent observation made throughout December was of the striking presence within riots, protests, squats and assemblies of young people. This situation often allowed those who misunderstood the character and extent of the movement's goals to condemn it on the basis of its "youthful", and consequently, "unrealistic" and "nihilistic" outlook. "Youth" has, however, been a rather amorphous category when it comes to political scholarship. It is a categorisation that has often brushed over the great complexities and contrasting social and economic experiences of the, often rather broad definition, of anybody falling between their early teens to those entering young adulthood. While attempting to avoid such pitfalls, it is possible nonetheless to identify, in the Greek context, common social and economic experiences felt more acutely by those (roughly) under the

age of 25, dissatisfaction with which came to be expressed vocally during the December unrest<sup>80</sup>. Another common cause of the predominance of youth also, of course, relate to the demographics of the anarchist, anti-authoritarian and the broader student movement (which will be discussed in greater detail below). For this section, however, the focus will be on three experiences – education, precarity and unemployment – most closely related to the increasing militancy, and sympathy for radical ideas, found amongst contemporary Greek youth (although as will become clear these issues go far deeper and wider to establish a much broader historical context for the radicalisation of Greek youth beyond the specific events of December 2008).

### *Education*

From early rituals and cultural practices carefully passed via generations within small tribal societies, to the more sophisticated mass indoctrination of the early church, the highly disciplined “moral schooling” of the early 1900s to the individualism and entrepreneurial spirit taught in our contemporary schools, knowledge and power have always been inseparable. Knowledge production is a key mechanism in ensuring the continued legitimisation and stabilisation of existing power relations. In capitalist society education is also a key instrument in ensuring the continued manufacture of labour power - a process which will have both material (the development of certain skills and aptitudes suited to labourers) and ideational (the learning of workplace and managerial discipline, social aspirations etc.) dimensions. It plays a central role in both easing social conflicts and preparing new generations of labourers for the changing needs of the economy. As a result of this process education is also a site of class struggle - a struggle which informs its content and form.

In post-Junta Greece, in the wake of rising social expectations following the fall of the dictatorship, throughout the 1970s and 1980s mass education along the lines of the traditional social democratic model was used to solidify the new regime - recuperating the demands of a working class antagonised by dictatorial rule and decades of stagnant living conditions. As *Ta Paidia Tis Galarias* explain,

The easier access to secondary school for workers’ and peasants’ children (who were formerly excluded from higher education) had at its ideological banner the slogan of “equal opportunities”. Mass consumption of education became the vehicle for social mobility, since education played a semi-egalitarian role. Before long, school (both the

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<sup>80</sup> “The future is looted!” became a common slogan both during and after the December unrest, a statement indicative of a generation’s disillusionment with the social and economic prospects available to them.

secondary and the university) had turned into a field of social conflicts, compromise, great expectations and contradictions. (1999: 12)

A study conducted in 1977 found, for example, that a quarter of students had a father who worked as a farmer with almost as many employed as manual workers (Psacheropoulos and Kazamias, 1980: 131).

This is a process not uncommon within the history of many European liberal democracies. However, *Ta Paidia Tis Galarias* (2008) argue further that, particularly in the case of Greece, the extent to which education was at the forefront of social policy throughout this period allowed it to appropriate and integrate, “functions that historically were performed by other social institutions (the family, the working class community, the workshop, the corporation)”. The result being that, “all social conflicts and contradictions manifest themselves in its terrain”. A crisis in education therefore, they argue, was related to broader crises in the wider reproduction of bourgeois political, social and economic forms. By the end of the 1980s this was evident in three ways – in a crisis of the division of labour, a crisis of discipline and a crisis of expectations – threatening, ultimately, a crisis of labour power (for a complete overview see, *Ta Paidia Tis Galarias*, 2008). Mass education encountered, in other words, structural limits imposed by increasing public expenditure relative to low profitability and spiralling public debt, a failure to square the “equal opportunities” promised with the realities of the labour market and a failure to fulfil social aspirations as the traditional route of graduates into stable, public employment could no longer be accommodated by an already bloated civil service<sup>81</sup>.

In the early 1990s New Democracy attempted to address this by proposing a series of laws that attempted to enforce greater discipline in the schools via traditionalist means – school uniforms, morning prayer - as well as by encouraging greater competition amongst pupils. The response was a school occupation movement that defeated a number of the measures and forced the education minister into retirement (Boukalas, 2009). However, although initially unsuccessful, the state approach to education remained broadly consistent from this point. The aim was, in effect, to promote social values more fitting to the needs of a Neo-Liberal economy with discipline and competition as the key tools in this re-moulding effort. The government has sought to tie expectations, particularly entry into university, to an increasingly competitive system of assessment, accompanied by much harsher punishments for those failing to conform to the pressures of the reformed system, e.g. expulsions for absences or those failing to complete a qualification in the

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<sup>81</sup> These crises, as TPTG are keen to point out, are as much reflections of the structural limitations of Greek mass education as they are the general class antagonisms that are capable of pushing all social systems into crisis (see TPTG’s debate with *Theorie Communiste*; TPTG, 2010)

allotted time. As well as attempting to preach the value of efficiency to a new generation of workers, these reforms were designed to individualise the experience of the education system as a whole. Not only does this result in a greater stratification of those entering the system, but also failure is perceived to be the result of *personal* inadequacies exposed by assessment, as opposed to the responsibility of the system as a whole. Long-term under-investment also paved the way for restructuring, the appointment of financial managers on the basis of cost-cutting needs and the entry of private companies and investors in educational programmes. Profitability is, hence, raised as the standard by which educational institutions are judged, an objective which also had a European-wide dimension as enshrined in the key political and economic aims of the Bologna declaration (1999). In line with this the state also, albeit unsuccessfully, attempted to revise article 16 of the constitution which prohibits the introduction of privately-owned institutions for post-secondary education. This applies similarly for the university asylum law with a number of calls to reform or outright abolish the law over the past decade (although ultimately all proving unsuccessful in the face of popular opposition). Reform to education work has proceeded on a similar basis. Law 2525, for example, attempted to address high levels of unemployment in the education sector, exacerbated by cuts and under-investment, by replacing superiority lists with a more meritocratic system based on extensive examination<sup>82</sup>.

Yet, in spite of stable levels of investment (relative to GNP), there has been an overall increase in students entering the university system in the past decade. As *Ta Paidia Tis Galarias* observe, due to a combination of,

class struggles, the use of EC money for setting up new university departments in the small towns in order to strengthen local revenues, and the formation and state management of a pool of reserve, complex and cheap labour power for the tertiary sector, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of students in higher education. In 1993, only 26.7 % of Greek citizens of an age between 18 and 21 years followed higher education. In 2004, this number had risen to 60.3%. (2008: 4)

As a result, the contemporary experience of education for students is increasingly framed by ever greater insecurities and pressures to compete with class mates for limited resources. 97% of students, for example, spend 2-6 hours a day in *Frontistiria* - private, supplementary schools designed to prepare for successful entrance into university – in addition to their state schooling (*Ta*

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<sup>82</sup> Under the list system prospective teachers would be placed on a waiting list for future, permanent employment by a school district. However, by the late 1990s this list had swelled to the point that many had to wait almost a decade until they could get appointed leaving many in a situation of long-term unemployment or dependent on precarious labour. Since its introduction law 2525 has been generally unsuccessful in implementing the intended reforms (see, TPTG, 2008: 4).



*Paidia Tis Galarias*, 1999: 12). Overwork, over-examination and disillusionment with educational institutions are common feelings articulated by both individual students and as a part of the wider student movement that has emerged in response to state reforms (which has also been consistently militant in addressing these concerns).

Feelings of precarity and insecurity in education are also intrinsically related to comparable pressures in the labour market. It is often easy to draw a line between the common experience of workers and students. However, the methods by which labourers are prepared for work - through the education system - will mean that school will often give students (although obviously with different incentives and disciplinary pressures) a degree of insight into what faces them before they enter the workplace. As Sotiris notes,

Educational reforms had to 'internalise' changes in the labour market and the capitalist labour processes within the educational apparatus ... young people in the educational apparatus have a stronger perception than before of the realities and difficulties of the workplace. (2010: 325-6)

Dissent in education is, therefore, frequently tied into the alienating experience of work and the student movement has historically worked closely with organised labour, in the community and the struggles of the unemployed. This closeness has been reinforced by a general lack of opportunities available to young workers once they leave school or university. Consequently throughout December young people were mobilised on a much broader basis, not simply as students or unemployed workers or young migrants, but under the wider identity of subjects of precarity and a system that deprived a whole generation of economic and social security.

### *Precarity and unemployment*

2008 was a time of economic downturn for Greece. While clearly exacerbated by the financial crisis of 2007, this was part of a long-term contraction ending a period of relative stability and growth (beginning roughly in 1996 and peaking in 2005) as the result of a downturn in key national industries and/or state revenues - principally shipping, tourism, construction of public works (e.g. the Olympics) and EU investment (see Sakellaropoulos, 2010). Industrial production, for example, fell by 4% in 2008 while it had risen by 2.7% in 2007 (Sakellaropoulos, 2010: 370). Through periods of growth and contraction, however, Greece has continued to record high levels of economic inequality. Greece measured joint highest (with Austria) for risk of in-work poverty (in work earning below 60% median equivalised income) out of the EU-15 countries in 2003 (Andress and Loliman,

2003: 252) while the proportion of the population living below the threshold for poverty in 2008 was as high as 21% (Labour Institute of GSEE, 2008: 210-1). 60% of pensioners registered with the biggest state pension funds continue to receive less than €600 per month, while average salaries in the public sector have failed to rise beyond €1,200 (Salzman, 2010). This situation leads Sakellariopoulos (2010) to argue that,

Greece is distinctive for its economic inequalities [compared to other countries in the Eurozone]. This becomes particularly evident when one takes into account that the top 20% of Greeks in the scale of wealth earn 40% of the overall national income, while the bottom 20% of Greeks earn just 7%. (Sakellariopoulos, 2010: 325-6)

To compound this, prospects for young people have remained consistently poor in spite of periods of growth with unemployment with low-pay and precarity as a common experience. A survey conducted on behalf of the Nicos Poulantzas Institute in 2005, for example, found that six years after graduation one in three of higher-education graduates, two in three secondary education graduates and one in three compulsory education graduates had not found some form of stable employment (Karamesini, 2005: 5). The youth unemployment rate was higher than the OECD average in 2008 (OECD, 2010) and where temporary or low-paid work is available it is unlikely to be paid higher, and frequently lower, than the national minimum of 700 Euros per month (the origins of the “700 Euro generation” label).

The expansion of a permanently temporary, and frequently unemployed, workforce has been a trend observed across European labour markets. As Sotiris notes,

A crucial factor in all forms of capitalist restructuring in the past decades has been an effort on the part of the forces of capital to have a labour force with more skills but fewer rights, that is more productive but also more insecure, overqualified but at the same time underpaid. (2010: 205)

This had led some Marxist critics to argue that capitalism, in the developed West at least, is entering a renewed cycle of capital accumulation based primarily on the higher rates of exploitation extracted from this productive, but nonetheless poorly paid, new workforce. This condition, in other words, is not just confined to young workers but is a generalised one within the European working class. The unrest in Greece is, therefore, often held to be a “first blow” struck against the renewed attacks by capital by an emerging proletarian force (see, for example, *Theorie Communiste*, 2009). However, while the existence (and growth) of such a workforce is undeniable a greater degree of scrutiny is required when outlining its extent. *Ta Paidia Tis Galarias* (2010), in particular, are eager to urge

caution in this regard. Crucially, they point to the fact that employment on temporary contracts amounted to just 11.1% of the working population in 2008 and have actually fallen considerably over the past decade (a trend that can also be observed globally). Moreover, to ascribe this position to the working class as a whole is not only empirically suspect but overlooks the historical division of the work force as a critical weapon in the manufacture of labour-power<sup>83</sup>. Accordingly, *Ta Paidia Tis Galarias* argue that while significant sections of the young working population can be understood to be a part of a “700 Euro generation” this is neither a generalised nor a permanent position. Rather, long-term unemployment and low-paid temporary work serve a disciplining function – structuring behaviour and expectations - for young workers before they find a more stable source of employment, as they explain,

These periods of flexibility and precariousness constitute a weapon which enables capital to “educate” the younger part of the population – the most promising vehicle, in biological terms, for the reproduction of capitalist relations – so that it will “learn” to reproduce its needs and to live in a more disciplined way before it enters production on permanent terms. In this manner, the labour market acquires an increasingly discipline-allocating character through the imposition of precarious conditions to a great part of young workers, but also through the internalisation of the “bogy” of precariousness which might bring down expectations of the whole class. (*Ta Paidia Tis Galarias*, 2010: 8)

Accordingly, precarity may be as important as a form of ontological or existential experience for Greek workers as the actual imposition of certain standards of living and conditions of labour. Moreover, it is on this basis that one could ascribe potential feelings of unity amongst young workers and other sections of the working class - as subjects of a common disciplining experience designed to teach compliance through the threat of insecurity<sup>84</sup>. In practice, as the following chapter outlines, this did have some limits as more stabilised workers were generally less present, or at least less militant, throughout the December unrest. Nonetheless, while these workers may have been less willing to participate fully in the events – most likely, as *Ta Paidia Tis Galarias* (2009)

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<sup>83</sup> As Cleaver explains,

From capital’s point of view a composition is desired that will sufficiently weaken the class to give capital control. For the working class that same composition is an obstacle. Its overcoming is designated as a political recomposition of the class in which the structure of power is recomposed more favourably for workers. Such a political recomposition on the basis of a given division of labour undermines the usefulness of that division to capital. Capital in turn is forced to attempt to decompose new levels of workers’ power through the imposition of a new technical or social division of labour through a process of repression and restructuring. (1979: 115)

<sup>84</sup> For many migrants, in particular, insecurity, unemployment and low-paid, temporary labour is the daily reality of living and working in Greece.

explain, due to the continuing constraints of waged labour - there was no indication that they were any less sympathetic to the cause of young workers and the unemployed.

## **Traditions**

Note on the choice of traditions: The choice of traditions, in this particular case, was more straightforward when compared to outlining the social “terrain”. The presence of anarchist, anti-authoritarians, student activists and other organisations of the anti-capitalist Left was marked throughout December and their influence clear. Nonetheless, in relation to Greece in particular, there was also a more historical dimension here. The history of Greek Communism has had a long-standing impact not only on the fortunes of the KKE but the identity and ideological composition of the anti-capitalist movement in general. The Civil War, in particular, is a recurring theme within Leftist imagery and discourse. The perceived successes/failures of the Communist Party over this period shape even contemporary attitudes towards political dissent. This in addition to the idiosyncracies of the KKE – a long-standing bulwark of European Stalinism even after the fall of the Soviet Union - which inform not only the deeply conservative ideology of Greek Communism but the corresponding militancy of the anarchist, extra-parliamentary and anti-authoritarian initiatives. The latter was to have, particularly in terms of attitudes towards political violence, a discernable impact on the shape and political content of the December unrest.

### *Anarchists/Anti-Authoritarians*

Anarchism/anti-authoritarianism has been, as this history will make clear, a minority current for much of Greece’s history. Unlike for some of its neighbours – France, Spain, Italy – and despite the initial appeal of anarchist ideas over that of Marxism and the traditional Left, it is only in the post-Junta period that anarchism in Greece really came to the fore. This is a factor that influences the distinctiveness of Greek anarchism – both in terms of ideology and the popular organisational strategies – when compared to more established European movements. From the fall of the Junta, however, the influence has been marked, culminating in the strong presence of anarchists and anarchist initiatives throughout the December days - a process which both had an effect on the popular mobilisations of the time as well as profoundly shaping the future of the movement.

The history of anarchism in Greece can be divided essentially into two periods: an early movement active from roughly the period 1860 to 1944; and a modern movement from the late 1970s to the

present period (Vradis and Dalakoglou, 2009). The years in between marked not only a general decline thanks to the growing influence of Marxism following the Russian revolution, but the bloody experience of World War II, the Greek Civil War, the Metaxas and Military dictatorship meant the effective severance of any links between the two phases of the movement. Accordingly, in a situation perhaps unique to European anarchism, historians of the contemporary movement cannot claim to find any common heritage to the early movement, “either through struggle, experience or theory” (Eutopia, 2009:1).

Anarchism made its first appearance in Greece in the 1860s. An article published in September 1861, entitled “Anarchy (Part 1)”, for the newspaper ‘*Fos*’ (Light) marks the first recorded trace of the movement<sup>85</sup>. Early anarchist groups appeared to have been heavily influenced by Italian migrants who had entered Greece in great numbers over this period as a result of the War of Independence<sup>86</sup>. In the city of Achaia, for example, a centre for the developing movement, the Italian colony accounted for around 10% of the city’s population (Pominis, 2004: 1). Emmanouil Dadaoglou, a merchant from Smyrna, along with an Italian anarchist, Amilcare Cipriani, organised one of the first groups which would participate in the revolution against King Otto in 1862. Over the coming decade groups emerged in Athens, Syros, Messini, Aegio, Filiatria and Patras. Anarchists in Patras formed the “Democratic Club of Patras” in 1876 which attempted to co-ordinate all anarchists in the Greek territory and form a section of the Anti-Authoritarian International. In 1877 the Club expanded into a regional socialist federation titled the “Democratic League of the People” publishing Greek’s first anarchist newspaper, “*Hellenic Democracy*”. Around the same time an anarchist workingmen’s club was formed on the Island of Syros which was reportedly instrumental in the island’s 1879 tannery and shipyard strikes (Vradis and Dalakoglou, 2009). State suppression, however, forced much of the organised movement underground which, along with the dissolution of many of the Bakuninist sections of the International, led to a period of decline.

From the late 1800s to the early 1900s the only notable activity was that of the “Boatmen of Thessaloniki” an illegalist group which, inspired by similar activity in Europe, carried out deadly attacks on banks, hotels, theatres and light and gas pipes. Nearly all the group’s members were caught and executed (Megas, 1994). Up to the period of the Second World War anarchism was to have no real organised presence in Greece. Individual anarchists were, however, instrumental within the development of the socialist and trades union movement and anarchism was still reported to

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<sup>85</sup> “Part 2” never materialised. Shortly after the publication of the article the newspaper offices were raided and copies of the paper confiscated.

<sup>86</sup> Bakunin relocated to Italy in 1860 and was instrumental in establishing branches of the First International there. The Italian section subsequently joined the anti-authoritarian section established in St. Imier upon their expulsion from the International at the Hague Congress of 1872.

have a strong influence on socialist thinking (Eutopia, 2009: 1). Konstantinos Speras (1893-1943) led an anarcho-syndicalist tendency that participated in the foundation of the GSEE. Yiannis Tatakos, an anarchist cobbler, was also implicated as a key instigator in a mass strike in Thessaloniki in 1936. Many anarchists were also to participate in the Socialist Federation of Thessaloniki and later the Socialist Workers' Party of Greece, a precursor to the Greek Communist Party. There is very little record of anarchist activity during the Axis Occupation or the Civil War. However, it is known that, during the *Dekemvriana*, the Communist Party used the opportunity of escalating military conflict to eliminate political opponents dispatching ELAS hit squads against known Trotskyists, Left communists and anarchists. It is likely that many were killed or fled during the conflicts. The National Resistance movement, combined with the Russian revolution and the spread of Communism across the East, also consolidated the dominance of Marxism and the Communist Party over the Greek Left from this point.

The first signs of a re-emergence of anarchism were during the military Junta where, inspired by the events of May 1968 in France, many Greek students began to turn towards libertarian and counter-cultural ideas. During this time the "International Library" (*Diethnis Vivliothini*) publishing collective was established and printed works by Guy Debord, Rosa Luxemburg, Bakunin, Ida Mett, Murray Bookchin, Max Nettlau and other libertarian authors as well as its own periodical *Pezodromio*. The collective's founder, Christos Constantinidis, was a participant in the students' anti-Junta protests and was also among those involved in the Polytechnic Uprising of November 14. Nonetheless, it was not until after the fall of the Junta that anarchism began to resurface on a larger scale. As a result there is a general disconnect between the classical movement, and classical anarchist contributors, and the modern movement. The "International Library", for example, would replace any reference to "communism", despite the fact that this label was common amongst early anarchists, in its re-published texts with "anti-authoritarianism". This is a practice that continues today with many anarchists preferring the label "class-struggle" or "social" anarchist or simply "anti-authoritarian" to the more traditional "anarchist communist". Likewise, Kalamaras (2010) comments that, "with us it started in the '70s. Here many people who say they are anarchist have never read Bakunin or Kropotkin" (16).

Following the dissolution of the dictatorship many Greeks (mainly students) returning from Italy, France, England and Germany brought back the radical ideas they had encountered abroad. The main influence was Italian Autonomism but the French situationists and the ideology of the urban guerrilla groups active at this time also had some influence. Moreover akin to the networks and initiatives of the Italian Autonomists contemporary anarchist groups have been largely rhizomatic in

character from this point. Practically the key focus of anarchists and anti-authoritarians at this point was building the continuing student occupation movement. Insurrectionary anarchism was also a popular current and, as Eutopia note, the practice of “insurrectional violence” (although often contentious) continues to be a key focus for large sections of the movement;

As is cited in a text written during the riots of December, “the basic element of the anarchist movement in Greece, since its very beginning is the question of the state’s legal monopoly of violence”. (Eutopia, 2009: 3)

Insurrectionalists not only challenged the state as the only legitimate arbiter for the use of political violence (and argued that the oppressed were just as entitled to use violent means to pursue their political goals) but also directly challenged a Left current which, since the Civil War, had internalised feelings of passivity and defeat in the face of widespread state suppression. Insurrectionalists argue the superiority of informal, temporary organisations based on the principle of “attack” (the primacy of action over education or theoretical reflection) and are, subsequently, critical of the way in which the existing Left (including sections of the anarchist movement) has displayed socially conservative attitudes towards social struggle or otherwise attempted to institutionalise or synthesise instances of popular mobilisation<sup>87</sup>.

An alternative, more organisational current also existed and there were a number of attempts to establish more permanent anarchist organisations through the late 1970s – the “Group of Council Anarchists” (*Omada Synvouliakon Anerxikon*) and the “Anarcho-syndicalist Group” (*Omada Anarxosyndikaliston*) – and later an attempt to form a synthesist anarchist federation between 1982-3. These were, however, unsuccessful in coalescing into national organisations and between the 1980s – 2000s individuals identifying with these traditions were largely orientated towards small publishing collectives or localised groups<sup>88</sup>. Overwhelmingly the general preference was for activity to be organised through informal affinity groups or “cells” which change and re-form according to the specific circumstances. This was reflected in the many groups, networks and initiatives that emerged throughout December, often formed on the basis of open assemblies, squats or

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<sup>87</sup> Black (1993) attributes the popularity of insurrectionary anarchism, in Italy as well as Greece, to the role of the Communist Party in both countries and its attempts to hold back or bring under its control conditions of mass, violent, and occasionally armed, struggle.

<sup>88</sup> “The Anarchist Communist Group of Nea Smyrini” (*Omada Anarxokommouniston Neas Symrinis*) active in Athens during the 1980s and publishing “*Anarxos*” between 1983-6; the “Anarchist Communist Call of Ano Liosia” (*Anarxokommounistikos Pyrinas Ano Liosia*) established in 1986 and publishing “*Aftonomi Drasi*” (Autonomous Action) between 1988-91; the “Anarchist Communist Group Iris” (*Anarxokommounistitti Imada Irida*) in the late 1980s; and from 1990s to present “The Children of the Gallery” (*Tia Padia Tis Galarias*) and “Social Harmony” (*Koinoiki Armonia*).

occupations or in relation to the practical needs of the wider movement, for example, in the form of prisoner support groups or initiatives to occupy public and municipal buildings.

The movement throughout the 1980s was also far more counter-cultural, influenced quite heavily by the punk sub-culture, which, along with their embrace of violent tactics (used as a point of differentiation from the rest of the Left), meant the movement often lacked a social dimension (Void Network, 2010)<sup>89</sup>. During this period violent clashes between police and members of the anarchist movement were commonplace, particularly around the 17<sup>th</sup> November commemorations. It was at one of these clashes in November of 1985 that a 15-year-old anarchist, Michalis Kaltezas, was shot dead by a police officer prompting further riots, occupations and demonstrations. The 1980s saw a more general shift in the political and social climate, as the election of PASOK signalled the end of a long period of antagonism between the post-Junta state and the Left. While many of the more vibrant movements of the revolutionary Left entered into decline over this time (see below), the occupation of the Polytechnic, mass opposition to Le Pen's visit to Greece (as well as riots following the murder of Kaltezas) showed the growing influence of anarchist and anti-authoritarian ideas amongst a new generation of radicals.

Through the 1990s the movement was renewed through its involvement in the student and teachers movement with members of the extra-parliamentary Left and anarchists playing a critical role within these struggles. Involvement in these mass movements also signalled a general shift in focus and from this point anarchist initiatives become more inclusive and much more influential socially (Void Network, 2010). This also prompted greater use of universities and spaces in education institutions as hubs for anarchist activity in a number of social spheres. The academic asylum law has also been particularly instrumental in this respect. Established in 1982, although long considered a traditional convention, academic asylum, which bans police from entering university grounds, has long meant that universities are safe spaces for radical activists (although university authorities are permitted to lift the law on a case-by-case basis and police have been known to violate it). Consequently many mass initiatives start on university property given the relative freedom this allows<sup>90</sup>. During the December unrest universities across Greece acted as a stronghold

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<sup>89</sup> It is as a result of this reputation that the media began to refer to sections of the anarchist movement as the "known unknowns" (*Gnostus Agnostous*).

<sup>90</sup> As one long-time activist comments;

I cannot even recall how many times we found refuge in a university building, chased or beaten by riot police, demonstration after demonstration. And I cannot begin to think what would have happened if the asylum wasn't there. (Occupied London, 2011a)



for participants in the unrest, although often also the site of pitched battles with the police, allowing the possibility to escape arrest.

State suppression at the end of the 1990s, particularly following the 1998 November commemoration march, put a temporary stall on organising as activists were forced to re-group. However this was followed by a quick recovery alongside the international growth of the alter-globalisation movement with a strong Greek anarchist presence on the anti-G8 demonstrations in Genoa (2001) and a 5,000-strong anarchist demonstration for the European Union leader summit in Thessaloniki (2003). As a result of preparations for the latter the “Anti-Authoritarian Movement” (*Antiexousiastiki Kinisi*) was formed. Over the following years the “Anti-Authoritarian Movement” expanded into a national network with sections in Athens, Xanthi, Komotini, Ioannina, Agrinio, Larisa, Heraklion and within the student movement. The network is based on unity under three broad principles and co-ordinates via local assemblies (which are generally open to the public) as well as publishing a monthly paper “*Babylonia*”. The Anti-Authoritarian Movement is, however, very loose in its organisation and acts as more as a framework for activity than an organisation co-ordinating action itself. It is also treated with some hostility by the more Insurrectionist orientated groups.

Due to the fractured, and often quite divisive, nature of contemporary anarchist activity many anarchists prefer to speak of the “anarchist space” as opposed to a movement as such<sup>91</sup>. This is reinforced by the spatial nature of the activity many anarchists involve themselves in which is often based around the development of social centres, occupied educational buildings or squats<sup>92</sup>. The majority of anarchists continue to be organised around loose networks of affinity groups and the collectives which co-ordinate the various initiatives. Students struggles and activity in the universities, the creation and maintenance of free spaces in squats and social centres, public assemblies, the publication of counter-information and independent media (for example, the national Indymedia collective and the campus-based pirate radio stations), prisoner support and solidarity actions are amongst the common areas of focus and activity for contemporary anarchists. Environmental and ecological issues have also been taken more seriously in recent years (especially

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<sup>91</sup> There is often quite bitter sectarianism between activists of the Anti-Authoritarian Movement and the insurrectionary anarchists. Gelderloos recalls the following series of incidents;

The Black Bloc threw some Molotovs at police in the middle of a melee, burning some of the protesters. People with AK [Anti-authoritarian Movement] bullied and beat up anarchists whom they suspected of stealing some computers during an event AK organised, getting them in trouble. In response, some insurrectionists burned down the Anti-authoritarian Movement’s offices in Thessaloniki. (Gelderloos, 2007)

<sup>92</sup> There are only two late attempts to form more formal organisations, a Platformist group – the “Federation of Anarchists of Western Greece” (*Omospondia Anarxicon of Dytiki Ellada*) - which is founded in 2002 and folds in 2008 (before December) and an Anarcho-Syndicalist federation – the “Libertarian Trade Union” (*Eleftheriaki Syndikalistiki Enosi*) - formed in 2003 and active to the present time.

since the Olympic developments of 2004). For the more socially orientated anarchists (i.e. those concentrated on mass, popular struggle usually via the workplace or community) this has been in the form of broad based networks promoting community self-organisation and critiquing the ideology of development, while some of the more insurrectional groups have been influenced by covert, direct action organisations of Europe and North America (e.g. the “Earth Liberation Front”). Compared to the European anarchist movement, armed expropriations and bank robberies (as well as armed struggle in general), although not principally a movement activity, are regarded much more sympathetically<sup>93</sup>. This is, however, more common to the insurrectionist groups and continues to be, along with attitudes towards the use of political violence in general, a divisive issue<sup>94</sup>.

The dominance of PASOK and the Communist Party of the trade union movement and the desire to create workplace organisations autonomous from the political parties has also led anarchists towards activity within the primary unions<sup>95</sup>. In recent years anarchists and members of the extra-parliamentary Left have played an active role in organising trades along these lines (having notable success in the courier/delivery industry and amongst bookstore and publishing house workers). Anarchist community spaces (e.g. reclaimed parks), social centres and squats continue to act as an important bridge between the anarchist groups and the communities they organise within. As well as promoting self-activity and anti-capitalism and acting as spaces for counter-information social centres offer cheap food, alcohol and entertainment (film screenings, music). Public assemblies are also frequently used as a tool to encourage greater participation and to agitate for a specific social problem. On a more day-to-day level the anarchist presence in a city or village is often made clear by the posters and graffiti that adorn the walls of public spaces.

It is also worth emphasising the size and scale of the resources that contemporary anarchist initiatives offer. As well as the amount of public understanding and sympathy, particularly amongst youth, the anarchism enjoys, occupations and squats are often expansive in the organising tools and facilities they offer. Fabrika Yfanet, for example, in Thessaloniki – an abandoned weaving factory in the Toumba neighbourhood occupied in 2004 – offers an essentially autonomous, semi-self

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<sup>93</sup> There has been vocal support, for example, for Vassilis Paleokostas a Greek fugitive convicted for kidnapping and robbery. Although expressing no clear political sympathies Paleokostas has built up a reputation as a modern-day Robin Hood for his reputation for giving stolen money to poor families. He famously escaped by helicopter twice from a Greek prison.

<sup>94</sup> Although it should be clear that divisions relate to the appropriate time and application of political violence, i.e. “when?” and “how?”. Political violence is almost universally accepted as a necessary tool for social change, as well as being a practical necessity in the face of violence from fascist organisations and police suppression (although groups, like TPTG, have criticised certain sections of the movement for their “ritualisation” of street violence).

<sup>95</sup> Primary unions are rank-and-file organisations which may operate autonomously of the national unions and can be formed with minimal legal formalities. (Eurofound, 2009)

sufficient community. As well as being host to a large housing collective, resources in the space include a library, cinema space, dance studio, gym, computer room, cafe, an area for music concerts and performances, a BMX course, climbing wall and a free clothes market. Around these are regularly organised political discussions and presentations (including international conferences), film screenings, skill-shares and social gatherings. This is in addition to the political activity and initiatives that participants will be engaged with outside of the space. All of which is organised in a collective and non-hierarchical way - through the squat's general assembly – by voluntary labour and without the reliance on profit generation. Such initiatives, of which Yfanet is currently one (albeit the largest) amongst six to seven open squats in the city, as well as being a locus of existing political activity, are places for the politicisation and mobilisation of communities in ways that are permanent, diverse and reasonably stable.

### *The Revolutionary Left*

The story of the Greek Left is inseparable from the history of the Greek Communist Party (KKE). Not only is Greek communism unique in the European context for, until 1974 at least, its hegemonic position over the working class movement (Klayvas and Marantzidis, 2002: 665), but the state's approach toward members of the communist party, and by extension political dissidents in general, is indicative of a climate of persecution and hostility towards the Left long entrenched in the country's political culture. Yet, it is also the case that in spite of this historical association the KKE has been far from representative when it comes to the Greek Left, its dominance having been carved out by systematic purges and expulsions from its ranks and even the use of deadly violence against its political opponents. Moreover, in spite of the repeated anti-communist crusades, the KKE has, ideologically speaking, been far from a revolutionary force. Fiercely loyal to Stalin throughout most of its history and frequently borrowing from nationalist rhetoric, even at the peak of its influence its immediate aspirations were largely limited to a power-sharing role within a parliamentary democracy. Accordingly, the KKE, as also evident in December, has often taken on an openly hostile stance to groups and movements that either favour an extra-parliamentary route or are simply beyond its organisational control. Nonetheless, as one of the oldest and most well established party in the country, its history intrinsically tied to the popular memory of the Civil War and its support seemingly unaffected by the fall of the Soviet Union the ideological terrain of the Greek Left is still profoundly shaped by its influence. Its preference for reformist practices and repeated attempts at accommodation with the political establishment, in spite of the experience of armed conflict with

the state, have likewise shaped opposition currents and anti-capitalist initiatives keen to distance themselves from the party's socially conservative legacy.

The Greek Communist Party owes its foundations to the "Socialist Federation of Thessaloniki", an initiative to unite all the various nationalities of Greek workers into one labour movement<sup>96</sup>. Before this point socialists in Greece were largely organised in scattered groups across the country<sup>97</sup>. Revolution in Russia, however, pressed the case for unity and, as was the case in many other parts of Europe, attempts were quickly made to found a national party. On the initiative of Avraam Beneroya (leader of the Thessaloniki federation) the Socialist Labour Party of Greece (SEKE) was formed in November 1918. The party, however, although inspired by the Bolshevik example, was far from ideologically coherent<sup>98</sup>. The chief influence at this time was of the Second International via the affiliation of the Socialist Federation of Thessaloniki and a number of anarchist and syndicalists would also be involved in the foundation of the party. As Kousoulas notes,

The success of the October Revolution in Russia had exerted a magnetic influence on the Greek socialists even before the establishment of the SEK; yet, at the beginning, this influence was of a somewhat sentimental nature ... The resolutions and the platform of the first congress, as well as the charter of the SEK, showed no trace of Leninist influence; the Charter, in particular, could have been that of any democratic party.  
(1965: 2)

The foundation of the Third International, and the emergence of a pro-Comintern faction, quickly changed the character of the party. At its second congress the party elected to change its name to Socialist Labour Party of Greece-Communist (SEKE-K), affiliate to the Third International and "re-affirm" its commitment to Leninist principles establishing the central committee as "the high command and the executive body of the Party, possessing all Party powers" (cited in Kousoulas, 1965: 4). Anarcho-syndicalists Konstantinos Speras and Giannis Fanourakis were expelled at this

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<sup>96</sup> The federation was organised into sections according to the four main ethnic groups: Jews, Bulgarians, Greeks and Turks. It quickly became one of the strongest socialist organisations in the Ottoman Empire, founding a number of trade unions and establishing links with the 2<sup>nd</sup> International (Quatart, 2002). It was also reasonably successful in the May 1915 general elections where it sent two deputies to the Greek parliament.

<sup>97</sup> Most prominently the "Socialist Centre" and Socialist League of Greek Youth founded by Nikos Yiannios in 1911 and the "League of the Working Classes of Greece" (1908) and Socialist Party of Greece (1909) founded by Plato Drakoulis.

<sup>98</sup> Margaritis notes,  
Some ... saw the revolution as a personal coup d'état of Lenin. Others ... were enthusiastic about what was taking place in Russia from the very beginning and aligned their cause to that of the Bolsheviks. (2009: 1441)

congress as “anti-party” elements (Kottis, 2006: 19), an anti-Comintern faction also split under the leadership of A. Sideris to form the Socialist Party of Greece (EKE)<sup>99</sup>. In spite of this the party remained strong and Lenin’s publication of the “twenty-one conditions” for admission to the Comintern three months later re-affirmed the new commitment to a highly proscriptive and centralised party.

From its founding the SEKE opposed Greece’s involvement in the Greco-Turkish war (1919-1922) with many members involving themselves in anti-militarist activity on the front as well as on the mainland. Soldiers on the front formed the “Central Council of the Communist Soldiers of the Front Line” spreading anti-war propaganda via militants placed in field communication posts (Kousoulas, 1965: 11). This activity had two important implications for the party.

The influx of veterans and Asia Minor refugees to the party following the war prompted a wave of “Bolshevisation” as returning members demanded strict adherence to Moscow’s political line, a process only strengthened by the fact that 1924 saw the first graduates of the “Communist University of Eastern People’s” (KUTU) filter back into Greece. The Third Party Congress saw not only the re-naming of the party to the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) but the expulsion of “reformist” and “adventurist” elements as the new leadership attempted to consolidate its hold over the party<sup>100</sup>. A small group of expelled members from Piraeus, Patras, Athens, Thessaloniki, Syros, Kerdira and Volos went on to form the short-lived “Communist Union of Greece” (KEE)<sup>101</sup>. A group around the magazine “Archive of Marxism” also went on to join Trotsky’s International Left Opposition between 1930-4 who with some 2,000 members constituted the organisations largest section. Nonetheless, the ideology of Greek communism from this point onwards (with the exception of a short period in the 1970s) would be overwhelmingly defined by loyalty to the Soviet Union.

This is evidenced in even the contemporary attitudes of Greek communists who, rather controversially, continue to defend the policies of political suppression enacted by the Soviet Union (such as the Moscow trials) and practice a fierce ideological opposition to political opponents on the Left (particularly anarchists and Trotskyists). On occasion this opposition has turned violent, for

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<sup>99</sup> The party was a member of the Labour and Socialist International (chief rival of the Comintern) between 1923 and 1932 and had reasonable success in the trade unions. In 1931 party member Dimitris Stratis was elected general secretary of the GSEE.

<sup>100</sup> Manuilsky and Meral, two leading members of the Comintern, even came to Greece to lend a hand with the purge (Kousoulas, 1965: 11).

<sup>101</sup> The founders, Stelios Arvanitakis and Evangelos Papanastasiou, were believed to have anarchist communist sympathies. The organisation folded in March 1925 only to be re-founded in 1926 with a new Bolshevik leadership (see Ed, 2010).

example, in 1979 when members of the Party assisted the eviction of an occupied University or, in the more recent period, open clashes on the streets<sup>102</sup>. Throughout December it was more ideological in character, in that, in spite of its initial denunciations, the KKE leadership realised the continued opposition to the growing unrest risked damaging its image. Consequently, the KKE sustained a policy of critical participation, condemning property damage and riots while participating in their own controlled marches on limited terms. In the press Papatou sought to present her party as a “party of order”, capable of restoring stability to Greek society while drawing on another dominant theme of Greek Left-populism of the fear of foreign intervention and accusing rioters of being provocateurs acting on “foreign orders” (see 2b28, 2b35 and 2b52)<sup>103</sup>.

Scholars typically associate the start of Left suppression with the Idonimon Law of 1929. However, there were a number of important measures before this that laid the groundwork for the widespread suppression of left-wing dissent. Under Venizelist’s liberal government the state was prepared to recognise unions only on condition that they abandoned any leftist influence (Leontaritis, 1980: 81). The authorities could also use Article 2 of Law 121 (1913), originally used to prosecute loyalists in Thessaly and Macedonia, which stipulated that anyone “suspected of disturbing public order” could be sent into internal exile. Moreover, decrees in 1924 established special “committees for public safety” designed to punish political dissidents. The Pangalos dictatorship outlawed the Communist Party and strengthened the committees by allowing suspected persons to be sent into exile without trial. Pangalos also oversaw the building of the first prison camps for left-wing political prisoners. The end of his dictatorship saw the release of the prisoners but not the destruction of the camps which remained in use until 1975. Legality did not last long with the Idonimon Law (1929) once more penalizing radical/revolutionary ideas. Moreover, the loose way in which the law was defined allowed a great number of labour agitators and liberals to be targeted as part of the anti-communist crusade.

Anti-communism was to be an important part of Greek nationalism following the collapse of the Megali idea (after the Greco-Turkish war) and the following years would see a steady escalation of suppression against the Left (see Seferiades, 2005: 67-8). Despite periods of legality and some

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<sup>102</sup> Greek protesters will regularly carry heavy flag poles as a means of protecting (against both fascists and police) their respective blocs. Members of PAME and the KKE will traditionally carry red flags, nationalists and fascists the national flag or “Golden Dawn” emblem, while anarchists carry bisected red and black or black flags. It is not unusual for a particularly heated dispute between blocs to escalate into open violence between the “flag-bearers” on each block, as was the case, for example, on October 20<sup>th</sup> 2011 when members of PAME openly fought anarchists on the steps of the Parliament building (Occupied London, 2011b).

<sup>103</sup> Thanks to the legacy of US intervention during the Civil War.

electoral success during the inter-war period (the party secured 15 seats in the legislative election of 1936) by 1940 the party had all but collapsed. The Metaxas dictatorship had imprisoned almost half of the membership, the rest were forced underground or to operate in exile.

It wasn't until the Second World War and the Axis Occupation of Greece that the Communist Party would start to become a political force once more. Although the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact initially sowed confusion amongst the party rank-and-file, the organisation was able to quickly re-group upon the foundation of the National Liberation Front (EAM) in April 1942 and later the National People's Liberation Army (ELAS) in February 1942<sup>104</sup>. Although guerrilla bands were already fighting the German occupation before EAM formally established ELAS (Gitlin, 1967: 143), the organisation quickly consolidated the majority of armed resistance. By 1943 ELAS had over 80,000 partisans, with a total 150,000 men and women in reserve. In places where the EAM was most successful it formed the de facto government, as Stourimos notes,

The other resistance groups were regional, almost exclusively military and dependent on the personality of one leader or another. The EAM, in contrast, was literally a state within a state. In fact, towards the end of the occupation period, it was a state in its own right, governing the two-thirds of Greece which it had freed. (1952)

By the end of the war the membership of the KKE had also swelled to over 400,000 members. However, the extent to which EAM and the resistance represented the potential for a Communist government following the war was questionable. The EAM was not an organisation Communist in aims nor was its membership drawn exclusively from the working classes (see Gitlin, 1967: 144-7). The KKE, for its part, never harboured revolutionary aspirations throughout this period, the leadership preferring the prospect of a post-war (parliamentary) regime in which they would have substantial influence, a position that was consistent with the Comintern line of international "United Front" and Stalin's agreement with Churchill over the division of the Balkans into Eastern and Western spheres of influence. As Gitlin notes,

[the] KKE was bending over backwards to satisfy non-communist, even anti-communist members of the EAM coalition towards the end of the resistance, because of Soviet pressure *but mostly because it genuinely believed in national unity against the German occupation as the central objective*. (1967: 49)

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<sup>104</sup> EAM was founded in collaboration with the (socialist) union of Popular Democracy, the Socialist Party of Greece and the Agrarian Party. The Communist Party was by far the bigger partner.

The perception of EAM, however, as a Communist threat by Britain and American forces, and their subsequent intervention, set the course for the December massacre in Athens and the Greek Civil War. For the native monarchist and rightist forces it was simply a case of enforcing anti-communist suppression consistent with their activities before the war (although now buoyed in their efforts by British support).

The KKE's forces were at a military disadvantage for much of the conflict. However, the real blow to the organisation was ideological when in June 1948 the Soviet Union broke all relations with Tito (who had been providing military support to the DSE via the Yugoslav border). A majority faction led by Nikos Zachariadis chose to side with the USSR leading to a cease fire (in reality, a surrender). Further disorganisation was prompted by a subsequent purge of "Titoites" within the party. Following the Civil War the party was not only outlawed, but effectively split in two between those inside the country operating in underground cells and those directing party operations in exile. In 1950, 2,289 people were condemned to death for communist activities, 22,000 imprisoned and 13,000 deported, remaining members of the party (numbering more than 30,000) were dispersed in exile across the Soviet-controlled East (Margaritis, 2009: 1445).

The "Union of the Democratic Left" (EDA) allowed for some degree of left-wing expression but what followed was a long-period of state suppression where communist sympathisers were jailed, tortured, subject to internal exile and barred from public employment. An extensive state surveillance apparatus gauged the political and ideological beliefs of all citizens in order to remove communist sympathisers and guarantee "national loyalty". On April 30<sup>th</sup> 1967 the EDA founded the "Patriotic Anti-Dictatorship Front" (PAM), an organisation that aimed to spread wider dissent against the dictatorship by distributing anti-Junta propaganda. In September 1970 the group would escalate its activities forming a sabotage orientated off-shoot, the "Group Aris", which carried through an unsuccessful attempt to bomb the American embassy in Athens in September 1970.

The geographical cleavage between those inside and outside of the country was to have important political implications. The KKE-interior (as they came to be known), heavily involved in EDA and influenced by developments in Western Marxism, began to move away from the strict pro-Soviet line of the KKE-exterior. Divisions came to a head when, forced to choose between submission and expulsion by the exterior committee, the dissident interior faction announced the formation of the "Communist Party of the Group of the Interior" (KKE Esoterikou) in February 1968. However, as Klayvas and Marantzidis note,



Until the collapse of the dictatorship, in 1974, the split in the Communist Party remained an abstract issue for the great majority of the EDA electorate. (2002: 668)

Of course, one of the larger groups to spread opposition to the rule of the Junta, and begin to reinvigorate the Greek Left, was the students in the schools and universities, a movement culminating in the occupation of the Polytechnic. The Communist Party, however, wary of groups beyond its control and the growing influence of both libertarian and extra-parliamentary ideas amongst them, was antagonistic to student protest from almost the beginning. As Kassimeris (2001) notes,

Unable to recognise its nature and character, both KKEs saw the protest through “the prism of a narrow student event with limited capabilities and personality... seeking short-term gains”, KKE student leaders went instead to great lengths to prevent all direct action. (Kassimeris, 2001: 53)

The outlook of the party was, once again, socially conservative. Moreover, when it was clear that the regime was on the brink of collapse both KKEs accepted the original plan for the post-Junta transition of a move towards a model approximating pre-1967 limited democracy. Only when it was clear that a full democratic transition already had popular support was there a shift in the line of the KKEs (Giovanopoulos and Skalidakis, 2009: 1447).

Sustained from this period are the ideas of “communist betrayal” and the need to wrest the mantle of Communist resistance away from the KKE, both of which continue to animate oppositionist forces within the Greek Left. This was present in the immediate period following the consolidation of the post-Junta regime but also continues to recur in the narratives of the contemporary period. Anarchists, for example, continue to reference the “betrayal of Varkiza” in relation to the continuing policies of the KKE – a decision which is perceived to have safeguarded party elites at the expense of working people (Occupied London, 2011b). While December literature, specifically, references the *Dekemvriana* (2b57) in relation to the unrest – implying a degree of continuity between the events – as well as declaring “we are in Civil War” (2c10).

The upsurge in student activism the post-Junta period saw the formation of a number of extra-parliamentary groups dissatisfied with the direction of both Communist Parties<sup>105</sup> - a development which was in line with more underlying shifts in the national political culture. As Giovanopoulos and Skalidakis note,

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<sup>105</sup> Or represented earlier splits or schisms within the party which, up to this point, could not be expressed publicly.

Greek history after the dictatorship is characterised by a transition from a post-civil-war police state to democratic stability ... this process was to a large extent a reaction to the forceful political presence of a socialist and communist left movement, leading to a deeper integration of the traditional left in the “national backbone” of political life. At the same time, a grassroots and dynamic extra-parliamentary left contested this political mutation and reinforced antagonistic struggles, on some occasions with spectacular results. (2009: 1447)

Over the 1970s these extra-parliamentary groups would come to the fore playing a prominent role in key movements of the period – Anti-Americanism and Anti-Imperialism, de-juntification of the state apparatus, Greek membership of NATO and the presence of US bases in Greece. The first Polytechnic commemorations would be a show of force for these new groups while, conversely, both KKEs found their electoral base increasingly appropriated by the more centrist PASOK. The growing militancy of the continuing student movement was also opposed by the KKE who expressed their condemnations of university occupations and even had KNE members violently break up the occupation of the School of Chemistry in Athens on December 17<sup>th</sup> 1979 (Giovanopoulos and Skolidakis, 2009: 1448). It was also out of this context, and from within these groups that the urban guerrilla groups “17<sup>th</sup> November” and “People’s Armed Struggle” (ELA) emerged<sup>106</sup>. The movement reached an apex with the Polytechnic commemorations of 1980 resulting in extended clashes with the police and the death of two activists at the hands of the police. This, along with PASOK’s election a year later (which was successful in co-opting much of the dissent of the previous decade) signalled a general decline, and dissolution, of the extra-parliamentary Left. Some would go on to work in similar areas to the anarchist/anti-authoritarian movement; others would eventually participate in the broad Left coalitions evolving from the KKE-Interior.

1974 saw a “United Left” platform with EDA, KKE and KKE-Interior for the purpose of the election but quickly dissolved. The KKE-Interior soon after adapted a model based on the Italian Communist Party subscribing to most basic precepts of Western Liberalism, parliamentary democracy, a mixed economy and accession to the EU. In 1986 it decided to shift its electoral strategy away from communist voters towards the more moderate Left. Since then it has experienced a number of splits, coalitions and reformations culminating in the formation of “Synaspismos” (SYN) and its participation in the contemporary “Coalition of the Radical Left” (SYRIZA) which includes other smaller Eco-socialist, Trotskyist, Maoist and Eurocommunist parties. More recently it has positioned

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<sup>106</sup> A comparable development can be observed in the extra-parliamentary Left in Italy over the same period which over the 1970s saw the most prominent organisation *Potere Operaio* (“Workers’ Power”) fracture into the autonomists and the *Brigate Rosse*.

itself far more favourably, in comparison to the traditional position of the Communist Left, towards student protest, a factor which has often seen it rewarded in the polls. During the 2006/7 student mobilisations, for example, “it gave its unequivocal support to the students and was rewarded with a high level of support from first-time voters” (Karamichas, 2009: 290).

For the KKE loyalty to the traditional party line has remained largely unbroken. For a brief period during the 1980s *Perestroika* seemed to open up the possibility of reform with a new party secretary Grigoris Farakos making moves towards modernisation. However, the fall of the Berlin Wall opened further divides in the party and after factional disputes hard-liners won out electing Aleka Papatoufaki as part secretary in 1991 (where she remains in the position to the present period). Consequently the modern KKE still holds to an Orthodox Leninist analysis, public and open support for the past policies of the USSR, and opposition to EU and NATO membership. It continues to publish its daily newspaper *Rizospastis* and theoretical journal *Komounistiki Epitheorisi* (Communist Review). Its contemporary strategy has been largely to appeal to traditional anti-Americanism (and the party’s association with this from the Civil War) on the basis of engaging with anti-EU sentiment and popular opposition to Neo-Liberal reform. Nationalism is, as has traditionally been the case, still a stronger component of party ideology than communist sentiment. As Klayvas and Marantzidis argue,

The KKE is trying to replicate PASOK’s distinctive brand of (early) populism that was based on a combination of nationalism and social protest. (2002: 680)

Protest is, however, ultimately engaged in areas of party strength (largely in the trade unions) and with a view to improving electoral performance (or enhance their bargaining power with the other parties) - a position that directly informs their routine condemnations of instances of spontaneous, extra-parliamentary or direct action. Hence in December 2008 the KKE attempted to act out a, seemingly contradictory, role of both presenting itself as a “party of power” (in its denunciations of instances of rioting occurring in the street) while also attempting to push its influences on the streets in the form of Communist-led rallies. Their influence in the trade unions in particular, as the following chapter will elaborate, would have a particular detrimental effect on the movement as, with little sympathy for either the tactics or organisational practices associated with the unrest, activity failed to spread in a comparable fashion to the workplaces.

In summary, when turning specifically to the impact of the revolutionary Left on the December events, although some practical issues can be outlined, the issue is more the general context of communist legacy than the KKE’s individual influence per se. Undoubtedly the KKE do monopolise

certain areas of social struggle, particularly in relation to the trade union movement. This does impose limitations on the prospects of autonomous and independent organisation in these areas and was, to some degree, evidenced through the December initiatives. Nonetheless the conciliatory role of the Left is by no means unique to Greek politics and this is a function, in many cases, fulfilled by social democratic or labour partys in other countries (and to a large extent PASOK has also fulfilled this role in the post-Junta period). The history of the party is actually far more influential in not only shaping the far-Left but informing a much broader dissident identity. Most widely this is in terms of a legacy of anti-communist repression but also, of more relevance to the case study, in the identities of those groups that seek to distance themselves from the historic mistakes and betrayals of the communist movement and reclaim the legacy of the Civil War.

### *The Student Movement*

Students, both school and university, were a prominent force in the December unrest. December was, however, by no means the first time in recent history that Greek students had risen up against the political establishment. In fact, as Karamichas notes, “University students were already starting a new wave of mobilisations at the time of Grigoropoulos’s death” (2009: 290). Many of the popular slogans of December, such as “city that burns, flower that blossoms”, were also widely circulated during the student mobilisations against educational reform over 2006-7 (Kornetis, 2010: 182). In many ways this is hardly surprising given that even a cursory look at popular social struggles through the contemporary period would reveal education institutions to have been at the forefront of major events. The student movement, in particular, has consistently been a dynamic force embracing much more militant and confrontational tactics when compared, for example, to comparable confrontations in the workforce. As Sifogiorgakis notes,

The student movement – from the renowned “rebellion of the Polytechnic” in November of 1973 against the Junta of the colonels, and through the occupations of campuses lasting 1.5 years in the year of 1978-9, up to the great occupations which caused a huge political crisis within the right-wing government during the period 1990-1 reaching today’s struggles – constituted the “unpredictable factor” in the social struggle within a country where the forces of Social Democracy and Stalinism dominate oppressively over the labour movement. (2006: 31)

Yet it is also far from a homogenous force. It is necessary to be clear that despite a certain cohesiveness in its tactics over high points of struggle it is also a plural movement –

representing a forum for the expression of, sometimes conflicting, political aims in response to the overarching threat of education reform (or in the case of the *Polytechnio* a desire for political reform). In this respect, several commentators have pointed to the often quite contradictory character of certain sections of the movement – at the same time as embracing principles of direct action, non-representation and direct democracy eschewing often quite reformist, sometimes parliamentary party-aligned, goals.

The history of the student movement is best divided into “waves”- escalating mobilisations and protests centred on opposition to specific attempts at education reform. Of course, a number of mobilisations occurred between the most notable of these, the most prominent being 2003 school student opposition to the Iraq War, but broadly these can be divided into opposition to the Junta (1971-4), law 815/1978 (1978-9), the proposed reforms of New Democracy (1990-1) and law 3549/2007 (2006-7).

Like many European countries Greece has had a politicised student movement dating back to almost the foundation of its universities. There are a few recorded instances of student participation in even the very early instances of protest and rebellion. In 1843 professors and students participated in the upheavals against King Otto, with further demonstrations and clashes with the police in 1857, 1859, 1860 and 1862. Greek students also participated in riots over the “language question” in 1901 and 1903 and, leading up to the contemporary period, in the movement following the assassination of politician and anti-war activist Grigoris Lambrakis in the 1960s (Psacheropoulos and Kazamias, 1980: 128-9). The most defining moment, however, in student activism was in the widespread opposition to the military Junta culminating in the famous occupation of the Polytechnic building.

During the Junta students were the only real group to mobilise opposition on a mass scale. The influence of the counter-cultural wave that was sweeping across the world over the preceding decade would bring many into conflict with the highly proscriptive social and educational provisions the regime had laid out for young people. Everyday acts of non-compliance included sharing and listening to illegal songs, forbidden literature and movies (Kotsonopoulos, 2009: 1434). Wary of a growing culture of dissent the Junta aimed to swiftly legislate against recalcitrant elements by introducing a new bill for higher education which ensured, among other things, that professors, commissioners and student union officials would be appointed by the state and that students were required to possess a certificate of national loyalty before being allowed to enrol. The regimes capture of the student union apparatus prompted self-organisation around grassroots student action committees and by November 1972 the student body had successfully boycotted the regime-

sponsored student union elections. As tension between the state and the growing student movement escalated the regime decided to discourage further activism by forcefully conscripting 91 students to the military in February 1973. The response, however, was explosive and riots between police and students at the National Technical University, the Law School and the Economic University of Athens followed. February 22<sup>nd</sup> also saw the first student occupation of the Athens Law School and two days later a successful national boycott of lectures.

The two most prominent organised political groups among students over this time were aligned to both sections of the Communist Party (Rigas Pharios for the KKE-Interior and Anti-EFEE for the KKE). However, a number of extra-parliamentary groups also gained growing influence, particularly the Maoist “Anti-Imperialist Anti-Fascist Student Association of Greece” (AASPE). It was also the case that, as Kotsonopoulos notes, despite,

the proliferation of student organisations, the anti-dictatorship student movement remained overwhelmingly autonomous. (2009: 1433)

On November 15<sup>th</sup> 1973, following an anti-Junta protest, students sought refuge from the police in the Athens Polytechnic building. Those inside decide to occupy the University to protest police brutality. The mobilisation was quickly transformed into a rallying point against the regime in general and many local residents and workers arrived to pledge their support. A pirate radio station was established in the building which transmitted anti-junta messages across the city. Events prompted a military reaction and by the night of the 17<sup>th</sup> November armed forces (accompanied by tanks) rolled over the Polytechnic gates killing many in the process. Although the night is often cited as a key turning point in the dissolution of the dictatorship, the movement dissolves shortly after as a wave of arrests and persecutions of student leaders continued until the fall of the Junta in July 1974.

It did not take long, however, for the movement to resurface. By 1977, a resurgent movement was challenging the state once more, this time over issues concerning education reform<sup>107</sup>. Moreover, despite the involvement of, the now parliamentary, political party’s activists continued to use the direct action tactics of the previous era and generally adopted an extra-parliamentary perspective<sup>108</sup>. A study carried out in 1977 found, for example, that only 40% of respondents agreed with the statement, “without party support the student movement is bound to fail” (Psacheropoulos and

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<sup>107</sup> In the intervening years students had been active in pushing for the removal of the residual elements of the regime in education institutions, including pro-Junta professors, restrictions on academic freedom and for greater participation in university governance (Psacheropoulos and Kazamias, 1980: 128).

<sup>108</sup> The largest student organisations being *Panellenios Agonistika Syndikaliste Parataxi* (PASP) for PASOK, *Panspoudaskike Syndikaliste Kinese* (PSK) for KKE and *Demokratikos Agonas* (DA) for KKE-Interior.

Kazamias, 1980: 130). Students obstructed the implementation of law 815 via strikes, boycotts, intimidation of hostile academic staff and long-term occupations of education institutions. By 1979 the government was forced to declare a lockout in the universities in an attempt to curb the advancing occupations. By New Year's Eve 1980 the movement could claim victory with the government announcing its abandonment of its already voted in plans for education reform.

PASOKs decade-long term in power through the 1980s saw a decline of such heightened political unrest. Nonetheless, the movement saw off the government's modernisation attempts from as early as 1982 and a second occupation movement in 1987, which also spread to secondary education, fought EEC educational reforms. The next notable point of mass mobilisation was when New Democracy returned to power and its subsequent proposals for education reform from October 1990 onwards. The focus, as outlined earlier, was primarily on changes in the primary schools and what would follow in response was a wave of school occupations and walk-outs on a henceforth unprecedented scale. Moreover, the student movement would, as had also been the case with the Junta, once more consolidate and extend popular opposition to the government.

Once more activity was organised from the grassroots level with occupied schools co-ordinating actions via general assemblies and recallable delegates at the local and regional level. Emerging out of this movement a large split from the Communist Youth of Greece (KNE) would found the "United Independent Left Movement" (EAAK). An organisation which, in spite of the affiliation of some of its members to hierarchical organisations and parliamentary parties, would hold to strict principles of non-representation – objecting to representation in school administrative councils (preferring to participate collectively), refusing to accept decision-making in the committees of the students' union and of the administrative faculty councils (supporting the decisions of the general assemblies instead). A popular slogan of the time, "when you agree with the parliament, we are the only opposition", reflected a popular belief that direct action was the only viable course for political opposition. The university students joined the movement by November and from then until January 1991 most universities and about 90 per cent of the schools nationwide were under occupation. The government responded by attempting to criminalise students with threats of having to repeat the entire school year and arbitrary arrests and police brutality on demonstrations. Measures that were supported by right-wing groups who also co-ordinated escalating attacks on occupied schools, culminating in the murder of a teacher, Nikos Temponeras, in Patras, an event which prompted two-days of rioting in Athens. The experience of the struggle would profoundly shape the outlook of a future generation. As Boukalas notes,

The age of the participants, their determination, and the mass appeal and impact of their struggle made this movement unique. Yet its most astonishing feature was that people with no experience of political action “instinctively” organised a mass-scale movement on the basis of direct democracy without any form of hierarchy and “representation”. It thus constituted a crash-course in radical politics for an entire generation. (2009: 3168)

The extent of student opposition meant no government would dare to attempt further reform until the late 1990s (the Minister for Education post being dubbed the “electric chair” by the media) when students and teachers would once more mobilise against law 2525 (the details of which were outlined previously).

2003 saw massive school student resistance to the Iraq war. This, again, would shape the perspectives of future activists some of who entered university over 2006-7 and formed a critical part of the opposition to law 3549<sup>109</sup>. The anti-CPE movement (2005-6) in France, which had mobilised thousands of students and young workers, was likewise a source of inspiration. This time the response was not only in the form of student occupations and lecturers strikes, beginning May 2006 through to April 2007, but a series of weekly demonstrations leading to regular confrontations with the police and, on occasion, escalation into full-scale riots. A month in and 447 university departments were occupied and by mid-October students at over a thousand secondary schools had staged occupations. Teachers, lecturers and civil servants also called sympathy strikes.

Demonstrations helped to consolidate the disparate elements of the movement as students organised with primary and secondary school teachers, civil servants, anarchists and groups of the extra-parliamentary left<sup>110</sup>. Moreover, the virtual collapse of the National Student Union of Greece (EFEE) over the previous twelve years, with left groups frequently blocking its reconstitution, meant that, “only the decisions of the assemblies could legitimise any form of mobilisation” (Sifogiorgakis, 2006: 33). Subsequently EAAK emerged as a popular current both for its alignment to the general aims of the students as well as its reputation within previous struggles (although as is also the case before the bulk of the movement operated autonomously).

Despite the escalation the government refused to negotiate with the movement labelling them as “minorities” reacting to “modernisation” and only conceded to postpone the vote on the law. The GSEE was also less than supportive, already hostile to the student movement, its leadership pledging

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<sup>109</sup>Garganas (2006) observes that, “a huge proportion of those involved in the co-ordinating committees of the occupations now said they were involved in anti-war walkouts back then.”

<sup>110</sup> Garganas (2006) also reports the involvement of football hooligans (of PAOK) in anti-government demonstrations in Thessaloniki.



support for a key constitutional amendment - the establishment of private universities. This general policy of non-engagement on the part of the state, and to a large extent the mainstream media, served to under-score a key weakness of much of the movement - its reformist aims. *Ta Paidia Tis Galarias* (2006: 2), for example, note that despite the militancy of those involved the slogans and literature produced on demonstrations “lacked imagination” and “mostly reflected the state capitalist political organisations active in the universities”.

Nonetheless the months leading up to December 2008 saw preparations for another round of student protests. Consequently, following the murder of Alexis, many school and university students were already preparing occupations, strikes and sit-ins in their existing networks in relation to the proposed implementation of education reforms. Moreover, thanks to the experience of the previous years, and in spite of their largely reformist aims of the movement, these militants not only had the connections and organisational resources to mobilise a mass movement, but the experience and confidence for confrontation with the police.

### **Terrain and Tradition**

Mapping the terrain and tradition before December reveals a particular political culture that goes some way towards explaining the form of struggle emerged and why. In addition to the more immediate outrage provoked by the murder, it reveals an increased sensitivity to police violence and an existing, growing dissent to the recent use of police tactics (especially for students and migrants). This is against the back drop of a long-standing cultural opposition to excessive policing and the existence of a confrontational and influential anarchist and anti-authoritarian movement. It is likewise possible to set the stage for the emergence of more generalised grievances arising through the course of the unrest as economic crisis (punctuated by a lack of opportunities for youth), high levels of unemployment and temporary/flexible contracts working conditions generated a climate of disaffection amongst, particularly young, workers. This is while comparable attacks on living standards and access to public goods were being made on the same sections of the population via the education system. In a more general sense, the particular way that economic inequalities are expressed – through corruption and clientelism – allowed individuals to draw a line between the impunity with which a police officer acted in relation to a young student to the conduct of politicians and civil servants in general (of which the working population is disproportionately disadvantaged). In this sense the shooting was more a case of an abhorrent act on the part of a police officer but quickly seen as an inditement of the political establishment as a whole. The presence of a strong and

confident anti-capitalist movement, both amongst the students and in social struggles generally, provided a catalyst through which these grievances could be mobilised into an explicitly political, and more often also anti-capitalist, struggle. In the contemporary period it is possible to point to the growth in anarchist and anti-authoritarian initiatives as well as recurring waves of mobilisations over education reform as testament to the influence of these ideas. In addition, the character of these movements is informed by the legacy of communist resistance which has presented certain questions concerning both the content and tactics of struggle. This is particularly in relation to questions of political violence but also more generally processes of conciliation, the perceived mistakes of the communist movement and the possibility of social and economic reform. The outcome of this has been an explicitly militant tradition of struggle, counter-posed to the acquiescence of the communist movement, but also drawing from and seeking to reclaim a deeper tradition of armed struggle.

All of the above goes some way to explaining the type of initiatives that emerged throughout the December unrest. Nonetheless, there is also a need to be wary of exceptionalism and determinism in drawing these judgements. It is important to be clear that none of the above supports the claim that December was either pre-figured in the specific character of Greek society or was something uniquely Greek. Rather the above are best identified as particular expressions of much more generalised and identifiable conflicts produced by capitalism. While December initiatives did orientate itself to the above context, the content of the struggle, as the following chapter outlines, was ultimately universal and, as the immediate history following December increasingly demonstrates social struggle will (and should) occur almost everywhere. The Greek December was not about addressing any of these issues together (or alone); rather this was the terrain, and the medium by which these general ideas came to be expressed. It is to this – the content of the unrest – which I now turn.

## **Part 2a: Chronology: December 6<sup>th</sup> 2008 – December 31<sup>st</sup> 2008**

*This chronology is primarily based on the first-hand accounts of participants in the unrest - most notably the accounts of the TPTG (Ta Paidia Tis Galarias – “The Children of the Gallery”) group, Blaumachen, the Void Network and Savas Michael of EEK, but also countless other anonymous postings which appeared on activist blogs like “Indymedia”, “Libcom”, “Occupied London” and “Social War in Greece” throughout December 2008. Where information has been otherwise lacking it has been supplemented by the reports of the traditional domestic and international news media.*

### **Day 1: Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> December**

At 20:45 a patrol of two Special Guards<sup>111</sup>, Epaminondas Korkoneas (a 37-year old former commando who joined the police force in 1999) and Vasilis Saraliotis (31), arrives in Exarchia after a report of an alleged incident involving two or three youths outside a small local shop. Following a verbal clash with the group the patrol continues. A few minutes later, while the patrol car passes through a pedestrian crossing it is pelted with some stones and bottles by a small group of youths near Exarchia square (Social War in Greece, 2008a). At 21:01 the two Special Guards communicate to the centre of operations that they are under attack by anarchists. The centre of operations orders them to withdraw from the confrontation site and return to police headquarters (Kathimerini, 2008a). Instead the two officers decide to park their patrol car on Harilaou Trikioupi street (outside the PASOK headquarters) and go to Tvazella street in order to confront the attackers. Reports are conflicting over what occurs during the interval between 21:02 and 21:13, at which point the two Special Guards return to the station. Korkoneas alleges that upon finding himself and his partner in confrontation with a group of youths, who attack them with stones and bottles, he fires three warning shots (one to the ground and two in the air) one of which ricochets and hits the 15-year-old Alexis Grigoropoulos. Eyewitness reports gathered later, however, state that it was the Special Guards who verbally provoked the group of youths, that at no point did they appear threatened or under duress (Free Press, 2008a) and that the “warning shot” was fired directly into Alexis’ chest (Free Press, 2008b). An ambulance transports Alexis to the nearby Evaggelismos Hospital where, at 21:25, he is declared dead.

Police almost immediately attempt to seal the streets around the shooting site. People from the locality begin to gather in the area to find out what is going on. As the news of the shooting spreads

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<sup>111</sup> A category of Greek police personnel originally established for guard duties on public property, e.g. embassies, but later used for routine policing tasks in reducing crime. Special Guards are expected to have some military experience as reservist officers or as volunteers of a five-year obligation. Many are also former members of Greece’s Special Forces.

groups start to spontaneously attack the police. In the next two hours more than 10,000 people (TPTG, 2009: 13), including many anarchists and anti-authoritarians, take to the nearby streets to spread news of the event, fight running battles with the police and erect barricades. Void Network et al., (2010: 77-8) report the following;

Some anarchists quickly make the critical decision to occupy the Polytechnic. Attacks on police, banks, and luxury stores spread to Pattison Avenue, Ermou and to the universities Nomiki and Pantou. Friends of Alexis fight off police attempts to enter Evaggelismos Hospital, where the body has been taken. Seventy luxury shops on Ernou are smashed and burnt to the ground, and a seven-floor megastore is torched. People in the cafes and bars hear the news and join in. Anarchists also occupy ASOEE University, and leftists and anti-authoritarians occupy Nomiki, the law school. By the end of the night, much of the city is filled with tear gas, police have been chased out of many neighbourhoods, and multiple police stations have been attacked. News of the killing and the riots spread throughout Greece via internet and cell phone. Starting within a couple of hours of the murder, major spontaneous protests attack police stations and banks in Thessaloniki, Iraklion, Chania, Patras, Ionnia, Kavala, and Volos. Smaller demonstrations occur in Rethymnon, Komotini, Mytilini, Alexandroupoli, Serres, Sparta, Corfu, Xanthi, Larissa, Agrinio and countless small towns. (Void Network, 2010: 77-8)

The riots in Athens are reported to have continued well into Sunday morning. In Thessaloniki the Theatre School and University are occupied by anarchists and anti-authoritarians.

## **Day 2: Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> December**

The occupation at the Faculty of Law called for a demonstration to assemble outside the Archaeological Museum (in close proximity to the now occupied National Technical University in Pattission Avenue) and march to the Police Headquarters (2b2). The demonstration quickly turns into a riot causing major property damage and stones thrown at the police. Several luxury shops and banks are burnt down. The police make an attempt to halt the protesters near Alexandras Avenue by deploying tear gas. This initially proves unsuccessful and the police are routed by the rioters. A second deployment of tear gas canisters at the corner of Ippokratous street disperses the crowd breaking it apart into several large groups (TPTG, 2009: 15). Destruction of property and clashes with the police continues (2b4, 2b5, 2b6). Riot police attempt to occupy Exarchia but residents pelt them with stones and flower pots (Void Collective et al., 2010: 78). Attacks against property and clashes

with the police resume in the evening around the National Technical University and the Faculty of Economics.

In Thessaloniki a 3,000 strong march is held (2b3). Around 1,000 people decide to break away from the march to attack government buildings, two police stations and to set up barricades. Police attempts to evict the Theatre School and University occupations but are unsuccessful (Blaumachen, 2009: 43-4).

In addition to this, the Void Network (2010: 78) reports the following;

In Iraklion and Patras there are demonstrations of 600 to 1,000 people, respectively, with the anarchists forming large blocs at the end as usual. In both cities many banks are attacked, causing the leftists in Patras to leave the march. In Corfu several hundred people protest. After demonstrators clash with police, a dozen youth from KEE (the Communist Party) and PASOK lock the University and refuse to let the protesters in, leaving them at the mercy of the riot police. There is also a large, violent demonstration in Ionnina involving 1,000 people, it is attacked by police, who hospitalise three. Other protests and actions occur in Mytilini, Ithaki, Larissa, Pyros, Karditsa, Kavala, Xanthi, Volos, Serres, Sparta, Kozani, , Arta and Naxos. In some cases in small cities, groups of as few as ten people carry out bold actions like attacking police stations with molotovs and dispersing before they can be caught, as occurred in Pyrgos. In Kozani an anarchist demo of just eighty people besieges the local police station, kicking out journalists and building barricades. In other places events unfold rather peacefully, as in Sparta where anarchists occupy a university and set up an infopoint.

Epaminondas Korkoneas and Vasilis Saraliotis are arrested and an investigation ordered into the shooting by the Interior Ministry. Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis expresses his sympathy in a letter to the parents of Alexis in which he also vows that those responsible will be brought to justice and that, “the state will see to it that such a tragedy does not happen again”.

### **Day 3: Monday 8<sup>th</sup> December**

Alexis' funeral is announced to take place on the afternoon of the 9<sup>th</sup> of December in the cemetery of the southern suburb of Palaio Faliro, Athens. It is predicted that the funeral will turn into an anti-police protest with many drawing comparisons to unrest following the shooting of 15-year-old

Michalis Kaltezas by police in 1985. Mobilisations are called in cities across the country including Thessaloniki, Chalkida, Aigion, Kozani, Mytilini and Patras. Many schools and universities decide to stay closed. However, instead of staying home thousands of students take to the streets (2b7). In Athens school students demonstrate attacking shops, banks and police stations. The banks at Omonoia square, and the shops on Stadiou and Filellion Avenue all suffer extensive damage with many looting the goods inside. Students from the schools of Piraeus (a port at the south-west part of the city) attack the central police station overturning police cars (TPTG, 2009: 16). Anarchists occupying the Polytechnic enter into a protracted clash with police forces and burn down computer stores on Stournari street (Void Network et al., 2009: 78) (2b9). The huge decorative Christmas tree on Syntagma Square is burnt down (2b11). The European Law Library is destroyed as the result of rioters setting fire to the nearby Kostis Palamas building. Following the fire, the rector of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Christos Kittas resigns leading to speculation over the future of academic asylum (Occupied London, 2008a). Extensive property damage has occurred throughout the city over the past three days.

In Thessaloniki students with other Left-wing groups occupy the Law School to use as a counter-information centre. A march down the principle avenue, Egnatia, sees many attack police stations, government ministries and banks. Rioting, protests and occupations are widespread across all of Greece's major population centres;

Thousands of people, mostly students, march and riot in Chania, Larissa, Rhodes, Nafplio, Chios, Egio, Veria, Kavala, Agrinio, Aliveri, Alexandroupoli, Chaldiki, Giannitsa, Syros, Ierapetra, Kastoria, Korinthos, Kyprarissia, Pyrgos, Corfu, Xanthi, Kilkis, Trikala, Serres, Tripoli, Mytilini, Kalamata, Moudros, Lamia, Kozani, Florina, Edessa, and elsewhere. In each place between 50 and 2,000 people participate, and actions range from blockading the police station and pelting it with garbage, to pelting police with molotovs and rocks and burning down banks. In several cities, youth with the KEE try to protect the police or prevent the occupation of universities. (Void Network, 2009: 79)

Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis calls a crisis meeting of his cabinet late into the day having vowed to bring the unrest under control. Rumours circulate, and are widely reported in the media, that a state of emergency will be declared. However a government spokesperson denies that this is the case.

#### Day 4: Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> December

A press release issued by police in the morning reports the number of injured officers over the past three days as twelve, arrested rioters at eighty-seven and persons brought before the public prosecutor as one hundred and seventy six (Ministry for the Interior and Public Order, 2008). Thousands gather to attend the burial of Alexis in Palaio Faliro, Athens (2b23). Attendees report provocations from the police and tear gas is fired into the large crowd (Infoshop News, 2008) (2b18). Eyewitnesses also report that police fired at least ten warning shots at protesters in Palaio Faliro (Social War in Greece, 2008b).

Despite a large attendance at the funeral ceremony clashes and heavy street fighting continues throughout the city (2b16, 2b17). The Communist Party (KKE) declares the looters and rioters as secret agents of “foreign dark forces” and calls for the “people’s movement” to stay away from the streets (TPTG, 2009). Thousands of prisoners across Greece abstain from food for the day in honour of Alexis. Teachers of primary and secondary schools also call a strike against police brutality and there is a work stoppage after 12pm of all public sector workers. In Thessaloniki a demonstration called at Kamara Square attracts in the region of 4,000 people leading to clashes with the police outside the Ministry of Macedonia and Thrace (TPTG, 2009: 45) (2b21). The press reports of attacks by shopkeepers against immigrants and rioters involved in looting and the destruction of property (In.gr, 2008). Amnesty International issues a report urging Greek authorities to end unlawful, disproportionate police force against peaceful demonstrators (Amnesty International, 2008).

Activists in Petras, after over a thousand take to the streets and completely barricade the central commercial street of Agiou Nikolaou, come under attack by groups of fascists, allegedly members of the Neo-Nazi organisation *Chrysi Avyi* “Golden Dawn”, as the demonstrations are dispersed by police (Libcom, 2008a) (2b20). Similarly in Athens activists involved in the occupation of the National Technical University and the Faculty of Economics report groups of fascists assembling in the adjoining streets where clashes with the police are taking place. TPTG (2009) later talk of a concerted strategy on the part of the state to encourage the collaboration of shop owners, fascists and the police with those hostile to the riots. Left-wing commentators cite the precedent of the murder of leftist teacher Nikos Temponer by members of the youth section of New Democracy in the wake of the 1991 high-school student occupations (TGL, 2008).

There is a great deal of anticipation for the general strike called by the General Labour Confederation of Greece (GSEE) and Civil Servant’s Confederation (ADEDY), scheduled months earlier and in response to cuts in public spending and attacks on pay and pensions in the 2007 state

budget, called for the next day. However, citing the ongoing riots and fearing fiercer clashes with the police, the leadership of the unions announce that they intend to cancel the already planned demonstrations in the capital instead calling a static gathering in Syntagma Square (in front of the Parliament building). #

#### **Day 5: Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> December**

More than 7000 people attend the gathering at Syntagma Square (TPTG, 2009: 19). Despite the union leaderships attempt to contain the situation, thousands of workers spread to the surrounding streets and battles with the police resume throughout Athens (2b26, 2b27). High school students from throughout the city also join the trade union mobilisations.

The situation in Thessaloniki is similar with the local branches of the ADEDY and GSEE initially gathering at the city's Trade Union Centre only to be joined by secondary school and university students (2b24) who lead a 4,000 strong worker-student march towards the Ministry of Macedonia and Thrace. Clashes with the police ensue, followed by a brief 500-strong blockade of Egnatia street (a central avenue in the city centre). TPTG (2009) observe that the riots are becoming increasingly popularised,

Anarchists and politicians are just a small part of the rioters and in many cases they are taken aback by the fierceness, the spreading and the duration of the riots.

In Athens and Irakleio (Crete) riots also see an increasingly large number of migrants take to the streets. In the Zeyferi suburb in Athens a group of around 100 Roma attack a police station.

Photographs, taken from the previous day, are published by a Greek blogger showing members of Neo-Nazi organisation "Golden Dawn" armed with blunt weapons walking alongside police on the streets of Patras (Libcom, 2008b) (2b20).

Stoppages by air traffic controllers and other air port workers leads to the cancellation of a number of flights to both mainland Greece and islands, including to Athens, Thessaloniki and Heraklion.

General assemblies are called at the University occupation in Patras and the National Technical University and the Faculty of Law in Athens to discuss the events and plan for actions over the coming days. The occupation of the Law Association building in Thessaloniki comes to an end.

Reports once again circulate throughout the mainstream media that a state of emergency will be declared should the rioting continue into Thursday (Occupied London, 2008b). Total damages up to



this point are estimated at fifty million Euros, it is also reported that 554 buildings have been attacked, and twenty-seven cars set on fire over the past few days (Void Network et al., 2010: 79).

### **Day 6: Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> December**

The testimony of Epaminondas Korkoneas is released (Eleftherotypia, 2008), his accusations of Alexis' having previously exhibited "deviant behaviour" are considered particularly provocative as is his lawyers statement that, "it is now up to the Greek justice to decide whether the young boy was justly killed or not".

The town hall of Agios Dimitrios, a suburb in the south of Athens, is occupied by residents (2b30). The space holds a general assembly involving those in the local neighbourhood as well as operating as a general gathering space and counter-information centre. Students once more take to the streets and there are widespread clashes with the police, the blockading of major roads and attacks on police stations. One hundred twenty schools in Athens are occupied by their students (Void Network et al., 2010: 80). Police sources report that 4,600 tear gas canisters have been used in the past five days and are forced to import additional supplies from Germany and Israel (Hider, 2008). Despite the opposition of members of the youth section of the KKE, mass assemblies and occupations continue to spread throughout Athens and Greece<sup>112</sup>. Occupied London (2008c) comments that at this stage the school students and the University occupations are critical to spreading and sustaining the struggle.

A demonstration outside the occupied Faculty of Law attracts in the region of 5,000 people leading to further clashes with the police (TPTG, 2009: 21). In Kominiti, a town in the north-east, students occupying the University report coming under attack from fascist and far-right groups (TPTG, 2009: 21). A demonstration in Patras called in response to police and far-right collusion attracts between 5-6,000 people. In Thessaloniki, a small group of anti-authoritarian militants attack the officers of the local newspaper "Macedonia" at Monastiriou street. A protest called by the School of Drama occupation in the early evening, attracting in the region of 2,000 people, proceeds peacefully despite police provocation.

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<sup>112</sup> The leadership of the KKE quickly changed its position towards the unrest from the work of "foreign forces" and *agent provocateurs* to a hostile analysis of it as a "petit bourgeois youth protest" or the work of "adventurist" anarchists (Marxistiki Foni, 2009)

### **Day 7: Friday 12<sup>th</sup> December**

In the region of seven hundred secondary schools and one hundred universities are occupied across the country (TPTG, 2009: 22). In Athens Flash FM radio is occupied, the protesters manage to broadcast their messages for around half an hour until the signal is cut. In the Chalandri neighbourhood the old city hall and another government building is occupied and opened into an infopoint and space for a popular assembly. Students hold a large march to the parliament building where they clash with riot police, they chant "shoot us too!" (Occupied London, 2008d) (2b31, 2b32, 2b33, 2b34). A peaceful, sit-down protest is also held outside parliament. The office of Alexis Kougias (the lawyer of Epaminondas Korkoneas) is ransacked. Attempts to evict the Nomiki occupation are unsuccessful.

In Thessaloniki, the school of Drama occupation calls a protest that marches throughout the city, originally consisting largely of antiauthoritarian activists, students and young workers it also attracts the support of local residents who have so far been uninvolved in the insurrection (Blaumachen, 2009: 48). A political office of the Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS) is set on fire. At night, a large peaceful candle-lit vigil is held in commemoration of Alexis in Athens.

### **Day 8: Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> December**

Once again there is a large demonstration outside the Greek parliament building (2b37). Despite being a relatively peaceful gathering the police deploy teargas and attempt to forcefully disperse the crowds around midday. Neighbourhood demonstrations occur across Athens. At night two banks, a number of shops, an environment ministry building and the financial department a police station near Exarchia are firebombed (Aloisi, 2008).

In Thessaloniki, the Aristotle University Co-ordination of General Assemblies and Occupations calls a demonstration for this day. A large anti-authoritarian block is joined by an equal number of leftist militants who march to the Ministry of Macedonia and Thrace (Blaumachen, 2009: 48).

The previous day the assembly at the Occupied polytechnic building in Athens called an international day of action "against state murders". On this day, and over the coming week, there are protests across the globe called in solidarity with the Greek struggle. Actions range from pickets and peaceful gatherings outside of Greek embassies and consulates to vandalism, property destruction and

outbreaks of rioting<sup>113</sup>. The international media reports the fears of politicians and political commentators that social unrest may spread from Greece to other European countries hit hard by the credit crisis (Athanasiadis, 2009).

#### **Day 9: Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> December**

Marches and demonstrations resume throughout the neighbourhoods of Athens as well as a number of other cities across the country (Thessaloniki, Corfu, Volos and Xanthi). A protest called by the Residents' Committee in Exarchia holds an open air assembly and demands the renaming of the street where Alexis was shot in his honour. In Nea Smirni an abandoned cafe is occupied by around a hundred activists and transformed into a counter-information and action coordination centre (TPTG: 24) (2b39). TPTG (2009) comment that the occupation of public buildings is a "new form of struggle coming out of the riots". It is also a tactic that is becoming increasingly popularised since the occupation of the town hall by residents in Agios Demetrios .

#### **Day 10: Monday 15<sup>th</sup> December**

Early in the morning there is a violent attempt by hired thugs associated with local shopkeepers, to evict protesters occupying the town hall of Halindri. Although initially successful, the building is reoccupied within a couple of hours (TPTG, 2009: 25). There are some attempts to get essential services running without the intervention of the state;

In Agios Demetrios the popular assembly of the occupation tried to cooperate with the municipal clerical workers in order to restart some municipal services without the mediation of the municipal authorities. The plan was to satisfy only urgent social needs, such as issuing green cards for migrants as well as paying wages and extra allowances. The mayor and the municipal services council intimidated the workers trying to prevent them providing these services. (TPTG, 2009: 26)

Anarchists sabotage the ticketing system and surveillance cameras on the metro in Athens allowing all passengers to travel for free for the day. Occupation of municipal buildings, radio stations, university departments and popular assemblies continue to spread throughout

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<sup>113</sup> There are reports of actions and protests from Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, China, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxemburg, Portugal, Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Netherlands, Turkey, United Kingdom and the United States.

Greece (2b41, 2b42). Teachers' Unions report that around 600 schools are currently under occupation along with an estimated 150 university facilities (Karahalis, 2008)

Rallies and marches take place in Chania, Heraklion, Larissa and Piraeus.

A protest held by musicians in Propylea is forcefully dispersed by police using tear gas. A sit-in held by students outside the police headquarters on Alexandras Avenue turns violent as police provocations lead to clashes and the erection of small barricades. A demonstration held by secondary school students, workers and militants outside the courts in Evelpidon street to express solidarity with those being charged for their part in the riots turns into a sit-in.

In Thessaloniki, members of the School of Drama occupation occupy the town hall of the western district of Sykies turning it into a counter-information centre and space for popular assembly.

Blaumachen (2009) observe that the coming week marks a general shift away from the streets and towards the occupations as the focal point for movement activism.

#### **Day 11: Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> December**

Once again anarchists sabotage the Athens metro allowing passengers to travel for free, slogans are painted on the walls including, "the self-organisation of the passengers will mean the end of ticket inspectors" (Occupied London, 2008e). Anti-police protests and rallies take place outside many police stations throughout Athens and Piraeus (2b44). A large rally called by the "Coordination of General Assemblies and Occupations" in Thessaloniki marches to the Ministry of Macedonia and Thrace. The central police station of Illisia, which also serves as the headquarters of sections of the special police forces, is firebombed by militants. A group of artists, anarchists and students occupy the studios of the state-run TV station NET, interrupting a news broadcast featuring the Prime Minister. They broadcast their own message - "stop watching – everyone to the streets!". The occupation of the town hall of Agios Demetrios comes to an end.

In Thessaloniki, the trial of two police officers who are accused of assaulting Avgoustinos Demetrioiu, a student from Cyprus, on the 17<sup>th</sup> November 2006 draws large crowds to the courthouse followed by clashes with the police (2b43).

## **Day 12: Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> December**

The historic central offices of the GSEE are occupied (2b48). Members of the “General Assembly of Labour in Rebellion” (also abbreviated to GSEE in Greek) issue a communiqué from the offices declaring that the action forms part of a strategy to counteract, “the designs of the union bureaucracy to distance its membership from the current revolt” (Libcom, 2008c). Employees of the GSEE attempt to evict the occupiers in the early afternoon but are pushed back thanks to the support of individuals from the ASOEE occupation (TPTG, 2009: 29). An open assembly is held in the evening attended by more than 800 people. This continues to be one of the most popular assemblies in the city, attracting an average 600 people every afternoon until the end of the occupation (Void Network et al., 2010: 80).

University students hang two giant banners on the Acropolis rock calling for demonstrations on the 18<sup>th</sup> December across Europe (2b47). The occupation of the old Town Hall in Halandri and residents of Kesiarini hold demonstrations that march on the local police stations. The Town Hall of Kesariani is briefly occupied.

A press conference held by the lawyer of Epaminondas Korkoneas in the Pampeloponisiako football stadium in Patras leads to rioting.

In Thessaloniki, in the district of Stavroupoli a supermarket is looted by fifty militants who distribute leaflets condemning the rising costs in living and then hand out the goods in a neighbouring open-air market (Blaumachen, 2009: 51). Rallies and demonstrations called by popular assemblies also continue throughout a number of neighbourhoods. At night, a homemade explosive device, planted outside a branch of Eurobank in the district of Kalamaria damages the building’s facade. A similar device damages the windows of a local Citizens’ Information and Service Center (KEP) nearby (Kathimerini, 2008b) .

In Chania, the local television station is occupied.

The “All Workers Militant Front” (PAME), an initiative of the KKE that unites all “class-struggle orientated” trade unionists, holds rallies in 51 cities and towns across Greece against the Working Time Directive under discussion in the European Parliament. The rally in the capital attracts in the region of 5,000 people (International Section [KKE], 2008). In the evening, Giorgos Paplomatas, a 16-year-old student and member of the youth section of the KKE (KNE), is shot and wounded by an unknown assailant while talking to friends in the Peristeri district of Athens. Giorgos’ father, a prominent official in the Greek Teacher’s Federation (which is affiliated to the KKE), describes the shooting to the press as, “a murder attempt ... by sinister forces” (Kathimerini, 2008c).

### **Day 13: Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> December**

A three-hour work stoppage by air traffic controllers, coinciding with protest action of ADEDY (who had called a 5-hour work stoppage), leads to the cancellation of flights scheduled to land or take off from Athens international Airport. Hospital staff stage a 24-hour strike, the couriers' union calls a one-day strike and the union for bookstores and publishing house workers a 5-hour work stoppage. A large demonstration comprising school students, university students, teachers, striking workers and a number of leftist groups proceeds through central Athens marching to the parliament building where clashes with the police begin (2b54). The fighting quickly escalates and spreads to the adjoining streets where it continues throughout the evening (2b50). Police protect the newly-erected Christmas tree in Syntagma square from a barrage of Molotov cocktails (Associated Press, 2008) (2b49).

The municipal radio of Tripoli ("Nea Tileorasi"), "Politeia FM" in Sparta along with "Star FM" and "Imagine 897 FM" in Thessaloniki are occupied. The Labour Centre in Patras is occupied following the example of the occupation of the headquarters of the GSEE (TPTG, 2009: 32)

Members of the KKE and KNE hold a demo in Peristeri to protest against the shooting of the previous day. A group of art students interrupt a recital in Megaro Mousiki, Athens' concert hall, to distribute leaflets criticising the role of art and artists in relation to the unrest (56a Infoshop, 2009: 32). It is reported that when the protesters began chanting "Cops, Pigs, Murderers!" from the audience the orchestra, as instructed by the director, stopped playing and joined in the chant (Michael, 2008a). In Thessaloniki, the occupied School of Drama holds an alternative concert as well as issuing calls for solidarity with those arrested during the unrest.

### **Day 14: Friday 19<sup>th</sup> December**

"Kydon TV" in Chania is occupied. Individuals from the occupations of the ASOEE and GSEE organise interventions in two call centres in Athens provoking work stoppages (TPTG, 2009: 33). Around thirty masked protesters force their way into the French Institute in Central Athens smashing property and throwing Molotov cocktails at the guard post of the building (2b55). They spray political slogans on the walls including, "Spark in Athens, Fire in Paris, Insurrection is coming" and "France, Greece, Uprising Everywhere" (Labban-Mattei, 2008). The Ministry of Public Works and Environment issues a report stating that over three hundred traffic lights have been destroyed over the past two weeks causing an estimated 300,000 Euros in damages (Kathimerini, 2008d). A demonstration organised by a local anarchist group in the suburb of Egaleo leads to attacks on the local police station and

neighbouring banks. Two marches are held in Pesteri, one organised by the "Athens Co-ordination of Secondary School Students and Parents' Associations" outside the school of the injured student and another organised by the KKE. The GSEE calls a rally in front of the parliament building. However, due to the unions' efforts to distance themselves from the riots and reluctance to call another general strike many boycott the protest and decide instead to attend the solidarity concert held in Propylaia square (Michael, 2008a).

In the evening around one hundred protesters interrupt a premiere at the National Theatre in Athens. They occupy the stage holding a banner reading, "Everyone to the streets. Immediate release of all arrested during the revolt" (TPTG, 2009: 34). The Secondary School Teachers' Union (OLME) reports that around 800 secondary schools are under occupation.

### **Day 15: Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> December**

Many small demonstrations take place around Athens. There are demonstrations in the neighbourhoods of Gyzi, Peristeri, Chaidari, Petralona, Nea Smyrini, Victoria, Vyronas, Illion and also in the cities of Thessaloniki, Heraclion and Larissa. A department store in Agios Panteleimonas is looted by a group of militants. Four radio stations - "Best", "En Lefko", "Athina 9.84" and "Republic 100.3" – are occupied and texts read out against state violence and in solidarity with any arrestees of the riots (Social War in Greece, 2008c).

Fresh sabotage of ticketing machines occurs at the Brahami and Ayios Antonios metro stations. A renewed attack on the Christmas tree in Syntagma square, which students deface by hanging bin liners to the branches, leads to clashes with the police. Throughout the day there are also continuing clashes with the police who attempt to contain individuals from the Polytechnic University who come to protest at the site where Alexis was murdered. Protesters are eventually driven back into the Polytechnic, GSEE and Law School occupations, which stay under siege until the early hours of the morning (Libcom, 2008d). During the evening an office block housing Tiresias SA, a credit checking agency, is targeted by arsonists and destroyed (Dawra, 2008).

In Petralona the local popular assembly occupies the City's Cultural Centre "Melina Merkouri". The Socialist Worker Party (SEK), in co-operation with other leftist groups, organises a rally in the centre of Athens against police attacks on immigrant workers.

Strikes by Olympic Airlines ground crews, who started their action on Wednesday, causing the cancellation of 23 flights over the weekend (Kathimerini, 2008e).

In Thessaloniki, militants occupy the Olympian cinema, the centre for the International Movie Festival of Thessaloniki (2b56). The cinema's cafe is converted into an open meeting space and for the distribution of free drinks. Nearby an open-air charity event involving the Mayor and his deputies is interrupted as protesters pelt them with cake and Christmas cookies. A large open assembly is held in the cinema in the evening.

International solidarity actions are reported in Germany, South Korea, US, Portugal, Netherlands, Finland, Slovakia, Spain, UK, Italy, Denmark, Brazil, Australia, Iceland, Mexico and Luxembourg.

### **Day 16: Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> December**

In the early hours of the morning two banks and a car dealership are firebombed in Iraklion, Crete (Kathimerini, 2008f). A branch of the Pancretan Co-operative bank is destroyed in the ensuing blaze. The occupation of the GSEE offices comes to an end following a march to the National Technical University. The popular assembly of Petralona occupies "Thema FM" broadcasting a declaration denouncing the assassination of Alexis, the police, the capitalist government and for continuing revolt and general strike (Michael, 2008b).

Small demonstrations occur in the neighbourhoods of Kaisariani, Nea Ionia, Vyronas, Nea Symrini, Chaidri and Ilion. Around a hundred drama students interrupt theatre performances around Athens (TPTG, 2009: 36).

In Thessaloniki around 100 people temporarily occupy the church of Taksiarches (Blaumachen, 2009: 54).

A national march of school students, students, teachers and workers is called for December 23<sup>rd</sup>. The general assembly of school children takes the decision to continue occupations of the schools and adopts the slogan, "Christmas is postponed, but not the revolt!" (Michael, 2008b).

Rumours that the authorities intend to evict the occupation of the National Technical University leads to rioting and clashes with the police in the surrounding area.

### **Day 17: Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> December**

The town hall of Peristeri is occupied by around one hundred people (TPTG, 2009: 36) (2b58).



In Thessaloniki, the municipal library of Ano Poli is occupied and turned into a counter-information centre (Blaumachen, 2009: 54).

In Larissa eleven minors are prosecuted for their participation in the riots under article 187a (“forming a criminal organisation” and “participating in a gang”) of the Greek anti-terrorism laws. This is a so far unprecedented practice for those arrested during the riots and provokes protestations from solidarity groups and even the local right-wing press (Athens.indymedia, 2008).

The campaign against the new Christmas tree in Syntagma Square continues as a collective of artists solicit donations of rotten meat from local shopkeepers which they subsequently use to pelt the tree and the police guarding it (Michael, 2008c)

Konstantina Kouneva, a feminist, syndicalist and general secretary of the cleaner’s union (Panattic Union of Cleaners and Domestic Personnel – PEKOP), is attacked while returning from work late in the evening. The attackers use sulphuric acid to burn her face. She is kept in an intensive care ward in a critical condition. According to her union, Konstantina had recently received a series of anonymous threats in relation to workers’ demands for outstanding pay at her employer OIKOMET. She had also been an attendee of the GSEE occupation (Libcom, 2008e).

### **Day 18: Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> December**

At 5:50am shots are fired at a riot police bus in the eastern Athens district of Goudi. Police claim, and forensic experts later confirm, that the shots were fired from the grounds of the National Technical University residence halls. A previously unknown group, *Laiki Drasi* (Popular Action), claims responsibility for the shooting (Flynn, 2008). At the time the rifles are reported to never have been used in any previous terrorist or criminal activity in Greece (Kathimerini, 2008g). However, a later investigation into the shooting of a 21-year old police officer on the 5th January suggests links between this group and the long-standing, domestic terrorist group *Epanastatikos Agonas* (Revolutionary Struggle) (BBC, 2009). The incident allows the police to obtain permission to break the asylum law and search the university.

In Thessaloniki a small demonstration marks the end of the occupation of the municipal library in Ano Poli. Although a few of the occupations and the general assembly’s continue to organise Blaumachen (2009: 55) report a general decline in activism in Thessaloniki from this point on.

A large demonstration, attended by around 3,000-5,000 people, called by the “Co-ordinating Committees of the Occupied Universities and Secondary Schools”, proceeds through central Athens (2b59). There are a few minor clashes with the police. This is followed by a number of open assemblies (TPTG, 2009: 37).

#### **Day 19: Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> December**

In the early hours of the morning a bomb blast damages the offices of the far-right party LAOS in the suburb of Alimos. A group calling itself “Nocturnal Arson Insurrection” claims responsibility (Kathimerini, 2008h)

A prisoner solidarity demonstration is called by the assembly of the occupied GSEE (now vacated), this also marks the end of the occupation of ASOEE. In the city of Volos the municipal radio and the offices of the local newspaper “Thessalia” are also occupied (Occupied London, 2008f).

Those at the Polytechnic University decide to end the occupation at midnight.

#### **Day 20: Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> December**

The car of Deputy Environment and Public Works Minister Stavros Kaloyiannis is torched while parked outside his home in Ioannina (Kathimerini, 2008i). A string of arson attacks against banks and car dealerships in Palaio Faliron cause widespread damage as well as an attack against the Development Ministry in Athen’s city centre.

#### **Day 21: Friday 26<sup>th</sup> December**

A solidarity demonstration takes place outside Evangelismos hospital where Konstantina Kouneva is still being kept in intensive care. During the demonstration a police car is attacked with rocks by protesters (Kathimerini, 2008j).

### **Day 22: Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> December**

The assembly for “Solidarity to Konstantina Kouneva” occupies the headquarters of ISAP, the state-owned Athens Piraeus Electric Company, which had been hiring Konstantina along with hundreds of other cleaners through OIKOMET (Libcom, 2008e).

Open assemblies are also organised to arrange solidarity actions for those arrested over the course of the unrest as well as to protest the decision of Prefect Yiannis Sgourus to keep stores in central Athens open on Sunday (despite the protests of unions) (Kathimerini, 2008k).

### **Day 23: Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> December**

In the early hours of the morning a New Democracy office in the Ano Poli neighbourhood of Thessaloniki is damaged in an arson attack (Kathimerini, 2008l).

Protesters attempt to block the entrances to the larger stores around Syntagma Square, Ermou Street and later in Exarchia. They succeed in shutting a few stores but the large crowds of shopper’s makes it difficult to continue the actions in the more commercial districts (TPTG, 2009: 39).

A march from the headquarters of ISAP to Evangelismos hospital marks the end of the occupation there (Blaumachen, 2009: 40).

### **Day 24: Monday 29<sup>th</sup> December**

A demonstration outside the Israeli embassy in Athens, in response to “Operation Cast Lead” which had commenced two days previously, organised by the local Palestinian community, the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRZIA) and Social Forum leads to clashes with police (Kathimerini, 2008m).

A small demonstration is held at “The Mall Athens”, a shopping centre in Maroussi. A demo organised by the assembly for “Solidarity to Konstantina Kouneva” also marches to the offices of the cleaning company in Piraeus (TPTG, 2009: 40). Cleaners blockade the entrance to the office forcing it to close down. The Feminist Centre of Athens also holds a demonstration outside Evangelismos hospital (Libcom, 2008e)

The offices of the Trade Union Centre in Thessaloniki are occupied in solidarity with Konstantina Kouneva (Void Network et al., 2010: 213) (2b62).

**Day 25: Wednesday 31st December**

Anarchists organise a large demonstration outside the Korydallos prison in Athens demanding the immediate release of all those arrested throughout the period of unrest. At midnight they set off fireworks and flares to welcome in the New Year, in response the inmates set blankets and sheets on fire and wave them through the prison windows (TPTG, 2009: 41).

### Part 3: Making Sense of the “Greek December”

*City that burns, flower that blossoms.*

In December 2008 Greek society was shaken by a revolt. On the evening of the 6<sup>th</sup> December two special guards, Epamonidas Korkoneas and Vasilis Saraliotis, responded to a call to an alleged incident involving youths outside a store in the Athen’s suburb of Exarchia. Minutes later Alexis Grigoropoulos, a 15-year-old school student, was shot dead. What started on that night as a violent, widespread outburst of anti-police and anti-establishment anger – riots, protests, clashes with the police - ended in a social and political crisis the likes of which Greece hadn’t seen for decades. By mid-December a poll had 60% of Greeks describing civil unrest as a ‘popular uprising’ (*Agence France-Presse, 2008*)<sup>114</sup> - clearly events had gone beyond familiar street battles between Greece’s anarchist and anti-authoritarian groups and the police. This was while Europe’s political commentators expressed fears that the spirit of insurrection would spread in the wake of a global recession. With a cautious eye on Greece, President Sarkozy opted to delay University reforms in his own country for fears that existing student protest could escalate into “Greek-style riots” (Joyner, 2008).

It was also of little surprise that the December events took the world of political scholarship by surprise, not least because no political party, leader or reform programme – the standard units of study for traditional political science – was ever claimed by the movement. As Karamichas comments,

The world literally watched as a country long considered to have overcome its troubled past and become a dynamic, modernising partner within the Eurozone (albeit not in such a perfect way as its wealthy partners), was paralysed by ... “the most intense social crisis in the thirty-four years since the democratic transition of Greece” (2009: 289).

Moreover, the events seemed to carry a momentum and express a spontaneity that was clearly far beyond the abilities for one organisation, or even a coalition of political organisations, to organise and direct. As Gourgouris notes,

The profoundly heterogeneous, plural, and multi-sited spontaneity of what we have come to identify as the December 2008 insurrection in Greece is arguably the most

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<sup>114</sup> As opposed to the responsibility of a “militant minority”.

remarkable—and most difficult to theorize—dimension of what happened. It is what defies subsequent attempts by supporters and detractors alike to codify the historical evidence whether according to standard modes of allegedly “objective” social science or the pronouncements of ideological certainty—to my mind, the same thing. (2010: 366)

The Greek December marked not only a sharp break from recent patterns of protest and political dissent in Greece (the student movement, for example, although militant was by-and-large composed with the central objective of halting a particular reform or piece of legislation) but of Europe and North America also.

At the centre, of course, was outrage provoked by the murder of a teenager and the government was quick to condemn “extremist elements” for “exploiting the tragedy” (Karamanlis quoted in China Daily News, 2008). But if the events could be attributed to the country’s hundred or so so-called “known unknowns” – small groups of militant “trouble-makers” as the media often presents them - then why were Greece’s cities still burning a week, two weeks, even three weeks following the murder? In order to understand this there is a need to look beyond televised images of smashed luxury shops, burning cars and banks and arching Molotov cocktails. Doing so reveals the growth of a social and political culture which came to articulate the needs and desires of a great proportion of Greek youth (among others) which came to the streets over this period. It reveals a movement that not only expressed outrage at a murder and disillusionment with an unpopular government but located the causes deeper within the social system; a movement that not only sought to spread an insurrection against capital and State but to build constructive alternatives to it. The origins of this movement can be located in ongoing cultures of struggle and existing anti-capitalist traditions, but also, ultimately, went far beyond them.

A study of the initiatives emerging throughout December reveals a rich, autonomous culture, one that held the seeds of a libertarian, counter-power. This was something, however – as much as it was prefigured in many of the traditions and practices that fed into the unrest – that was ultimately formed through the course of the revolt. It is to this specific topic that this chapter turns. The following section aims to lay out an analysis of this process through the vectors of its development – its composition, character, fluctuations, limitations and legacy. In doing this it is possible to capture the formation, substance and growth of the insurrection in all of its dimensions. In a more general sense this chapter aims to demonstrate the richness of an approach to social movement behaviour that does not seek to pre-judge the content of behaviour and the quality of research that can be generated through an internalised standpoint in relation to the study. I conclude by pointing to a

number of areas that re-affirm this perspective and the implications of my case study in reflecting back upon the theoretical framework and methodology outlined.

### **Understanding the revolt**

The traditional characterisation of escalating political dissent is of an eruption during a period of crisis (for example, Gourevitch, 1986). December was no exception, with rising economic problems, youth unemployment and government corruption all being singled out as contributing factors. As valid as these may have been, however, such a perspective also risks ignoring ongoing formal and informal cultures of resistance, acts of political dissent. Traditional commentators have tended to emphasise the distinct characteristics of Greece's labour market or political institutions that led to the crisis (for example, Bratsis, 2010; Sakellariopoulos, 2010), while even certain native, anarchist insurrectionalist commentators have emphasised both the spontaneous and transcendent qualities of the revolt<sup>115</sup>. The supposed "newness" or exceptionality of events has tended to translate into a belief that such distinctiveness warrants an equally unique explanation (Lountos, 2010). That is just because it was only in December 2008 that our attention was drawn to Greece, does not mean that there were ongoing and less visible processes in need of careful consideration when coming to understand these events. As Lountos argues,

Important events always force people who until then ignored an on-going procedure to turn their eyes on them with the misconception that something new is born. The possible trap for researchers is to take the normality for granted. In that way, one could turn his/her own question: "why did I consider the events not expected?" into a fact "given that the events were not expected, how did they come into being?" (2010: 1)

That is not to say that highlighting underlying structural contexts is not a valid response to framing the December events, certain characteristics of the revolt and, to some degree, lines of causality and effect. On limited terms they are valid. Rather, the issue is when these efforts towards framing patterns of behaviour foreclose discussion of the content of the behaviour itself.

However, a focus on these contextual factors should not serve as cause to overlook the *subjectivity* which is not just an integral part to understanding the conflicts that permeate these contexts but also, more importantly, the *combativity* that extends into periods of political conjuncture, like

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<sup>115</sup> For example, Sagris' (2010) account and particularly the comment that, "The street has its own history. It doesn't need historians; it doesn't need intellectuals or sociologists to speak in its name" (1).

December. A more discerning approach reveals events like December not as a novelty but as escalation of ongoing and recurring episodes.

It would be correct to highlight, for example, that Greece was both the site of a Neo-Liberal offensive and a deep economic crisis in the period leading up to December (Sakellariopoulos, 2010). It likewise needs to be acknowledged that this was also a *global* context in which, as Lountos (2010: 1) observes, Greece wasn't even the most badly hit (hence responses can't be solely attributed to levels of exposure).

A focus on the subjectivities that fed into the December revolt, of the existing political traditions, make it evident that what was unique about the Greek situation, in comparison to other states, was not necessarily the domestic character of Neo-Liberal reform nor the extent of the crisis but a legacy of successful resistance and, as a consequence, a highly politicised, confident and organised minority, particularly amongst the high school students, capable of resisting it. In this respect, it would be perhaps more appropriate to ask not why the December riots happened, but rather, given this culture of resistance, how could we *not* expect an explosion of unrest in response to such a brazen provocation as the murder of a fifteen year old student?

Nonetheless, it would be equally wrong to be led by this to the alternative conclusion that the December revolt is best characterised as a re-enactment of previous struggles. As correct as Lountos is to observe that at the very heart of the December revolt lay a very "tried coalition of students unions, trade unions and organisations of the Left" (2010: 5), seeing only this risks overlooking the ways in which December saw the broadening of this coalition but the way the events transformed, and allowed individuals to go significantly beyond, these traditional roles<sup>116</sup>. In other words, December saw the formation of a, not necessarily new (historically speaking) but certainly distinct within the context, subjectivity. Moments of political crisis allows existing dissident cultures to coalesce into something greater. It wasn't the scale, for example, of the unrest that led to December being widely characterised as a "social revolt"; protests, even riots, regardless of their size, are rarely described in this way. It was the *transgressive* nature of the actions that suggested a more critical political content.

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<sup>116</sup> This is reflective, to some degree, of Lountos' leftist framework.



## Definitional issues

Of course the characterisation of December as a “social revolt” is, in itself, a contestable claim. For those most deeply involved in the movement “revolt”, “rebellion” even “revolution” were commonly used to describe what was happening (2b45, 2b57, 2c3-6, 2c17-22). The question is, of course, the point in which a protest or a riot, both of which arguably exhibit similar characteristics, becomes a “revolt” or even, for that matter, a “social revolt”?

Like much political vocabulary these are all of course heavily contested and loaded terms, underlying which are disputes over both the political content and normative implications of the events. Indeed, it is possible to detect the normative stance adopted by key commentators almost immediately by the term they choose to assign to the events. For example, for the government and the corporate media (domestic and international) “riot” served to place emphasis on the uncontrollability and chaos provoked by the unrest, their existence outside of acceptable repertoires of political protest and, perhaps most importantly, the seeming lack of “reasonable” and civic demands presented by rioters. Perversely a “riot”, despite its connotations, is often a politically disarming characterisation. Riots tend to be perceived as criminal and illegitimate, implying a solution should be delivered by the security forces. Rioters, accordingly, tend not to be principally characterised as raising social or political grievances. For traditional political commentators, and some leftists, terms such as “crisis” and “unrest” underlined their state-centric conception of the problem (for example, Bratsis, 2010). They argued that December had meant a period of discontinuity in the form of both a governance and legitimacy crisis for the government.

Of course, assigning any single narrative to the December events is problematic to a certain degree; at the very least alternative narratives are reflective of real, conflicting interests in the unrest and, accordingly, need to be taken seriously. Indeed, the narrative itself is as much a terrain of social struggle. Creating new social and political contexts is an important dynamic of social transformation, particularly, in relation to popular struggle, building credibility in an agentially centred (i.e. direct action), as opposed to representationalist based, conception of social change. In this sense, the characterisation of December as a “rebellion” denotes more than the stance and actions of those involved but also their *capacities* as social actors.

Although many of these terms – unrest, riots etc. - will be used interchangeably throughout the text, the *content* of the events – the issue that these definitional questions ultimately hinge on – will be characterised in a more developmental way. The perception of the Greek December as a riot, for

example, is manifestly inadequate - given the wealth of evidence suggesting it was far more substantial than this – and was clearly employed as an act of de-legitimisation (or re-legitimisation depending on the perspective). Nonetheless the fact that this characterisation was used as a critical point against the movement is noteworthy. Abstractions, as Bakunin would say, “advance only when borne forward by real men”, when they reflect real situations and perspectives. In this respect I am less interested in quantifying the kind of behaviour that makes a riot/insurrection/revolution and more in the value of the actual practices that constituted the December movement. In terms of these practices it is possible to say that they did present a substantial challenge to the existing social relations and, on this basis, one could ascribe, at the very least, an insurrectionary intent.

Definitional problems, unfortunately, do not end there. Reference to a December “movement” presents a rather glaring issue – what exactly *is* the December movement? While the focus of this research (in the Movement Texts and Visual Chronology) has been on the most militant – and therefore more unique, politically destabilising etc. - aspects of the revolt, this is also not to fail to acknowledge the diverse views, actions, ideas and organisations within the general milieu of protest and political activism that occurred during this period. In respect to this, it is necessary to seek some clarification - within this much broader array of political activity, where are the contours of a “December movement”? Is it fair, for example, to include the KKE, whose activists were routinely on the streets but also openly hostile to anything outside of traditional protest repertoires, within the “movement”? Or, likewise, how to treat the acts of arson, looting and sabotage which, while often carried out by those who also operated openly within the movement, were nonetheless conducted on a clandestine basis?<sup>117</sup> Or even the armed attack on a police vehicle by the group “Revolutionary Struggle”? All of the above, and these are just a few examples, were the source of debate and difference between those on the streets (see, for example, Void Network et al., 2010: 313-317), so to what degree should they be considered representative of a movement-as-a-whole?

These issues indicate a need to address more directly deeper dynamics of collective action; for while I will aim to outline a distinct subjectivity associated with the December revolt, this should be understood as emerging within the context of existing political traditions<sup>118</sup>. Periods of political conjuncture rapidly expand the constituencies through which radical minorities operate and, as such, the character of the movement, expressed through the many texts, symbols, slogans, debates

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<sup>117</sup> An exception would be the Town Hall Occupation of Agios Demetrios which collectively agreed to the sabotage of ticketing machines on public transport.

<sup>118</sup> Something which is hardly surprising given that communities of struggle do not erupt from nowhere but will develop from existing conditions.

and communiqués, will reflect the success of radical minorities, in this case largely the anti-authoritarian, anarchist and extra-parliamentary Left, in popularising their practices and, to some extent, their ideological leadership. Conversely, it is also necessary to embrace the possibility that even those who embraced the tactics advocated by these traditions - direct action, occupation, collective illegality etc. - may have also continued to perceive the events from a more institutional perspective, e.g. those ideas and practices associated with the parliamentary parties and liberal democracy, and subsequently, also acted out more traditional political repertoires<sup>119</sup>. This is something which would have been influenced by a multitude of factors including existing bias and preconceptions, levels of participation and involvement, social and economic status etc. In other words, it is not possible to always infer meaning(s) from action(s).

The flaw in existing accounts of collective action is to seek such a singular, all-encompassing representation. To allow, as was outlined in chapter 1, a view of what a “social movement” is or should be to fill the content, expectations and analysis of a particular movement *a priori*. To understand the true *dynamics* of a movement, however, an approach is required that emphasises process and a shifting content and composition over a period of time; to acknowledge not just a general diversity of ideas, motives and tactics but changing contexts for these. This is not only to acknowledge the conflicts that will occur over different practices and aims – for example, the use of political violence – but that even within groups and initiatives that are ideologically homogenous, as *Ta Paidia Tis Galarias* (2010) note, radical and reformist tendencies often co-exist at the same time. For example, the solidarity movement that emerged in reaction to the attack on Konstantina Kouneva (2c25, 2c27), and out of December initiatives, was characteristic in the fact that it pushed reformist demands (that the perpetrators be brought to justice, that the union’s demands should be fulfilled etc.) and, as a result, forced some concessions out of the cleaning agency where Konstantina worked. This was while the actual acts of solidarity were in line with the tactics associated with the wider movement, e.g. the use of occupation and direct action, and followed aims that ultimately went beyond a traditional trade unionist paradigm. A far richer account can be derived from moving beyond the need to make general and categorical characterisations and instead appreciating the context in which movement formation occurs. The Konstantina Kouneva solidarity initiatives, for example, arose in relation to a pre-existing struggle, one with its own demands and composition. It was also active in a context distinct from that which the majority of the December initiatives were largely not engaged - within the waged workplace addressing the conditions of a specific section of workers.

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<sup>119</sup> One example of which would be the rise in the SYRIZA vote in the elections following December.

Such a perspective is far closer to assuming an internalised perspective of movement praxis - appreciating how contexts, ideas and social content inform the shifting composition, character and potential trajectory of struggle. Even radical political action requires some negotiation of social contexts. Questions concerning movement practice, challenges that ultimately also face all forms of transformative action, will traditionally revolve around the issue of establishing points of generalisation (or ruptures) from dominant social practices. The avenues through which, in other words, political ideas can become solidified and existing practices transformed and be re-defined. In capturing this process it is possible to capture the outline, contours (both internal and external) and the hybridity of a movement.

Consequently, while it may be possible to talk of a “December movement” to the extent to which there was a process of organisational and ideational convergence over this period – first in respect to the murder of Alexis and then later in relation to the questions raised by the December events themselves - this “movement” was also an arena for political contestation between competing political traditions<sup>120</sup>. This process involved the innovation of concrete practices and shared social spaces all of which helped to build and re-affirm a shared sense of identity, with the occupations in particular, acting as a locus of activity for the mass of participants. However this should not serve to overlook the diversity within this. There were also those who went significantly further in their militancy, hoping to extend the logics of these practices and this stratification should be acknowledged.

It is important to capture those unique characteristics to develop out of the December experience. However, this is while appreciating that the practice and composition of this movement also continually altered the context for action (thus, making activity that was seemingly impossible at certain points practical at others and vice versa). In this sense while it is important to have some understanding of the principle coalitions and organisations at the core of the movement, it is equally important to appreciate its *general character* via the composition, popular actions, discourse and *contexts created* by the revolt. In terms of the priorities of a critical researcher accessing the objectives, values and content of the sociability that emerged as part of this constitution is of paramount concern. This is, of course, while not failing to appreciate the equally valid analysis and judgements that movement participants have come to concerning the same questions.

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<sup>120</sup> The character of this convergence is clear both through the movement texts, and the recurring themes and objectives articulated within, as well as the recurrence of certain tactics, e.g. the use of general assembly, occupation of education and municipal buildings, protests and riots.

## **“We are Alexis”: Composition**

A number of activists within the existing anarchist and anti-authoritarian movement were to express their surprise at both the speed and intensity of the reaction to Alexis' shooting. In many cases news relayed through traditional activist networks and information channels occurred after significant rioting and clashes with the police on the street. New communication networks were partly responsible for this, as passers-by were able to spread the word within minutes via internet and mobile phones enabling both swift and widespread mobilisation. The location of the shooting also had a part to play as information was spread by word of mouth amongst patrons of the cafes and bars around Exarchia, an area with a long tradition of protest and political dissent and whose residents harboured a deep resentment to the constant, visible presence of police in their neighbourhoods<sup>121</sup>. Within a couple of hours of the shooting, however, the geographical spread of the riots (with spontaneous attacks on police, police stations and banks occurring in cities and towns throughout Greece) and the intensity of the demonstrations made it clear that events had become far more significant than the more regular clashes between police, leftist groups and the anti-authoritarian/anarchist milieu usually witnessed in central Athens. Demonstrations were reported in twenty-six cities across Greece (including in some of the mainland) while by dawn on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> December 24 police officers were reported injured and 31 shops, 9 banks and 25 vehicles had been either burned or destroyed within central Athens.

Undoubtedly the existence of networks of activists associated with ongoing mobilisations around education reform had a part to play in the speed in which the riots spread. In these first few days it was overwhelmingly the Greek Youth who took to the streets. This continued to be the case throughout December with students (both University and High School) and young workers not only making up a large proportion of those on the streets but often the most combative also.

The riots appeared to be largely spontaneous, erupting across the country within hours of the shooting. The seemingly spontaneous character of these early reactions should not, however, obscure the strong affinities that already existed between many young proletarians through the experience of the anti-war movement, education struggles and many other instances of organised, collective struggle occurring in Greece over the past decade. There were informal mobilisations – organised by friends, neighbours, claiming no membership to any particular group or organisation – but these should be also viewed within the context of the precedents already set by a heavily politicised and militant student movement. Radical minorities within Greek students, formed during the struggles of the previous years, had not only the experience and confidence for confrontation

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<sup>121</sup> And in this respect new technologies should not be held solely responsible.

with the police but the capacity and skills to organise their fellow students. For example, as one participant observed,

All over the country, starting from the morning of 8<sup>th</sup> December, a Monday, they gathered at schools yards just before the bell rang and organised their response. In most cases they staged demonstrations and marches in their neighbourhoods ... for those who stayed in their localities, the town halls or the main squares were the obvious place for the march to go. Unfortunately, for the police, many of their stations happened to be near these main squares. (Lountos, 2010: 2)

The murder of Alexis, a school student himself, was also a potent symbol of a continuing policy of criminalisation of student and youth protest pursued by the government within recent years (2c1, 2c2). Despite the fact that Alexis himself was not particularly politically active nor was he killed during a protest or demonstration (although undoubtedly the fact that he was in Exarchia had a part to play in the nature of the response), it was a culmination, in many ways, of the government's hard-line response a year earlier to youth opposition to its program of Neo-Liberal reforms.

While anarchists and anti-authoritarians may not have been in all cases the first on the streets they were the first to escalate the revolt (Void Network, 2010: 77-8). It was on the night of the Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> December that, following a brief assembly, they made the critical decision to occupy the Polytechnic building in Athens; critical in the sense that this immediately established a shared space for organising responses to the murder. These were actions that were also quickly echoed in Thessaloniki and other Greek cities, capturing spaces which would quickly become focal points for the continuing unrest (2b15, 2b19, 2b45, 2b51, 2b53, 2b58, 2c1, 2c5, 2c6, 2c8, 2c9, 2c13, 2c20, 2c21). As well as the defence of the Polytechnic occupation becoming a principle concern of the movement, this allowed for a permanent space for participants in the revolt to meet and discuss further action, as opposed to the impromptu, temporary communities formed via the "mobs" in the street<sup>122</sup>. The streets around the Polytechnic were, consequently, to see some of the fiercest clashes between police and rioters and most extensive acts of property damage. The Polytechnic, however,

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<sup>122</sup> The cultural value of the *Polytechnio* as a historic centre of political dissent also had strategic importance, particularly in relation to attracting greater numbers of people to the mass assemblies, as two occupiers recalled,

The Polytechnic is a point on the map of social consciousness that is related with the insurrection. That's why not only the first night but all the first week and the days after thousands of people passed through there to fight. Many more than the number of people who stayed in the occupation. We were only a few dozen there, keeping the occupation running, just a few people next to the huge masses who participated in the events. In the assemblies there were some hundreds of people who didn't sleep there, didn't stay in the buildings, and during the nights, in the fighting outside the Polytechnic, there were thousands of people. And of course not only anarchists. (Pavlos and Irina, 2010: 119)

was not alone as a hub for continuing unrest. Acting in a similar way the occupation of education institutions by students would continue to play a critical role as permanent resources for the revolt across the country acting as spaces for dialogue, the formation of strategy and identity; processes that, ultimately, sustain a movement. Over time this was expanded to include town halls, trade union centres, cinemas, libraries and many other public spaces, an indication that the unrest was not only growing but encompassing a much broader social base.

The extra-parliamentary left, the anarchist and anti-authoritarian organisations were notable for their involvement in these escalations<sup>123</sup>. In this respect focus on the riots alone obscures the more substantive actions of the revolt, which, by-and-large, were not occurring on the streets, but in the communities established by these spaces (2b42). The Eutopia group, for example, recount their experiences of the Aghios Dimitrios occupation,

On December 11, the occupation of the Aghios Dimitrios town hall and the subsequent call for an open, popular assembly gave the chance to more than 300 people to discuss what was going on at the time, thus opening a broader public space for discussion and collaboration (it should be noted that there is also a libertarian social centre, which has a decade long history of community activism, active in this specific municipality). In this assembly several opportunities, either in a realistic or on an imaginary level, were presented: the gathering and meeting of many people was possible through the procedure of the assembly held in a town hall occupied by anarchists – these people either participated in street clashes with the police forces or expressed their anger for the murder of Alexandros Grigoropoulos but couldn't be on the streets because of their age – some were just interested in the procedure, or just pretended to be for their own reasons. During the assembly anyone could express his/her opinion (even the vice mayor), but this didn't mean that this procedure ceased to be characterized as a meeting of people who struggle. In these assemblies the social anti-violence, the destruction of banks, state and corporate buildings and the clashes with the police that took place were advocated openly, in public and by name (since we are speaking of a local town hall). There was also sabotage of the ticket machines in the subway as authorized by decision of the popular assembly. For a few days the city council was denied access to the town hall. Before this occupation, nearly all occupations took place in university buildings, where the police cannot easily enter, due to legal reasons. This

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<sup>123</sup> Along with their practical involvement this also reflected the popularisation of the tactics advocated by these groups, as an anarchist from one of Thessaloniki's largest squats commented, "I don't think the anarchist movement spread in December, but its tactics spread" (Little John, 2010).

time the responsibility to opt for a violent eviction was laid in the hands of the city council, which meant that they had to turn against many inhabitants of the region/municipality. Discussions were held among the occupiers and the people who work in the municipality services about the possibility of running the social services, proving that community control and workers control can be combined. Through this experience, anarchist and libertarian practices, as well as the presence of the comrades in this area, were strengthened. (Eutopia, 2009)

Of course Greece had witnessed mass, militant student mobilisations before December; in fact several commentators have noted that many of the slogans, rhetoric, organisational practices (e.g. commitment to non-representation, use of occupation, violent confrontation with the police), even the routes of marches can be identified in the student occupation movement of 2006-7 (Kornetis, 2010; Lountos, 2010). Moreover, the history of these mobilisations had shown that they not only had the power to halt education reform but provoke general, governmental crises, e.g. waves of student occupations through the 1990s. By 2008 the school students had an almost annual tradition of occupations, marches and clashes with the police. The anarchist and anti-authoritarian organisations had, likewise, strong ties with the existing student movement and established a thriving network of squatted and occupied municipal and private buildings. They were also equally renowned for their commitment to symbolic property destruction and militant approach to police provocation on marches and demonstrations (in the form of the Greek “Black Bloc”). In fact, students were already preparing their opposition to the continuing implementation of education reforms in the weeks leading up to the December unrest (Lountos, 2010: 7). Nonetheless, in spite of the instrumental role that the actions of students and, mostly unemployed or precariously employed, youth played during December, it was, in fact, the generalised nature of the unrest, both in its character and its composition, i.e. that both the demographics and the political aims would go far beyond previous youth-led movements, which was to be a defining feature of the revolt<sup>124</sup>.

Traditional marches and demonstrations took place attracting thousands of people. In some cases they followed established domestic patterns of protest, in others they focused around the new centres of the revolt, in the occupied spaces, and in some instances were localised, organised in the neighbourhoods and municipalities of the cities (2b2, 2b7, 2b8, 2b27, 2b32, 2b37, 2b40, 2b54, 2b57,

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<sup>124</sup> Although equally the student movement shouldn't be seen as narrow or exclusive. Part of its success was due precisely to its ability to spread its activity on a general basis through aligning itself with sympathetic sections of workers as well as work within communities via solidarity initiatives.



2c10, 2c11). However, rather than clashes being confined to a militant core at the end of demonstrations, as was traditionally the case, December saw widespread escalations into acts of property damage against symbolic targets (largely banks, police stations and municipal buildings) clashes with police, the erection of barricades and other uses of direct action on a mass scale.

Although popularised in the public mind by students and anarchists these tactics are not completely alien to the workers' movement nor should such militancy be seen as completely unexpected given the stormy period leading up to December. Between 2007-8 Karamanalis' government had faced three general strikes in response to pension reform (with a fourth scheduled to take place on the 10<sup>th</sup> December 2008), wildcat strikes by doctors and nurses in some of Greece's largest hospitals, occupations of factories threatened with foreclosure, costly strikes by dockworkers and air traffic controllers as well as continuous strikes from the teachers' and lecturers' unions. In fact, militant traditions within the education unions, also traditionally close to the student movement, expressed themselves early in the revolt with strikes called by the teachers' and lecturers' unions directly in protest of the murder<sup>125</sup>.

Nonetheless, the murder of Alexis provided a renewed focal point for the generalisation of existing opposition to the government. To many workers not only was the murder indicative of a state, within the backdrop of a country with already widespread clientelism and corruption, that had been shown to be particularly corrupt and unaccountable – accentuated by scandals surrounding the forest fires of 2007 and the more recent Vatopedi affair - but the severity of the crime was a wider testament to the means it was willing to employ to silence continuing resistance to its attacks on working class living conditions<sup>126</sup>. That's not to say that there were some protests that focused solely on the police's use of deadly violence (the pacifistic sit-down protests in front of the parliament, for example, which received disproportionate coverage from the international media considering how small and of little importance it was to the bulk of December initiatives; BBC, 2008; Reuters, 2008), rather there also emerged within and alongside this a more generalised understanding of the murder of Alexis as indicative of wider and deeper social problems (as one poster proclaimed, "the cup runs over", see 2b29). This was also of course alongside, as in many instances of social unrest,

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<sup>125</sup> The University rectors attempted to use the POSDEP strike as a pre-text to keep university buildings closed during the first few days of December in the hope that this would halt the spread of student assemblies. This was ultimately unsuccessful as the revolt proved as intense two days after the shooting and many mass assemblies and occupation of colleges simply occurred later in the week following the end of the strike (see Lountos, 2010).

<sup>126</sup> In this we see that the popular slogans "we are Alexis" and "these days are for Alexis" extend far deeper than expressions of solidarity.

moderating elements which sought to mainstream and, ultimately limit, the movement. Schwarz, for example, comments that;

In the Left's history of December, the revolt was only about anger over a police shooting, and the desperation of youth whose future was threatened by an economic crisis. The history of the struggle and the depth of its negation are censored. Its refusal to make demands is wilfully misinterpreted as a lack of political analysis. The violence was its ugly side, but it also had a positive side, praised by many parts of the far Left, especially SYRIZA. These include the creation of parks, the peaceful protests, actions and occupations by artists, even the foundation of new social centres. This politically correct version of December attempts to erase the centrality of the Polytechnic occupation and everything it symbolises: the continuation of the civil war despite the transition to democracy uncompromising rebellion against the entire system, constant struggle against the police and the total destruction of corporate stores, the mixing of youth and adults, immigrants and Greeks, anarchists and non-political people. If there were good insurgents and bad insurgents, those described by this symbol, whether they were at the Polytechnic or anywhere else, were undeniably the bad insurgents, and that is precisely why for me they constitute the most important element of the revolt, because they are the only element the State finds indigestible. (Schwarz, 2010b: 356)

It should also be clear, however, that although many who joined the protests and demonstrations marched behind leftist and trade union banners, the breadth of the revolt owed more to its ability to break away, and sometimes actively organise against, these traditional working class representatives. The trade unions, after all, have been historically dominated by both PASOK and the KKE, both of which held a hostile analysis towards the unrest and were particularly dismissive towards the involvement of young proletarians. While many unions may have adopted the rhetoric of the wider movement e.g. some unions marched behind the slogan "down with the government of murderers", by-and-large both unions and the parliamentary Left played out their institutional role as a mediator within the terms set by capital and the state<sup>127</sup>. Strike action was symbolic (or designed to facilitate traditional protest), was relatively tame compared to the level of creative resistance organised on the street and displayed a clear lack of any will to escalate opposition to the government beyond that which union leaders could reasonably control. In fact, both the leaders of

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<sup>127</sup> A slightly different case would be made for SYRIZA whose relationship to the revolt was more sympathetic but whose goals were nonetheless opposed to the revolutionary aims of the movement.

the ADEDY and GSEE as well as the KKE-controlled unions partially heeded the government's call for "national responsibility" ensuring that the strike demonstration on the 10<sup>th</sup> December – an event which would have spread thousands of workers across Athens bringing them into direct contact with the resistance on the streets - was replaced with a more modest "static gathering" at Syntagma Square. In this respect, it was the general assemblies, and not the traditional structures of working class "representation", that were the true heart of the movement. It is through these forums, organised on the basis of community, neighbourhood or municipality that we see the basis for the inclusion of a great number of proletarians, allowing spaces for dialogue and the growth of the movement in ways that would have been otherwise mediated by representatives or, in some cases, simply not been possible<sup>128</sup>.

Aside from the students, and having a greater level of participation than organised labour, the second largest group in terms of principle involvement in the December revolt was that of migrants (2c24). "Migrant" is, of course, a rather broad demographic and, on this basis, it is necessary to make the distinction between more "integrated" second generation migrants, largely of Albanian origin, who participated in large numbers and more precarious refugees, largely of African and Middle-Eastern origin, who were less present (2c14). For second generation migrants their involvement was largely catalysed through the existing student, extra-parliamentary Left, anarchist and anti-authoritarian movements<sup>129</sup>. December was an opportunity to also voice the fact that the violent, arbitrary treatment afforded to Alexis was a daily reality for many young migrants living in Greece. Moreover, the primacy the movement gave to the experience of precarity, as both indicative of universal proletarian experiences – alienation, powerlessness, commodification – but also as an evolving *identity* of the rioters, had resonance with the common experience of, even second-generation, migrants dependent on temporary work permits, casual or illegal work and the whims of state bureaucrats and border officials. That is not to say, as *Ta Paidia Tis Galarias* (2009) comment, that, "the precarious condition of a university student" can be "identified with that of an immigrant", but rather that their "*common origin*, i.e. the domination of capitalist forms, became a visible target of their [combined] attack (my emphasis)".

Refugees, although often participating in smaller numbers, had comparable motivations for joining the struggle. In port-towns like Patras Afghani refugees joined those on the streets while Athens saw

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<sup>128</sup> The advancement of the movement was expressed most clearly by the occupation of the GSEE HQ in Athens, and later other trade union centres across the country, aimed at exposing the inadequacies of the trade union apparatus and its ultimate incompatibility with autonomous, proletarian action.

<sup>129</sup> The "Haunt of the Albanian Migrants" commented that student demonstrations acted as a "steam engine" for the wider mobilisation (2c14).

Roma (another marginalised and heavily discriminated against ethnic group) stage their own demonstration against a police station. In many cases these communities, although often not formally organised and forced to live a marginal, extra-legal existence, had already displayed a degree of combativity in the face of racist, and frequently violent, treatment by police. In fact the day of Alexis' murder (Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> December) had already seen an hour long riot in central Athens by migrants waiting to submit their asylum applications at the Aliens Bureau. They were provoked by the news of a migrant's injury in a close spot to where a refugee, Montasser Mohammed Ashraf, had been killed two months earlier as a result, eye-witnesses allege, of clashes with police outside the same government building. That killing had also mobilised solidarity demonstrations involving thousands of people<sup>130</sup>. A similar incident had occurred in Thessaloniki during August of the previous year when African migrants openly clashed with police following the death of a Nigerian man while fleeing the police.

Finally, *Ta Paidia Tis Galarias* (2009) also observe the presence of other "lumpen" elements in the early days of the riots stemming from Greece's poorer, inner-city neighbourhoods – drug addicts, prostitutes etc. It is also worth noting that many of the students and young workers were also Ultras for local teams. Football clubs like PAOK, AEK and some smaller teams have a distinct, anti-authoritarian and anti-fascist following amongst some Ultras<sup>131</sup>. Fans have their own network of squats and "haunts", extensive graffiti and fly posting campaigns, adopt a "no platform" stance towards racist and fascist fans and even been involved in anti-government demonstrations (see Garganas, 2006).

While the point of unification of the movement was largely in the form of mobilising responses to the murder of Alexis, through studying the demographics of the movement it is possible to identify characteristics that suggest generalisation was more about accentuating and expanding existing grievances than the emergence of a new platform of social struggle (see, for example, 2c24 on the question of for how many participants it was their "first time" and the re-use of existing tactics, also 2c10 and 2c20 on the revolt being "prepared" in the preceding period). As *Ta Paidia Tis Galarias* (2009) explain, it was those who felt a greater closeness and sympathy with Alexis' fate, either by

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<sup>130</sup> Of course the fact that the killing of a migrant did not provoke comparable levels of outrage as a native Greek does deserve some consideration.

<sup>131</sup> Ultras are sports fans renowned for their fanaticism and elaborate displays. They are often identifiable by the many flares they set off during games. Ultras are distinct from hooligan firms in that they, while often still adopting a strong anti-police mentality, do not prioritise fighting fans of other teams and, therefore, are far more open about their support. Ultras have often led movements against the commercialization of sports.

shared or comparable experience, that were most likely to be involved (and also more pre-disposed to the prospects of generalising and expanding the struggle once mobilised);

In general, it was precisely those segments of the class that have been experiencing directly the violence of the state surveillance and the deterioration of the work conditions that were more active in the rebellion. On the other hand, many older workers that had just started experiencing the so-called “financial crisis” (lay-offs, wage reduction etc) were very sympathetic towards the burning down of banks and state buildings, but were mostly passive.

Consequently while the murder of Alexis was a recurring focal point for actions and initiatives, what the murder symbolised – in terms of the social and political conditions associated with state repression – also continued to act as a point of reference (2c11).

There were also distinct characteristics in the communities that these individuals came from that not only established common grounds for co-operation between them but put them in a position favourable to forwarding autonomous struggle. For example, *Ta Paidia Tis Galarias* (2010), also made the later observation (from which it is useful to quote at length);

We should lay a special emphasis on those cultures of resistance –outcomes of older struggles– whose response to the murder of the kid was prompt. For example, the people who responded immediately on the night of December 6th were basically politicized proletarians (anarchists, antiauthoritarians, leftists) ...Thereafter, as more subjects participated in the movement, such as students, football hooligans or immigrants, the initial activities got expanded and soon riots were transformed into a rebellion. These subjects were also involved in communities, groups or gangs, that is organization forms that were of decisive importance for two reasons: they don't favour representation (which is another reason for the lack of demands) and they contributed to the unpredictable character of the rebellion. So, a “world” of direct and inter-personal relations preexisted. These community relations had created a multiform culture of resistance through the years (whether in the form of the political activism of the antiauthoritarian milieu, with occupations, haunts and constant clashes with cops around Exarchia neighborhood, or in the form of antifascist and anti-cop ideology and practice of football hooligans, or in the form of a “tradition” of high-school and university occupations, or in the form of everyday communal life). (*Ta Paidia Tis Galarias*, 2010: 28)

One could also make comparable observations on the structure of social media networks and the subsequent communicative practices that emerged through the movement. The experience of December created a shared opportunity for putting these experiences in dialogue and developing a unified political practice in the form of the growth of a movement (2c18). Of course, while these traditions played a crucial role in laying the ground for the rebellion, they were also (as TPTG also acknowledge) transformed by it. As stated earlier, December cannot be simply ascribed with the characteristics of prior struggles but it is necessary to identify how these individual subjectivities coalesced into something distinct and new.

### **“Flower that blossoms, city that burns”: Character**

The “absence of demands” is frequently cited as a unique characteristic of the December unrest, as both strength and a weakness of the revolt – an indication of both the uncompromising, radical content of the actions or, conversely, of the ultimately antisocial, perhaps even nihilistic outlook of the principle actors<sup>132</sup>. Either judgement understandably invites contestations concerning the appropriate narrative and purpose of the events. What is often overlooked in this, however, is to identify *why*, from either perspective, this is considered to be something distinct? Why does “demand-less” dissent fail to marry to existing expectations? A revolt (and this appears to be how the unrest was popularly perceived by the population at least), after all, runs counter to the spirit of demanding which typically appeals to, and therefore sanctions, an authority. A revolt does not express itself on the terrain of “demands” but intends to challenge the very structures by which “demands” are delivered. That is not to say that it has no positive content or that it doesn’t demand, i.e. strives to achieve, but rather a revolt, by its nature is a transgressive action challenging the basis and legitimacy of existing political power.

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<sup>132</sup> This does open up an interesting line of enquiry in terms of how to judge the “success” of the December unrest. In respect to the terms outlined by many of the initiatives, which were explicitly revolutionary, December was ultimately unsuccessful. Nonetheless there is a more complex picture here also of which multiple judgements could be drawn. In terms of immediate changes, for example, one could cite the arrest and prosecution of Epaminondas Korkoneas (under public pressure) or the gains won in relation to the cleaners union. There’s also a much broader picture in terms of Greece as an “episode” of social struggle and the way this will serve to build confidence, experience and a militant attitude amongst participants (just as struggles in education had done previously). This final point is especially important to consider given the distinction between anarchist and traditional qualifications of success in politics, the latter being almost synonymous with the capture or influence of state power. Anarchist action is social revolutionary and, in the final instance, does mean confrontation with the state. Nonetheless, anarchists will also generally speak of a long-term process of building autonomous cultures of resistance, the seeds of which are laid in moments of social struggle. In this respect much more sensitive criteria need to be outlined for a “successful” movement in regard to the kind of legacies and traditions it engenders even if it fails to achieve its immediate goals.

Of course, it could be argued that many traditional commentators (for example, Karamichas, 2009; Economides et al., 2009; Bratsis, 2010) did not understand December as a “revolt” and, subsequently, were drawing on more established understandings of the conditions that give rise to protest and riots<sup>133</sup>. Likewise one could point to the state-centric bias of much political literature, and media commentary, which will have imposed traditional frames on movement behaviour and focused primarily on existing centres of power. There is truth in these. However, a better more encompassing explanation can also be found in appreciating the wider political context in which the December events took place and, particularly, the extent to which the Greek December not only marks a sharp break from recent patterns of protest and political dissent in Greece (the student movement, for example, although militant was by-and-large composed with the central objective of halting a particular reform or piece of legislation) but of Europe and North America also.

Arguably over the last two decades mass movements in these areas have largely been defined by either the specific conditions from which they arose, e.g. the anti-Iraq war movement, the anti-CPE movement in France, or, mobilised on the pretext of open, all-encompassing platforms, such as “people power” or “direct democracy”, designed to facilitate at least a degree of co-operation between broad coalitions encompassing anything from anti-capitalists and Black Bloc anarchists to trade unions and reformist NGOs (of which the anti-WTO protests in Seattle were a principle point of reference) (see, for example, People’s Global Action, 2001). The latter, widely understood in the literature as the “anti-globalisation” movement, has been the principle concern of “social movement” scholarship for the present period (Cox and Nilsen, 2007; Bevington and Dixon, 2005; della Porta, 2007, della Porta and Tarrow, 2005; Hamel et al., 2001)<sup>134</sup>. Conversely what was unique about December was that the ideas expressed by the movement were not only generalised and radical, marking a break from both specific and reformist rhetoric, but articulated in *immediate* terms<sup>135</sup>. The commitment to unmediated, direct action was expressed from the outset as a core impulse of the revolt. This is something that had always been present within previous movements, either as the propagandistic praxis of minorities, as tactical and strategic decisions by activists or,

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<sup>133</sup> Bratsis (2010), for example, identified a principle cause in a legitimacy crisis provoked by corruption and clientelism within political elites, Karamichas (2009) emphasised the legacy of youth protest and the Athens Polytechnic in particular while, the responses of Economides et al. were overviewed in the introductory chapter. All understood the December events as a period of disjuncture from the political status quo, but none went so far as to suggest substantive social and political challenges contained within the revolt itself.

<sup>134</sup> Although commentators also frequently misunderstood the *strategic* choices of anti-summit protesters, e.g. to organise on a broad, open platform, the use of non-violent tactics, consensus-decision making etc. for paradigm shifts in the nature and form of contemporary political dissent.

<sup>135</sup> Not strictly “the absence of demands” (there were a number of demands articulated by certain sections of the movement in relation to different struggles, e.g. the K. Kouneva solidarity movement).

occasionally, as final points of rupture between reformist and revolutionary elements, but rarely expressed – in the contemporary context at least - as the fundamental *character* of a popular movement. Moreover, despite its common appearances, this could not be characterised in the same way as, for example, earlier equally widespread civil unrest in France (2005). Both were fuelled by youth unemployment, social alienation, institutionalised racism and police violence (2c1, 2c4, 2c6, 2c14; for a comparative view on French riots see prol-position, 2006). However, while rioting in the former was a reaction to a lack of inclusion, to institutions that had systematically shut out certain sections of its population from channels of representation and opportunity, and in this sense an “absence of demands” truly did mean an absence of clear political content, rioting in December was structured by political commitments raised by the movement itself. Principally this was in the form of a new terrain established by the eruption of a “community of insurrection” and the desire to build on this generalisation of outrage and anger in response to the murder with a movement capable of challenging the power of capital and the state (2c24). Many of these commitments were prefigured in the traditions that fed into the December unrest, arising “out of a specific culture and history of struggle” (Schwarz, 2010b: 352), but they’d never been expressed in this way before<sup>136</sup>.

It was this, as Davis (2010) argues, that was truly “scandalous” not the “Molotov cocktails or broken shop windows”. No popular, legislative demands emerged in response to the murder, i.e. that the policeman be “brought to justice”, likewise with an increasingly unpopular government there was a surprising absence, with the exception of the existing parliamentary parties, of calls for the government to “step down” or for an early election<sup>137</sup>. In spite of the attempts of SYRIZA to position itself as such, a position it was ultimately ill-suited for, no recuperating force emerged in the wake of December. Certainly it would transform the future political landscape, but nonetheless no institutionalised party, group or reform programme could credibly claim the legacy of the revolt, nor would it want to.

Considering this, it might be easy to claim that December somehow inaugurates a “new” form or logic of protest (see, for example, Escobar, 2004; Juris, 2005). Such a claim is also bolstered by the clear influence, in discourse and repertoires, December had on subsequent anti-austerity

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<sup>136</sup> And in this respect the traditional idea of a “tinderbox” effect – an event providing both a focal point and provocation for widespread unrest – may not be far off the mark; the murder of Alexis, and immediate responses to the murder, provided grounds for a mass movement that would have been harder to manufacture in respect to other existing grievances.

<sup>137</sup> This was despite the fact that the government was actively promoting such a response given that it would allow it to present the murder as the actions of a “criminal” officer, rather, as was the growing, popular perception, indicative of not only the police force but the government’s actions in general.



movements throughout Europe<sup>138</sup>. This would be to fall into the error of reading history backwards. Patterns of political dissent akin to December can be traced long before, and, undoubtedly will find new and different expressions in the future<sup>139</sup>. Indeed the movement itself had no illusions that it was doing something new or innovative, militant minorities in particular located their ideology and practices in a long, historic tradition of social struggle. In light of this a more credible observation to make is that, in the context, it can act as a new reference point, one, that is looking to be increasingly useful in a time of escalating resistance to austerity across Europe. Commentators like Davis have even argued that the December rebellion, and its international legacy, may rival “May ‘68” in (re)capturing the imagination of the European Left, although with a markedly distinct character from those events<sup>140</sup>. As a slogan repeated on the walls of Athens proclaimed, “Fuck May 68! Fight now!” (2b60)<sup>141</sup>.

Many in the media and even some academic commentators (Bratsis, 2010 for example), decried these more unique characteristics - a commitment to non-representation, the absence of demands, an explicit rejection of incorporation into the political establishment - as a seminal weakness. They argued that lawlessness, riots and acts of vandalism ultimately betrayed a lack of political imagination on the part of the revolt; a view that was reinforced by internationally televised images of apparently leaderless youth rampaging through Greece’s urban centres.

Many of the incidents of rioting, property destruction and looting were born of emotive reactions to the murder, of, as many participants stated at the time, a sense of outrage and despair. These would have felt more pronounced, and subsequently had a political dimension, given the wider backdrop of growing disillusionment with the government, but they were largely reactive impulses nonetheless<sup>142</sup>. There was, however, also a *conscious* militancy that accentuated and gave meaning

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<sup>138</sup> It may be possible to draw equally credible links to the “Arab Spring”, particularly the use of social media as a mobilising tool, commitments to non-representation and occupation as a primary tool of political dissent. A number of contemporary UK anti-austerity texts have also made reference to the “Greek Winter”, for example, in a recent interview with a student activist involved in the Millbank occupation they recall making the comment, “perhaps we should learn Greek” at an NUS conference (Freedom, 2011).

<sup>139</sup> There are ultimately only a limited number of forms of working class organisation.

<sup>140</sup> He comments,

It recalls not so much the student left of the 1960s as the intransigent revolts of underclass anarchism in Montmartre in the 1890s or Barcelona’s “Barrio Chino” during the early 1930s. (Davis, 2010)

<sup>141</sup> Although it should be acknowledged that this was a slogan that existed in international anti-capitalist circles before December (the fact that it was one of the few repeatedly written in English is telling in this respect), largely to express disillusionment in both the cultural appropriation of the May events and opposition to its use as a yardstick by which all subsequent acts of youth rebellion were judged.

<sup>142</sup> This is not, necessarily, to relegate emotions to a secondary status in relation to transformative ideology and actions. Feelings of hope and progress can be far more powerful in motivating individuals, and play an equally important role in the

to these popular sentiments (2c10, 2c11 particularly the comment, “it should be evident to all by now that this uprising is not merely an honorary response to the death of Alexandros”, 2c24). This was both in terms of the presence of politicised youth but also in terms of the politicisation of the events themselves through the expansion of the riots into social spheres – such as the social centres, occupations and other places participants chose to meet and discuss the mobilisations. This was a militancy not only framed by a growing legitimacy crisis - why ask a government to deliver “demands” when the issue is with the government itself? – but, more importantly, based on a principle of radical refusal to the demands of capital. This position was informed by the ideological influence of militants within the movement – anti-representational traditions within the student movement, autonomists, anarchists and anti-authoritarians - but also the shared experience of precarity and the perception of a future “looted” (see, for example, 2c24 on the influence of anarchist ideas and tactics along with recent youth struggles). The absence, in other words, of any illusions in the progressive role existing political and economic institutions could play.

It was in both the government and the media’s interest to portray this in a negative way. Accepting this assessment, however, not only misses the “positive” content of this position – that in refusing the demands of capital is also to open “space” for the constitution of an autonomous subject – but also the many experiments in collective appropriation and self-organisation that were practised, e.g. the town hall and municipal occupations, popular assemblies, collective living etc. That is not to say that media accusations of “nihilism” were completely baseless (for example, Kalyvas, 2008). It would be fair to say, to some extent, that there was a “nihilistic” fervour in some of the more grand acts of collective illegality; a particularly joy exercised in the rupture with bourgeois codes of civility (the burning down of the Christmas tree in Syntagma Square being a particularly emblematic example of this spirit)<sup>143</sup>. It would also be equally fair to point to resurrections of spectacular acts of anti-police violence which had existed long before December which were informed by their own particularistic

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constitution of movements, to take action than even the best articulated and calculated arguments. Rather, what I point to here is points of ideological *principle* that promoted the expression of these feelings towards a specific goal.

In addition, it should be considered that, on a more structural level, feelings of “rage” and “despair” are ultimately informed by the experience of relative powerlessness in relation to the instruments of capital. In this sense they will always have some form of social content even if those who experience them do not locate their principle cause within these systems.

<sup>143</sup> An insurrectionalist anarchist group recalls the following,

There were also many funny incidents in December. Perhaps the funniest was on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December. We jacked a fire engine and were driving it around. We got on the CB radio and radioed to the dispatcher, we were saying, “tonight you motherfuckers we will burn you all!” At the time the journalists had been saying hysterically that the anarchists were burning everything to the ground and the fire department couldn’t stop the fires ... At the same time that all this happened, the big Christmas tree in front of Parliament was in flames. Journalists were shouting on all the channels that 300 anarchists broke through the line of riot cops and are going behind the Parliament to burn down the house of the Prime Minister, and this was true. (Transgressio Legis, 2010: 163-4)

logics, for example, those that which traditionally happened around the 17<sup>th</sup> November commemorations.

Nonetheless, even ignoring the practice of the mass assemblies, occupations and other more constructive acts property destruction should not be dismissed so readily as a legitimate articulation of political interests. It can be a substantive political act in its own right, particularly in cases where acts of collective illegality take on a mass, popular character (as in December). Moreover it has the potential to go beyond being used as a tool of standard protest repertoires - for example, a way of attracting media attention or as a means to cause economic damage to a particular institution via the property they own. It can equally be an affirmation of values. In the case of December these were the values of a community in struggle.

Property damage, vandalism and sabotage has always played a part in social struggles, both in purely economic terms as a means to seek leverage against elites, but also, to anti-capitalists in particular, as symbolic acts against "basic organisational principle of our societies: that of private property and its sacredness" (Papadimitropoulos, 2010: 68). To commit property damage, in other words, is considered an act of political dissent in itself, via the violation of essential constructs of bourgeois sociability, namely, the inviolability of private property rights<sup>144</sup>. In this sense it can be perceived as a process of symbolic correction to the faulty relationship of labour to the products of its labour; A re-affirming of human agency by destroying (or expropriating) the objects of a world, as Marx would describe it, where objects dominate social life<sup>145</sup>.

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<sup>144</sup> Or, in the case of looting, to enter a "market" that by-passes the obfuscation of exchange-values to one based purely on use-values. A Louis Vuitton bag, when snatched through a broken shop window, is ultimately just a bag. Of course this also raises question of the potential situation of individuals who intend to profiteer from looting (by selling looted products on), an issue which is addressed by Blaumachen in its debate with Internationalist Perspective; see Blaumachen, 2011. For this reason there was hostility towards the practice of any form of looting within certain sections of the movement, for example,

I don't want to give a bad impression, but it's okay to admit this because it was our decision to mix with everyone in the insurrection, and out of all these people who came together there were many who carried within them the culture of the enemy. So there were people who came to steal mobile phones and computers to sell for money. I don't have a problem with this but when it happens in an insurrection it doesn't advance the struggle. So that's why we put an end to this phenomenon after the second or third day, because some people were coming only to steal things. After that, any time somebody wanted to enter the gates of the campus with looted items - there were people carrying boxes of stolen goods, computers and other things - we didn't allow them in unless they gave us the objects to throw in the fire. We told them, "You have to choose: you or your computer." (Pavlos and Irina, 2010: 128)

<sup>145</sup> As was stated in an email sent to the occupied ASOEE,

Why do we burn? Why do we destroy?  
Because we are commodities...  
And we don't like it at all. (*The Potentiality of Storming Heaven*, 2009)

In regard to December, it is possible to detect the influence of the anarchist and anti-authoritarian groups in particular in injecting these ideas into movement discourse, especially considering that this was an analysis which was already both propagandised and practised by many of them already<sup>146</sup>. As Papadimitropoulos (2010) notes,

it is this perception of commodities as falsifying elements of human interaction that provides legitimisation to the acts of destroying commodities (and the shops which sell them) and allows individuals to imagine looting as an act by which products are being taken by those who "really" own them. (Papadimitropoulos, 2010: 69)

Moreover, the fact that this was also part of a broader, direct action repertoire not only showed the influence of these groups but other traditions that valued immediacy and prefigurative practices in the attainment of political goals, e.g the students.

Property destruction likewise aims to communicate certain ethical commitments, largely in terms of the value-systems that structure the provision of social goods - on the basis of the social needs they can fulfil, as opposed to their exchange-value<sup>147</sup>. Of course, attributing value in this way also reveals that many products have little to no value other than as spectacular commodities. Hence, as was commonly reiterated the revolt, the perspective that the damage caused by the riots was relatively minor when compared to the human damage reaped by long hours, poverty wages, work accidents, and, particularly in the case of December, the security mechanisms, i.e. police brutality, used to maintain a commodity society<sup>148</sup>. It is also possible to point to ways, albeit often the responsibility of minorities, in which this was employed in a more strategic fashion than simply the vandalism of luxury shops, banks and police stations, for example, in the sabotage of ticketing machines and surveillance equipment at metro stations, which allowed passengers to travel for free for the day, or by the redistribution of food stolen from supermarkets.

Whether the movement, or to be more specific the anarchist and anti-authoritarian currents within the movement, were successful in communicating the differentiated content between performative

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<sup>146</sup> For example, supermarket expropriations (where small groups of militants would steal carts of food and then re-distribute it for free in open markets) had been happening more regularly in the year leading up to December (see Nikos, 2010)

<sup>147</sup> As two anarchists from the Polytechnic occupation commented,

It was important because having this tool, this ability to feed ourselves, affected our living conditions. But it was also like a womb of the world that we want to create inside the insurrection. (Pavlos and Irina, 2010: 128)

<sup>148</sup> Most clearly expressed by the *Open call to join the popular assembly organised by the liberated town hall of Agios Dimitrios* (see "Movement Texts").

acts of property destruction and more traditional repertoires of civil disobedience is a slightly more complex issue (particularly the extent to which this meaning was transferred to society-at-large)<sup>149</sup>. In a broader sense it relates to the success of radical narratives in defining the events and the values they embodied (made all the more contentious by the way political violence was deployed by the state as a central justification for widespread repression). In the case of the Greek anarchist movement in particular, renowned especially for the continuing influence of illegalism and expropriative anarchism, one could point to existing criticisms that past actions of this type often lacked a social dimension, e.g. they failed to generalise beyond themselves, and, could become self-referential and elitist. Ironically, during the December unrest the scale of the social upheaval made more clandestine acts of property destruction, such as the small-scale use of incendiary devices against shops and offices, actions that would normally result in media frenzy, far less pronounced in the public eye. They were also largely disconnected from sections of the movement through which the majority were active, i.e. the assemblies and occupied spaces. The practice of political violence by “urban guerrilla” vanguards is not an original development for the Greek left (as the legacy of the N17 attests). Neither is it a practice restricted exclusively to Marxist groups. Anarchists engaged in these types of actions tend to not see them in the same terms as Marxists, rejecting the notion of a leadership role. Nonetheless, the practice of groups such as “The Conspiracy of Fire Cells”, who were actually active before December but are nonetheless widely identified as a product of the revolt, showed how these performative acts of property destruction could be applied with a particularly militaristic logic and equally used to justify extremely individualistic and anti-social political goals<sup>150</sup>.

A careful distinction needs to be made, therefore, between a popular rejection of bourgeois moral and social codes, namely those pertaining to the inviolability of private property rights and the monopoly of the state’s agents as the sole legitimate executor of violence, and the propagandistic acts already carried out by smaller, militant groups (like those who planted incendiary devices outside of party offices). In terms of the more popular practices throughout December, it was clear

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<sup>149</sup> As is mentioned in 2c24 part of the problem in gauging this is that “public opinion” is often manufactured via sources that seek to limit or otherwise subvert this transference of meaning, i.e. via TV coverage or corporate media commentary. Consequently, as is also stated in the interview, counter-information was a central concern for December initiatives, as well as building more effective channels of communication. As it stands no systematic survey was carried out of general attitudes towards property destruction in the December riots. In the absence of that it is possible to refer more generally to accounts by participants on the general sentiment for anarchist tactics and repertoires amongst at least certain sections of the population (particularly militant youth) which suggests that there was some generalisation of ideas (again see 2c24) but with clear limitations (some internal limitations but also in the form of the constraints placed on any dissident, particularly illegal, political practice).

<sup>150</sup> The Conspiracy of Fire Cells” identify themselves as “individualist anarchist”, distinct from the existing social and insurrectional currents established within the country. It describes its tactics as “revolutionary militarism” and openly embraces the labels “nihilist” and “terrorist”. It has conducted a campaign of arsons, bombings via improvised explosive devices and parcel bombs since January 2007. Its identification as an “anarchist” group is controversial, especially given its rejection of communitarian goals and a class-based analysis.

that for the most part the use of property destruction did have this symbolic/performative dimension, specifically in the targeting of businesses and buildings that were considered to be representative of consumerist values – banks, luxury shops, malls etc. On a smaller scale we also see the rejection of proprietarian values (e.g. burning looted goods as opposed to keeping them for personal gain), sabotage (the vandalism of ticketing machines, sabotage of credit agency, security and surveillance equipment) and the expropriation of private (or state-owned) space into collective and open forums. What was truly distinct about these practices, however, was the expanded social base they rested on. Their place, in short, in the progression and development of a growing movement, and therefore as a means of expressing the values of that movement (values that were simultaneously in antagonism to bourgeois social values), along with its deployment during a time of escalating political crisis, gave them a much more profound social content. The political result of which was to throw into crisis certain monopolies of state-power – the monopoly over legitimate violence, something which was expressed in the government’s inability to guarantee “law and order”, particularly in relation to the aggressive tactics adopted against its principles agents (i.e. the police), but also, more importantly, the monopoly over decision, the absence of any “resolution” presented by the movement that could be arbitrated by the state<sup>151</sup>.

The intersection of this with the normative positions of existing militant traditions warrants a more careful study of their relationship to the revolt and the way this subsequently informed its character. Was it the case, for example, in the Gramscian sense, of anarchists and anti-authoritarians fomenting a form of counter-hegemonic movement? It is, after all, widely acknowledged that these existing militant traditions not only provided sets of repertoires, for example, the legacy of “the known unknowns”, but an analysis, political goals and guides for further action that subsequently fed strongly into the movement, as Papadimitropoulos argues,

anarchist discourse provides individuals with particular knowledge that helps in ordering the world and providing necessary material for action. (Papadimitropoulos, 2010: 69)

A general culture of violent dissent amongst politicised students, some young proletarians and migrants, anarchists and the extra-parliamentary Left (both the result of principle and first-hand experiences of state repression) undoubtedly catalysed the revolt. It is inadequate, however, to simply attribute these existing positions to the revolt as a whole or to these existing groups within

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<sup>151</sup> This is a theme that Schwarz (2010: 193) explores in relation to why the “lack of demands”, imbedded in both anarchist normative positions and the subsequent character of the movement, were such a challenge to the reproduction of state-power.

the movement. There is a need to recognise the *symbiotic* way in which relationships and identities developed. For while it may be useful to adopt closed categories such as “anarchist”, “anti-capitalist”, “communist” etc. (and to some degree, particularly concerning points of political principle these are closed categories) this should equally not preclude the recognition that these are deeply interconnected ideas and identities that exist relationally to each other. Not only this, but to some extent in the expression of the December revolt we see the breakdown of existing identities into other forms, in the case of the streets, for example, a community of rioters. As *Ta Paidia Tis Galarias* observed,

The rebels who met in the streets and the occupations temporarily superseded their separated identities and roles imposed on them by capitalist society since they met not as workers, university or school students or immigrants but as rebels. (2009: 2)

This was evident, through the collectivisation of their practices, in relation to even those traditions most closely aligned with the popular expressions of the revolt. The traditions, in short, transformed and, were likewise transformed by the events (2009; also see Schwarz, 2010b, *Ta Paidia Tis Galarias*, 2009).

Imbedded within the December revolt was a radical subjectivity which was both culturally specific “a Greek December” but socially general “a proletarian revolt”<sup>152</sup>. It saw a deepening and extension of those minority cultures most closely related to the core impulses of the movement, those that prioritised non-representation, direct action etc. It also saw the spread of the revolt and mobilisation of sections and social groups previously unconnected to the anti-capitalist and leftist milieu. In this it is possible to trace the development of an interconnected, diverse (e.g. inclusion of ethnic minority, women, migrant groups) web of social struggle as part of the formation of a much wider proletarian culture of resistance. Conversely the Left and the trade unions expressed their traditional role most robustly showing that moments of autonomous proletarian action saw in fact an accentuation of their reformist policies and their preference for mediation within the limits and terms imposed by the state, i.e. capitalist management. Consequently the heightening of the revolt saw criticism extend into action against those bodies that traditionally place themselves as representatives or in certain cases just representative, of proletarians. This was in ways that were both innovative, e.g. the occupation of the trade union offices, but also allowed an extended forum for potential realisation of proletarian self-organisation. Moreover, far from being a minority current these actions proved to be the most popular.

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<sup>152</sup> Greece may have been the reference point but action was unconstrained by notions of a “national experience” or even within the paradigm of the “Greek citizen”.

All of these represent, to a certain degree, transgressions from earlier outbreaks of social unrest. However, in spite of these ruptures, the *radical* qualities of the revolt lay not in organisational innovations but in the potential realisation of a non-institutionalised political power<sup>153</sup>. The emergence of spaces for self-organisation and association, which as well as being contingent and practical, were also the basis for the growth of a movement for autonomy. That is not just a disruption of the citizen-base in relation to its government (and the institutions under its control, e.g. the police), i.e. what is commonly understood to be a “crisis”, but attempts to shift the location of political power away from the centralised and representational institutions to de-centralised, non-institutional, social and collective bases of political power – whether formalised in neighbourhood, workplace or townhall occupations or spontaneously conducted within a community of resistance in the streets<sup>154</sup>. It is possible to draw attention to a number of key organisational practices that are representative of this:

**Communication:** Even a cursory study of the December unrest reveals a rich political discourse; communiqués, slogans (on banners and placards but also as graffiti in public places), analytical pieces, graphic art, polemics and other texts were circulated, discussed and debated within the movement, distributed to the public as well as shared through blog posts, message boards, websites and other social networking tools.

“Counter-information centres” were a common use for occupied spaces (2b39, 2b56) in attempts to open up a dialogue with the wider public and provide alternative perspectives, other than those provided by the state and the media, on the events. This was similarly the rationale behind actions that attempted to tackle the influence of the media head-on, either by occupying radio stations and newspaper offices or, as was the case with the most ambitious action, a television studio. As well as acting as means for groups to distribute their own propaganda, however, many also intended to

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<sup>153</sup> It needs to be stressed that this process was potential, and in reality partial and incomplete. Largely because, despite their influence on the national polity, this was still ultimately a minority movement but also because of the areas in which the revolt did not spread, most obviously, with the exception of education, the waged workplace.

<sup>154</sup> Although even a “non-institutionalised power” fails to fully capture what was being practised here. Power is, after all, a concept synonymous with sovereignty which, often, has a reductive, singular dimension/representation; the state rules *over*, in one direction, with one face, in one interest (the “majority”) etc. Rather, we see in these communities of struggle a development of something *qualitatively* unique from this power, a “power” to the extent that it does indeed challenge sovereignty in terms of its potential to undermine the mechanisms that allow the state to govern, and therefore may prompt a legitimacy crisis or a “dual power” scenario, but these are the limits by which it is possible to compare the two concepts. “Power” fails to capture the *transgressive* qualities of the actions, the pluralistic and evolving ways in which it is expressed and its multiple and shifting locations. In other words, it fails to capture the antagonistic *sociability* – a collectivist or communist sociability struggling against bourgeois sociability - that is integral to the realisation of this “power”.



forward a much deeper critique of the methods by which both information and cultural products are manufactured and distributed in this society - on a hierarchical and exclusive basis<sup>155</sup>. Protests at cultural events, e.g. at the national theatre or the international film festival in Thessaloniki, had a similar basis, criticising the representation of culture as apolitical and its role as a normalising, spectacular experience, especially during periods of political crisis<sup>156</sup>.

A commitment to both independent and collaborative media was something already existing within many of the anti-capitalist groups, and the student movement, as a component of their praxis.

University campuses, squats and social centres, for example, had their own pirate radio stations ("Radio Revolt", for example, broadcasts from an occupied train carriage at the centre of Aristotle University campus in Thessaloniki), this was along with the national Indymedia network, a whole host of movement-based networks for information distribution and the cultural and artistic events run by social centres and squats<sup>157</sup>. Accordingly some of the discourse was the result of a wider appropriation and collectivisation of these routines (see 2c24 on the "role of anarchists").

December, however, also saw a much broader convergence between these existing initiatives, new innovations, such as the radio and TV station occupations (2b46) and a whole host of informal (both existing and new) communication channels emerging in response to the events. These ranged from traditional techniques such as leaflets and pamphlets distributed on the streets and during assemblies, counter-cultural and artistic motifs such as graffiti, posters and banners adorning public spaces (2b17, 2b36, 2b38, 2b47, 2b55, 2b60) to the use of the latest technologies, for example,

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<sup>155</sup> The image of the Prime Minister's address to parliament slowly fading to a television studio occupied by protesters was immensely powerful in this respect (2b46). It immediately shattered established hierarchies of political communication; between the images of power (parliament), the mediators of the message (the mass media, in this case a television studio) and the subjects of the discourse (the December movement). For this brief moment the subjects were crafting their own message – "switch off you TV, come to the streets".

<sup>156</sup> Banner drops and protests were more often than not directed at the performers or the performance but at the audience and their role as spectators.

Following the December period The National Opera Hall of Athens was occupied by artists who hosted daily assemblies (drawing around 600 people) and discussions on art, philosophy and insurrection as well as hosting street parties at night. The occupation lasted until the 7<sup>th</sup> February. The assembly issued the following communiqué;

"December's rebellion, while drawing strength from all previous social struggles, laid the ground for a generalized resistance against everything that offends us and enslaves our lives. It triggered a fight for life that is being disparaged on a daily basis. As an answer to those who understand rebellion as a short lived firecracker, and discard and undermine it by simply saying "life goes on", we say that the struggle not only continues but has already set our lives on a new basis. Nothing is finished; our rage perseveres. Our agony has not subsided; we are still here. Rebellion in the streets, in schools and universities, in labour unions, municipal buildings and parks. Rebellion also in art.

Against art as a spectacle that is consumed by passive viewers.

Against aesthetics that exclude the 'Different'.

Against a culture that destroys parks and public space in the name of profit." (Free opera-tors, 2009)

<sup>157</sup> Indymedia (Independent Media Centre) is a global network of collectively run media outlets for the promotion of radical and activist news and analysis. Many operate on the basis of an open-publishing platform with only very limited editorial input.

youtube videos and images captured on mobile phones. All of this laid the basis for the formation of far broader, alternative “publics” - sites for the transmission and sharing of information and cultural meanings but also the conduct of political discussion and deliberation.

Moreover, these were not just dislocations from the more traditional sites of political discourse, hence their comparative plurality and diversity, what they also shared was a conduct in contrast to the dominant models of communicative practice, particularly in relation to socio-economic issues. This was conduct characterised by both a commitment to immediacy, i.e. in a way which was neither filtered via corporate/party political interests nor mediated by the interests of elites, and also openness, openness of access but also in the “opening up”, i.e. contestation, of social spheres previously closed to political discourse<sup>158</sup>. That is not to say that these were not also areas of internal disagreement, as evidenced by some of the political divisions within the movement. Rather, what is significant here was the possibility for a radically differentiated communicative practice; one based on equal terms between autonomous subjects<sup>159</sup>.

**Social space:** The politicisation and contestation of formally apolitical spheres also had a geographical dimension, most prominently in the transformation of private space into autonomous, collectivised spaces, i.e. occupied town halls, schools, theatres, and University buildings. Despite the fact that many protests and demonstrations followed traditional sites and routes – for example, around the parliament building (Syntagma Square) and Polytechnic in Athens, the ministry of Macedonia and Thrace in Thessaloniki and town centres across Greece – there was also a significant expansion of both the targets and the social bases for resistance. As was noted earlier, some of this had a practical dimension, with many town halls and public squares also being the sites of police stations, banks and luxury shops. As the intensity of the riots continued unabated, however, this meant an expansion of the geography of that community of rioters and, in identifying these three institutions specifically, established a vast network of potential targets<sup>160</sup>. This had three important

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<sup>158</sup> Openness within the principles and terms established by the communities inside the movement.

<sup>159</sup> A practice which develops from a normative concern to organise communication free from the imperative to make political capital, and therefore is closer to an understanding of politics as a method of critique than an art of persuasion, or the need to commodify knowledge.

<sup>160</sup> This again would have also been a practical response as the damage to some buildings in the early stages of the riots was so extensive it would have been practically impossible to attack them again.

implications for the revolt; accessibility, the base and spread of the movement and, underlying this, a far broader challenge to the reproduction of bourgeois power<sup>161</sup>.

The fact that these institutions existed in any village, town or city in Greece made the possibility of organising actions, and therefore sustain the revolt, much greater. Protests that focused solely on centres of power were not only practically limiting, i.e. it was not possible for every Greek to travel to the centre of Athens or Thessaloniki every day, but allowed the authorities an easy line of defence in halting further acts of resistance. Instead the ever expanding geography of resistance punctuated the government's inability to guarantee law and order as gatherings, actions and protests occurred in multiple sites, sometimes simultaneously and often on an impromptu basis. It, consequently, re-affirmed an essential weakness of bourgeois (hierarchical) power – social, multifarious resistance. This also allowed for the growth of a broader and more diverse social base for the movement, particularly in relation to the town hall occupations which not only hosted assemblies as a means of escalating and extending the revolt but also encouraged participation of locals on the basis of addressing how general social and economic issues had manifested in that area. In other words, despite being overwhelmingly motivated by criticism of the government, actions were equally grounded in localised, grassroots initiatives designed to establish alternative community forums, build social solidarity and collective sociality and allow direct input into the shape of the movement as a whole. Finally, underlying this is a far broader challenge to the *social* reproduction of bourgeois power. That is to not only operate on the level of the function, role and responsibility of the state, but to also recognise a much wider terrain of struggle in which bourgeois sociability is produced. Hence any institution that reproduces bourgeois norms, and particularly those representative of advanced bourgeois power – the luxury shop, the bank, the mall, were considered legitimate targets. This is something that many grassroots-orientated groups promoting social change have recognised but rarely realised to this degree<sup>162</sup>.

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<sup>161</sup> Much of this is similarly related to the particularly spatial nature of the existing anti-capitalist movement (as discussed in the previous section).

<sup>162</sup> That these particular targets were identified – police stations, banks, luxury shops, education and municipal buildings - over others, particularly in relation to the comparative absence of workplace-based action, has been a source of criticism of the December movement. *Theorie Communiste*, one of the first international groups to publish on the events, perceived the weakness of an approach which, they believed, attacked capitalist social relations at the point of coercion and oppression but not, crucially, at their point of material reproduction (this will be discussed in further detail later).

The popular rationales for the targeting of these particular institutions was obvious given the cultural and historical context: police as an act of retribution for the murder, banks in the context of popular resentment generated by a post-credit crunch economy and education institutions as a familiar and established locus of youth protest. Symbolically these particular institutions also happen to be the archetypal tools/markers of global, Neo-Liberal economic order – a system that doesn't seek to recuperate but increasingly criminalises working class resistance and has considerably widened the gap between rich and poor.

**Self-management:** Occupied spaces were not purely vehicles for the extension of the revolt – spreading propaganda, widening the social base, organising practical support such as prisoner solidarity etc. – but were also the basis, as well as living examples, of self-management<sup>163</sup>.

The occupation of the city hall of Agios Dimitrios by local residents is cited by many commentators as a crucial development within the revolt. Although student sit-ins, social centres and squats had long operated on the basis of some form of collective self-management the occupation of municipal buildings in this way was an organisational innovation solely related to December. It was also an initiative that was soon replicated in many other urban centres across Greece. Not only did this provide a centre for the extension of the unrest into the neighbourhoods but also opened up the possibility of a direct challenge to the administration of the state at a local level (see, for example, Eutopia, 2009). Participants, in other words, were not simply disrupting the running of municipal government but building alternatives based on principles of participatory decision-making, horizontalism and collective association<sup>164</sup>.

In analysing these organisational practices and initiatives specifically it is possible to see that the classification of December as a “crisis” or merely a series of riots barely does it justice. This was a *social* rebellion and all of the above - the combination of existing militant practices, the popular content (for a time at least), the spread and influence of revolutionary ideology, a background of political and economic crisis and the attempt to not only propagate but build constructive alternatives - was the “social” aspect of this social rebellion. Or to put it another way, the revolt saw the expression, as *Ta Paidia Tis Galarias* argue, of “communist moments”;

the rebels created communities of struggle, they overcame the existing separations in many cases, they liberated their creativity and they attacked alienation creating new social relations. (2009: 22)

Yet, in spite of this there were clearly areas in which the revolt did not reach. For all the movement’s talk of the need to fight the return to normality, and despite the level of both social and

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<sup>163</sup> That is, a prefigurative politics that hoped to both anticipate and *practice* the social relationships and modes of organisation advocated by the groups. Or as was traditionally referred to by syndicalist organisers, to “build a new world in the shell of the old”.

<sup>164</sup> These are practices also commonly applied in the recuperation/reclamation factories, i.e. principles of workers’ self-management. The distinction being that the possibility of the resumption of production in a factory also provides the occupying workers with a means of economic subsistence. Along similar lines, in the case of Agios Dimitrios there was an unsuccessful attempt to organise with the municipal workers to provide municipal services without the municipal authorities. Had they been successful this would have been a further decisive step in the realisation of community self-management. The mayor and the municipal services council, however, were able to largely intimidate workers into not co-operating, something which was also indicative of an underlying weaknesses of the revolt – its comparative lack of power in the waged-workplace.

economic disruption caused by the revolt, there were indeed many areas of life that did continue as normal throughout the unrest. For example, despite some industrial action on the part of the trade unions, and the general class orientation of the revolt, December did not see comparable initiatives erupt in waged-workplaces, as in the streets, municipal centres and occupied spaces. The only exceptions to this were in education and the assembly and occupations in solidarity with K. Kouneva and the migrant cleaners. In all other cases action derived from the existing militant traditions within the education sector or the rank-and-file organisations amongst the couriers and book store workers. There was no comparative evolution into December-specific initiatives. The occupation of trade union centres showed a desire to organise independent action, and were also some of the most successful in terms of their popularity, but wildcat strikes did not materialise. Likewise, the rather obvious, observation could equally be made in terms of the length of the unrest. Despite the great deal of activity that occurred during this period, the majority of the most militant actions were confined to the first two weeks and that towards the end of December levels of participation as well as the frequency of actions were declining<sup>165</sup>. Certainly into 2009, and arguably up to the present period, a degree of activity has continued but, with the exception of the anti-austerity movement emerging through late 2010 to mid-2011, rarely with the same sort of mass character.

#### **Development: growth, fluctuation, limitations and legacy.**

December developed from months, in some case years, of escalating resistance. Nonetheless, the revolt itself, at its peak, lasted a mere three weeks. It is important, in this respect, to establish the changing context. Not everything developed at once and, as was stated before, it is best to avoid viewing the unrest via a singular representation. Many of the organisational innovations of the revolt are better recognised as emerging from a “forum” that was ever changing. That is recognising in December not just the constitution of a distinct subjectivity but a subjectivity emerging from a sociability constituted via the practices of the movement. All organisational practises are, therefore, better recognised as trends/currents/evolutions. Nonetheless, it is also possible to identify universal limitations within these, some of which had their origins in the general composition of the movement itself, the absence of sustained industrial action for example, others more standard limitations imposed by the mechanisms of capitalist order that all dissident movements must face to some degree - suppression, state violence etc.

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<sup>165</sup> Compare, for example, the level of participation and number of events from day 1 – 17, compared to day 18- 25 in the chronology.

While it would be unfair to state that “workers” were completely uninvolved in the unrest, nor that there was a complete absence of strike action, it would be fair to say that the most militant aspects of the movement were led by students, precariously employed and unemployed youth and migrants – none of which derived organisational strength from waged workplaces<sup>166</sup>. In fact this relative absence, compared to the organised sections of the working class but also in relation to the role of party-dominated and collaborationist unions, of economic power was one of the defining experiences of precarity with which large sections of the movement identified. Likewise both PASOK and KKE, both of which were openly hostile to the revolt, have long held a stranglehold over the unions which had made organising in this area, with a few exceptions, near impossible. That is not to say, however, that a spread into unofficial action was completely inconceivable, but certainly more difficult giving the established traditions the actions throughout December drew from. *Ta Paidia Tis Galarias*, for example, comment that,

A careful look at the class composition and the content of the rebellion drives us to the conclusion that its expansion to the places of waged-labour was not only unfeasible but maybe not even desirable for many of those who took part in the clashes and in the collective projects. From our empirical knowledge, most of the workers that were involved in the rebellion were young, coming from sectors where precarious and ‘flexible’ work relations prevail, with the exception of some permanent workers from public services such as health and education. For the latter ones, the extension of the

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<sup>166</sup> There is need for caution in the classification of “worker” here, as Cleaver explains,

To conceive the value of a commodity as being the direct result of the work of producing that individual commodity is to lose the social character of value and see it instead as some metaphysical substance that is magically injected into the product by the worker's touch ... [this] leads to such bizarre and potentially dangerous results as identifying “value-producing” workers only as those who do physical work directly on a product. From here it is only one step to the ritualistic categorization of “real” workers and “unproductive” workers ... labour-power socially combined and the various competing labour-powers which together form the entire production machine participate in very different ways in the immediate process of making commodities, or, more accurately in this context, creating the product. (1979: 118-9)

And as noted by Marx,

In order to work productively, it is no longer necessary for the individual himself to put his hand to the object; it is sufficient for him to be an organ of the collective labourer, and to perform any one of its subordinate functions. (1867: 643-4)

Even ignoring the role that students and the unemployed may play as a function of the “collective labourer”, as *Ta Padia Tis Galarias* note, many students also take on waged work as well,

Many undergraduate and postgraduate students work in such entrepreneurial sites in exchange for a wage. It's not unusual for students who carry out their dissertation to work unpaid in order to complete their studies. The labour conditions and relations of the students who work for a wage in such entrepreneurial activities are usually precarious. (2009: 4)

rebellion to their workplaces would mean occupations and wildcat strikes outside and against unions, since most of the strikes are called by unions and remain in most cases under their control ... With most of their colleagues *alien* to the rebellion, those non-precarious workers involved in it could not find a way of communication which could lead to mobilisation in these workplaces. (2009: 29)

In spite of the many other ways that the December revolt did generate collective subjectivities there was, nonetheless, an essential weakness to this position. Compare, for example, the estimated economic damage done during the first five days of the December riots (an estimated 50 million Euros) to that done by the Piraeus dockworkers a year later just by withholding their labour (an estimated 5 and a half million Euros a day, totalling 104 and a half million Euros over the course of the entire strike). This is also more than just a case of the comparative economic pressure, it was also a failure to challenge capitalism fully on the basis of the ownership and control of the means of subsistence and the basic social relationships that work directly reproduces. Subsequently many participants found themselves, with the exception of the strike days, forced temporarily to live a double life, involved in a community of resistance in the occupied spaces and on the streets, on the one hand, while occupying a highly normalised position of relative weakness when they returned to work, on the other, with slacking and absenteeism (ultimately individual acts of resistance) often the only means to participate in the former. Consequently, where initiatives directed at waged workplaces did emerge from the occupied spaces, e.g. the actions at the call centres organised by the occupied GSEE, they were in the form of external interventions and not emerging from the workplaces themselves<sup>167</sup>. This is also consistent with the broader targets of the rebellion, which

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<sup>167</sup> That is not to go so far as to say that action in waged workplaces should necessarily be considered the sole locus of class struggle. As Bookchin, for example, argues many successful radical workers' movements, in spite of being organised in workplaces, have also relied upon a strong civic dimension;

Many radical workers' movements were largely *civic* phenomena, grounded in specific neighbourhoods in Paris, Petrograd, and Barcelona, and in small towns and villages that formed the arenas not only of class unrest but civic or communal unrest. In such as oppressed and discontented people acted in response to the problems they faced not only as economic beings but as communal beings. Their neighbourhoods, towns, and villages, in turn, constituted vital sources of support for their struggles against a wide range of oppressions that were more easily generalized into broad social movements whose scope was wider than the problem of their shops and factories. It was not in the factory or workshop alone that radical *values* and broad social ideals were usually nourished but also in community centers of one kind or another, even in town halls, as history of the Paris Commune of 1871 so clearly demonstrates. It was not only in Petrograd's factories that mass mobilization against czarist oppression emerged but in the city's Vyborg district as a whole. (1993)

In the case of December the issue wasn't so much the primary focus on civic action, as some Marxists allege, but the absence of waged workplace action to the same degree.

were precisely directed at those things considered obstacles to organising in this sphere – the institutions of trade unionism.

However, it would be a mistake to consider these limitations, as some commentators have, as the result of ideological or tactical mistakes on the part of the movement itself. Even posing the question in such terms assumes a command-control style of leadership ill-suited to the movement. Nonetheless, the steps that were taken clearly showed a desire to generalise the revolt in this direction and indeed awareness that this was also an area of weakness (for those at the centre of the movement at least). Given this, it makes more sense to point to the popular limitations of the revolt; that in spite of the *potential* trajectory of occupations, the seed of non-institutionalised political power discussed above, they shouldn't be considered populist initiatives but an expression of a militant minority, albeit an inflated minority but a minority nonetheless, of the Greek working class-as-a-whole. In that sense, as *Ta Paidia Tis Galarias* (2009) also argue, it is far more appropriate not to look at why the revolt didn't expand but why more workers *didn't* join the revolt. And for that it is necessary to look at a much wider, and more familiar, political context of social fragmentation, media presentation, state suppression and existing conservative ideology.

Despite a number of rumours, circulated via the domestic and international media, that the government would declare a state of emergency or that they would consider the introduction of martial law (Hope, 2008) the use of the military were never really introduced either as threat or as a potential course of state policy throughout December<sup>168</sup>. Instead the state opted to effectively militarise existing police forces (the country spending its supplies of tear gas and having to import more from Israel and Germany being a good illustration of this) as well as, on the ground at least, relying on the violent intervention of para-military, fascist organisations<sup>169</sup>. This was exercised most clearly in the city of Patras where, later shown in images published by a Greek blogger (2b20), para-fascist groups worked hand-in-hand with the local police in violently suppressing local demonstrations and vandalising local businesses; a move that was so flagrant that the mayor of the town was forced to comment on the acts of collaboration. The Polytechnic occupation was likewise repeatedly subject to attacks from the far-right.

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<sup>168</sup> This is most likely because declaring a state of emergency would have severely undermine the government's claims that it was under control of the situation and, as a result, mean an effective escalation of the revolt. This is also not to mention the historical memories having soldiers police youth unrest would trigger in the populace as well as the international image this would have generated of a supposedly stable EU member state forced to use the military against sections of its own population. Texts from soldiers (see movement texts) also cast doubt on the extent to which, young conscripts in the cities in particular could be relied upon to subdue rioters (Greece also has a history of anti-militarist activity and "masked" protests amongst conscripts).

<sup>169</sup> A video emerged in early 2011 of police being trained by army officers on strategies to deal with violent protesters in a barracks in Northern Greece.



Hostility from fascists is nothing new for the Greek Left and many radical initiatives in Greece are set up with the general expectation that they will elicit a violent response from the far-right at some point (although usually when these attacks happen they tend to be more clandestine)<sup>170</sup>.

Nonetheless, the combination of the use of these extra-legal groups along with a general climate of criminalisation and violence employed by the state had the intended effect of making both the organisation and growth of December initiatives increasingly difficult. Within just the first three days the Ministry of the Interior had already published figures claiming it had arrested 87 people and brought 176 before a public prosecutor. It is safe to assume this figure was considerably larger by the end of the three weeks (and that's not to mention those who would have been injured during protests and riots). In Larissa, this went even further with the unprecedented use of anti-terrorism legislation against eleven minors. Hence, a central plank of the platform of occupied spaces, demonstrations and initiatives from almost the outset was for solidarity with those prosecuted and the immediate release of all those arrested during the riots. Regardless of this, as a cumulative effect on the movement as well as a bar to the generalisation and spread of the revolt, over the entire month state suppression took its toll.

The existence of conservative cultures and media bias is something that revolutionary movements will always have to counter when attempting to generalise their ideas. Unsurprisingly the corporate media was unsympathetic to the revolt and drew on very traditionally conservative and nationalist discourse to bolster their message<sup>171</sup>. These were also fragmentary. The involvement of migrants, for example, provided the media, and the far-right groups who they so frequently pander to, with an easy scapegoat for the unrest, quickly establishing a dual narrative which distinguished between "naive" and "hot-headed" youth and "criminal" and "foreign" looters involved in the riots<sup>172</sup>. This was to serve as a popular pretext for the intervention of fascist and far-right, paramilitary groups against the movement as well as having important implications for the political landscape following the revolt<sup>173</sup>, the attack on Konstantina Kouneva (a Bulgarian migrant), being just one in a number of

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<sup>170</sup> Derived from field research.

<sup>171</sup> For example, the "known unknown" holding 'Lady Athens' hostage on the front cover of *Eleutheros Tupos* (2b28).

<sup>172</sup> Although TPTG (2009) also note that a media campaign against "financial and environmental degradation in inner city neighbourhoods" as a result of the unorganised housing of thousand of migrants, along with the presence of junkies and prostitutes, had begun before December.

<sup>173</sup> Not that the fascist groups needed such a pre-text, their collaboration (and sympathies) with the Greek police are well-documented before this point (see previous section). Rather, what we see is the manufacture of a *popular* mandate by the corporate media for violent intervention on the basis of the presentation of the riots as instigated by "foreign criminals" and "anarchist terrorists".

increasingly violent, racist attacks against both politicised migrants and the community in general both during and following the December revolt.

Culturally it is possible to point to a whole host of existing traditions that were, as could be expected, hostile to the unrest – from the influence of the church, nationalism and conservatism to the grip of social democracy and trade unionism over the workers movement itself. It makes little sense to analyse these in particularly great detail as they are, in all cases, familiar features of capitalist democracy. In relation to the December revolt, however, it is worth noting the cultural influence of the Christmas period in particular and how this accentuated the weakness of the movement at a time when its influence and activity was waning.

The image of the burning Christmas tree in Syntagma Square came to be a powerful symbol of the rebellion (2b11). It was so strong, in fact, that in later demonstrations the police showed a far greater interest in protecting the replacement tree than the surrounding banks and luxury shops (2b49). The holiday season, however, was not friendly to the uprising. Traditional celebrations like Christmas have a strong hold over communities and many initiatives failed to get back on their feet after the break. The revolt also found itself coming against another ideological offensive in the form of the consumerism associated with Western celebrations of the Christmas holidays<sup>174</sup>. This became another barrier between the demands of the uprising and the experience of the general public; something which was punctuated by the failure of activists to halt consumers, where previously hundreds had swept through the streets spreading an anti-consumerist message, shopping at the commercial districts of Athens in the days leading up to Christmas day. As one commentator observed, “the revolution was cancelled for Christmas”. That’s not to say that the holidays had a decisive impact on the revolt but were an added barrier to its further generalisation.

In spite of all the hopes, popular aspirations and innumerable creative, powerful and inspiring actions that took place during the December period it was, ultimately, (as a group of participants rather appropriately titled their recollections of the events) “the rebellious passage of a proletarian minority through a brief period of time”. It was a social explosion, it threw the government into crisis, brought young proletarians, students, immigrants and unemployed to the streets in ways that were unprecedented and went far beyond any predicted reaction to the murder. It was undoubtedly an escalation, both in terms of the native militant traditions and the wider European context and, as many commentators speculated at the time, in terms of a post-credit crunch era perhaps a sign of

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<sup>174</sup> A popular slogan parodied this situation, “Merry Crisis and a Happy New Fear!”

more things to come. In spite of all this it was an escalation that was also limited, limited in terms of its composition and, when it comes down to it, limited in terms of the aspirations of the movement itself – that were, as is starkly apparent, far from realised.

Nonetheless, just as it was necessary to advise caution of the perspective of the “newness” of the December movement, because it may be more difficult to detect the on-going episodes and more routine practices that built up to it, there is an equal need for caution in claiming that because it has disappeared from our TV screens this meant its effective dissolution. As Bologna quite aptly put it, “the mole” of class antagonism will continue to borrow and resurface, and just because December saw a particularly explosive inauguration of new communities of struggle does not mean that ongoing cultures of resistance are any less valid or that they will necessarily dissipate as well. In the case of Greece in particular this process is fairly evident. For example, despite the general lull in activity over the Christmas and New Year period January and February saw in many ways a resumption of previous methods of struggle, albeit often on different terms. Indeed, the need to limit the terms of the study largely to the December period derives not only from the fact that this was the high point of the revolt, but also because extending that framework by just a month not only would vastly expand the size of the material to be studied but raises a whole host of *new* issues and questions. The Greek government’s pursuit of anti-immigration legislation, and the “clearing” of the inner-city ghettos, escalating attacks by the far-right (as well as their improved electoral performance), the resumption of activity by armed groups and the ongoing activities of “The Conspiracy of Fire Cells” and, subsequently, anti-anarchist repression are just a few of the challenges that movement activists faced immediately following the revolt. That is not to mention the many who were still imprisoned as a result of their part in the riots.

There were many positive developments as well. December established greater grounds for co-operation between the anarchist and anti-authoritarian groups, students and young people who gained their first experiences in organising throughout December will take those lessons and experiences on to new generations of activists, migrants have entered the movement in a serious and sustained way, these are just a few examples<sup>175</sup>. Most importantly a new point of reference has been established from which ongoing traditions can draw from. December inspires confidence in the capacity and creativity of militant action and, in this respect, for those who wish to continue to pursue social change it is of great cultural significance. The perceived fragility of the political stability in Greece, or rather, a lack of faith in the existing political system, a perception that was raised most strongly in December, has, more recently, taken on new dimensions with the deepening of the

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<sup>175</sup> Derived from Interviews and participant observation conducted during the course of field research.

economic crisis. The town square occupation movement of 2011, a phenomenon that likewise has spread all across the country, the thousands that have marched in greater numbers than ever before on the streets of Athens and the ongoing formal and informal resistance to austerity measures against the government does owe its debt to December<sup>176</sup>. In spite of its reformist rhetoric, the popular assembly of Syntagma Square, an assembly involving thousands of people declared at the beginning of June (2011) that it will not leave until the IMF, banks, and governments and “all those that exploit us” resolve to leave the Greek people. Undoubtedly such initiatives cannot be viewed in isolation of the comparable movements in Spain (15-M) and in the Middle East (Tahir Square), from which they drew inspiration, it is likewise impossible to see these declarations outside of a social and political context carved by the December revolt; an episode which established the political credibility for making such a declaration (and which was only made in Greece, not in Egypt or Spain). The only discernable difference now, as an international observer, is that instead of blaming “hot-headed” youth for “disorder” and “chaos” in the streets we find media and political commentators asking in disbelief what is wrong with these “hot-headed” and “irresponsible” Greeks.

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<sup>176</sup> Albeit in a not entirely straightforward way, although, that the connection does not present itself as a linear progression is hardly surprising. None of the research I have conducted here suggests that any political movement or ideology develops in such a straightforward way. The connection between the two could be the subject of new research in itself. On a rather cursory study, however, it is possible to note that the nationalist edge and the commitment to “democracy” (as well as, in some cases, non-violent means of achieving social change) do put these later movements in contrast to December. They are also movements that have involved far greater numbers of people.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

For political theorists re-assessing the core assumptions that structure understandings of extra-institutional political behaviour could not be more opportune. Where events in Greece came largely as a shock to political commentators, a number of “case studies” have presented themselves as good candidates for study since that time. Events in Greece, in the wake of the December riots, could even be the source of an expansive study (and it certainly has required some restraint to stick to the terms of this study given the acceleration of social struggle since December), particularly the extent to which waves of austerity are acting as a further catalyst for anti-state sentiment - much in the way that the murder of Alexis provided a focus, deeper meaning and unifying context for mobilisation – and the prospects of a more generalised libertarian alternative developing from protracted resistance. Likewise the experience of December – which is still referenced strongly by militants - could serve to counter the structural or economic explanations (frequently deployed as justifications for further Neo-Liberal reforms) of Greece’s current political and economic climate, i.e. the country’s “under-development”, its “irresponsibility” as a state-spender etc., which appear to be dominant at this time.

If traditional commentators failed to fully grasp the extent and underlying causes of the December riots, civil unrest since, particularly riots in the UK over the summer of 2011, present even greater problems. In fact social movement theory appears to be wholly adequate in the face of “anti-systemic” repertoires, behaviours and ideas in the seeming absence of any “social movements”. At the very least Greece presented traditional movements and practices - although ultimately the revolt when a great deal beyond this - through which the existing literature could focus. Riots in the UK, and even the more organised practices of the *indignados* and #Occupy camps, had a fluid, shifting content, complex motivations and a diversity of participants all of which are ill-suited to the standard assumptions of the core of SM theory.

It has been the intention of this thesis to signal the importance of an anarchist approach to, what is traditionally understood to be, social movement behaviour. Anarchism addresses, as well as poses more critical questions of, weaknesses in the existing social movement literature. It demonstrates that the presentation of social movements is problematic not only on the basis of the failure to account for, or otherwise pre-judge, social movement content but in the way that even critical social movement theorists internalise statist assumptions concerning the supposedly civic role of social movements. These assumptions, as my initial chapter outlined, are deep-rooted and conform to more general ideological constructions concerning the maintenance, and supposed permanence, of elite rule. Nonetheless, simply identifying this fails to answer pivotal questions for critical

researchers, writers and activists - how to formulate an authentic and liberatory account of the social world without being drawn back to these assumptions? Anarchism, along with some of the working class traditions of thought associated with it, answers this question by posing the problem in a unique way – principally, in terms of the issue of representation and the means by which representation occurs in social thought, i.e. abstraction and idealisation. For many anarchist militants these assumptions developed as a natural reflection of their activity. Nonetheless the level and depth of this critique must be acknowledged: it is not simply about proximity, or being an activist, nor can questions be resolved by methodological choices alone (as my review of dissident Marxism and co-participative research outlined). Rather it is about the adoption of a specific standpoint in relation to the subject and a libertarian practice in social and political writing and research.

On a more general, but nonetheless noteworthy, level an anarchist approach produces not only a more critically valuable, but a more empirically sustainable, enquiry. Although structured by clear normative aims and goals, this approach, as the case study demonstrates, delivers a rich, holistic analysis which seeks to capture the culture, goals and organisational practices of movements but also wider *processes* of transition and conflict. The vision of the political presented here is one premised on open-endedness and the practice of conscious political struggle – not of subjects or units within wider systems or historical processes. It recognises both the methodological weaknesses as well as the political dangers (in terms of internalising processes of reification and naturalisation of the political order) of the contrary position. This is with an appreciation of the routine struggles that occur within systems that serve to maintain social privilege and the power of elites. The critique levelled at the mainstream literature is, therefore, two-fold – a normative one concerning the priorities of political study, an alignment with social struggle and the desirability of a libertarian research practice and an empirical one concerning the authentic presentation of political action, movements and ideas.

In terms of the latter it is possible to point to a number of areas where my case study demonstrates the value of my methodology in comparison to established approaches. It reveals that, contrary to the orthodox assumptions of social movement studies, collective action is characterised by a dynamic and shifting content. In outlining the initiatives and activities that took place over December it is possible to chart in the ensuing struggle the development of shared social spaces, shared symbolism, shared purpose and a sense of collective sociality all of which evolved and developed over a period of time. Similarly it is only possible to understand this process through a careful analysis of the events, the participants, their actions, ideas, objectives and practices. These

are factors which are all, by-and-large, pre-judged in existing social movement literature, largely through preconceptions of the shape and character of a “social movement”. Marxist perspectives of counter-hegemonic movements are likewise shown to be inadequate in this context and this is in spite of the heavy involvement and clear influence of anarchists and anti-authoritarians on the December revolt. For the native political traditions participation in December was a dynamic involvement - and this was the case even for movements who attempted to assume such a “hegemonic” position - prompting alternative behaviours and orientations depending on their own goals and objectives, the social context and the extent of their involvement. Most importantly this analysis confirms a state-centric view of extra-institutional behaviour to be wholly inadequate. This perspective, heavily represented in the international news coverage of the events, presents a series of riots and civil disturbances and nothing more. It is simply wrong to apply the over-riding assumption of social movements as a “particular level of the political system” (Cox, 2007: 429) to initiatives that explicitly aimed to break existing codes of civility. It fails to capture not only the wealth of the initiatives emerging through the December period, but their true political meaning, potential and capacity.

The anarchist understanding of the qualitatively different properties of autonomous practice – and how ill-fitting the dominant assumptions of “politics” are to this – is critical in this respect. As previously stated, in many cases such a representation has explicit ideological goals. Throughout December, in a very practical sense, one could see the political value (from the government’s perspective) of representing the initiatives as riots, for example. Likewise there has been a clear current of social movement literature that has not taken social movements seriously, sought to understand social movement activity principally as a symptom and reflect on the issues it presents for political institutions. Nonetheless, there is an equally clear tradition that has distanced itself from these assumptions and emphasised the critical and liberatory practices of social movement activity. For that body of research my principle contribution is to sound a caution; to urge greater scepticism concerning the supposed neutrality of our tools and means of analysis and call for greater self-reflection on the permeation of elite-centred, bourgeois assumptions within the core of political analysis.

Of course an equally important motivation for this research was not simply to show *how* it is possible to conceptualise and study events like December in better ways, but also to aim to capture the event itself. My treatment shows that existing understandings – from the rather reductive view of the media of criminal riots to even common views in the literature of triggers from legitimacy crises, corruption and youth employment – although sometimes capture some of the story missed

the most fundamental element of the unrest, those involved. At the centre of the December unrest was always a tragic murder and, as a popular slogan stated at the time, these days were always “for Alexis”. Nonetheless what happened on December 2008 through the catalyst of unemployment, economic crisis, precarity, student struggle, corruption and clientelism, police brutality, the strength and confidence of a student and anti-capitalist movement and, of course, the murder itself was a social explosion that ultimately showed glimpses of a different kind of future. It was easy for this to be obscured via the glare of the burning cars and the Molotov cocktails, but December really was about creating a better, freer and more just society<sup>177</sup>. It was about attempting to generalise mass opposition to the regularised brutality and indignity of capitalism, the rule of commodities and the violence of its institutions. Even when traditional commentators recognised this they fundamentally mistook the character and composition of the insurrection. It wasn’t intransigence or inexperience that led to a failure to orientate grievances into parliamentary reform or social policy. The key protagonists rightly argued that the problem was not those in power, but the institutions themselves and that real social change starts at the grassroots, constructing better models of social and political practice, that the endurance of capitalism is marked by its ability to placate, modify, or even outright steal radical ideas and movements and that the power of any insurrectionary movement is ultimately judged by its social power – the ability of working people to re-appropriate and re-organise the materials that control their lives – and not the recognition of governments. This, of course, is largely alien to the kind of “political” practice that political scientists are used to studying. It is also the poverty of accounts that talk of the December as simply youth riots or general civil unrest.

In a rather astute phrase, Linebaugh and Rediker talk of the “violence of abstraction” that exists in much historical writing, of the;

severity of history that has long been the captive of the nation-state, which remains in most studies the unquestioned framework of analysis. (2000: 7)

Like them I see the role of radical and critical theorists is to, in part, make those connections that have usually been “denied, ignored or simply not seen” and I hope that, just as Kropotkin had exhorted, through my research it is possible to “see the people” in the events in a way that is lacking elsewhere; to undo the violence of accounts that denies individuals a voice.

It is a great irony that it is often the unseen side of history – a side that also tends to be an affirmation of society’s better instincts – that has such a profound impact on political life, on nation-

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<sup>177</sup> Something which traditionally always has been a violent process.



states, governments, laws, political attitudes and culture. Of course acknowledging this, as thinkers such as Rocker and Kropotkin rightly identified, would mean telling a wholly different story of social progress, one largely incompatible with the benign influence of great leaders, captains of industry, governments and gods.

### **Areas for expansion**

In the opening chapter of this thesis I criticised social movement theorists for presenting the characteristics of particular movements, as well as their own ideological assumptions, in an effort to formulate a generalised construct of a “social movement”. I argued that such prescriptiveness only proved to be useful in capturing those organisations that had largely internalised the assumptions of the theories already. A reader may ask themselves then that given the prevalence of anarchist ideas and organisations in the December unrest and my subsequent emphasis on anarchist assumptions in understanding extra-institutional behaviour, do I ultimately, fall foul of my own critique. Am I guilty, in other words, of simply presenting an anarchist theory of anarchist movements?

In response I would argue that what I have emphasised in anarchist theory is not characteristics of social movements, but a unique perspective on this behaviour in respect to the *context* in which this occurs. Moreover, anarchists address the normalising influence of the state - something that has had a distinct impact on the study of social movements - in a way that other theorists have largely failed to address. It is clear from the case study that the December insurrection, and the movement that arose within it, would be poorly characterised as simply “anarchist”. Certainly there was much within it that anarchist would approve of, hence my original interest. Anarchist involvement was, however, multi-sited, shifting and part of a much broader process. Neither does the idea of an “anarchist insurrection” really conform to the attitudes of the participants, anarchist and anti-authoritarians included. Such a singular presentation reduces the complexities and developmental character of the events not to mention my own documentation of non-anarchist traditions – the trade unions, the KKE, SYRIZA etc. – influence.

Such a critique, however, does point to an area for further research and development. A claim in my methodology, a claim I believe still holds, is that the framework outlined here is as valid to the study of left and progressive movements, ideas, actions as to any other political current. In fact an overarching rationale of relying on such an ecological perspective was precisely in capturing conflict and competition between different ideas and, especially in respect to dissident ideas, the struggle against dominant and hegemonic ideology and practice. Nonetheless it would be fair to say that, in

spite of other elements being present through the case study, the principle focus is a far-Left, anti-state and anti-capitalist insurrectionary movement. A further study applying similar techniques to an altogether different type of movement/event – religious, right populist, nationalist etc. – would serve to more robustly test the limits of this approach and how this would marry with the applied normative goals<sup>178</sup>. It would also speak to a long-standing criticism of the marginalisation of right-wing and religious movements within the body of social movement research.

A similar challenge could be posed to common understandings of more institutionalised political behaviour. Problematising the presentation of the political within the literature is not done with a view to arguing that there is something missing from these accounts, i.e. that some sphere of extra-institutional action needs to be incorporated into the framework. Rather the perspective is of extra-institutional practices existing in relation to prescriptive routines and organisational logics that perpetuate the interests of elites. In this respect the conception of de-lineated spheres of institutional and extra-institutional practice is inadequate. After all as Kropotkin, Bakunin et al. have noted, institutional ideologies, repertoires etc, permeate into areas of social life where the state is either physically absent or practically redundant. Indeed it is an acknowledgment of the advanced nature of state-power in the form of the grip it holds over the political imagination. Such dynamics, however, do open up a series of questions. For if the organisational logics of class societies can penetrate into the practices and discourse of seemingly autonomous and independent cultures is it not conceivable that a similar process could be applied in the reverse? How institutionalised is, in other words, institutional behaviour? Are representationalist understandings adequate or, as both Malatesta and Graebar suggest, would it be inconceivable to think of autonomous moments permeating through all social and political practice? That is not to say simply that there exists dissident and conflicting positions within all political cultures, this is largely self-evident. Rather, the potential here is of discovering unique contexts, comparable to the contexts documented through this research, for a wholly different form of social and political practice within institutional settings. The writings of post-structuralist anarchists go some way to addressing this issue in terms of highlighting the “utopian moments” that underlies dominant discourse (and the potential for rupture within). However, there has of yet been little work on the notion of studying and documenting autonomous *practice* – direct and counter-systemic affiliation, subversion of channels of sovereignty, counter-cultures etc. - within institutional settings. The informal and unconscious acts of resistance documented by Italian autonomists on factory production line presents perhaps one possible indication of what such a study would look like. Importantly such a vision opens up a

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<sup>178</sup> That's if these can be considered valid presentations. As the study of December confirms, labels are loaded and often politically contested and such a deconstruction of immediate presentations, via gauging the core ideas of participants via an internalised perspective, would be an essential first task.

whole set of challenges for both existing pre-conceptions of politics as well as the accompanying methodologies, challenges that I believe that the course opened up by this research and the methodological framework outlined is well-suited to tackle.

## APPENDIX

### 2b: We are an Image from the Future - Visual Chronology

2b1. Alexis Grigoropoulos, 15, amongst class mates.



European Press Photo Agency, 2008.

**2b2. 7 December 2008: Demonstrations in Exarchia.** Banner in background reads, “GSEE-ADEDY 10<sup>th</sup> of December General Strike!”. Banner in foreground reads, “Down with the Government Murderers! –Red” (*Kokkinos*, “Red”, is a Trotskyist organisation part of the parliamentary Co-alition of the Radical Left, SYRZIA).



**2b3. 7 December 2008: A protester smears his face with Maalox antacid tablets dissolved in water to relieve the effects of tear gas, Thessaloniki.**



2b4. 7 December 2008: A protester's silhouette in the streets surrounding the Polytechnic, Athens.



Athens.Indymedia, 2008.

2b5. 7 December 2008: A burnt out car forms a barricade, Athens.



Athens.Indymedia, 2008.

2b6. 7 December 2008: Police officers take up positions surrounding the Polytechnic, Athens.



2b7. 8 December 2008: Students fill the streets in Kozani.



Athens.Indymedia, 2008.

**2b8. 8 December 2008: Left-wing youth demonstrate in the centre of Athens.** The banner in front, held by members of the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA), reads "Time to Throw Them Out!".



AP Photo/Dimitri Messinis, 2008.

**2b9. 8 December 2008: Riot police look at fires at banks, shops and houses on Syngrou avenue, Athens.**



AFP/Louisa Gouliamaki, 2008.



**2b10. 8 December 2008: A man comforts a woman in front of a message board near the site where Alexis was shot.** Street signs read (upper right), “15 years old” “Alexandros Grigopoulos street”. Messologiu street was re-named in honour of Alexis by members of the movement following his death. This was done in the same fashion as Stournari street, which was unofficially re-named in honour of 15-year old Michalis Kaltezas after being shot and killed by police in 1985.



Louisa Gouliamaki/ AFP/ Getty Images, 2008.

**2b11. 8 December 2008: People flee from the burning Christmas tree in Syntagma Square, Athens.**



AFP/Aris Messinis, 2008.

**2b12. 8 December: Protesters blockade the Greek embassy in London.** Alexis' age was widely mistakenly reported as 16-years-old in the days immediately following the shooting.



Indymedia (UK),2008.

**2b13. 9 December 2008: An angry man shows a picture of Alexis to riot police protecting the Greek parliament during a demonstration.**




AFP/Louisa Gouliamaki, 2008.

**ΓΙΑΤΙ** έτυχε  
 να είναι εκεί...  
**ΓΙΑΤΙ** τόλμησε  
 να αντιμιλήσει...  
**ΓΙΑΤΙ** έτυχε  
 να είναι νέος...  
**ΓΙΑΤΙ** έτυχε  
 να είναι οξύθημος  
 ο μπάτσος...  
**ΕΠΕΙΔΗ ΣΥΝΕΒΑΙΝΕ  
 ΣΥΜΒΑΙΝΕΙ ΚΑΙ  
 ΘΑ ΣΥΜΒΑΙΝΕΙ**

Στις 6/12/08  
 ο 16χρονος  
 Αλέξανδρος  
 Γρηγορόπουλος  
 εκτελέστηκε  
 εν ψυχρώ από  
 τους ένστολους  
 "προστάτες"

**ΠΡΟΣΟΧΗ**  
**"Η ΑΣΤΥΝΟΜΙΑ  
 ΕΚΤΕΛΕΙ  
 ΤΟ ΚΑΘΗΚΟΝ ΤΗΣ"**


 αναρχικοί/ες  
 αντιξουσιαστές/στριες Σερρών

"BECAUSE he happened to be there... BECAUSE he dared to speak back ... BECAUSE he happened to be young ... BECAUSE IT WAS HAPPENING, IT HAPPENS AND IT WILL STILL BE HAPPENING.

On the 6/12/08 the sixteen year old Alexandros Grigoropoulos was executed in cold blood by the 'protectors' in uniforms."  
 CAUTION

'THE POLICE ARE EXECUTING THEIR DUTY'  
 anarchists anti-authoritarians of Serres"

(Note: In Greek, the wordplay between the two meanings of the word "execute" (to kill or perform) is more pronounced.)



Text at top centre: “Everything is, unfortunately, a misunderstanding... statement of the defence lawyer of the murderer cops about the cold blooded execution of Alexis Grigoropoulos” (Note: The Greek word “μπάτσος” does not have a direct English equivalent. Its meaning lies somewhere between “copper” and “fuzz” and is considered to be a, relatively mild, insult by most policemen. It is customarily used by the Left when speaking about the police.)

Text at bottom centre: “everyone [come down] to the streets, occupations, marches, clashes ... without misunderstanding” (Note: The Greek word for misunderstanding “παρεξήγηση” when used in the phrase “χωρίς παρεξήγηση” acquires the same meaning as the English phrase “no offense”. The poster makes wordplay on that ambiguity of meaning.)

Small text at the bottom: “ASOEE Occupation” “Assembly meeting everyday at 20:00”

2b16. 9 December 2008: Rioting in the centre of Athens.



2b17. 9 December 2008: "Cops, pigs, murderers", Athens.



2b18. 9 December 2008: Police threaten protesters with firearms during protests in Palaio Faliro, Athens.



Free Press, 2008.

**2b19. 9 December 2008: The occupied TEI Chania, Crete.** Banner reads: “THE SECURITY FORCES ARE THE OCCUPATION ARMY OF DEMOCRACY” “AL. GRIGOROPOULOS, 15 years old dead FROM A COP'S BULLET” (Note: Security forces is an approximate phrase for the Greek term “ΣΩΜΑΤΑ ΑΣΦΑΛΕΙΑΣ” which denotes all State Organizations that aim to “protect” the citizen. This includes the police, the army, the fire department, the secret services etc. In the common perception, however, it is mainly used to denote the police and the army.)

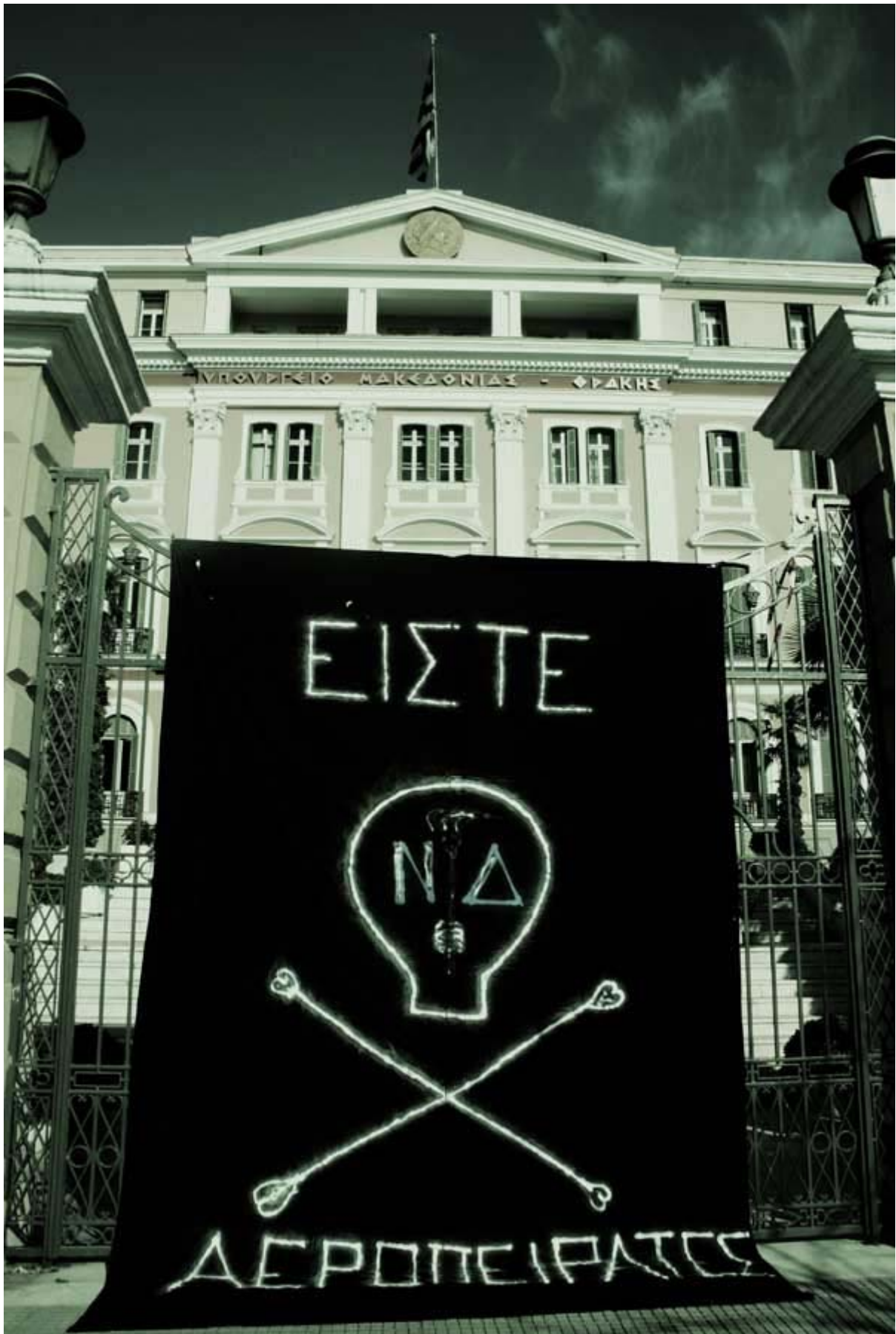


Athens.Indymedia, 2008.

**2b20. 9 December 2008: Police with members of *Chrysi Avyi* “Golden Dawn” in Patras.**



2b21: 9 December 2008: Ministry of Macedonia and Thrace, Thessaloniki Banner reads: "hijackers!" (Note: the "ND" forming the eyes of the skull is for "New Democracy")





**ΤΕΤΑΡΤΗ 10 ΔΕΚΕΜΒΡΗ**

Πορεία: Ολύμπου με Αριστοτέλους 11 πμ

**απεργία**

Για να διεκδικήσουμε από τα αφεντικά τα δικαιώματά μας, την αξιοπρέπεια μας, την ζωή μας που μας κλέβουν καθημερινά.

**ΚΑΘΕ ΑΠΕΡΓΙΑ ΕΙΝΑΙ ΣΗΜΑΝΤΙΚΗ  
ΓΙΑ ΑΥΤΟ ΚΑΙ ΔΕΝ ΤΗΝ ΑΦΗΝΟΥΜΕ ΣΤΑ ΧΕΡΙΑ  
ΤΩΝ ΕΠΑΓΓΕΛΜΑΤΙΩΝ ΣΥΝΔΙΚΑΛΙΣΤΩΝ**



**ΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΙΑΚΗ ΣΥΝΔΙΚΑΛΙΣΤΙΚΗ ΕΝΩΣΗ**  
Θεσσαλονίκης  
ΓΛΑΔΣΤΩΝΟΣ 24 - 6984 835 444

“WEDNESDAY 10 OF DECEMBER

March: Corner of Olumpou St. with Aristotelous Sq. 11 am

STRIKE

To demand from the bosses our rights, our dignity, our life that they steal every day.

EVERY STRIKE IS IMPORTANT AND THAT IS WHY WE DO NOT LEAVE IT IN THE HANDS OF PROFESSIONAL TRADE-UNIONISTS.

LIBERTARIAN TRADE UNION of Thessalonica

Gladstonos St. 24 – 6984 835 444”

2b23. 9 December 2008: Alexis' funeral, Athens.



2b24: 10 December 2008: High school students protest in Thessaloniki. Banner reads, "15 year old dead by a cop's bullet" "To the streets to break the terror".



2b25: 10 December 2008: Epaminondas Korkoneas arrives at an Athens prosecutor's office.



AP Photo/Eurokinissi, Vassilis Papadopoulos

2b26: 10 December 2008: A protester smashes marble slabs with a hammer during clashes with riot police near the Greek parliament.

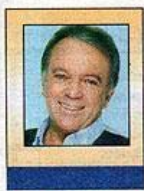


AFP/Getty Images, 2008.

**2b27: 10 December 2008: Protesters march as part of the general strike demonstration, Thessaloniki.** The banner, held by members of PAME, reads “RUPTURE WITH THE PLUTOCRACY TO SATISFY OUR NEEDS”.



Sakis Mitrolidis/AFP/Getty Images, 2008



**ΤΥΠΟΣ**

**ΑΔΕΣΜΕΥΤΟΣ**



ΕΚΔΟΤΗΣ ΔΙΕΥΘΥΝΤΗΣ  
**ΔΗΜΗΤΡΗΣ ΡΙΖΟΣ**

ΑΡ. ΦΥΛΟΥ  
(4.209) 3.191  
**ΤΕΤΑΡΤΗ 10**  
ΔΕΚΕΜΒΡΙΟΥ 2008  
ΤΙΜΗ ΦΥΛΟΥ 1,30 ΕΥΡΩ  
ΣΕΛΙΔΕΣ 46

Τελευταίο αντίο από συμμαθητές, φίλους και πλήθος κόσμου

## Ταξιδεύει στον ουρανό ο Αλέξης

• Στο Π. Φάληρο έγινε η κηδεία του τραγικού 15χρονου με πετροπόλεμο και δακρυγόνα **ΣΕΛ. 3**



Δήλωση - βόμβα της Αλέκας Παπαρήγα



## ΕΝΤΟΛΕΣ ΕΚΤΕΛΟΥΝ σκληροί κουκουλοφόροι

- «Ας σταματήσει ο ΣΥΡΙΖΑ να τους χαιδέει τ' αφτιά» είπε η γεν. γραμματέας του ΚΚΕ
- Εκλογές ζήτησε ο Γ. Παπανδρέου **ΣΕΛ. 7**

### ΕΠΕΙΣΟΔΙΑ ΚΑΙ ΧΘΕΣ ΣΤΗΝ ΑΘΗΝΑ



Συνεχίστηκαν οι συγκρούσεις με την Αστυνομία και στη Θεσσαλονίκη **ΣΕΛ. 8,9**

Καταδίκασε την «τυφλή βία» ο Αλ. Αλαβάνος, αλλά καλεί τη νεολαία σε... εξέγερση! **ΣΕΛ. 7**



Και αλλοδαποί μεταξύ των συλληφθέντων  
Πέντε νεαροί κατηγορούνται για κακουργήματα **ΣΕΛ. 9**

Αποφασισμένη να επιβάλει την τάξη η κυβέρνηση

**Κ. Καραμανλής:**  
«Όχι στα άλλοθι για πράξεις ωμής βίας»



Ο Πρόεδρος της Δημοκρατίας καλεί όλους να δείξουν σεβασμό στους θεσμούς και στους νόμους **ΣΕΛ. 6**

Text in top box (next to Alexis' photograph): "Last goodbye from classmates, friends and other people" "Alexis is travelling in the sky [heaven]" "The funeral of the tragic 15 year old happened at P. Faliro, accompanied by stone-throwing and tear gas"

Headline: "Bombshell by Aleka Papariga" "TOUGH MASKED-MEN ARE FOLLOWING ORDERS" (Note: Aleka Papariga is general secretary of the Greek Communist Party, KKE)

Under headline: "'SYRIZA should stop supporting them', said the general secretary of KKE"  
"G. Papandreou asked for elections"

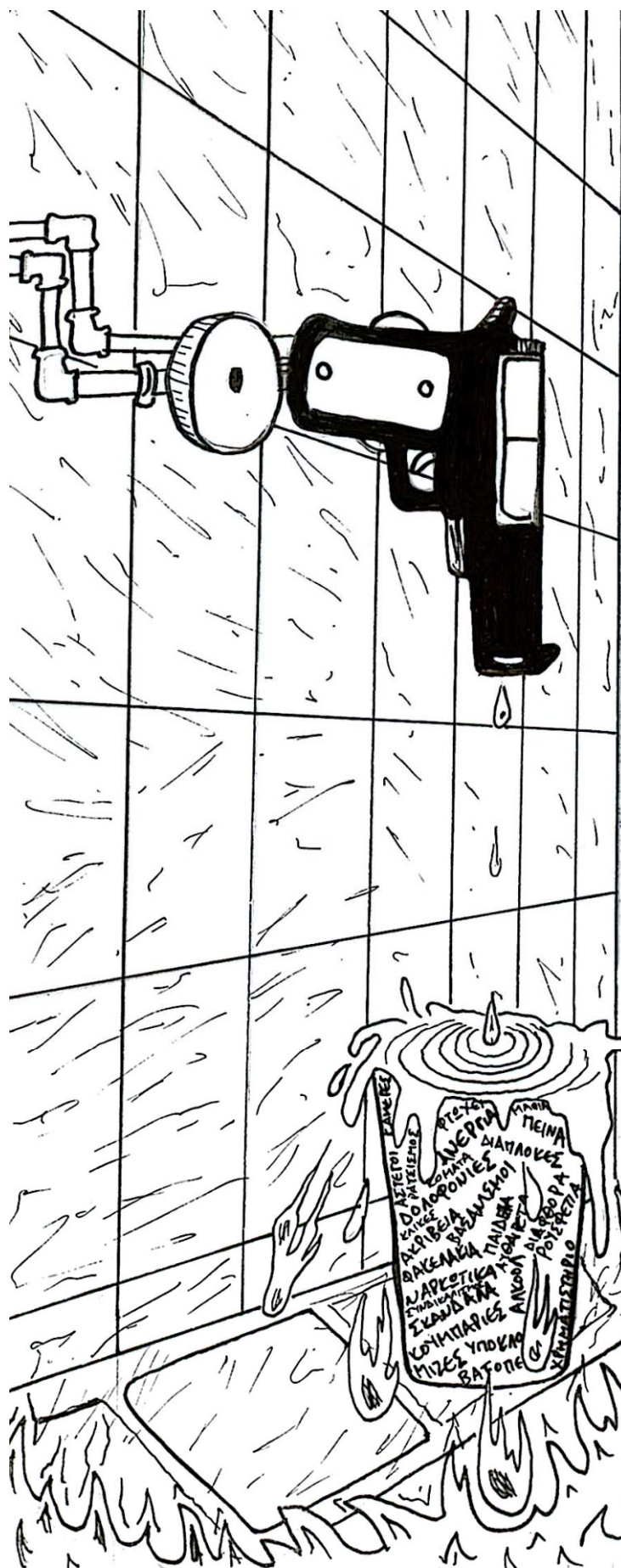
Text surrounding picture (bottom left): "CLASHES CONTINUED YESTERDAY IN ATHENS" "Clashes with the police continued in Thessaloniki too"

Text in box (centre-right): "Al. Alavanos condemned 'blind violence' but also called on the youth to ... revolt!" (Note: Aleko Alavanos is the parliamentary leader of SYRIZA)

Text to the right of the caricature (centre-right): "Foreigners too among the arrested" "Five young men charged with criminal offences".

The caricature in the centre features a lady being helped to wear a coat painted with targets by a hooded, masked man (an anarchist). The bag left beside her has the word ΑΘΗΝΑ, suggesting that the lady symbolizes the city of Athens. The message implied here is of a foreign conspiracy involving anarchists targeting the city at large, a rumour which was widely reported in the mainstream press and fit with the KKE statements about "the hooded ones" following orders from "somewhere".

Text bottom-right: "The government is determined to enforce order" "No alibis for brutality" "The President of the Republic calls on everyone who demonstrates to respect the law"



# 06-12-2008

Ο 15χρονος

Αλέξης Γρηγορόπουλος

πέφτει νεκρός από  
την σφαίρα του μπάτσου  
Επαμινώνδα Κορκονέα.

Το ποτήρι ξεχυλίζει  
και το νερό ενός λάου  
πνιγμένου, μετατρέπεται  
σε φωτιά σε όλη την  
Ελλάδα.

Μικρέ Αλέξη,  
μακάρι αυτές οι μέρες  
να αλλάξουν κάτι σε  
αυτή την κοινωνία.

Γιατί αυτή η κοινωνία που  
εμείς φτιάξαμε δεν σε άφησε  
να μεγαλώσεις και εμείς  
οφείλουμε να σε κάνουμε πιο  
μεγάλο από όλους.

**ΓΙΑ ΣΕΝΑ**

"06-12-2008

The 15 year old Alexis Grigopoulos drops dead from the bullet of the cop Epaminondas Korkoneas. The cup runs over and the water of a drowned people turns into fire in all of Greece. (Note: The Greek phrase "το ποτήρι ξεχειλίζει" translated into "the cup runs over" does not correspond to the biblical "my cup runneth over" used in English-speaking countries. The Greek phrase has the meaning of a situation that goes beyond the capability of someone to tolerate it. It would be more akin to "enough is enough")

Little Alexis, may these days change something in society. Because this society we created did not allow you to grow up and we have the obligation to make you bigger than everyone.

FOR YOU

(Note: The phrase for "growing up" in Greek literally means becoming larger. There is a wordplay between getting bigger as in "growing up" and making Alexis bigger than everyone, as in making him a great symbol of the coming struggle.)"

The image of the cup contains various words in no specific order:

"Surveillance cameras", "Homelessness", "Racism", "Poverty", "Unemployment", "Hunger", "Mafia", "ΔΙΑΠΛΟΚΕΣ" ("Diaplokes" - the hidden economic relationships between the business and the political worlds in the form of cronyism and economic favouritism), "Political Parties", "Murders", "Cliques", "Inflation", "Tortures", "Bribes", "Drugs", "Trade Unionism", "Scandals", "ΚΟΥΜΠΑΡΙΕΣ" ("Koumparies" – denoting the family relationship between a best man and the groom or bride, or a godfather/mother and the child's parents. It refers to political scandals involving elected state officials and businessmen that were receiving illicit state commissions via the aforementioned family relationship), "Telephone Surveillance", "ΒΑΤΟΠΑΙΔΙ" ("Vatopedi" – referring to Vatopedi monastery, a semi-autonomous institution controlled by the Orthodox Church in Agio Oros prefecture. The Presbyter-chief-monk was implicated in a real estate scandal – acquiring land belonging to the state illegally, money laundering and the bribery of government ministers – in September 2008), "Education", "Corruption", "Alcohol", "ΑΥΘΑΙΡΕΤΑ" ("Authaireta" - a term used to denote various houses - mainly villas – built illegally outside of cities, without a license, inside protected areas from development like forests, mountains etc.), "Stock Market" and "ΡΟΥΣΦΕΤΙΑ" ("Rousfetiá" - A colloquial expression denoting political favoritism/cronyism between members of Parliament and voters. Its main and almost exclusive use is to describe MPs granting positions in the Public Sector to their individual voters in an illicit fashion.)



2b30. 11 December 2008: Occupation of the town hall of Aghios Dimitrios, Athens.



From top of banner to bottom: “WE ARE DISGUSTED BY YOU! WITH YOUR CRONYISM BETWEEN POLITICIANS, THE CLERGY, MASS MEDIA, JOURNALISTS, JUDICIALS, BIG SHOT LAWYERS, COPS, PIMPS AND DRUGLORDS, YOU HAVE CREATED A BOUNDLESS CESS POOL WE SPIT ON YOU, YOU ANIMALS (Note: The original reads “oxen”, not “animals” but it loses its meaning in the translation. Oxen are considered to be stupid animals in Greece and the word is often used as an insult. “Pimps” does not refer to regular pimps but in this context denotes a specific small group of big millionaire contractors that have been implicated in cronyism with K. Karamanlis at the beginning of his first term.)

Second banner under the large one: “Everyone [come] to the OPEN ASSEMBLY MEETING Today, 7:30 at the Occupied Town Hall.”

Third banner under the large one: “15 YEAR OLD DEAD – SILENCE IS COMPLICITY – RESISTANCE – SELF-ORGANISATION – SOLIDARITY”

Banner at bottom: Occupation.

2b31. 12 December 2008: a protester addresses the crowd during demonstrations in Athens.



2b32. 12 December 2008: Demonstrations in Athens. Banner on the left reads, "THESE ARE ALEXIS' DAYS: Disarm the police, let's topple the government". The small placard in front of this reads, "Occupations, Strike until Victory". The banner in the centre reads, "the kids get bullets and the money stays in the banks –Ecologists-Greens" (*Oikologoi Prasino*, "Ecologist-Greens", is a Green political party affiliated to the European Green Party)



2b33. 12 December 2008: Riot police attempt to assist a colleague covered in flames from a petrol bomb thrown by protesters during clashes in central Athens.



AP/Lefteris Pitarakis, 2008.

2b34. 12 December 2008: A youth throws a petrol bomb during clashes.



Getty Images, 2008.

**2b35. Avriani, Friday 12th December 2008** (Note: Avriani has been traditionally viewed as the paper of PASOK since the 1980s, when it served as their primary mouthpiece and was renowned for its slander of the party's political opponents. This type of yellow journalism came to be known as "Avrianism" in Greek popular culture. Nowadays the power of this newspaper has waned completely, losing its support from PASOK in the mid 90s. The newspaper has now aligned itself closer to the populist-right publishing criticism of both PASOK and Nea Dimokratia, while also supporting the business community by publishing various praising articles for businessmen implicated in political cronyism.)

GERMANIA  
2.00 EURO

# Αυριανή

avriani@kmg.gr

ΠΑΡΑΣΚΕΥΗ 12 ΔΕΚΕΜΒΡΙΟΥ 2008 ΑΝΕΞΑΡΤΗΤΗ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΗ ΕΦΗΜΕΡΙΔΑ Έτος 28ο ΑΡ. ΦΥΛΛΟΥ 9120 ΤΙΜΗ 0.50 EURO

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Για να ματαιώσουν τις συμφωνίες που υπέγραψε με τον Πούτιν για τους αγωγούς φυσικού αερίου...

## ΘΕΛΟΥΝ ΝΑ ΡΙΞΟΥΝ ΤΟΝ ΚΑΡΑΜΑΝΛΗ ΟΙ ΑΜΕΡΙΚΑΝΟΙ



**ΔΛ. ΠΑΠΑΡΗΓΑ ΣΤΟΝ Ν. ΧΑΤΖΗΝΙΚΟΛΑΟΥ:**

Υπάρχουν δύο ανταρξόμενα στρατόπεδα παγκοσμίως. Το ένα αντιρρωπιζει τα λαϊκά κινήματα με τους μασκοφόρους και τους κουκουλοφόρους που ο πυρήνας τους έχει σχεδιαστεί εκτός Ελλάδος.

**ΚΑΙ ΟΙ ΥΤΌΠΙΟΙ ΥΠΟΤΑΚΤΙΚΟΪ ΤΟΥΣ**

✓ **Ανελέητο σφυροκόπημα με στόχο τον Πρωθυπουργό από τα λόμπυ της Ουάσιγκτον στην Ελλάδα και τους εκφραστές τους στην πολιτική και τα Media. Βρώμικη επίθεση και από τις βρετανικές φυλλάδες που στάζουν χολή για την κυβέρνηση**

**ΚΑΡΑΤΖΑΦΕΡΗΣ:**

Προστάτες παράκεντρων του εξωτερικού πίσω από τα επεισόδια

ΣΕΛ. 32, ΣΕΙΣΕΙΣ 6

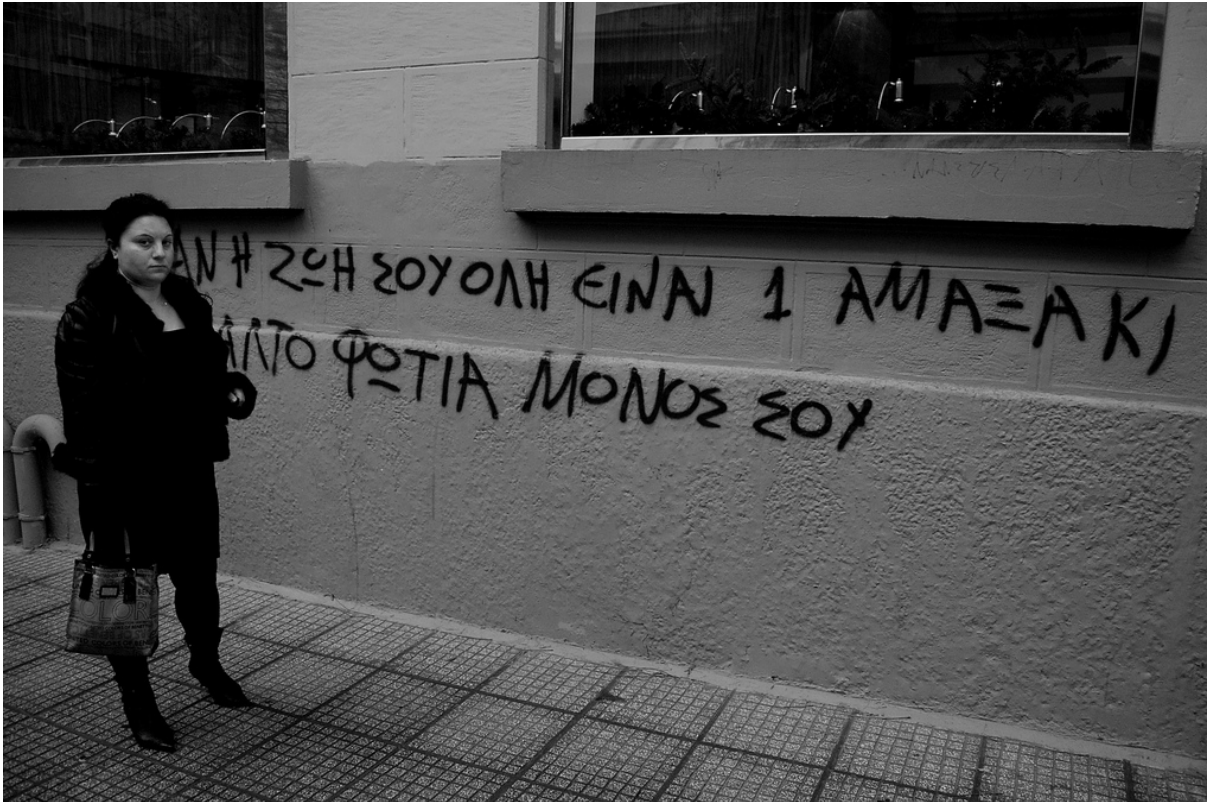
Headline reads: "In order to cancel the agreements he signed with Putin about the natural gas pipelines... THE AMERICANS ARE TRYING TO TOPPLE KARAMANLIS and their local minions"

Text under the headline reads: "Incessant "pounding" targeting the Prime-Minister from the lobbies of Washington in Greece and their employees in politics and the Media. Visceral attack on the Government from the British news-rags as well."

Red text-box at bottom left: "AL. PAPANICOLAOU: There are two opposing camps worldwide. The first one tries to neutralize public movements with 'hooded ones' (*koukouloforoi*), the [operational] cell of which has been designed outside of Greece." (Note: Alexandra Papanicolaou General Secretary of the KKE, Nikos Hatzinikolaou is a prominent Greek journalist and host to weekly talk-show *Enopios-Enopio*, "face-to-face"; *koukouloforoi*, "the hooded ones" used in the media to denote militant protesters who wear masks and hooded sweatshirts to protect their anonymity)

Blue text-box at bottom right: "KARATZAFERIS: Protectors of foreign political interests behind the Greek clashes" (Note: Georgios Karatzaferis president of the right-wing populist Popular Orthodox Rally, LA.O.S.)

2b36. 13 December 2008: "If your whole world is one little car, set fire to it yourself", Thessaloniki.



2b37. 13 December 2008: Police during a demonstration on the streets of Athens.



2b38. 14 December 2008: "They're ruining our lives, so we are going to ruin everything, so we can take our lives into our own hands"



2b39. 14 December 2008: Activists break into an abandoned cafe in Nea Smirni, later to be transformed into *Eleftheros Galaxias* (Free Galaxy) a counter-information centre and space for open assemblies.



**ΣΥΓΚΕΝΤΡΩΣΗ**  
Τρίτη 16 Δεκεμβρίου,  
6μ.μ.  
στη γωνία Χ. Τρικούπη  
και Καλλιδρομίου

**ΕΞΩ  
ΤΑ ΜΑΤ  
ΚΑΙ ΟΙ ΕΙΔΙΚΕΣ  
ΔΥΝΑΜΕΙΣ  
ΑΠΟ ΤΑ ΕΞΑΡΧΕΙΑ**



**ΝΑ ΑΦΟΠΛΙΣΤΕΙ ΤΩΡΑ  
Η ΑΣΤΥΝΟΜΙΑ**

**ΕΠΙΤΡΟΠΗ ΠΡΩΤΟΒΟΥΛΙΑΣ ΚΑΤΟΙΚΩΝ ΕΞΑΡΧΕΙΩΝ**

“Protest  
Friday 16<sup>th</sup> December  
6:00

OUT  
the MAT  
and the SPECIAL FORCES  
from Exarchia

DISARM THE POLICE NOW”

Committee of the initiative of the residents of Exarchia”

(Note: “MAT” refers to ‘Units for the Reinstatement of Public Order’, Riot Police - *Monades Apokatastasis Taksi*)



2b41. 15 December 2008: Occupied city hall of Sykeai, Thessaloniki. Banner reads (centre): “Solidarity to all the prosecuted of December”.



Athens.Indymedia, 2009.

2b42. 15 December 2008: General assembly inside the occupied city hall of Sykeai, Thessaloniki



Antiexousiastiki Kinisi, 2008

2b43. 16 December 2008: Protesters clash with riot police outside the courthouse where two police officers stand trial for the assault of Avgoustinos DemetrioIU, Thessaloniki.



2b44. 16 December 2008: Crowds around the Polytechnic, Athens.



# Η ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ ΔΟΛΟΦΟΝΕΙ

Η δολοφονία του συντρόφου Αλέξανδρου Γρηγορόπουλου από τον ειδικό φρουρό Επαμεινώνδα Κορκωνέα δεν είναι ένα "μεμονωμένο περιστατικό", αλλά έκρηξη της κρατικής καταστολής. Η δολοφονική βία απέναντι σε εκείνους που αγωνίζονται είναι η κορύφωση της γενικευμένης επίθεσης του κράτους και των αφεντικών ενάντια στην κοινωνία. Στον κόσμο της φτώχειας, των κοινωνικών αποκλεισμών, της μισθωτής σκλαβιάς, της εκμετάλλευσης, της καταπίεσης, του ελέγχου και της κατασταλτικής τρομοκρατίας, οι στρατιές των εξεγερμένων επιφυλάσσουν στάχτες και συντρίμια...

...για να ανθίσει ο κόσμος της ελευθερίας, της ισότητας και της αλληλεγγύης



## Η ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΚΗ ΚΑΙ ΤΑΞΙΚΗ ΑΝΤΕΠΙΘΕΣΗ ΜΟΛΙΣ ΑΡΧΙΣΕ ΚΑΙ ΘΑ ΤΟΥΣ ΣΑΡΩΣΕΙ

**ΑΜΕΣΗ ΑΠΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΩΣΗ ΟΛΩΝ ΤΩΝ ΔΙΚΜΑΛΩΤΩΝ ΤΗΣ ΕΞΕΓΕΡΣΗΣ ΤΟΥ ΔΕΚΕΜΒΡΗ**

**ΑΛΛΗΛΕΓΓΥΗ ΜΕ ΟΛΟΥΣ ΚΑΙ ΟΛΕΣ ΠΟΥ ΚΑΤΑΛΑΜΒΑΝΟΥΝ ΣΧΟΛΕΙΑ, ΣΧΟΛΕΣ,  
ΔΗΜΟΣΙΑ ΚΤΙΡΙΑ, ΔΙΑΔΗΛΩΝΟΥΝ ΚΑΙ ΣΥΓΚΡΟΥΟΝΤΑΙ ΜΕ ΤΟΥΣ  
ΚΡΑΤΙΚΟΥΣ ΔΟΛΟΦΟΝΟΥΣ ΣΕ ΟΛΗ ΤΗ ΧΩΡΑ**

**ΑΛΛΗΛΕΓΓΥΗ ΜΕ ΟΛΟΥΣ ΚΑΙ ΟΛΕΣ ΑΝΑ ΤΟΝ ΚΟΣΜΟ  
ΠΟΥ ΜΕ ΚΑΘΕ ΜΕΣΟ ΜΕΤΑΦΕΡΟΥΝ ΤΟ ΜΗΝΥΜΑ ΤΗΣ ΕΞΕΓΕΡΣΗΣ ΠΑΝΤΟΥ**

## ΑΥΤΕΣ ΟΙ ΜΕΡΕΣ ΕΙΝΑΙ ΤΟΥ ΑΛΕΞΗ

της Κουλούρη, του Τζουλιάνι, του Μαρίνου, του Τεμπονέρα, του Πρέκα, του Κασσίμη,  
του Καλτεζά, του Τσιρώνη, του Τσουτσουβή, του Κουμή, της Κανελοπούλου... όλων μας

**Κατάληψη Πολυτεχνείου**  
katalipsipolytexneiou.blogspot.com

“Democracy murders!

The assassination of Alexandros Grigoropoulos by the special guard Epamonidas Korkoneas is not just another isolated incident, but an explosion of state repression. Murderous violence against those who struggle is the climax of the general attack by state and the bosses against society. In the world of poverty, of social exclusion, of wage slavery, of exploitation, of oppression, of control, of repressive terrorism, the armies of the revolted promise dusts and debris...

... so that the world of freedom, equality and solidarity will blossom.

Social and class counterattack has just started and will sweep them.

Imminent release of all the captives of December's revolt.

Solidarity to all those occupying schools, universities, public buildings, protest and clash with the state murderers throughout the country.

Solidarity to all those around the world who by any means possible spread the message of the revolt everywhere.

These are the days of Alexis.

...of Koulouris, of Giuliani, of Marinos, of Temponeras, of Prekas, of Kassimis, of Kaltezas, of Tsironis, of Tsoutsouvis, of Koumis, of Kanelopoulou...of all of us. (Note: Maria Koulouris was a resident of Lefkimmi killed in 2008 during clashes with riot police following a protest against a proposed landfill site; Carlo Giuliani was an Italian anarchist shot dead by a police officer during the demonstrations against the G8 summit in Genoa; Xristoforos Marinos was an anarchist killed in 1996 in unclear circumstances when an anti-terrorist unit raided a ship he was aboard; Nikos Temponeras was a teacher and member of the extra-parliamentary Left killed by right-wingers during the school occupations of 1991; Michalis Prekas was an “anarchist outlaw” and urban guerrilla fighter killed during a shoot-out with the police in 1987; Xristos Kassimis was an urban guerrilla fighter killed by police while attempting to plant an explosive at an AEG factory, to protest the death of Red Army Faction members while in custody, in 1977; Michalis Kaltezas was a young anarchist killed by police in 1985 during riots following the anniversary of the 17<sup>th</sup> November uprising; Vasilis Tsironis was a doctor and a radical whose surrealist interventions led to police pressure and in 1978 for him to declare (under threat of arrest) his apartment an “independent state”, he either committed suicide during the ensuing siege or was killed following the police raid on his apartment; Xristos Tsoutsouvis was an urban guerrilla fighter killed during a shoot-out with police in 1985; Iakovos Koumis and Stamatina Kanelopoulo were two demonstrators killed during clashes outside the Polytechnic in 1980)

Occupation of Polytechnic University

2b46. 16 December 2008 – Students occupy the state-run TV station. Banners read (top-left): “Immediate release of the arrested”, (top-right) “freedom to everyone” and (centre) “Stop looking. Get out on the streets everyone.”



2b47. 17 December 2008: Protesters unfurl banners at the Acropolis.



Athens.Indymedia, 2008.

2b48. 17 December 2008: Occupied offices of the GSEE, Athens.



Large banner (centre) reads: “From the work accidents up to cold blooded murders the state and capital are murdering. No prosecutions. Immediate release of the arrested. GENERAL STRIKE. Self-organisation of the workers will become the grave of the bosses. – General Assembly of Insurgent Workers”

Banner (top left): “Occupation.”

Banner (bottom centre): “Workers’ re-occupation of GSEE”

Banner (bottom left): “Self-organisation of the workers”

2b49. 18 December 2008 – Riot police protect the Christmas tree installed as a replacement for the one that was torched during previous bouts of rioting, during renewed clashes with rioting protestors in the city centre streets.



2b50. 18 December 2008: An overturned car lies in a smoke-filled street, Athens.



Milos Bicanski/Getty Images Europe, 2008.

# ΝΑ ΡΙΞΟΥΜΕ ΤΗΝ ΚΥΒΕΡΝΗΣΗ ΤΩΝ ΔΟΛΟΦΟΝΩΝ!

με μαχητικό κίνημα νεολαίας-εργαζομένων



- ★ ανατρέπουμε τις πολιτικές ΝΔ-ΠΑΣΟΚ-ΕΕ σε παιδεία-εργασία
- ★ διάλυση των ΜΑΤ-ΟΠΚΕ και δυνάμεων καταστολής, αφοπλισμός της αστυνομίας
- ★ άμεση αθώωση-απελευθέρωση των συλληφθέντων

## **ΣΥΛΛΟΓΟΙ ΦΟΙΤΗΤΩΝ ΗΡΑΚΛΕΙΟΥ**

( Βιολογίας – Επ. Υπολογιστών – Επ. και Τεχν. Υλικών – Εφαρμοσμένων Μαθηματικών – Ιατρικής – Μαθηματικών - Φυσικής – Χημείας )

“LET’S TOPPLE THE GOVERNMENT OF MURDERERS!

With a militant movement of youth/workers.

\*The toppling of the policies of New Democracy/PASOK/EU in education and employment.

\*Dissolve the MAT/OPKE and the forces of suppression.

\*Immediate dropping of the charges and liberation of the arrested.

STUDENT CLUBS OF HERAKLION

Biology – Computer Science – Resistant Materials – Applied Maths – Medicine – Maths – Physics – Chemistry”

(Note: OPKE refers to tactical units for the ‘Prevention and Deterring of Crime’)

Banner in image reads, “One of us buried, thousands in the struggle. Down with the murderous policies and all of its agents. Mass squatting in schools and universities. – Occupation of the Physics Department”



ΓΕΡΜΑΝΙΑ  
2.00 EURO

# Αυριανή

avriani@kmg.gr

ΠΑΡΑΣΚΕΥΗ 19 ΔΕΚΕΜΒΡΙΟΥ 2008 ΑΝΕΞΑΡΤΗΤΗ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΗ ΕΦΗΜΕΡΙΔΑ Έτος 28ο ΑΡ. ΦΥΛΛΟΥ 9126 ΤΙΜΗ 0.50 EURO

**Μυστήριο με τον πυροβολισμό σε 16χρονο μαθητή**  
✓ Παυλόπουλος: Η υπόθεση θα ερευνηθεί σε βάθος

ΣΕΛ. 16-17

## Εάν η αστυνομία είναι ανίκανη...

# ΝΑ ΑΝΑΛΑΒΟΥΝ ΟΙ ΠΟΛΙΤΕΣ Ή ΤΟ ΚΚΕ

### την αποκατάσταση της τάξης και την προστασία του δημοκρατικού πολιτεύματος

**Το κόμμα της Αλέκας Παπαρήγα είναι η μοναδική οργανωμένη πολιτική δύναμη στην χώρα, που τόλμησε να καταγγείλει δημόσια τους κουκουλοφόρους και να αποκαλύψει τον βρώμικο ρόλο τους**

**Λεφτά από την Ντόρα ζήτησε ο Ιερώνυμος**

**✓ Δεν πάει άλλο, με τόση αναδουλειά και τόσο μεγάλη οικονομική κρίση να έχουμε κάθε μέρα διαδηλώσεις, βόμβες μολότωφ, ξύλο, ΜΑΤ και κουκουλοφόρους να τα σπάνε, καταστρέφοντας περιουσίες και να θέτουν σε κίνδυνο την ζωή των πολιτών**

**Η** χώρα διανύει την δεύτερη εβδομάδα της ισοπεδωτικής επέλασης του χάους και της κατάρρευσης των θεσμικών συστημάτων διαφύλαξης της τάξης. Η ανοχή της κοινωνίας, ακόμα και των πολιτών που συνηγορούσαν υπέρ της στρατηγικής αυτοσυγκράτησης έναντι του κύματος της βίας, εξαντλήθηκε.

ΣΕΛ. 32

ΣΕΛ. 3, ΘΕΣΕΙΣ ΣΕΛ. 6

Headline reads: "If the police are incapable... THEN LET THE CIVILIANS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREECE take over the restoration of order and the protection of the democratic constitution."

Text (box centre-left): "the party of Aleka Papariga is the only organised political force in the country that dared to publicly denounce 'the hooded ones' (*koukouloforoi*) and reveal their dirty role."

2b53. 18 December 2008: Occupiers on the roof of the Polytechnic building.



Athens.Indymedia, 2008.

2b54. 18 December 2008: Protesters try to protect themselves from tear gas released by police.



Milos Bicanski/Getty Images Europe, 2008.

2b55. 19 December 2008: Graffiti outside the French Institute, Athens. The slogan, in French, reads: "Spark in Athens. Fire in Paris. Insurrection is coming."



AP, 2008.

2b56. 20 December 2008: The occupied Olympion cinema, Thessaloniki. Banner reads, "Solidarity to the arrested of the uprising."



2b57.

**...ΓΙΑ ΤΗ ΔΟΛΟΦΟΝΙΑ ΤΟΥ 15ΧΡΟΝΟΥ ΑΛΕΞΗ  
ΑΠΟ ΤΟ ΜΠΑΤΣΟ ΚΟΡΚΟΝΕΑ ΣΤΙΣ 6-12 ΣΤΑ ΕΞΑΡΧΕΙΑ  
...ΓΙΑ ΤΗΝ ΑΠΑΞΙΩΣΗ ΤΩΝ ΖΩΩΝ ΟΛΩΝ ΜΑΣ  
ΑΠΟ ΤΟΥΣ ΚΑΘΗΜΕΡΙΝΟΥΣ ΚΑΤΑΝΑΓΚΑΣΜΟΥΣ,  
ΣΤΑ ΕΡΓΑΣΙΑΚΑ ΚΑΤΕΡΓΑ, ΤΑ ΣΧΟΛΙΚΑ ΚΕΛΙΑ,  
ΤΑ ΣΤΡΑΤΟΠΕΔΑ ΣΥΓΚΕΝΤΡΩΣΗΣ ΜΕΤΑΝΑΣΤΩΝ,  
ΤΙΣ ΦΥΛΑΚΕΣ ΚΟΛΑΣΤΗΡΙΑ,  
ΤΟΥΣ ΕΛΕΓΧΟΜΕΝΟΥΣ ΔΡΟΜΟΥΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΟΛΗΣ  
ΚΑΙ ΤΗΝ ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΚΗ ΜΑΣ ΑΦΑΙΜΑΞΗ...**

Την Τρίτη 16-12 έγινε στον σταθμό του ΗΣΑΠ Πετραλώνων Λαϊκή Συνέλευση κατοίκων που αποφάσισε και πραγματοποίησε πορεία στην οδό Τριών Ιεραρχών και ολιγόωρη κατάληψη στο Πολιτιστικό Κέντρο του δήμου στα Άνω Πετράλωνα...  
Την Πάρασκευή 19-12 πραγματοποιήθηκε εκ νέου Λαϊκή Συνέλευση κατοίκων που αποφάσισε τη διεξαγωγή πορείας το Σάββατο 20.12 στους δρόμους των γειτονιών μας.

**ΝΑ ΠΑΡΟΥΝΕ  
ΤΙΣ ΑΠΑΝΤΗΣΕΙΣ ΠΟΥ ΤΟΥΣ ΑΞΙΖΟΥΝ**

**ΝΑ ΠΑΡΟΥΜΕ  
ΤΙΣ ΖΩΕΣ ΜΑΣ ΣΤΑ ΧΕΡΙΑ ΜΑΣ**

**...γιατί όλα είναι δυνατά όταν εξεγείρεσαι**

**ΑΛΛΗΛΕΓΓΥΗ ΣΤΟΥΣ ΣΥΛΛΗΦΘΕΝΤΕΣ  
ΤΩΝ ΔΕΚΕΜΒΡΙΑΝΩΝ ΤΟΥ 2008**

**ΣΥΓΚΕΝΤΡΩΣΗ-ΠΟΡΕΙΑ  
ΣΑΒΒΑΤΟ 20.12.08 ΩΡΑ 13.00  
ΣΤΑΘΜΟΣ ΗΣΑΠ ΠΕΤΡΑΛΩΝΩΝ**

Λαϊκή Συνέλευση Κατοίκων Πετραλώνων, Θησείου, Κουκακίου

"...for the murdering of the 15-years old Alexis by the copper Korkonea on 6/12 in Exarchia.

...for the depreciation of our lives from everyday coercions in labour's chain gangs, in the schools' prison cells, in the immigrants' concentration camps, the prisons-hellholes, the under control streets of the city and our financial bleeding...

On Tuesday 16/12 in Petralona's metro station a peoples' assembly took place that decided to march in Trion, Lerarxon road and occupy the culture social centre of the municipality in Ano Petralona.

On Friday 19/12 there was a new peoples' assembly that decided a on a march on Saturday 20/12 in the streets of our city.

They should take the answers they deserve.

Let's take our lives in our own hands.

... because everything is possible when you revolt.

Solidarity to those arrested in the battles of December 2008. (Note: for "battles of December" the term *Dekemvriana* is used, making reference to clashes between British troops and Communist partisans on December 1944 – a key episode in the lead up to the Civil War)

Gathering, protest Saturday 20/12/08, 13:00, metro station of Petralona

- Peoples' Assembly of Petralona, Koukaki, Thiseio"

2b58. 22 December 2008: Occupied town hall in Peristeri, Athens. Banners read (top), “We are all insurgents. School and university students, workers, immigrants. Public assembly in Peristeri.”, (centre) “LIBERATION AND NO PROSECUTION TO THE ARRESTED OF THE UPRISING” and (bottom) “The isolated incidents are co-ordinated in Peristeri as well. Smash the Para-state”.



Athens.Indymedia, 2008.

2b59. 23 December 2008: (in ancient Greek) “Glory from above to the people, on the earth equality and among people anarchy. For this victory.” (Note: adaptation of a common Greek prayer)



2b60. 26 December 2008: Graffiti in Athens.



2b61. 27 December 2008: Vigil to Alexis Exarchia, Athens. Banner (top right) reads, "We don't forget. We don't forgive. Alexis you are with us. 6/12/08"



2b62. 29 December 2008: Occupation of the trade union centre, Thessaloniki. Banner (in Dutch) reads: “from Thessaloniki to Nijmegen we are against every state!”



Antiexousiastiki Kinisi, 2008

2b63. Loukanikos, the “anarchist” dog, briefly enjoyed international celebrity for the frequency in which she cropped up in images of riots and alongside Greek protesters in the mainstream news media.



Aris Messinis/AFP/Getty Images, 2010.

2b64. 8 December 2008: A stray dog crosses a street during riots in Athens



Aris Messinis/AFP/Getty Images, 2008.

2b65. 18 December 2008: A protester tries to avoid tear gas thrown by riot police



Aris Messinis/AFP, 2008.



2b66: 23 December 2008: A protester sits with a dog in front of police officers.



Marko Djurica/Reuters, 2008.

## 2c: Testimonies, movement texts and communiqués

*Primarily these texts have been drawn from the occupations and open assemblies (and the individuals and organisations that sustained them) which represented the high-point, in terms of the articulation of autonomous social forms, of the December unrest. Some texts from the organisations of the statist-Left, such as the statement of the KKE, and from the labour unions have also been included as a reference point, to emphasise a plurality of political and social views of those on the streets (but also convergence on key themes) and as a recognition of the mediating forces within the “movement” itself that sought to channel popular unrest in a more traditional, political direction. The texts have occasionally been edited to improve their translation.*

### 2c1. 6<sup>th</sup> December 2008: Assassins!

15 year old boy is murdered.

Alexandros was our friend, our brother, our son, our classmate and our comrade.

The murder of the 15 years old Alexandros was the latest in a long history of the murder of young people, either for talking back to the cops, or for not stopping in a roadblock, or even for being in the wrong place at the wrong moment -as Alexandros was.

The murder of the 15 years old Alexandros was not an isolated incident, as the Home Secretary stated audaciously. His statement compliments the announcement of the former minister of Justice (Polydoros) that is a matter of time until a policeman will lose his temper and will shoot. The statements of all the witnesses indicate, and force us to think, that a single verbal attack may be enough for a cop to lose his temper and shoot.

The murder of young Serbian student Bulatovic by a cop in 1998 in Thessaloniki, the murder of young Leontidis by a cop on Cassandrou street in 2003, the death of 24 year old Tony Onohua after being chased by civil cops in Kalamaria during the summer of 2007, the murder of 45 year old Maria in Lefkimi after police attacked protesters opposing the waste disposal facility, the murder of the Pakistani migrant on Petrou Ralli street in Athens last month, the everyday humiliation and violence against petty transgressions in police precincts all over Greece, shots against the university students' demonstrations last year, violent suppression of demonstrations, the police's tear gas fuelled war, the violence against anyone protesting [...] And, of course, the everyday murders of economic and political immigrants by the border patrols. Even the deaths in the freezing Aegean waters or the minefields in Evros: all these paint a picture of the Greek police.

The murder of the 15 year old Alexandros caused a wave of anger and despair from hundreds of thousands of youth and citizens of any age. It's not just disgust and grief at the death of a young man. It's the common conscience that we all share as brothers, friends and parents, that there is a bullet with our or our beloved's name on it waiting for an ill-fated rendezvous. We live in a society which rewards worthless crooks who manipulate us - the politicians and clergy. We are all struggling for tomorrow without any future.

We have handed the future and the management of our society to people without morality or rules, without respect for mankind.

In such a society the murder of the 15yr old Alexandros was the last drop that overfilled our rage.

Rage is not just a feeling. It is a struggle for social justice. As long as there is no justice, there will be no peace. Submission and social inequality means only graveyards are peaceful.

Just because we are young like Alexandros, just because we want to dream with dignity where the state and the authorities seed submission and despair, because we want to live and not just get by this winter, we are enraged and we fight for all these things.

We won't forget Alexandros nor will we have another dead Alexandros from a cops bullet.

No peace for those that destroy the future of youth, no intervention and no tears for the hypocritical ministers. Love for life, hope for people. We fight with our classmates, our friends, our families and our comrades for a *societas civilis* without guardians, for a society of solidarity.

We call every citizen, every student and worker to march with us against the government-backed assassins.

We call the schoolmates of Alexandros in Thessaloniki to honour the memory of their peer and to abstain from the schools on Tuesday, the day of Alexandros' funeral.

Demonstration at Aristelous on Tuesday 10th of December, the day of the funeral.

- *Assembly of the Occupied Theatre School, Thessaloniki.*

Occupied Theatre School (2008) *Assasins!* [online] (Updated 10<sup>th</sup> December 2008) Available at:  
<http://katalipsisxolistheatrou.blogspot.com/2008/12/15-years-old-boy-is-murdered.html> [Accessed 1st September 2010]

## **2c2. 7<sup>th</sup> December 2008: Open Letter from Greek Anarchists to International Movement.**

New rules of engagement for capitalist police. You throw a bottle, they shoot to kill. Resist now, or we are next.

Around 10 o'clock tonight (6/12) a police car was making its regular runs around Eksarchia Square in the center of Athens. The area of Eksarchia has always been a focal point for radical leftists and has a tradition of militant political activity. Police presence in the area is always vigilant and the cops who patrol the streets of Exarchia are always trigger-happy and act like they are in occupied territory.

Some comrades saw the police car and decided to openly declare their opposition to its provocative presence in the square. They threw some stones and a few bottles of water against the pigs and told them to leave. The cops who were riding in the squad-car, are part of a new elite police unit, the "blue-suits", which has been created for the specific purpose of taking repressive measures against militant demonstrators. They are specially-trained and politically indoctrinated.

Two of them got out of the car. They threw flashbang grenades against those present in the square and one of them pulled his gun and shot in cold blood the 15-year old in the stomach. Apparently, their orders are to respond with full force against anything they might interpret as "provocation". The youngster died 15 minutes after he was transferred to the hospital. His name was Grigoropoulos Andreas (Alexandros) and he is the latest victim in a long list of state-murders. Comrades are assembling everywhere in Greece to avenge the murder of Andreas and make the bastards pay. Athens will see no peace until his death is vindicated.

In memory of Andreas.

*Make the bastards pay!*

Social War in Greece (2008a) Statement by Anarchists (I)mmmediately After the Murder of Alexis. [online] (Updated 7<sup>th</sup> December 2008) Available at: [http://greeceriots.blogspot.com/2008\\_12\\_07\\_archive.html](http://greeceriots.blogspot.com/2008_12_07_archive.html) [Accessed 19th June 2010]

### **2c3. December 2008: Open Letter from the Soldiers**

*Original date of publication unknown.*

Hundreds of soldiers from the forty-two districts state that:

We refuse to become a force of terror and repression against the mobilisations; we support the struggle of the school and university students and the workers. We are soldier from all over Greece. We are soldiers who, very recently, in Hania, have been ordered to turn on and bear weapons against university students, workers and combatants in the anti-militarist movement. Soldiers who bear the weight of the reforms and "tactical manoeuvres" of the Greek army. The soldiers who live daily amongst the ideological oppression of militarism, of nationalism, of un-remunerated exploitation and submission to "our superiors".

In the army barracks, we learnt about another "isolated incident": the death, at the hands of an armed police officer, of a fifteen-year-old named Alexis. We heard it in the slogans carrying over the exterior walls of the camp like distant thunder. Weren't the deaths of three of our colleagues in August also called "isolated incidents"? Haven't they also called the deaths of each of the forty-two soldiers in the last three and a half years "isolated incidents"? We believe that Athens, Thessaloniki, and a growing number of Greek cities have become areas of social agitation, environments in which the resentment of thousands of young people, workers, and unemployed people resounds, while we are dressed in army uniforms and "working attire," guarding the camp or running errands, being servants of "our superiors." We have seen, as have university students, workers and desperately unemployed people, their "clay pots," "accidental backfirings," "bullet deflections," as well as the desperation of precarity, of exploitation, of lay-offs and of prosecutions.

We hear the rumours and insinuations of the army officials; we hear the threats of the government, made public, about the imposition of a state of emergency. We know very well what this means. We are living it through an intensification of work, and the increase of our tasks, intense conditions with a finger on the trigger.

Yesterday we received the order to take care and "keep our eyes peeled." We are asking: whom are you ordering us to be careful of?

Today we have been ordered to be prepared and on alert. We are asking: with whom do we have to be on alert? We have been ordered to be ready to bring the state of emergency into action.

There has been a distribution of arms shipments amongst certain units in Atica [where Athens is situated], accompanied by orders to use them against the civilian population in the case of threats (for example, orders were given to one unit in Menidia, close to the attacks against the Zephiro police station). There has been a distribution of bayonets to soldiers in Evros [along the Turkish border]. They are aiming to inspire fear in the demonstrators by setting out squads in the area around the army barracks.

They have moved police vehicles to army camps in Nauplia-Tripoli-Corinth for safekeeping. There was a "confrontation" on behalf of Major I. Konstantaros in the recruits' training barracks in Thiva regarding the identification of soldiers by shop-owners whose property had been damaged. There has been a distribution of plastic bullets in the Corinthian recruits' training barracks and the order to fire against citizens if they move "in a threatening manner" (against whom?).

A special unit was ordered to the statue of the "Unknown Soldier" just in front of the demonstrators on Saturday the 13th of December, and soldiers from the Nauplia recruits' training camp were put into action against a workers' demonstration. They are threatening citizens with Special-Ops units from Germany and Italy - in the role of occupying forces - thus revealing the true face of an anti-worker/authoritarian EU.

The police shoot with the objective of present and future social revolts. In order to accomplish this they are preparing the army to take on the functions of a police force and they are preparing society to accept the return of an army of Reforms' Totalitarianism. They are preparing us to oppose our friends, the people we know and our brothers and sisters. They are preparing us to oppose our past and future workmates and classmates. This series of measures shows that the leadership of the army, the police with the consent of Hinofoties (ex-member of the professional army, currently vice-interior minister, responsible for the internal "unrest"), the army headquarters, the government, the EU directives, the small shopkeeper as an angry citizen and the far-right groups are looking to use the armed forces as an occupying army (isn't it called Peace Corps when its sent to a foreign country to do exactly the same thing?) in the cities where we grew up, in our neighbourhoods, in the streets through which we've walked. The political and military leaders forget that we are part of the youth. They forget that we are made of the same stuff as the youth which is coming face to face with the bleak wasteland of reality inside and outside of a military camp. A youth which is furious, un-subjugated and, even more importantly, fearless.

We are civilians in uniform. We will not accept being turned into free tools of fear that some are trying to implant in society like a scarecrow. We will not accept being turned into a force of

repression and terror. We will not oppose the people with whom we share the same fears, needs, and desires, the same common future, the same dangers and the same hopes. We refuse to take the streets, under the name of any state of emergency, against our brothers and sisters. As young people in uniform we express our solidarity with a fighting people and we state that we won't turn ourselves into pawns of a police state and of state repression.

We will never fight our own people. We will not allow, in the army corps, the imposition of a situation which brings back the "days of 1967."

Void Network, Schwarz, A.G., Sagris, T. (2010) *We Are An Image From the Future: The Greek Revolt December 2008*. Oakland; Edinburgh; Baltimore: AK Press



#### **2c4. 8<sup>th</sup> December 2008: Greece in Revolt!**

Athens and all Greece are in flames from last Saturday night. The cowardly murder of a 15 years young boy by a member of the Special Guard of the Police in Athens on Saturday, December 6th was the immediate cause for a popular revolt, particularly of the youth, which embraced not only the Greek capital but the entire country. It is, undoubtedly, the biggest revolt since the civil war of the 1940s and the Polytechnic School uprising in 1973 against the military dictatorship.

Immediately after the news of the death of the young boy the area near the site of the killing, near the Polytechnic University of Athens, was full of people, mainly young. Clashes with riot police have started and barricades were erected in the streets. The Polytechnic was occupied and a call for a demonstration next day was issued. Similar mobilizations took place the same night in Thessalonica, Ioanina, Crete, Patras and other Greek cities.

Sunday, December the 7th at least 20.000 people joined a mass demonstration towards the Police Central Headquarters in Athens, which soon took the dimension of mass riots, continued during all night.

Monday, December the 8th, from early morning tens of thousands of very young schoolchildren of 15 years or less marched through Athens and occupied the forefront of the Police Central Headquarters. Youth attacked or occupied police stations and/ or town halls all over the country, from Corfu to Rhodes, from Evros in the North to Crete in the South.

Early in the evening a mass demonstration in Athens, double from that of the previous day, was transformed to generalized clashes with the riot police all over the capital. The Faculty of Law of the Athens University, the Athens Economic University and the Polytechnic, are all occupied and general assemblies are discussing and deciding the course of action.

Today( December 8), it was announced and then denied that the right wing Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis will meet the president of the Republic and the leaders of other Parties in parliament to explain the necessity to declare the country under a State of Emergency.

The mass media try to cultivate hysteria among the middle classes against the “social hooligans” who “exploit the unfortunate death of the boy” and “destroy private property and put on fire the banks”. The x- Minister of Education Marietta Yannakou, who had to resign because of the mass student movement of 21006-2007, has accused “middle aged (!! ) Trotskyites and anarchists who lead the riots through the occupation the Law Faculty in Athens””!!

The revolt, of course, is not manipulated by anybody. It manifests the explosive situation produced by the world capitalist crisis. The rebellion is an expression of a mass anger accumulated the last period when the young generation lives without future, in a present of misery under the worst conditions of labour flexibility, unemployment, and continuous police harassment. Thousands of young boys and girls have identified themselves with the innocent victim, the young Alexis Grigoropoulos, and his tragic end. Sometimes the explosion of their anger takes the form of blind violence, as in the 2006 revolt in the Paris neighbourhoods- and this is why that many representatives of the ruling class call for a "Greek Sarkozy". But both in Paris and in Athens, the real causes are deeply social, actually class issues.

The pseudo socialist PASOK official opposition condemns the riots and their members in the leadership of the General Confederation of Labour voted together with the Right to cancel the march in Athens next Wednesday, December, 10, the day of a 24 hours General Strike.

The official left takes also a dubious stand. The Stalinist KKE the first days did nearly nothing, apart sending a delegation to discuss with the leadership of the Police, i.e. of the killers. It does not take part in the common demonstrations, organizing separately its own, and "guarding the social peace from the anarchists and ultra-leftists". The reformist Synaspismos (ex-Eurocommunists) try to play the role of the "mediator" between the mass movement and the State.

The far left, mainly the forces of two fronts, of MERA (Front of radical Left, where also our Party, EEK, participates) and of ENANTIA (United Anti-capitalist Left), some Maoists and the Anti-authoritarian Movement (anarchist), coordinate their actions. We issued together a call for a continuous struggle and a General Strike to overthrow the Government of the Killers and put an end to its capitalist policies, which try to make the exploited pay for the crisis of the system. We decided the following actions:

Tomorrow, December the 9th, a mass demonstration of schoolchildren, students, and University professors will take place in Athens. A delegation of the march will participate in the funeral of the young Alexis. In the afternoon, demonstrations and agit-prop actions will be waged in all working class neighbourhoods.

On December the 10th, the day of the General Strike against the decision of the leadership of the GSEE (the General Confederation of Labor), we organize a march in Athens and in all main cities of the country.

EEK intervenes in all the main cities of the country fighting to transform the strike into an indefinite General Strike on a program of transitional demands for a workers socialist way out from the crisis, against the murderous capitalist State and its government, for workers power.

VENCEREMOS!

- *Savas Michael (EEK)*

EEK (2008) *Greece in Revolt!* [online] (Updated 8<sup>th</sup> December 2008) Available at: <http://www.eek.gr/default.asp?pid=6&id=629> [Accessed 31<sup>st</sup> August 2010]

## **2c5. 9<sup>th</sup> December 2008: Communiqué of the Occupied Polytechnic Building, Athens.**

On Saturday December 6, 2008, Alexandros Grigoropoulos, a 15-year old comrade, was murdered in cold blood, with a bullet in the chest by a cop in the area of Exarchia.

Contrary to the statements of politicians and journalists who are accomplices to the murder, this was not an “isolated incident”, but an explosion of the state repression which systematically and in an organised manner targets those who resist, those who revolt, the anarchists and anti-authoritarians.

It is the peak of state terrorism which is expressed with the upgrading of the role of repressive mechanisms, their continuous armament, the increasing levels of violence they use, with the doctrine of “zero tolerance”, with the slandering media propaganda that criminalises those who are fighting against authority.

It is these conditions that prepare the ground for the intensification of repression, attempting to extract social consent beforehand, and arming the weapons of state murderers in uniform!

Lethal violence against the people in the social and class struggle is aiming at everybody’s submission, serving as exemplary punishment, meant to spread fear.

It is part of the wider attack of the state and the bosses against the entire society, in order to impose more rigid conditions of exploitation and oppression, to consolidate control and repression. From school and universities to the dungeons of waged slavery with the hundreds of dead workers in the so-called “working accidents” and the poverty embracing large numbers of the population... From the minefields in the borders, the pogroms and the murders of immigrants and refugees to the numerous “suicides” in prisons and police stations... from the “accidental shootings” in police blockades to violent repression of local resistances, Democracy is showing its teeth!

From the first moment after the murder of Alexandros, spontaneous demonstrations and riots burst in the center of Athens, the Polytechnic, the Economic and the Law Schools are being occupied and attacks against state and capitalist targets take place in many different neighborhoods and in the city centre. Demonstrations, attacks and clashes erupt in Thessaloniki, Patras, Volos, Chania and Heraklion in Crete, in Giannena, Komotini and many more cities. In Athens, in Patision street – outside the Polytechnic and the Economic School- clashes last all night. Outside the Polytechnic the riot police make use of plastic bullets.

On Sunday the 7th December, thousands of people demonstrate towards the police headquarters in Athens, attacking the riot police. Clashes of unprecedented tension spread in the streets of the city centre, lasting until late at night. Many demonstrators are injured and a number of them are arrested.

We continue the occupation of the Polytechnic School which started on Saturday night, creating a space for all people who fighting to gather, and one more permanent focus of resistance in the city.

In the barricades, the university occupations, the demonstrations and the assemblies we keep alive the memory of Alexandros, but also the memory of Michalis Kaltezas and of all the comrades who were murdered by the state, strengthening the struggle for a world without masters and slaves, without police, armies, prisons and borders.

The bullets of the murderers in uniform, the arrests and beatings of demonstrators, the chemical gas war launched by the police forces, not only cannot manage to impose fear and silence, but they become for the people the reason to raise against state terrorism the cries of the struggle for freedom, to abandon fear and to meet –more and more every day- in the streets of revolt. To let the rage overflow and drown them!

State terrorism shall not pass!

We demand the immediate release of all those arrested in the events of 7th-8th December.

We are sending our solidarity to everyone occupying universities, demonstrating and clashing with the state murderers all over the country.

*- The Occupation of the Polytechnic University in Athens*

Libcom (2008) *Athens Polytechnic occupation publishes communiqué*. [online] (Updated 9<sup>th</sup> December 2008) Available at: <http://libcom.org/news/athens-polytechnic-occupation-publishes-communique-09122008> [Accessed 31st August 2010]

## **2c6. 9<sup>th</sup> December 2008: Days of Greek Democracy**

Either with the guns of the police or with the struggles of society.

No insurrection in history could ever be controlled, manipulated, submitted to ideologies or to the mechanisms of the political parties, it could never be merely political in content. Every riot, every insurrection has always been a social affair and has thus been political in the broadest sense. After the murder of 15-year-old Alexandros in cold blood, a tumult of rage and discontent has come to the surface. A wave of excluded, disappointed, repressed, desperate people flooded the streets, of diverse cultural background, education, experience and class and were united in a spontaneous cry within a society that is being suppressed, deprived of its future, that is watching its dreams being crushed. This is a generation that has been systematically excluded from any means of expression, deprived of any possibility to make its own decisions at school, at university or at work and through its growing alienation. This generation is choosing destruction as its own expression of rage and creativity. Rage is not just a feeling. It is a struggle for social justice. As long as there is no justice, there will be no peace.

We are out on the streets as part of this society but also as part of this social rage. We do not seek to be the leaders of this discontent; we are not experts in violence. We are out on the streets because we are on Alexandros' side. Any one of us could have been in his position. We know well, from our everyday experience in social and labour struggles, in the struggles of immigrants for dignity, in the struggles of the marginalized and the prisoners for a glimpse of freedom, that the State and the institutions of power have always confronted us with their finger on the trigger.

We do not just feel hurt, outraged and revolted by the unjust death of a young person. We are also fully aware that, whether we are friends, parents or relatives, for each one of us and each of our beloved ones, there is a police bullet waiting for its fatal call. Guilty are the State and its uniformed murderers. It is they who are the true specialists and the true perpetrators of violence.

They started it. They are the ones who are responsible for this wave of violence and insurrection that broke out with the murder of Alexandros. There was never justice for the murders of Koumis, Kanellopoulou, Kaltezas, Temboneras, Boulatovic, and of so many more immigrants...Social rage grows with State violence, chemical warfare on the streets (teargas cartridges shot directly at demonstrators), rubber bullets, beatings and hooded, plain-clothed policemen arresting demonstrators.

The explosive social situation could -and should- create the conditions and the aspirations for a better future. It could also create the conditions for the acceptance and legitimization for the use of firearms by the police.

How else should we interpret the riot police in Athens waving a revolver against demonstrators during the demo on Sunday?

How else should we interpret the shots fired in the air by special-force policemen right after Alexandros' funeral?

How else should we interpret knife-flogging fascists helping out the police during their attack against demonstrators in Patras on Tuesday evening?

However hidden from the majority of people, all the above-mentioned incidents happened.

NO MORE HYPOCRICY

THESE ARE NO "ISOLATED INCIDENTS"

THIS IS THE REALITY OF STATE VIOLENCE

COPS SHOOT TO KILL

WE ARE AT WAR

Whoever pretends nothing is happening has already chosen which side they are on.

- *The Occupation of the Theatre School, Thessaloniki.*

Occupied Theatre School (2008) *Days of Democracy 2008*. [online] (updated 10<sup>th</sup> December 2008) Available at: <http://katalipsisxolistheatrou.blogspot.com/2008/12/days-of-democracy-2008.html> [Accessed 1st September 2010]

**2c7. 9<sup>th</sup> December 2008: About the recent developments and the manifestations concerning the murder of the 15 year old boy.**

The CC of KKE held a session on Tuesday, 9th December and discussed the political situation in the country, on the basis of the developments of the last days and of the mass struggle of workers and the youth, who protested the murder of the 15 year old pupil and manifested their indignation concerning the intensified people's problems.

The CC of KKE arrived at the following observations and conclusions:

1. The CC of KKE salutes the youth, the pupils, the students and the workers, who since the first moment and up today have reacted with mass demonstrations to the murder of Alexandros Grigoropoulos. They disclosed the long standing political causes that armed the hand of the murderer, but also the concrete responsibilities of ND. The mobilisations had also as background the acute people's problems, the authoritarianism, and the state repression, the indignation of the youth, their agony and uncertainty concerning their future. The CC of KKE calls for a militant continuation and strengthening of the popular and youth struggles that took place during the last months and which should be escalated, so as the new attack stemming from the economic crisis and the growing state authoritarianism to be fought back. KKE underlines that: There must be no deferment of the popular action and mobilisation, of the organisation and high safeguarding of the struggles, of the development of advanced forms of struggle through collective processes. The above require popular participation and a spirit of militant responsibility. Popular struggles should embrace all the spectre of the dominant policy, from the escalation of state repression and violence to the economic and social demands of the working class, the petty and middle strata of the cities and the countryside, the youth and women, against the extensive assault on their rights. Workers should immediately take the situation in their hands. The workplaces, the factories, the industrial branches, the construction sites, the large department stores of the cities, the places of education and neighbourhoods should become vital kernels for the revitalisation and development of the labour and popular movement in general.

2. The murder in cold blood of the 15 year old pupil Alexandros Grigoropoulos on Saturday night, on 6th December, by special guards of the state repression forces, is a "chronicle of a death foretold" caused by the state violence and repression. It is the result of a policy that regards as an enemy the people and youth who struggle, demand and call to question the power of domestic plutocracy and



its parties. This policy opposes all militant forms of struggle, strikes, demonstrations, building occupations. It is against all organised and politically advanced forms of struggle. This policy is an enemy of the collective organisation and action of workers, peasants, petty and middle strata of the city, of the youth. The murder of the pupil is a continuation of police violence and arbitrariness, which has grown during the last years. It is directed against workers at workplaces, where constant extortion and intimidation takes place, against immigrants, who are victims of exploitation and wars, against students, pupils that are being prosecuted for demanding public Education for free. The core of the system itself causes the victims of the employers' lawlessness and indifference that leads to the death of workers.

3. The governments of the country up to now, those of ND and PASOK, have grave responsibilities. They have promoted and applied laws, which they have passed in the Parliament. The anti-terror laws of the EU, the Prum Convention (Shengen III), the legislation on the use of weapons by policemen allows for an excess use. There is a widening of the power of secret services, a creation of surveillance systems and a gradual interference of Armed Forces in issues of internal order. A new mechanism, complimentary to Greek Police, at the level of Local Authorities has been created. The use of police dogs by the Greek Police is spread in public and during demonstrations. There is a spread of weapon holding by private security companies' guards and more.

4. The bourgeois state, the government of ND are trying to use the blind violence by masked and hooded persons, that we witness mainly through TV, in order to check the increasing wave of protests and the struggles of the people. The measures for the protection of the struggles are an issue of the organised popular movement and not of the police and state repression forces. The people can protect their struggles as well as their mass movement with the contribution of KKE and the class oriented forces. They can also confront the repressive state as well as the masked and hooded persons that constitute an ally and assistant of the forces that intend to cause fear to the people and make them quit struggling. The core of such groups has been formed in pockets within the state, inside and beyond the borders of Greece, both during ND and PASOK governments. Furthermore, their inspirers might lose control over them at some point.

5. Those who grant indulgences to the blind violence of masked and hooded persons, trying to equate it to the spontaneous actions of indignant school students, bear particular responsibility. In addition, those who "caress the ears" of the hooded persons such as SYRIZA along with its allies and propagators in the media, bear outsized political responsibilities. As a matter of fact, the practice of

SYRIZA supports forms of action vulnerable to the penetration of the state repression mechanisms and other agencies. The political stance of SYRIZA is characterized by political opportunism. In the perspective of gaining a handful of votes at the parliamentary elections they adulate and provide “umbrella” for the hooded persons, setting their sight on the ballot-box and the post-election developments concerning the formation of the government.

6. The CC salutes the participation of tens of thousands of protestors, workers and youths in the rally organised by KKE and KNE on Monday, 8th December. During the mobilisation it became obvious that there was a plan aiming at involving KKE in a conflict with the hooded persons and suppression forces. KKE has not fallen into that trap. On the contrary, it organised successfully militant, mass mobilisations in Athens and in dozens of towns throughout the country. These mobilisations have achieved their goals and no protestor has been injured. It is an imperative need for those who quitted fighting in the past or those who are not yet determined to fight, to join the struggle. The organised popular movement should take the matter into its own hands starting from the workplaces, the places of residence, and coordinating its action among sectors, municipalities and neighbourhoods. When representatives elected by workers do not respond to their duties, betray the struggle of the workers and hinder the processes of the struggle, the workers should take the matter into their own hands and create struggle committees. They should rally and coordinate their forces throughout the country and put forward economical, social and political demands against the repression laws.

This situation demands great alertness in view of the possibility of early elections, so that the parties of the bipartisan system suffer a strong blow. At the same time, it is important to reinforce KKE, as it constitutes the resolute factor for the development of the class struggle and of the social-political front, for the struggle for conquests in the road of rupture and overthrow of the dominant policy. People should give ND and PASOK a good lesson in the following elections. They must condemn, weaken, leave behind the parties of the bipartisan alternation and their allies, all those who degenerate the pure radicalism in order to conserve the rotten, unjust and corrupted system of repression and violence. The first step in this direction is the strengthening and joint action with KKE in all fields. The members of the Party and of KNE must take initiatives, and combine with determination, increased alertness, creativity and preparedness, the massive enlightenment and information of the people about the position of KKE and its posture regarding the current events, with the completion of the pre-congress debate within the Party, in view of the 18th Congress, contributing further to the development of the popular and youth struggles.

The people and the youth should respond now with their struggle and their vote!

Struggle-organisation-alertness-readiness

Along with KKE we organise people's and youth counterattack

For a broad popular alliance, the sole hope and guarantee for a genuine popular power

- *Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Greece.*

Communist Party of Greece (2008) *About the recent developments and the manifestations concerning the murder of the 15 year old boy.* [online] (Updated 9<sup>th</sup> December 2008) Available at: <http://inter.kke.gr/News/2008news/2008-15-cc-resolution-xrono/> [Accessed 31<sup>st</sup> August 2010]

## 2c8. 10<sup>th</sup> December 2008: Homo Sacer Quartet

A boy resides out-of-place. Two pigs charge into the out-of-place. In the conjuncture of these two trajectories, an event is born. The boy challenges the violation of the borders of his out-of-place by the pigs. The pigs park in-place and cross once again the limits of the heterotopia, on foot. The pigs injunct the boy. The boy responds to the injunction. The pigs shoot and destroy the life that “is not worth being lived”. The pigs return in-place. The borders of the out-of-place are ruptured and urban space, from end to end, is recomposed into a thick burning network of heterotopia: the city is on fire.

For sovereignty, every life out-of-place is a life that is not worth being lived. The state of exception is imposed, even by suspension, on every life out-of-place, on every life that is acted not as a contemplation of privacy and its commodity-panoply, but as a social relation, as a self-constituted construction of the space and time of conviviality. The sovereign exception is not so much about the control or the destruction of an excess in itself, but about the creation or the definition of a space where juridico-political order can be perpetually validated. The state of exception classifies space and the bodies within it. It puts them in order. It imposes order upon them. With assimilation, commodification, surveillance and discipline. Executing the delinquent with prisons, psychiatric units, marginalisation. And wherever, whenever might be necessary: with bullets, with bullets, with bullets.

In a society dedicated to the production of privacies, the murder of a boy can only be conceptualised in the terms of the value of his privacy, the ontological base of property: the sacred right to one’s own life. This is the only way in which death can be political: as a destruction of the source of property. The destruction of property, let alone its source, is a dreadful crime in the bourgeois world. Even, or especially when it is committed by the apparatus charged with its protection. But to destroy properties in order to take revenge for the destruction of property, that is a doubly nefarious crime: Have you not understood a thing? All those tears, all the dirge, the requiems are not for a boy that attacked the power-that-safeguards-property, they are for the power that failed in its duty: the duty to defend life as the ultimate property, as privacy.

The body of an enemy now deceased can be sanitized, pillaged, transformed into a symbolic capital for the reproduction of sovereignty and finally, in the announcement or reminder of the capacity for the imposition of a generalised state of exception. An emergency confirming the sovereign monopoly on the definition of the real through the abolition of its symbolic legitimisation. The sovereignty, in tears, shouts: you are all private individuals, else you are all potential corpses. And

society falls on its knees in awe of its idol and shows remorse: mea culpa; from now on, I will take care of myself only, as long as you safeguard its reproduction. The return to the normalcy of the private is paved with the spectacle of generalised exception.

- *Flesh Machine from the squatted Athens School of Economics.*

Occupied London (2008) *Homo Sacer Quartet*. [online] (Updated 11<sup>th</sup> December 2008) Available at: <http://www.occupiedlondon.org/blog/2008/12/11/homo-sacer-quartet/> [Accessed 31<sup>st</sup> August 2010]

**2c9. 11<sup>th</sup> December 2008: We are here/ We are everywhere/ We are an image from the future**

If I do not burn

If you do not burn

If we do not burn

How will darkness come to light?

(Nazim Hikmet, "Like Kerem")

Clenching fear in their teeth the dogs howl: Return to normality – the fools' feast is over. The philologists of assimilation have already started digging up their cut-sharp caresses: "We are ready to forget, to understand, to exchange the promiscuity of these few days, but now behave or we shall bring over our sociologists, our anthropologists, our psychiatrists! Like good fathers we have tolerated with restraint your emotional eruption – now look at how desks, offices and shop windows gape empty! The time has come for a return, and whoever refuses this holy duty shall be hit hard, shall be sociologised, shall be psychiatrised. An injunction hovers over the city: "Are you at your post?" Democracy, social harmony, national unity and all the other big hearths stinking of death have already stretched out their morbid arms.

Power (from the government to the family) aims not simply to repress the insurrection and its generalisation, but to produce a relation of subjectivation. A relation that defines bios, that is political life, as a sphere of cooperation, compromise and consensus. "Politics is the politics of consensus; the rest is gang-war, riots, chaos". This is a true translation of what they are telling us, of their effort to deny the living core of every action, and to separate and isolate us from what we can do: not to unite the two into one, but to rupture again and again the one into two. The mandarins of harmony, the barons of peace and quiet, law and order, call on us to become dialectic. But those tricks are desperately old, and their misery is transparent in the fat bellies of the trade-union bosses, in the washed-out eyes of the intermediaries, who like vultures perch over every negation, over every passion for the real. We have seen them in May, we have seen them in LA and Brixton, and we have been watching them over decades licking the long now white bones of the 1973 Polytechnic. We saw them again yesterday when instead of calling for a permanent general strike, they bowed to legality and called off the strike protest march. Because they know all too well that the road to the generalisation of the insurrection is through the field of production – through the occupation of the means of production of this world that crushes us.

Tomorrow dawns a day when nothing is certain. And what could be more liberating than this after so many long years of certainty? A bullet was able to interrupt the brutal sequence all those identical days. The assassination of a 15 year old boy was the moment when a displacement took place strong enough to bring the world upside down. A displacement from the seeing through of yet another day, to the point that so many think simultaneously: "That was it, not one step further, all must change and we will change it". The revenge for the death of Alex, has become the revenge for every day that we are forced to wake up in this world. And what seemed so hard proved to be so simple.

This is what has happened, what we have. If something scares us is the return to normality. For in the destroyed and pillaged streets of our cities of light we see not only the obvious results of our rage, but the possibility of starting to live. We have no longer anything to do than to install ourselves in this possibility transforming it into a living experience: by grounding on the field of everyday life, our creativity, our power to materialise our desires, our power not to contemplate but to construct the real. This is our vital space. All the rest is death.

Those who want to understand will understand. Now is the time to break the invisible cells that chain each and everyone to his or her pathetic little life. And this does not require solely or necessarily one to attack police stations and torch malls and banks. The time that one deserts his or her couch and the passive contemplation of his or her own life and takes to the streets to talk and to listen, leaving behind anything private, involves in the field of social relations the destabilising force of a nuclear bomb. And this is precisely because the (till now) fixation of everyone on his or her microcosm is tied to the traction forces of the atom. Those forces that make the (capitalist) world turn. This is the dilemma: with the insurgents or alone. And this is one of the really few times that a dilemma can be at the same time so absolute and real.

*- Initiative from the occupation of the Athens School of Economics and Business*

56a Infoshop (2009) *Everyone to the Streets: Texts and Communiques from the Greek Uprising*. Shortfuse Press: London

## **2c10. 11<sup>th</sup> December 2008: "We Are in Civil War"**

On Saturday night the greek police killed a 15 year old student.

The murder was the last straw.

It was the follow up of a coordinated campaign, a campaign of state terrorism with the help of the fascist organisation "Golden Dawn", which was aimed at university students who are fighting against the privatization of education, the high school students, the immigrants who are under constant state control because they have the wrong colour, the working class who have to work for a nickel and a dime until they die.

The government praetors who have covered up a lot of crimes against society, those who burnt the Greek forests in the summer of 2007, are also responsible for the burning of the cities these days. They maintain nepotism. They protect the government people who were involved in the mobile phone interceptions scandal, those looting the public pension funds, those who kidnapped and tortured immigrants and were involved in law, stock market and church scandals.

We are in civil war with the fascists, the bankers, the state and the mass media who want the young people to be submissive and society to be pacified. Although they have no excuses, they try again to use conspiracy theories as well as theories of "irregular attack" in order to calm spirits down.

The rage that has accumulated through the years had to be expressed and it shouldn't end.

Throughout the world people set their eyes on what is going on here.

People must rise up everywhere.

This generation of poor, unemployed, precarious, homeless and immigrant young people will smash the display window of this society and will wake up the obedient citizens from their sleep of the ephemeral American Dream.

DON'T WATCH THE T.V NEWS, CONSCIOUSNESS RISES IN THE STREETS

WHEN YOUNG PEOPLE ARE MURDERED, THE OLD PEOPLE SHOULD NOT SLEEP

GOODBYE ALEXANDROS, MAY YOUR BLOOD BE THE LAST OF AN INNOCENT TO RUN.

- *The workers' s union of municipality of Agios Dimitrios, Athens*



Libcom (2008) *Athens worker's statements on the killing of Alexandros Grigopoulos*. [online] (Updated 12<sup>th</sup> December 2008)  
Available at: <http://libcom.org/library/athens-workers-group-statement-killing-alexandros-grigoropoulos> [Accessed 1st  
September 2010]

**2c11. 11<sup>th</sup> December 2008: Open call to join the popular assembly organised by the liberated town hall of Agios Dimitrios, Athens.**

On the 6th of December 2008, a police man pulled a gun and shot a 15 year old child dead. The peoples' rage is growing despite the attempts of both the media and the government to manipulate public opinion. It should be evident to all by now that this uprising is not merely an honorary response to the death of Alexandros. Ever since, there has been much talk about theft, burning and looting. For the media and the politicians, violence is understood only in terms of what disturbs the public order.

For us, however:

Violence is working non-stop for 40 years, wondering whether you will ever retire.

Violence is the stock market, stolen pensions and shares.

Violence is being obliged to take on a mortgage where you will repay double the cost.

Violence is the right of an employer to dismiss you of your duties any time they like.

Violence is unemployment, precarity, 700 Euros salary.

Violence is "accidents" in the work place, because bosses reduce their costs over the security of their employees.

Violence is being on Prozac and vitamins in order to cope with overtime.

Violence is being an immigrant, to live in fear that you are likely to be deported any time and experience constant insecurity.

Violence is being a housewife, a wage labourer and a mother at the same time.

Violence is being sexually harassed at work while being told: "Smile, we are not asking you for much are we".

The uprising of school children, students, unemployed, the workers on temporary contracts and the immigrants broke through the violence of normality. This uprising must not stop! Trade unionists, politicians, priests, journalists and businessmen are determined to maintain the violence we refer to above.

It is not just them; we are also responsible for this continuation. This uprising has opened a space for communication where we can finally express ourselves freely. We therefore decided to occupy the town hall of Agios Dimitrios and call for a popular assembly, open to everyone. An open space for dialogue and communication, to break through the silence, to take over our lives!

- *Occupation of the town hall of Agios Dimitrios, Athens.*

56a Infoshop (2009) *Everyone to the Streets: Texts and Communiques from the Greek Uprising*. Shortfuse Press: London

## **2c12. 12<sup>th</sup> December 2008: Declaration from the Athens Surrealist Group**

The Ghost of Freedom always comes with a Knife between its Teeth.

A shot to the flesh is the high point of social oppression.

All the stones removed from pavements and thrown at cops' shields or through the shop-windows of the temples to the commodity; all the flaming bottles drawing orbits under the night sky; all the barricades erected on the city's streets, separating our space from theirs; all the bins full of rubbish from a consumerist society which the riot's flames transform from nothing into something; all the fists raised over the moon; these are the weapons giving flesh and real power, not only to resistance, but freedom, too. It is only this feeling of freedom that should be counted on in these moments: the feeling of forgotten mornings of our childhood, when everything can happen because it is us, as creative human beings, which have awoken, not as subordinate, productive human-machines of the future, the trainee, the alienated worker, the private owner, the family man. It is feeling the confrontation with the enemies of freedom - not fearing them anymore.

So, everyone who wants to continue minding their own business, as if nothing is happening, as if nothing has ever happened, has serious reasons for disquiet. The ghost of freedom always comes with the knife between its teeth, with a violent mood to break every chain that reduces life into miserable repetition, to break that which is useful for the reproduction of the dominant social relations. Since Saturday the 6th of December no city in this country has functioned normally: no shopping therapy, no clear roads to reach our workplaces, no news about the government's next recovery initiatives, no carefree zapping between lifestyle TV shows, no night drives around Syntagma square and so on. These nights and days do not belong to shop owners, TV commentators, ministers and cops. These nights and days belong to Alexis!

As surrealists, we have been out in the streets from the start, together with thousands of rebels and others expressing their solidarity, because surrealism was born in the breath of the street and does not intend to abandon it. After this massive outbreak of resistance to the state murderers, the breath of the street is even warmer, even more hospitable and even more creative. Proposing any future direction to this movement doesn't correspond with our aims. However, we stand fully behind this struggle, because it is a struggle for freedom. Without being obliged to agree with every expression within it, without being partisans of blind anger or violence for its own sake, we believe in its right to exist.

Let's not let this flaming breath of poetry defuse or die!

Let's convert it into a concrete utopia: a transformation of world and life!

No peace while there are cops and bosses!

Everybody to the streets!

Whoever does not understand the rage can just shut up!

- *Surrealist group of Athens.*

Libcom (2008) *The ghost of freedom always comes with the knife between its teeth.* [online] (Last Updated 12<sup>th</sup> December 2008) Available at: <http://libcom.org/news/ghost-freedom-always-comes-knife-between-its-teeth-14122008> [Accessed 2nd September 2010]

2c13. 14<sup>th</sup> December 2008: Up against the wall motherfuckers! We've come for what's ours...

In these days of rage, spectacle as a power-relation, as a relation that imprints memory onto objects and bodies, is faced with a diffuse counter-power which deterritorialises impressions allowing them to wander away from the tyranny of the image and into the field of the senses. Senses are always felt antagonistically (they are always acted against something) – but under the current conditions they are driven towards an increasingly acute and radical polarisation.

Against the supposedly peaceful caricatures of bourgeois media (“violence is unacceptable always, everywhere”), we can only cachinnate: their rule, the rule of gentle spirits and consent, of dialogue and harmony is nothing but a well calculated pleasure in beastliness: a promised carnage. The democratic regime in its peaceful façade doesn't kill an Alex every day, precisely because it kills thousands of Ahmets, Fatimas, JorJes, Jin Tiaos and Benajirs: because it assassinates systematically, structurally and without remorse the entirety of the third world, that is the global proletariat. It is in this way, through this calm everyday slaughter, that the idea of freedom is born: freedom not as a supposedly panhuman good, nor as a natural right for all, but as the war cry of the damned, as the premise of civil war.

The history of the legal order and the bourgeois class brainwashes us with an image of gradual and stable progress of humanity within which violence stands as a sorry exception stemming from the economically, emotionally and culturally underdeveloped. Yet all of us who have been crushed between school desks, behind offices, in factories, know only too well that history is nothing but a succession of bestial acts installed upon a morbid system of rules. The cardinals of normality weep for the law that was violated from the bullet of the pig Korkoneas (the killer cop). But who doesn't know that the force of the law is merely the force of the powerful? That it is law itself that allows for violence to be exercised on violence? The law is void from end to bitter end; it contains no meaning, no target other than the coded power of imposition.

At the same time, the dialectic of the left tries to codify conflict, battle and war, with the logic of the synthesis of opposites. In this way it constructs an order; a pacified condition within which everything has its proper little place. Yet, the destiny of conflict is not synthesis – as the destiny of war is not peace. Social insurrection comprises the condensation and explosion of thousands of negations, yet it does not contain even in a single one of its atoms, nor in a single one of its moments its own negation, its own end. This always comes heavy and gloomy like a certainty from the institutions of mediation and normalisation, from the left promising voting rights at 16, disarmament but preservation of the pigs, a welfare state, etc. Those, in other words, who wish to

capitalise political gains upon the wounds of others. The sweetness of their compromise drips with blood.

Social anti-violence cannot be held accountable for what it does not assume: it is destructive from end to end. If the struggles of modernity have anything to teach us, it is not their sad adhesion upon the subject (class, party, group) but their systematic anti-dialectical process: the act of destruction does not necessarily ought to carry a dimension of creation. In other words, the destruction of the old world and the creation of a new comprise two discrete but continuous processes. The issue then is which methods of destruction of the given can be developed in different points and moments of the insurrection. Which methods cannot only preserve the level and the extent of the insurrection, but contribute to its qualitative upgrading. The attacks on police stations, the clashes and roadblocks, the barricades and street battles now comprise an everyday and socialised phenomenon in the metropolis and beyond. And they have contributed to a partial deregulation of the circle of production and consumption. And yet, they still comprise in a partial targeting of the enemy; direct and obvious to all, yet entrapped in one and only dimension of the attack against dominant social relations. However, the process of production and circulation of goods in itself, in other words, the capital-relation, is only indirectly hit by the mobilisations. A spectre hovers over the city torched: the indefinite wild general strike.

The global capitalist crisis has denied the bosses their most dynamic, most extorting response to the insurrection: “We offer you everything, for ever, while all they can offer is an uncertain present”. With one firm collapsing after the other, capitalism and its state are no longer in a position to offer anything other than worse days to come, tightened financial conditions, sacks, suspension of pensions, welfare cuts, crush of free education. Contrarily, in just seven days, the insurgents have proved in practice what they can do: to turn the city into a battlefield, to create enclaves of communes across the urban fabric, to abandon individuality and their pathetic security, seeking the composition of their collective power and the total destruction of this murderous system.

At this historical conjuncture of crisis, rage and the dismissal of institutions at which we finally stand, the only thing that can convert the systemic deregulation into a social revolution is the total rejection of work. When street fighting will be taking place in streets dark from the strike of the Electricity Company; when clashes will be taking place amidst tons of uncollected rubbish, when trolley-buses will be closing streets, blocking off the cops, when the striking teacher will be lighting up his revolted pupil’s molotov cocktail, then we will be finally able to say: “Ruffians, the days of your society are numbered; we weighted its joys and its justices and we found them all too short”.

This, today, is no longer a mere fantasy but a concrete ability in everyone's hand: the ability to act concretely on the concrete. The ability to storm the heavens.

If all of these, namely the extension of the conflict into the sphere of production-circulation, with sabotages and wild strikes seem premature, it might just be because we haven't quite realised how fast does power decomposes, how fast confrontational practices and counter-power forms of organising are socially diffused: from high school students pelting police stations with stones, to municipal employees and neighbours occupying town halls. The revolution does not take place with prayers towards and piety for historical conditions. It occurs by seizing whatever opportunity of insurrection in every aspect of the social; by transforming every reluctant gesture of condemnation of the cops into a definite strike to the foundations of this system.

Off the pigs!

*- Initiative from the occupation of the Athens School of Economics and Business*

Occupied London (2008) *Up Against the Wall Motherfuckers! We've come for what's ours...*[online] (Updated 14<sup>th</sup> December 2008) Available at: <http://www.occupiedlondon.org/blog/2008/12/15/up-against-the-wall-motherfuckers-we%E2%80%99ve-come-for-what%E2%80%99s-ours%E2%80%A6/> [Accessed 7<sup>th</sup> September 2010]



## **2c14. 15<sup>th</sup> December 2008: These Days Are Ours Too**

Following the assassination of Alexis Grigoropoulos we have been living in an unprecedented condition of turmoil, an outflow of rage that doesn't seem to end. Leading this uprising, it seems, are the students – who with an inexhaustible passion and hearty spontaneity have reversed the whole situation. You cannot stop something you don't control, something that is organised spontaneously and under terms you do not comprehend. This is the beauty of the uprising. The high school students are making history and leave it to the others to write it up and to classify it ideologically. The streets, the incentive, the passion belongs to them.

In the framework of this wider mobilisation, with the student demonstrations being its steam-engine, there is a mass participation of the second generation of migrants and many refugees also. The refugees come to the streets in small numbers, with limited organisation, mobilising with spontaneity and increasing momentum. Right now, they are the most militant element of the foreigners living in Greece. Either way, they have very little to lose.

The children of migrants mobilise en mass and enthusiastically, primarily through high school and university actions as well as through the organisations of the left and the far left. They are the most integrated part of the migrant community, the most courageous. They are unlike their parents, who came with their head bowed, as if they were begging for a loaf of bread. They are a part of the Greek society, since they've lived in no other. They do not beg for something, they demand to be equal with their Greek classmates. Equal in rights, on the streets, in dreaming.

For us, the politically organised migrants, this is a repeat of France of November of 2005. We never had any illusions that when the peoples' rage overflowed we would be able to direct it in any way. Despite the struggles we have taken on during all these years we never managed to achieve such a mass response like this one. Now is time for the street to talk: The deafening scream heard is for the 18 years of violence, repression, exploitation and humiliation. These days are ours, too.

These days are for the hundreds of migrants and refugees who were murdered at the borders, in police stations, workplaces. They are for those murdered by cops or "concerned citizens." They are for those murdered for daring to cross the border, working to death, for not bowing their head, or for nothing. They are for Gramos Palusi, Luan Bertelina, Edison Yahai, Tony Onuoha, Abdurahim Edriz, Modaser Mohamed Ashtraf and so many others that we haven't forgotten.

These days are for the everyday police violence that remains unpunished and unanswered. They are for the humiliations at the border and at the migrant detention centres, which continue to date. They are for the crying injustice of the Greek courts, the migrants and refugees unjustly in prison, the justice we are denied. Even now, in the days and nights of the uprising, the migrants pay a heavy toll – what with the attacks of activists from the far-right and cops, with deportation and imprisonment sentences that the courts hand out with Christian love to us infidels.

These days are for the exploitation continuing unabatedly for 18 years now. They are for the struggles that are not forgotten: in the plains of Volos, the Olympic works, the town of Amaliada. They are for the toil and the blood of our parents, for informal labour, for the endless shifts. They are for the deposits and the adhesive stamps, the welfare contributions we paid and will never have recognised. It is for the papers we will be chasing for the rest of our lives like a lottery ticket.

These days are for the price we have to pay simply in order to exist, to breathe. They are for all those times when we crunched our teeth, for the insults we took, the defeats we were charged with. They are for all the times when we didn't react even when having all the reasons in the world to do so. They are for all the times when we did react and we were alone because our deaths and our rage did not fit pre-ordained patterns, didn't bring votes in, and didn't sell tabloid newspapers.

These days belong to all the marginalised, the excluded, the people with the difficult names and the unknown stories. They belong to all those who die every day in the Aegean Sea and Evros river, to all those murdered at the border or in a central Athens street; they belong to the Roma in Zefyri, to the drug addicts in Exarchia. These days belong to the kids of Mesollogiou street, to the unintegrated, the uncontrollable students. Thanks to Alexis, these days belong to us all.

18 years of silent rage are too many.

To the streets, for solidarity and dignity!

We haven't forgotten, we won't forget – these days are yours too

Luan, Tony, Mohamed, Alexis...

- *Haunt of Albanian Migrants*

Στέκι Αλβανών Μεταναστών (2008) Αυτές οι μέρες είναι και δικές μας. [online] (Updated 15<sup>th</sup> December 2008) Available at: <http://steki-am.blogspot.com/2008/12/blog-post.html> [Accessed 7th September 2010]

## **2c15. 17<sup>th</sup> December 2008: Declaration of the General Assembly of Insurgent Workers**

We will either determine our history ourselves or let it be determined without us.

We, manual workers, employees, jobless, temporary workers, locals and migrants, we are not passive viewers. Since the murder of Alexandros Grigoropoulos on Saturday night we have participated in the demonstrations, the clashes with the police, the occupations in the city centre and the neighbourhoods. Time and again we have had to leave work and our daily obligations to take to the streets with the students, the university students and the other proletarians in struggle.

WE DECIDED TO OCCUPY THE BUILDING OF GSEE

- To turn it into a space of free expression and a meeting point of workers.
  
- To dispel, among other fairy-tales touted by the media, the myth that the workers were and are absent from the clashes, and that the rage of these days is the affair of some 500 "mask-wearers", "hooligans". This is while on the TV-screens the workers are presented as victims of the clashes and the media and their managers talk of countless layoffs in Greece and across the World, as a result of the economic crisis, as a "natural phenomenon".
  
- To uncover and counteract the role of the trade union bureaucracy in undermining the insurrection -and not only there. GSEE, and the entire trade union mechanism that supports it, has for decades undermined our struggles, bargained away our labour power for crumbs and perpetuated the system of exploitation and wage slavery. The stance of GSEE last Wednesday says it all: GSEE cancelled the programmed strikers' demonstration and instead organized a brief gathering in Syntagma Sq, while also making sure that people would be dispersed quickly from the Square, fearing that they may become infected by the virus of insurrection.
  
- To open up this space for the first time - a space that has been built from our contributions, a space from which we are also excluded. This is a continuation of the opening of social space as part of the insurrection. All these years we trusted our fate to saviours of every kind and we have ended up losing our dignity. As workers we have to start assuming our own responsibilities, and to stop assigning our hopes to wise leaders or "able" representatives. We have to acquire a voice of our own, to meet up, to talk, to decide, and to act against the generalized attack we all endure. Collective "grassroots" resistance is the only way.

-To propagate the idea of self-organization and solidarity in the workplace, strike committees and collective, grassroots work to overthrow the trade union bureaucrats.

All these years we have been silent to the misery, the pimping and the violence in our workplaces. We have become accustomed to counting the crippled and our dead - the so-called "labor accidents". We became accustomed to ignoring the migrants -our class brothers- getting killed. We have become tired of living with the anxiety of securing a wage, revenue stamps, and a pension. That now feels like a distant dream.

Just as we struggle not to place our lives in the hands of bosses and trade union representatives, we also will not abandon the arrested insurgents in the hands of the state and the judiciary.

IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF THE DETAINED

NO CHARGES TO THE ARRESTED

SELF-ORGANIZATION OF THE WORKERS

GENERAL STRIKE

- *Workers' Assembly of the "Liberated" building of the GSEE*

Απελευθερωμένη Εργατική Ζώνη (2008) *Μεταφράσεις της πρώτης προκήρυξης της Γενικής Συνέλευσης Εξεγερμένων Εργατών*. [online] (Updated 20<sup>th</sup> December 2008) Available at: [http://gseefreezone.blogspot.com/2008/12/blog-post\\_7278.html](http://gseefreezone.blogspot.com/2008/12/blog-post_7278.html) [Accessed 2nd September 2010]

## **2c16. 17<sup>th</sup> December 2008: A Letter to Students**

Our age difference and general estrangement make it difficult for us to discuss with you in the streets; this is why we send you this letter.

Most of us have not (yet) become bald or big-bellied. We were part of the 1990-91 movement. You must have heard of it. Back then, while we occupied our schools for 30-35 days, fascists killed a teacher because he had gone beyond his natural role (that of being our guard) and crossed the line to the opposite side; he had come with us, into our struggle. Back then it was the boldest of us who took to the streets and rioted, we didn't even think of doing what you easily do today: attack police stations (although we sang "burn police stations...").

So, you've gone beyond us, as always happens in history. Conditions are different of course. The '90s gave us opportunities for individual success that some of us swallowed. Now people no longer believe this fairy tale. Your older brothers showed us this during the 2006-07 students' movement; you now spit their fairy tales in their faces.

So far so good. Now for the more difficult stuff. We'll tell you what we've learned from our struggles and from our defeats (for as long as the world is not ours we'll always be in defeat) and you can use what we've learned as you wish:

Don't stay alone. Call us; call as many people as possible. We don't know how this can be done, but you will find a way. You've already occupied your schools and you tell us that this is because you don't like your schools. Nice. Since you're occupying them, change their role. Share your occupations with other people. Let your schools become the first buildings to contain new social relations. Their most powerful weapon is dividing us. Just like you are not afraid of attacking their police stations because you are together, don't be afraid to call on us in order to change our lives together.

Don't listen to any political organization (anarchist or otherwise). Do what you need to. Trust people, not abstract programmes and ideas. Trust your direct relations with people. Trust your friends; bring as many people as possible into your struggle. Don't listen to them when they say that your struggle doesn't have, and needs, political content. Your struggle is the content. You only have your struggle and it's only in your hands that it will advance. It's only your struggle that will transform your life, you and your relations with others.

Don't be afraid of confronting new things. Each one of us, as we're getting older, has an anxious mind. You too, even though you are young. Don't forget the importance of this fact. Back in 1991,

we confronted the smell of the new world and, trust us, we found it difficult. We learned that there must always be limits. Don't be scared by the destruction of commodities. Don't be scared by people looting stores. We did all these things, they are ours. You (just like we in the past) are raised to get up every morning to make things that will not be yours. Let's get them back together and share them, just like we share our friends and the love among us.

We apologize for writing this letter quickly; we write it behind the bosses back. We are imprisoned in work, just like you are imprisoned in school. We'll now lie to our boss and leave work: we'll come to meet you in Syntagma sq with stones in our hands.

- *Proletarians*

Libcom (2008) *Greece Unrest: A Letter to Students, December 2008*. [online] (Updated 17<sup>th</sup> December 2008) Available at: <http://libcom.org/library/letter-students-december-2008-16122008> [Accessed 2nd September 2010]

## **2c17. 19<sup>th</sup> December 2008: (self)destruction is creation**

*Translation of a leaflet circulated in the occupied Athens School of Economics and elsewhere.*

We won't forget the night of December 6th that easily. Not because the assassination of Alexis was incomprehensible. State violence, as much as it might try to construct itself into more productive formations of sovereignty, will endlessly return to dear and archetypal forms of violence. It will always retain within its structure a state disobeying the modernist command for discipline, surveillance and control of the body – opting, rather, for the extermination of the disobedient body and choosing to pay the political cost coming with this decision.

When the cop shouts “hey, you”, the subject to which this command is directed and which turns its body in the direction of authority (in the direction of the call of the cop) is innocent by default since it responds to the voice reproaching it as a product of authority. The moment when the subject disobeys this call and defies it, no matter how low-key this moment of disobedience might be (even if it didn't throw a molotov to the cop car but a water bottle) is a moment when authority loses its meaning and becomes something else: a breach that must be repaired. When the manly honour of the fascist-cop is insulted he may even kill in order to protect (as he himself will claim) his kids and his family. Moral order and male sovereignty - or else the most typical form of symbolic and material violence - made possible the assassination of Alexis; they propped the murder, produced its “truth” and made it a reality.

Along with this, at the tragic limit of a death that gives meaning to lives shaped by its shade, revolt became a reality: this incomprehensible, unpredictable convulsion of social rhythms, of the broken time/space, of the structures structured no more, of the border between what is and what is to come.

A moment of joy and play, of fear, passion and rage, of confusion and some consciousness that is grievous, dynamic and full of promises. A moment which, regardless, will either frighten itself and preserve the automations that created it or will deny itself constantly in order to become at each moment something different to what it was before: all in order to avoid ending up at the causality of revolts suffocated in normality, revolts becoming another form of authority whilst defending themselves.

How did this revolt become possible? What right of the insurgents was vindicated, at what moment, for what murdered body? How was this symbol socialised? Alexis was “our Alexis”, he was no



“other”, no foreigner, no migrant. High school students could identify with him; mothers feared losing their own child; establishment voices would turn him into a national hero. The body of the 15-year old mattered, his life was worth living, its ending was an assault against the public sphere – and for this reason mourning Alex was possible and nearly necessary. This sphere turned against a community us who revolted don’t identify with, exactly like Alexis did not identify. This is a community, regardless, in which many of us many have the privilege to belong since the others recognise us as their own. The story of Alexis will be written from its end. He was a good kid, they said. The revolt, which we would have been unable to predict, became possible through the cracks of authority itself: an authority deciding what bodies matter in the social network of relations of power. The revolt, this hymn to social non-regularity, is a product of regularity... It is the revolt for “our own” body that was exterminated, for our own social body. The bullet was shot against the society as a whole. It was a wound on every bourgeois democrat who wants their own security to be reflected upon the state and its organs. The bullet was a declaration of war against society. The social contract was breached – there is no consensus. The moral and political act of resistance became possible, understandable, just, visible at the moment when it came under the terms and conditions of justice of the dominant symbolic order encompassing the social fabric.

This starting point does not cancel the righteousness of the uprising. Because the dominant Speech, the authority that gives name, shape and meaning to things, the range of dominant ideas from which the concept of social segmentation derives so as to control the hierarchical social relations have all already excluded the “hooded youths” from this community. They have cornered them at the community’s dangerous borderline in order to set the limits of disobedience.

They tell us to resist but not in this fashion, they say, because it is dangerous. What the social legitimation we came across at the beginning of all this has got to tell us is that even if we are tangled in the web of authority, even if we are its creations, we are inside and against it; we are what we do in order to change who we are. We want this historical moment to adopt the content we have set ourselves and not the meanings from which it can escape overnight.

It is not possible for this authority to bloodlessly cross the boundary between obedience and autonomous action, since if the rebels need to muster up their masculinity in order to fight the cop, they need to question it at the same time because it constitutes the authority they use to fight the cop. And this ambivalence lies at the heart of our subjectivity, it is a contradiction that tears us apart and forms the moral splendour that takes place in the margins of the rebellion, outside and inside

us, on the quiet nights when we wonder what is going on now, what has gone wrong, and we can only hear silence.

Nothing exists without the meaning assigned to it. Resistance strategies can turn into strategies of authority: Chaos will recreate a hierarchy in social relationships unless we fight with ourselves while fighting the world, some selves that we formed as part of this world: we have grown within the moral and political limits this world sets, within the moral-political ties in which the self comes into being... It will recreate itself into a hierarchy, should we not bring off male macho behaviour that goes berzerk and gets carried away by emotion, should we adopt positions that densify in positions of authority.

- *Girls in Revolt*

Occupied London (2008) *(Self)destruction is creation*. [online] (Updated 19<sup>th</sup> December 2008) Available at: <http://www.occupiedlondon.org/blog/2008/12/19/self-destruction-is-creation/> [Accessed 8<sup>th</sup> September 2010]

## **2c18. 20<sup>th</sup> December 2008: Greek Fire – From Riot to Social Rebellion**

*The text below is from a leaflet which was being distributed at a demonstration in San Francisco, USA expressing solidarity with the Greek revolt.*

In one scene, Molotov cocktails rain down in the night on a police station, their explosive flashes lighting up an otherwise dark street; in another, the national Christmas tree is torched by angry protesters. The current unrest in Greece seems to have taken place under the sign of fire, one that was ignited by the police killing of a teenager in Athens two weeks ago. Beyond the pyrotechnics, however, there has been another kind of conflagration: what started as concentrated rage at the police has assumed the dimensions of a social rebellion, moving beyond the actions of a “violent fringe” to involve large numbers of young people. While undoubtedly having specifically Greek characteristics, this burgeoning movement has attracted attention elsewhere. French officials have expressed worries about a “contagion” spreading to youth in their country. They have even gone so far as to withdraw a plan to reform French secondary education, citing the fear of a possible replay of the Greek events as a reason. There have been solidarity protests in a number of countries, including exemplary actions by Turkish anarchists eager to show their sympathy with their counterparts in Greece.

If the reaction to the police killing had been limited to skirmishes between cops and a few anarchists, however, the Greek events would have literally burned themselves out after a few days. What is interesting about the current situation is precisely how it grew into something larger, expanding from street battles to the occupation of secondary schools and university faculties, and showing not only combativeness but a sense of initiative and imagination, as in the dramatic seizure of television and radio stations by protesters who took control of the microphones and cameras. Viewers of a national NET television channel on December 16 saw the broadcast of a speech by the Greek prime minister interrupted by another emanating from the network studio and showing protesters there holding a banner that said, “Stop watching television. Take to the streets.” A day later, protesters draped large banners over parts of the Parthenon, transforming a tourist site into a forum from which to launch their call for a Europe-wide solidarity action on December 18. On December 18 itself, young demonstrators in Athens wore large bar codes to symbolize their rejection of being treated as objects, as commodities. These gestures were both poetic and to the point, showing the ingenuity of the movement.

As the counterattack against the police turned into a broader offensive at the end of the first week’s clashes, the revolutionary minority at the rebellion’s core—whom the Greek government and

media sought to isolate and vilify as “criminals”—found that its anti-state and anti-capitalist message resonated with a generation facing bleak economic prospects. Moreover, as others—mainly, but not only, students—became involved, the rebellion no longer “belonged” to the anarchists, who in any case had never asserted any claim of ownership. Language considered extreme only a few weeks ago had now entered into a larger public discourse where many voices could express themselves. Amidst this polyphony, a kind of dialectics (διαλεκτική, argument or conversation, in the original Greek) was being practiced in the streets and occupied buildings of the country. The uprising had also ceased to be a purely Greek affair, as sizeable numbers of young immigrants—with their own long history of grievances against the police—joined the fray. There were indications of workers joining the movement. Significantly, on December 17, a group of “insurgent workers” occupied the headquarters of the main Greek trade union federation. The occupiers issued a declaration that, among other things, stated the goal of their seizure of the union building:

*To open up this space for the first time—as a continuation of the social opening created by the insurrection itself—a space that has been built by our contributions, a space from which we were excluded. (...) We have to acquire a voice of our own, to meet up, to talk, to decide, and to act. Against the generalized attack we endure. The creation of collective “grassroot” resistances is the only way.*

Communiqué of the General Assembly of Insurgent Workers, Athens, December 17, 2008

Arrayed against the rebellion have been the forces of the Greek state, abetted in some places by the fascist thugs of the Golden Dawn organization. Also playing their allotted role in counter-insurgency have been the political parties, including the Stalinists of the KKE (Communist Party of Greece), who issued vile calumnies of those fighting the police in the streets. More adroitly, the independent “new left” party SYRIZA (Coalition of the Left and Progress) has sought to position itself—by extending a kind of critical support to the protest movement—so as to be able to co-opt the discontent for its own electoral ends.

If the Greek movement of occupations becomes more generalized, then this rebellion may turn into the most significant revolt in Europe in the past 20 years, eclipsing the kinds of protest waves seen in France in recent years, for example. What makes the Greek uprising especially interesting has been its fluid, shifting character—or to use another good Greek word, its *protean* nature. It has been part insurrection, part protest movement, part movement of occupations, without being defined by any

single category. However, this rebellion will develop further only to the extent that it widens and deepens “the social opening” referred to in the communiqué cited earlier, thereby becoming a truly mass phenomenon and not merely an affair of radical youth. There are signs that this is possible, but it will only happen if the revolt moves from pure negation to affirmation, beyond a necessary and militant No to a daring and visionary Yes. If this doesn’t occur, the movement is likely to devolve into a predictable, albeit interesting, kind of street theater. One of the rebellion’s most popular slogans, spray painted in English, has been “No Control.” In this, one hears an echo of the punk “No Future”; one might find a distant link to the most radical of the Spanish anarchists who proudly called themselves *los incontrolados* (the uncontrolled ones). And the difference in meaning is crucial: either the movement leads to self-organization, to the prefiguration of new social relationships, as in the Spanish Revolution, or it ends in a kind of nihilism.

By attacking both capital and the state, the Greek insurgents have shown that these are two sides of the same coin, a currency whose denominations are hierarchy, exclusion, and exploitation. They are not seeking another government but another society. Their rebellion has also been a timely reminder that the radical transformation of the world does not depend on the workings of some ineluctable “laws of history.” In addition to the necessary objective conditions, it also requires a decision on the part of large numbers of people to fight back, to make themselves heard, and to make change.

In the Byzantine era, Greek Fire was a devastating weapon made from a mixture of elements whose exact composition was a closely guarded secret. The present rebellion in Greece represents an altogether different kind of fire, one whose fuel derives from conditions found everywhere. Its heat has already torn holes in the shroud enveloping an era of diminished horizons and worsening social conditions. In place of resignation and fatalism, it offers other choices, putting the world in another light.

Imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery, but in the end it is still only that: imitation. Trying to blindly replicate the Greek scenario elsewhere is doomed to failure, especially in the U.S., where conditions are quite different. To begin with, the rules of engagement for cops here do not include much tolerance for Molotov cocktails (it is more than likely that American cops would start shooting), nor are there the kinds of “no go areas” (like the Greek universities) in which to shelter from the police.

To emulate the spirit of the Greek rebellion requires little, but yet requires a great deal: audacity and verve, but also creativity and intelligence.

- *Collective Reinventions*

Collective Reinventions (2008) *Greek Fire: From Riot to Social Rebellion*. [online] (Updated 20<sup>th</sup> December 2008) Available at: [http://www.collectivereinventions.org/Essays/Greek\\_Fire/Greek\\_Fire.htm](http://www.collectivereinventions.org/Essays/Greek_Fire/Greek_Fire.htm) [Accessed 7th September 2010]

## **2c19. 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2008: Merry Christmas**

“No one has the right to use this tragic incident as an alibi for brutalities”. - *Statement by prime minister K. Karamanlis, one of these days*

### **1.**

This December, the wind of insurrection blew once again over cities. The joyful and festive atmosphere was set on fire together with the Christmas tree on Syntagma sq. The assassination of the 15-year-old student Alexis Grigoropoulos by special police guard ignited the spark. Thousands of enraged proletarians got to the streets and set the cities of commodity on fire. The social explosion we still live cannot be explained only by means of rage against one more state assassination or against police. It's much more. It's the explosion of accumulated rage deriving from their constant attempt for years now to depreciate our lives, something which seems to be accelerated by a capitalism in crisis. At last, we had the opportunity to decisively and practically declare “That's enough! Now it's our turn!”. Despite our smaller or greater sporadic reactions, we have all these years been tolerating more and more work for increasingly tinier wages, we have tolerated our indirect wage being attacked by the benefits-pensions system reform, student life being intensified, the recent universities' reform, more and more layoffs, growing precariousness, environmental devastation and brutality against immigrants. We have been tolerating the multiplication of human-waste -those who don't fit to their economy's development diagrams- and bosses' arrogance. And during all these years, we have been accumulating rage, while bosses hoped this social bomb wouldn't explode and the naive wouldn't believe it would explode. But history proves that explosion is inevitable and it always compels everyone to take sides. The old mole is not dead yet...

### **2.**

Since we got to the streets, a grand mass of non-politicized teenagers showed us what we had to do in order to proceed. However, this revolt isn't a student one. We met school kids, university students, young (mainly, but not only) workers, unemployed. Several of them (mainly in Athens) were immigrants who stood up against brutal exploitation, silently tolerated for two decades now. We heard about prisoners abstaining from food for 24 hours, manifesting their support to rebels in the cities. In the streets, dividing identities were practically negated. We merged in a crowd attacking police departments, banks and stores, fighting police, liberating public buildings (if not just provisionally) at the centre of the cities and various suburbs, holding popular assemblies and demonstrations in the neighbourhoods. This mixed crowd obtained homogeneity in the revolt

against the everyday violence of commodity's dominance, in the violent manifestation of its desire for real life. This insurgency is spontaneous and uncontrollable, while at the same time it explicitly implicates the rejection of politics, since no concrete demands or political proposals were put forth. We made clear that we don't trust politicians of any kind, whose only goal is to maintain social peace; peace that veils the misery of our everyday life, our exploitation and alienation. Our rage is manifested in the wild simplicity of banners saying "Murderers!". This insurgency constitutes an authentic proletarian moment of negating the conditions which we are forced to live in...

### 3.

From the very first moment after the assassination on December 6, state and media mechanisms were activated to confront the explosion of the proletarian rage. Initially, they attempted to put possible reactions under control exploiting the spectacular submission of the resignations by Pavlopoulos and Chinofotis (the Minister and ex- Deputy Minister of the Interior, correspondingly), the Prime Minister's promise that anybody responsible for the death of the 15-year-old kid will be 'exemplarily punished', all oppositional parties' and many journalists' disapproval of the government and the 'discreet stance' of cops against demonstrators. However, very quickly, they unleashed every form of repression: threats of declaring the country in a state of emergency, mobilization of fascists and para-governmental organizations of 'indignant citizens', dozens of arrests and beating of demonstrators, more shootings by cops in Athens. All bosses' parties in a body (with the Communist Party being the most vulgar amongst them) and the TV scamps attempted to spread fear. Similarly, the two major union confederations, GSEE and ADEDY, cancelled the routine strike demonstrations against New Year's state budget when they suspected the danger of those demos being transformed into riots. However, against union bureaucrats' jabber about government's failing to ensure social order and peace, demos did take place during the general strike day and were indeed wild. Thus, reality is different: the bosses are those who are afraid. When the foreign minister of France stated from the very beginning of the insurgency 'I would like to express our concern, everyone's concern about the progress of conflicts in Greece', he would express bosses' fear for the possibility of this social explosion to be circulated, since solidarity demos to insurgents in Greece are taking place in many cities all over the world. Particularly in France, the Ministry of Education withdrew the impending reform in secondary schools, thus giving an end to an emerging movement of high school kids applauding the flames of insurgency in Greek cities and towns.



#### 4.

On the news, we watch the police campaign of dividing demonstrators, either by presenting insurgency as an adventure of teenagers, whose inherent sensitivity due to their age gives them a right to rebel against their parents' world (as if proletarian parents wouldn't rightfully desire this world's destruction) or by mobilizing racist reflexes using the fake separation 'Greek demonstrators - immigrant looters', but mainly by attempting to divide demonstrators between good-peaceful ones and bad-rioters. The right of demonstrating is affirmed by bosses and their lackeys only to suppress the need to revolt. Because they want to avoid any further socialization of violent behaviours in the streets, they seek by all means to present them as actions of 'antiauthoritarians' or 'hooligans' who intrude into demonstrations of otherwise peace-loving civilians. Well, not only (and not mainly) anarchists loot, smash and attack police. Anarchists participate up to a point. The significant depreciation of youngsters and immigrants for years now explains the harsh and standing conflict against the state and the generalized looting. Smashing as a proletarian action declares the everyday existence of police departments, banks or chain stores as moments of a silent war. It also manifests the rupture with the democratic management of social conflict, which tolerates demos against this or that matter, provided that they are deprived of any autonomous class action. Invoking the ultimate political rampart of capital's dominance, that is democracy, the prime minister declared that 'social struggles or the death of a teenager cannot be confused with actions against democracy'. Democracy of course approves devastating cities and the countryside, polluting atmosphere and contaminating water, bombing, selling weapons, creating dumps of human beings, forcing us to stop being humans in order to become objects-thatwork (or look for work, since more and more people are or will be unemployed because of the crisis). He thus implicates that some people can destroy anything they want as long as new chances for profit are created and development is promoted. However, doing this against private property constitutes the ultimate scandal for a society which has established this essential right from its early birth. Burning and smashing constitute wounds to this society's legitimacy. The 'hooded rioters' is an empty notion, intended for police use exclusively. Police monopolizes the shaping of the threat's profile.

#### 5.

For the image-producing machine, the very opposite of the 'hooded rioter' (that is, the image constructed to separate proletarians) is the 'peaceful civilian whose property is destroyed'. Who is this celebrated 'peaceful civilian', enraged by smashing? In this occasion, 'peaceful civilians' are the small businessmen, the owners of 'small' stores, the petit bourgeoisie. The state has been fooling

even them, since many of them are being destroyed by the capitalist crisis. During this December, turnover is half of that of December 2007, not only for stores at Ermou and Stournari streets (the first being the place with the more expensive stores in Athens and the second the main street in Exarchia district), but also for open-air markets; yet no such market was attacked during these past days... Bosses claim that smashing stores has made many people lose their jobs, while at the same time one hundred thousand layoffs are soon to be announced in Greece because of the crisis. Even when 'small' stores weren't vandalised by hooded vandals in the employ of the state, as has been commented by the workers of these stores in a leaflet written by the 'Autonomous Initiative of Shop-assistants of Larisa': 'We denounce whoever attempts to terrorize and convince us that defending property stands above human life and dignity; besides, this property has been created by precarious workers' unpaid, black and surplus labour; no small businesses have been damaged during symbolic attacks against banks and public buildings [indeed, this is true for Larissa and other provincial cities]. If they really care about shop-assistants, they should increase the miserable wages they give them, they should learn what social security is and they should create human working hours and conditions'. Let bourgeois (petit or grand ones) worry about their stores. We don't stand on the same side in the class war; during periods of social polarization, as the one we live today, everyone has to take sides.

## 6.

This is the insurgency's third week. Although the mass media attempt to conceal this by all means, demonstrations, occupations and popular assemblies still continue to take place, mainly in Athens but in other cities as well. Insurgents demand the immediate release of everyone arrested. The only effective way to support arrested people is by developing the struggle, of which they are a part of as well. It's true that at this time it's difficult for anyone to predict whether and how this social unrest will continue. Regardless of what will happen, nothing will be the same not only for those of us who have been in the streets but for the whole working class as well. Lots of discussions and critical accounts have to be made concerning what happened during this December. But such a project concerns insurgents or whoever has interest in this world's destruction and not the news or politicians. To conclude: this year, Christmas is canceled; there's a revolt goin' on!

Nothing is over yet, the struggle continues!

Immediate release of everybody arrested during the social revolt!

- TPTG

Ta Paidia Tis Galarias (2008) *Merry Christmas*. [online] (updated 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2008) Available at:  
[http://www.tapaidiatisgalarias.org/?page\\_id=105](http://www.tapaidiatisgalarias.org/?page_id=105) [Accessed 8<sup>th</sup> September 2010]

## **2c20. 24<sup>th</sup> December 2008: Announcement by the Polytechnic Occupation**

Immediately after the murder of Alexandros Grigoropoulos by the special police guard Ep. Korkoneas and the first clashes in the streets of Exarchia, the Polytechnic University was occupied and turned into a focus for the expression of social rage. Being a space historically and symbolically connected with the living memory of the rebels, and with society at large, with the struggle against Authority - from the period of dictatorship until today's modern totalitarian democracy - the Polytechnic became the place where hundreds of people gathered spontaneously: comrades, youth and workers, jobless, pupils, immigrants, students...

The fights with the forces of repression and the flaming barricades in the surrounding streets became the spark of a revolt that spread with spontaneous demonstrations in the city, the occupation of the Economics University and the Law School, with attacks against state and capitalist targets in the centre and neighbourhoods of Athens and in most cities across the country. The following days, with demonstrations of thousands of people ending up in riots and attacks against banks, ministries and big department stores, with occupations of schools and public buildings, with young children besieging and assaulting police stations, the riot police guarding Koridallios prison and the Parliament, the revolt became generalized; this revolt that was triggered by the murder of A. Grigoropoulos and exploded by the immediate reaction of hundreds of comrades to this example of the increasing use of state violence, inspiring actions of rage and solidarity beyond the borders, all over the world. This revolt that was simmering in the conditions of a generalized attack by the state and the bosses against society, growing in the reality of the everyday death of freedom and dignity that is reserved for the oppressed people by the increasing exclusion, poverty, exploitation, repression and control. This revolt that was persistently being "prepared", even in the darkest times of state and fascist terrorism, through every small or big gesture of resistance against submission and surrender, keeping open the way for many more people to meet in the streets, just like what has happened during these days. In this explosive social reality, the occupied Polytechnic became a point of reference for a direct confrontation with the state, in all forms and with all possible means, through consecutive insurrectionary events that burned down the order and security of the bosses, smashing the fake image of social consent to their murderous intentions. It became a place where rebellious social and political subjects met and influenced one another, through the general assemblies and their daily presence in the occupation. It functioned as a base for counter-information, through communiqués and posters, its blog and radio station, and with the PA system sending the messages and the news of the ongoing revolt. And it also gave life to political initiatives of resistance, like the call made by the Polytechnic occupation assembly for a global day of action on

the 20th of December –which resulted in coordinated mobilizations in more than 50 cities in different countries, and in which the Polytechnic occupiers participated by calling for a gathering in the place where A. Grigoropoulos was murdered-, like the concert held on the 22nd of December for solidarity and financial support to the hostages of the revolt, and the call for participation in the prisoner solidarity demonstration that was organized by comrades who took part in the open assembly of the occupied GSEE (General Workers' Confederation).

As a stable, for 18 days, point of the revolt that expanded, the occupied Polytechnic was a continuous call of insubordination to the people resisting all over the world, and a permanent sign of solidarity to the hostages taken by the state from within this struggle. It became the territory we used in order to diffuse the message of solidarity between the oppressed, of self-organisation and of a social and class counter-attack against the world of Authority, its mechanisms and its symbols. These elements and values of the struggle created the ground for the oppressed to meet in rebellion, armed our consciences and, for the first time maybe, became so widely impropriated by so many people of different age and different nationalities; people with whom anarchists and anti-authoritarians shared the same slogans against the police, the same words, the same practices of struggle, the same rage against those who are looting our lives, and, many times, the same vision for a world of freedom, equality and solidarity.

For this reason, repression was not only expressed in the form of police brutality, arrests and imprisonment of demonstrators, but also with an intense ideological attack launched by all sides of the political system which saw its foundations trembling when repression, in which it is based, not only was unable to restrain the waves of revolt, but, contrary, it was the one that caused them in the first place. This ideological attack selectively targeted anarchists, as a political and unmediated part of the revolt, exactly because of the impact their words and actions had, and because of the danger that it presented for the state when they communicate and coordinate with the thousands of the oppressed. In this context, there was an hysterical effort to divide the revolt between “good pupils” on one hand, and “evil hooded anarchists – ‘koukouloforoi’” or “immigrant looters” on the other, as well as the good old myth about provocateurs, in order to manipulate the anger for the assassination, to exhaust the social explosion, to criminalize, isolate and crush the steady points of reference within this revolt [This is, by the way, the same rhetoric of repression that led to the murder of A. Grigoropoulos, as it is responsible for recognizing specific political-social milieus, spaces and people as the “enemy within” on which state violence should be “legitimately” enforced]. In this effort made by the state, the continuous targeting of the Polytechnic was included on a daily basis, with statements made by politicians and a slandering campaign by the mass media. After the hours

of clashes in Exarchia and around the Polytechnic during the night of December 20, the state, in the face of the public prosecutor, threatened to proceed to a police raid, after suspending the academic asylum in the campus, despite the disagreement of the university authorities, in order to suppress the revolt by attacking one of the first places where it had started. Their intentions were defeated because of the refusal of the occupiers to give in to any ultimatum, their decisiveness to defend this political and social territory as a part of the revolt, their open call to people to come and support the occupation with their presence and by proceeding to the planned prisoner solidarity gig on the 22nd of December which gathered hundreds of people at the Polytechnic. The threats for an immediate eviction returned stronger the following day, December 23, when, while the assembly was discussing the end of the occupation, we were informed by political and academic figures that the ministry of Interior and the police are demanding our immediate exit from the campus otherwise the cops would invade. The reply of the occupiers was that the Polytechnic does not belong either to the ministry or to police for us to surrender to them; it belongs to the people of the struggle who decide on what to do based exclusively on criteria of the movement and do not accept blackmails and ultimatums by the assassins. This way the Polytechnic occupation was prolonged for one more day, and called to the demo which was realized in the centre of Athens for solidarity with the arrested. No repressive project and no ideological attack managed or will manage to blackmail the return to normality and to impose social and class pacification. Nothing is the same anymore! The surpassing of fear, of isolation and of the dominant social divisions, led thousands of young people, together with women and men of every age, refugees and migrants, workers and jobless to stand together in the streets and behind barricades fighting the tyrants of our life, our dignity and freedom. And this is a reality lighting with its flames the future of revolt, both its intensification and deepening, until the absolute subversion of the world of the bosses. Because we shouted in all ways that those days belong to Alexis, to Michalis Kaltezas, to Carlo Giuliani, to Christoforos Marinos, to Michalis Prekas, to Maria Koulouri and to all comrades murdered by the uniformed assassins of the state; they aren't though days that belong to death, but to LIFE! To life that blossoms in the struggles, in the barricades, in the revolt that continues.

Ending the Polytechnic occupation after 18 days, we send our warmest solidarity to all people who became part of this revolt in their many ways, not only in Greece but also in numerous countries of Europe, of South and North America, Asia and Australasia. To all those with whom we met and we will stay together, fighting for the liberation of the prisoners of this revolt, but also for its continuing until global social liberation. For a world without masters and slaves, without police and armies, without borders and prisons.

DEATH TO THE STATE – LONG LIVE ANARCHY!

IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF ALL THE ARRESTED IN THE REVOLT!

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES!

We call to the open assembly that will take place in the Polytechnic, on Saturday, December 27 at 16.00, concerning the organization of solidarity to the arrested, which was called by comrades in the assembly of the occupied GSEE.

- *The Polytechnic Occupation*

Occupied London (2008) *Announcement by the Athens Polytechnic Occupation (24.12.2008)* [online] (Updated 25<sup>th</sup> December 2008) Available at: <http://www.occupiedlondon.org/blog/2008/12/25/announcement-by-the-athens-polytechnic-occupation-24122008/> [Accessed 8<sup>th</sup> September 2010]

**2c21. 24<sup>th</sup> December 2008: A Bedouin anytime! A citizen never.**

“Having by our late labours and hazards made it appear to the world at how high a rate we value our just freedom (...) we do now hold our selves bound in mutual duty to each other, to take the best care we can for the future, to avoid the danger of returning into a slavish condition.”

- *Levellers, An Agreement of the People, 1647*

Let's look beyond the tear gas, the baton sticks and the riot police vans: The operation being conducted by the bosses since December 6th doesn't comprise a mere combination of repression and propaganda; rather, it is the application of a series of methods aiming to re-negotiate social peace and consensus.

From the Communist party, who view the revolted people as puppets of SYRZIA (the far-left parliamentary party) or of the CIA, all the way to Socialist party (PASOK) politicians moaning that Athens resembles a city of the Eastern Block with its streets empty of consumers. From the archbishop of Thessaloniki, who begs his flock to go shopping and the city's international exposition offering free parking to Christmas shoppers, they all hold a common target: The return to the normality of democracy and consumption. Thus the day after the revolt, which happens to coincide with a dead consumer feast such as Christmas, is accompanied by the demand that this must be celebrated at all cost: not only in order for some tills to fill up but in order for us all to return to our graves. The day after holds the demand of the living dead that nothing disturbs their eternal sleep no more. It holds a moratorium legitimising the emptiness of their spectacle-driven world, a world of quiet and peaceful life. And the generals of this war hold no weapon that is more lethal than the appeal to that absolute, timeless idea: democracy.

The word-for-democracy, developing as it does ever more densely from the side of the demagogues of calmness, aims at the social imaginary – the collective field of structuring of desires and fears. It aims, in other words, at the field where procedures invisibly take place that can secure or threaten order and its truth. Everyone knew, well before the assassination of Alexis, that the oligarchy of capital had given up on trying even to seem democratic, even by bourgeois terms: economic scandals, blatant incidents of police violence, monstrous laws. Yet this fact is not, neither here nor anywhere else, what might worry the bosses. This is precisely because the constant reproduction of the establishment under such terms (“is it democratic enough? Is it really democratic?”) reproduces the capitalist oligarchy that builds around it a wall of scandals, remorse, resignations, demands and reforms – preventing, in this way, the questioning of (not the democratic qualities of the regime but)



democracy as a system of social organising. Hence bosses can still appeal to this higher value today, this axiomatic mechanism of the political, in order to bring us back to normality, consensus, compromise. In order to assimilate the general spontaneous rage in the sphere of mediation before this rage can organise itself into a revolutionary potential which would swoop all and any intermediaries and peaceful democrats – bringing along a new form of organising: the commune.

Amidst this ludicrous climate of shallow analyses the salaried officials of this psychological warfare point at the revolted, howling: “That’s not democratic, that ignores the rules under which our democracy functions”. We cannot help but momentarily stand speechless in the face of what we would until recently have considered impossible. Even if having the intention to deceive, the bosses of this country have said something true: We despise democracy more than anything else in this decadent world. For what is democracy other than a system of discriminations and coercions in the service of property and privacy? And what are its rules, other than rules of negotiation of the right to own – the invisible rules of alienation? Freedom, rights equality, egalitarianism: all these dead ideological masks together cannot cover their mission: the generalisation and preservation of the social as an economic sphere, as a sphere where not only what you have produced but also what you are and what you can do are already alienated. The bourgeois, with a voice trembling from piety, promise: rights, justice, equality. And the revolted hear: repression, exploitation, looting. Democracy is the political system where everyone is equal in front of the guillotine of the spectacle-product. The only problem that concerned democrats, from Cromwell to Montesquieu, is what form of property is sufficient in order for someone to be recognised as a citizen, what kind of rights and obligations guarantee that they will never understand themselves as anything other than a private citizen. Everything else is no more than adjusting details of a regime in the service of capital.

Our despise for democracy does not derive from some sort of idealism but rather, from our very material animosity towards a social entity where value and organisation are centred on the product and the spectacle. The revolt was by definition also a revolt against property and alienation. Anyone that didn’t hide behind the curtains of their privacy, anyone who was out on the streets, knows it only too well: Shops were looted not for computers, clothes or furniture to be resold but for the joy of destroying what alienates us: the spectacle of the product. Anyone who doesn’t understand why someone delights in the sight of a destroyed product is a merchant or a cop. The fires that warmed the bodies of the revolted in these long December nights were full of the liberated products of our toil, from the disarmed symbols of what used to be an almighty fantasy. We simply took what belonged to us and we threw it to the fire together with all its possible expressions. The grand potlatch of the past few days was also a revolt of desire against the imposed rule of scarcity. A revolt

of the gift against the sovereignty of money. A revolt of the anarchy of use value against the democracy of exchange value. A revolt of spontaneous collective freedom against rationalised individual coercion.

- *Initiative from the occupation of the Athens School of Economics and Business*

56a Infoshop (2009) *Everyone to the Streets: Texts and Communiques from the Greek Uprising*. Shortfuse Press: London

## **2c22. 25<sup>th</sup> December 2008: Greece unrest - Interview with a libertarian syndicalist**

*An interview by the CNT-f (Confédération Nationale du Travail-Vignoles – National Confederation of Labour) with the International Secretary of the ESE (Eleftheriaki Sindikalistiki Enosi - Union of Libertarian Syndicalists), discussing the death of Alexis Grigoropoulos and the events that have followed.*

- Can you describe the events surrounding the death of Alexis again?

For the last three years the Greek police's strategy in Exârcheia, a district famous for popular struggle and home to many students., young people and libertarians, has been one of provocation.

Police patrols have become more frequent recently and on a daily basis the police are insulting the people in the area.

When it comes to the murder of this 15 year-old boy all the witnesses (residents, passers-by etc) state that the police were provoking a group of young people by insulting them. When the youths responded the police parked their car and then returned to where the youths were sitting then they fired three times. The witnesses state that the murderer fired directly at Alexis who died on the pavement.

- What are the tactics of the Greek police?

Since the end of the dictatorship of the Colonels dozens of Greeks have been killed by the police. Amongst the dead are: Mikalis Kaltezas, a 15 year-old anarchist militant killed in 1985; Issidoros Issidoropoulos, a 16 year-old extreme left-wing militant killed in 1976; Koumis and Kanellopoulou, two demonstrators and also a number of immigrants and people from ethnic minorities (gipsies and Thracian turks etc). Recently the police murdered a young disabled boy.

At the same time we're seeing countless cases of militants, demonstrators and immigrants being tortured by the police; as well as a systematic and unjustified use of tear gas bombs and other gas weapons at all demonstrations.

I'll add a final note, a police officer has never been killed by a demonstrator, furthermore no police officer, has ever spent more than two and a half years in prison.

- What is going on, and where?

The revolt has exploded in virtually all the regional capitals. In Salonika, Agrinion, Yannena and across Crete there have been clashes between police and demonstrators. In Patras the police attacked demonstrators accompanied by a battalion of armed neo-nazis, so-called "outraged citizens".

Every day in Athens there are two or three different demonstrations, with tens of thousands of participants. In solidarity 20000 demonstrators attended the funeral of Alexandros Grigoropoulos.

This isn't about "blind rebellion" like the media claims; on the contrary it is a real movement and one that continues...

The targets of the demonstrators are the banks and the multinational enterprises that are the symbols of poverty and suffering.

The revolt unites young and old, militants and the non-politicised.

It is the largest revolt in Greece since the Second World War and the Civil War which followed in Greece. It could be the largest revolt in the western world for the last forty years. For us this revolt is a completely legitimate response.

- Apart from the murder of this young man, what are the other reasons for this explosion of protests?

We are the first post-war generation to experience worse economic and employment conditions than our parents.

In Greece we often speak of the "700 euro generation". Without a doubt this slogan doesn't express how bad things are. In fact the majority of people under 30 live on less than 700 euros a month. The only jobs available are casual or short term, a lot of people are forced to work on the black market. The bosses fire people, blaming the crisis, mean while Greek Capital is benefiting from the massive profits gained from the pillage of the balkans.

The situation is worse for immigrants who suffer from racist laws, widespread xenophobia and attacks from nazi groups which go unpunished. We must underline that immigrants have played a large part in this movement and, as usual, they have been the main victims of state repression. Of the 400 arrests so far, half have been of immigrants.

As far as politics and corruption goes I can briefly sum up the situation for you:

Recently there was a scandal as the 'Vatopedia' affair saw the government giving land to the church.

Two families, the Papandreous of the centre-left and the Caramanlis of the right have governed Greece for 34 of the last 40 years.

To this we can add the disastrous mismanagement of the fires in 2007 and of the aftermath; the attacks on Social Security by the Socialists in 2001 and by the right in 2006. And the privatisation of the electricity company, the ports and of Olympic Airways.

- *Interview by Jérémie, International Secretary of the CNT-f*

CNT-f (2008) "Greece Riots: Interview with a Libertarian Syndicalist." *Anarcho-Syndicalism 101* [internet] 25<sup>th</sup> December. Available at: <http://www.anarchosyndicalism.net/newswire/display/40737/index.php> [Accessed 2nd September 2010]

## **2c23. 25<sup>th</sup> December 2008: Merry Christmas and a Happy New Fear**

“Normality” (read: their normality; the capitalist norm of exploitation, misery, repression and death) is what we are standing up against. This is what we do now, what we have always done, yet in these past days it is something that has become clearer than ever (as written elsewhere: “sometimes, tear gas can make you see better”). There were so many of us now that normality faced a new fear: a fear that it might soon be normality no more. This is when the normal panicked and called the exceptional to its defense. The assassination was called “an exception” or even, as the assassin’s lawyer claimed, “a misunderstanding”. But the people only got more enraged by their lies. So they brought in “exceptional measures”: Thousands of the occupation army of murderers and torturers (aka, the Greek police) flood the streets while the threat of an army intervention, a state of exception or the lifting of the academic asylum was hanging over our heads. And yet it wouldn’t be that easy for them, not this time round. What we had was an army of the frantic, of the desperate, of all those who wanted to shatter and smash the frame in which normality wouldn’t let them fit. “The first stone is for Alexandros, the rest are for us”. Things were getting way too serious, way out of control. Another exception is now called in: They tell us these days are special, they are “holy”, they call for social peace, consumerism and truce. This year there is, indeed, something to celebrate: not the remains of some obscure pagan feast, but a fabulous uprising that is worrying them, and rightly so. Let normality sink in its crisis and we’ll be sure to bring it some more fear.

Occupied London (2008) *Merry Crisis and a Happy New Fear*. [online] (Updated 25<sup>th</sup> December 2008) Available at: <http://www.occupiedlondon.org/blog/2008/12/25/merry-crisis-and-a-happy-new-fear/> [Accessed 8<sup>th</sup> September 2010]

**2c24. 25<sup>th</sup> December 2008: How to Organise an Insurrection (Interview with Void Network by CrimethInc)**

*How were the actions coordinated within cities? How about between cities?*

There are hundreds of small, totally closed affinity groups—groups based in longstanding friendship and 100% trust—and some bigger groups like the people from the three big squats in Athens and three more in Thessaloniki. There are more than 50 social centres in Greece, and anarchist political spaces in all the universities of the country; also, the Antiauthoritarian Movement has sections in all major cities, and there is a network of affinity groups of the Black Bloc active in all Greek cities, based on personal relations and communicating via telephone and mail. For all of them, Indymedia is very important as a strategic point for collecting and sharing useful information—where conflicts are happening, where the police are, where secret police are making arrests, what is happening everywhere minute by minute; it is also useful on a political level, for publishing announcements and calls for demonstrations and actions.

Of course, we can't forget that in practice the primary form of coordination was from friend to friend through mobile phones; that was also the main approach used by young students for coordinating their initiatives, demonstrations, and direct actions.

*What kinds of organizing structures appeared?*

a.) All sorts of small companies of friends were making spontaneous decisions in the streets, planning actions and carrying them out themselves in a chaotic, uncontrollable manner: thousands of actions taking place at the same time everywhere around the country . . .

b.) Every afternoon there was a General Assembly in squatted schools, squatted public buildings, and squatted universities . . .

c.) Indymedia was used for announcements and strategic coordination of actions . . .

d.) The various communist parties also organized their own confederations of students . . .

e.) . . . And also, one especially influential federation was organized by the friends of Alexis, to organize the students' demonstrations and actions, the squatting of schools, and to publish general announcements from the students' struggle.

*Were there any structures already in existence that people used to organize?*

For the young students who were in the streets for the first time, and also for the immigrants who participated, the telephone was more than enough; this produced a totally chaotic and unpredictable element in the situations. On the other hand, for anarchists and anti-authoritarians, the General Assemblies are the organizing tool they have used for the last 30 years during any kind of movement. All affinity groups, squats, social centres, university occupations, and other organizations have their own assemblies, as well. Some other participants included left political organizations and left and anarchist university political spaces. During the fight, a lot of new blogs appeared, and new coordinating networks of high-school students.

*What different kinds of people have participated in the actions?*

The majority were anarchists, half of them older ones, some at high risk as they had previous charges for actions and would have to face custody if they were arrested. Beside them were thousands of school students 16-18 years old. Alongside these groups were immigrants, thousands of university students, many “gypsy” [Romani] kids taking revenge for social repression and racism, and old revolutionaries with previous experience from other social struggles.

*What different forms have the actions taken?*

a.) Smashing, looting, and burning were the main actions that the young people used. They often attacked the expensive shopping districts, opened the fancy luxury shops, took everything from inside, and set fire to it in order to counteract the effects of the tear gas in the air. Many turned cars upside down to serve as barricades, keeping the police at a distance and thus creating liberated areas. The police used over 4600 tear gas bombs—nearly 4 tons—but people set countless fires, enough to maintain areas in which you could breathe despite this chemical warfare waged by the state against the people.

When the thousands of people on the streets realized that the black smoke of the fires could cancel out the white smoke of the tear gas, they used the tactic of burning everything at hand as a protection from the tear gas. Other techniques included the smashing of the pavement with hammers, to produce thousands of stones for people to use as projectiles; and, of course, the personal initiative of producing and throwing molotov cocktails. This last tactic was used especially



to force the riot police to fear and respect the demonstrators, and also as a way of controlling the space and time of attack and escape.

b.) Attacks with sticks, stones and molotov cocktails were carried out against countless banks, police stations, and police cars across the country. In smaller cities, the banks and the police were the primary or only targets, as the small-scale society and face-to-face relations discouraged the smashing of shops, with the exception of a few multinational corporate franchises.

c.) Hundreds of symbolic occupations were carried out in all kinds of public buildings, municipal offices, public service offices, theaters, radio stations, TV stations, and other buildings by groups of 50-70 people. Also, there were many symbolic acts of sabotage and blockading of streets, highways, offices, metro stations, public services, and so on, usually accompanied by the distribution of thousands and thousands of pamphlets to people in the area.

d.) Every day there were silent protests, art happenings, and non-violent actions in front of the parliament and in all cities. Most of them were brutally attacked by the police, who used tear gas and arrested people.

e.) Leftists organized concerts in public spaces with the participation of underground bands and also politically conscious pop stars. The biggest one in Athens involved more than 40 artists and drew over 10,000 people.

f.) Controlled student demonstrations were organized by the Communist Party. Many of these attracted much less participation than the chaotic spontaneous student demonstrations.

*How many of the participants in the actions have been involved in similar actions earlier? For how many of them do you think this is their "first time"?*

Many thousands of people were experienced anarchist insurrectionists, anti-authoritarians, and libertarian autonomists; half of them were older anarchists who come into the streets only in very important struggles, as most of them have previous charges. There were also many thousands of young people who were radicalized over the last three years in the course of the social struggles for Social Insurance and against the privatization of education, and also in the huge spontaneous demonstrations that took place during the fires that burned almost 25% of the natural areas of Greece in the summer of 2007. We estimate that for about 30% of the people, this was their first rioting.

*Which of the tactics used in the actions have been used before in Greece? Did they spread in the course of this rebellion? If they did, how did it happen?*

Most of the tactics used in this struggle have been used for a long time now in Greece. The most important new characteristic of this struggle was the immediate appearance of actions all over the country. The assassination of a young boy in the most important area of anarchist activity provoked an instantaneous reaction; within five minutes of his death, anarchist cells all over the country had been activated. In some cases, the police were informed much later than the anarchists about the reason they were facing attacks from the people. For Greek society, it was a surprise that the majority of young people in the country adopted the tactics of “anarchist violence, smashing and burning,” but this was a result of the generalized influence that anarchists’ actions and ideas have had in Greek society over the past four years.

*Have any conflicts emerged between participants in the actions?*

The Communist Party separated itself from anarchists and leftists, and organized separate demonstrations. Also, the announcements that the Communist Party published, their appearances in the corporate media, their speeches to the parliament, and the negative propaganda that they carried on against all leftist organizations prove that they are a real enemy of any kind of efforts for social change.

*What is the opinion of the “general public” about the actions?*

What is called “general public” during a period of tele-democracy is something that needs a lot of discussion.

Generally speaking, the “general public” feel fear when the TV says that we were “burning the poor people’s shops,” but the people know well what kind of shops exist in the expensive districts where the riots took place; they feel fear when the TV says that angry immigrants came out to the streets and looted, but also they know that the immigrants are poor and desperate, and also that it was only a minority of them that came to the streets. There were many artists, theoreticians, sociologists, and

other such personages who offered explanations about the revolt, and many of them were beneficial for our causes; some were probably trapped by their need to participate in the spirit of the times, while others were using the situation as an opportunity to honestly express their real ideas. The “general public” is angry about the murder of a 15-year-old boy by a police officer, and they hate the police much more than before; anyway, nobody liked the police in the first place. The majority of “normal” people in Greece don’t trust the right wing government or the past (and probably future) socialist government, and they don’t like the police, expensive shops, or banks. Now a new public opinion is appearing that offers all the social and ethical justifications of revolt. If it was difficult to govern Greece before, now it will be much more difficult.

*How important to the context of these events is the legacy of the dictatorship in Greece? How does it influence popular opinions and actions in this case?*

In 1973, the young people were the only ones who took the risk to revolt against the seven-year-running dictatorship; even if this was not the only cause of the end of dictatorship, it remains in the collective memory that the students saved Greece from the dictators and the domination of the US. It is a common belief that young people will put themselves at great risk for the benefit of all, and this produces a feeling of hope and a tolerance of the students’ actions. Of course, this story is now an old story and though it influences the background of the fights, it is not mentioned in reference to this conflict.

Another influence comes from the student struggles of 1991 and 1995 against the privatization of education, which succeeded in changing the plans of the government and saved public education until today. Granted, the revolt of December 2008 was probably the apex of the anarchist movement in Greece until now, as it appeared all around the country and with a great deal of influence on the actions and slogans and ideas of a general part of the society; but the earlier student struggles, especially in Athens in 1991 were more visible and more generalized.

*Do you think troubles in the economy are as important in these events as the corporate media is saying?*

The young people from the many rich areas of Athens also attacked the police stations of their areas, so even the class war Marxists have serious troubles to explain what is happening: the

separation of the rich and poor doesn't seem to matter as much as long-existing solidarity and participation in the fight for equality and social justice.

On the other hand, Greeks between the ages of 25 and 35 cannot make families and have children, because of the economy. Greece is the most underpopulated society in all Europe. But we don't talk about that here as the cause of the revolt. Young people are angry and they hate the police, capitalist cynicism, and the government in a natural, instinctual way that doesn't need explanations or a political agenda. The local media tried not to speak in depth about social conditions here the way the English, French, or US media have. The local corporate TV stations attempt to pass off lies about chaotic "masketeers" with no ideas and no social identity, because the moral influence of anarchists is so strong now in this society that if they start to talk seriously about our ideas on television, society could explode. With the exception of some TV programs and newspapers, most of the mass media are trying to separate economic issues from the chaotic revolt.

Even the leftists from the May '68 generation, when they speak to the media, say that the smashing and the riots are not political expressions of the needs and the hopes of the people—that the anarchists and young people don't have the ability to express a political agenda, and the people need other kinds of political representation. Of course, all this has little influence on the young people who will participate in the social struggles of the future, as after this struggle there exists high tension and a great distance between the younger people and any kind of political leadership or authority.

*What other motivations, besides anger against the police and the economy, do you think are driving people to participate?*

The personal and collective need for adventure; the need to participate in making history; the chaotic negation of any kind of politics, political parties, and "serious" political ideas; the cultural gap of hating any kind of TV star, sociologist, or expert who claims to analyze you as a social phenomenon, the need to exist and be heard as you are; the enthusiasm of fighting against the authorities and ridiculing the riot police, the power in your heart and the fire in your hands, the amazing experience of throwing molotovs and stones against the cops in front of the parliament, in the expensive shopping districts, or in your small silent town, in your village, in the square of your neighborhood.

Other motivations include the collective feeling of planning an action with your best friends, making it come true, and later hearing people tell you about this action as an incredible story that they heard from someone else; the enthusiasm of reading about some action that you did with your friends in a newspaper or TV program from the other side of the planet; the feeling of responsibility that you have to create stories, actions, and plans that will become global examples for the future struggles. It is also the great celebrative fun of smashing the shops, taking the products and then burning them, seeing the false promises and dreams of capitalism burned in the streets; the hatred for all authorities, the need to take part in the collective ceremony of revenge for the death of a person that could have been you, the personal vendetta of feeling that the police have to pay for the death of Alexis across the whole country; the need to send a powerful message to the government that if police violence increases, we have the power to fight back and society will explode—the need to send a direct message to society that everyone has to wake up, and a message to the authorities that they have to take us seriously because we are everywhere and we are coming to change everything.

*Are political parties succeeding in co-opting energy from the uprising?*

In “real” numbers, the Socialists have increased their lead over the right wing government, gaining an 8% lead in the polls; the “European Social Forum communists” lost 1% even though they helped the revolt, but still they are in third place with 12%; the Communist Party has 8%, the Nationalist neo-fascists 4.5%, and the Green Party is holding steady at 3.5%.

It is also interesting that the leader of the Socialists appears now to be regarded as first in “capability to govern the country” after many years with much less popularity than the right wing prime minister. The riots had a great effect on the political scene: the political parties seemed unable to understand, explain, or react to the massive wave of violence and participation from every level of society. Their announcements were irrelevant to what was really happening. Their popularity decreased dramatically among the younger population, who don’t see themselves in the logic and the politics of the political parties and don’t feel represented by them.

*What has been the role of anarchists in starting and continuing the actions? How clearly is their participation seen by the rest of society?*

Over the past few years, anarchists have created a network of communities, groups, organizations, squats, and social centers in almost all the major cities in Greece. Many don't like each other, as there exist many significant differences among the groups and individuals. This helps the movement, though, as the movement now can cover a great variety of subjects. Many different kinds of people find their comrades in different anarchist movements and, all together, push each other—in a positive, if antagonistic, way—to communicate with society. This communication includes creating neighborhood assemblies, participating in social struggles, and planning actions that have a meaning for the general society. After 30 years of anti-social anarchism, the anarchist movement in Greece today, with all its problems, limitations, and internal conflicts, has the capability to look outside of the anarchist microcosm and take actions that improve society at large in ways that are readily apparent. Of course, it will take a lot of effort for this to be obvious, but day by day nobody can deny it.

As for the role of anarchists in starting and continuing the actions . . . especially at the beginning—Saturday and Sunday, December 6 and 7—and also in the continuation after Wednesday, December 10, the anarchists were the vast majority of those who carried out the actions. In the middle days, especially on Monday when the destructive Armageddon took place, students and immigrants played a very important role. But the vast majority of students found it easy to feel satisfied after one, two, or three days of smashing, and then went home or attended demonstrations with a more pacifist atmosphere. Likewise, immigrants had to face a very strong backlash from locals, and they were afraid to return to the streets.

So the 20,000 anarchists in Greece started it, and continued it when everybody else returned to normality. And we have to mention that the fear of returning to normality helped us to keep up the fight for ten days more, putting ourselves into great danger as acts of vengeance for the assassination of our comrade transformed, in our fantasies, into preparations for a general strike. Now European society knows once and for all what a social insurrection looks like, and that it is not difficult to change the world in some months.

But you need all the people to participate and play their roles. The young people of Greece sent an invitation to all the societies throughout Europe. We are awaiting their responses now.

*How much visibility do anarchists have in Greece in general? How “seriously” is anarchism taken by the majority of Greek people?*

In a way, you can say that it is just three or four years now since anarchists started to take themselves “seriously” so we are seen that way in the broader society. It is only in the past few years that we have succeeded in expanding beyond the limitations of the anti-police strategy that had characterized our efforts for 25 years. According to that strategy, we attack the police, they arrest people, and we do solidarity actions, over and over again. It took us 25 years to escape from this routine. Of course, the anti-police attacks and fights continue, and the prisoner solidarity movement is stronger than ever, but the anti-social element inside the anarchist movement is under conscious self-control and we can speak, care, and act for the benefit of the whole society now, using actions and plans that can be comprehended much more clearly by at least a part of the society.

Many actions, like the attacks on supermarkets and the free distribution of stolen products to the people, became very popular and well-accepted. The attacks on banks, especially now following the economic crisis, are well-accepted also, and the attacks on police stations have been adapted and utilized by high-school students around the country. In one way or another, we have been the first subject in the news for the last 15 days. Generally speaking, with our participation in students’ or workers’ struggles and also in ecological struggles, every week some action taken by anarchists attracts attention and offers visibility to the anarchist movement.

This doesn’t mean that “anarchism” is taken seriously by the majority of Greek people, as most people still believe the lies of television that describe us as “masketeers” and criminals, and also the majority don’t have any idea about how an anarchist society could ever function—that includes most of the anarchists, also, who refuse to address this question! But our actions, critiques, and ideas have strong influence now on left and progressive people. It’s not possible anymore to say that we don’t exist, and now our existence radicalizes the majority of the younger generation.

*What role have subcultural groups—like punk, squatting, and so on—played in making the uprising possible?*

After ’93 we had a strong tendency in the Greek anarchist movement—accompanied by many serious internal fights—that eliminated the influence of “subcultural” styles inside the movement. This means that there is no punk, rock, metal or whatever anarchist identity in the Greek anarchist movement—you can be whatever you like, you can listen to whatever music you like, you can have whatever style or fashion you like, but that is not a political identity.

In the street fights this month, many “emos” participated, together with hippy freaks and ravers, many punks, heavy metal boys and girls, and also trendy, normal kids and students that like Greek music or whatever. It has to be social and political consciousness, social critiques and collective understandings that bring you to participate in the anarchist movements, not fashion. Of course, for at least the last 19 years the Void Network and similar collectives have played the role of offering a cultural introduction to radical political spaces. Such groups organize many cultural/political events, festivals, and parties every year and have the power to attract thousands and thousands of people to underground cultures. But even Void Network doesn't create subcultural identities, doesn't separate the different subcultures, and tries to organize events that include most of the underground cultures. It's true, though, that the majority of the people in the scene attend and participate in most of the events of the d.i.y. underground culture; many events are organized every month in liberated spaces.

*What things have made the anarchist movement healthy in Greece?*

The separation from subcultural identity politics made people understand that to call yourself an anarchist it takes much more serious participation, planning, creativity, and action than just wearing a t-shirt with the antichrist on it and walking around in punk concerts drinking beer and taking hypnotic pills. Now there is an understanding that to call yourself an anarchist you have to come to demonstrations, to come out into the streets with banners and black or red-and-black flags, shouting slogans together and manifesting an anarchist presence. Also, that you should participate every week in one, two, or three different assemblies with people for one, or two, or three different preparations of different actions, plans, or struggles to call yourself an anarchist. You have to be friends with people you trust 100% to plan anything dangerous, you have to be aware and informed about anything that is happening in this world to decide what the proper course of action is, you have to be crazy and enthusiastic, to feel that you can do incredible things—you have to be ready to give your life, your time, your years in a struggle that will never end. It is healthy not to have expectations, because then you don't get disappointed. You don't expect to win. You are used to appearing, fighting, and then disappearing again; you know how to become invisible as a person and visible as collective power; you know that you are not the center of the universe, but that any time you can become the center of your society.



*In what ways do you think the anarchist movement in Greece could be better or stronger?*

We need to find more intelligent ways of explaining our ideas to people. We need techniques of political communication with all of society, better and stronger ways to make the “political translation” of our actions and put the whole struggle in its social context. In a tele-democracy, where the politicians are nothing more than television superstars, our refusal to communicate with or through the mass media is healthy, but we need to find new ways to overcome the mass media “consensus reality,” the media propaganda against us, and find ways to explain the causes of our actions to society. As long as whatever the TV shows “exists” and whatever doesn’t appear on TV “doesn’t exist,” we will be there with our crazy ideas, the dangerous actions and the street fights to break the normality of the TV program, we will use the negative advertisement of our actions to kidnap the fantasies and dreams of the common people. But how can we explain our positive ideas to everyone? How can we help people cease to trust the media? How can we come into contact with millions and millions of people?

It will take millions and millions of posters and free pamphlets, traveling hand by hand in the streets; it will take millions of invitations for demonstrations and participation in social struggles; it will take more free public services in sections that the government don’t want or cannot cover—free anarchist doctors and teachers, free food, free accommodation, information, underground culture, and so on—that can bring people closer to our ideas. It will also take more and more squats and social centers. If you can start a squat, that is better, but even if it’s not possible to squat in your town, rent a building with your friends, take care of the bureaucracy, make a collective, start an assembly, and put the black or red-and-black flag in the entrance. Start offering the people of your city a living example of a world without racism, patriarchy, or homophobia, a place of equality, freedom, and respect for differences, a world with love and sharing. We need more “Autonomia” in the insurrectionism of the Greek anarchist movement, to make it shine as a paradigm of a new wave of social life and demonstrate this novel survival methodology in the metropolis.

*How effective has police repression been in shutting down the anarchist movement? How have people resisted it?*

The dreams and plans of the insurrectionists came true: a huge wave of participation “overpassed” the anarchists, and for many chaotic days people traveled and fought in the city like never before, in an unfamiliar time and space of existence.

In the same days, of course, they came face to face with the limitations of insurrection. The people now spend many hours in long discussions about how to expand popular understanding and invent practices, actions, and methods that will sustain and enrich the struggle. Many people think about ways that will bring really close all the different elements of this revolt. The police repression didn't play a more important role in the conclusion of the riots than physical fatigue did. All of us share a feeling of completion and a feeling of beginning, and these are feelings that the police cannot touch.

*What do you think the final result of the events of December will be?*

Ongoing struggle! A never-ending fight for political, social, and economic equality! Constant expansion of freedom!

In the future, neoliberal governments in Greece and throughout Europe will think very seriously before attempting to implement any kind of economic or social change. The riots in Athens and the economic crisis ended the cynicism of the authorities, banks, and corporations, radicalized a new generation in Greece, and gave our society a chance to open a dialogue about the massive social struggles of the future.

As the slogan of December 2008 in Athens and Exarchia goes:

WE ARE AN IMAGE FROM THE FUTURE.

- *Questions answered by Void Network (Theory, Utopia, Empathy, Ephemeral Arts); posed by the CrimethInc. ex-Workers' Collective.*

CrimethInc Ex-Workers' Collective (2008) *How to Organize an Insurrection*. [online] (Updated 25<sup>th</sup> December 2008) Available at: <http://www.crimethinc.com/blog/2008/12/25/how-to-organize-an-insurrection/> [Accessed 8<sup>th</sup> September 2010]

## **2c25. 27<sup>th</sup> December 2008: “When they mess with one of us, they mess with all of us”**

On the 27th of December we occupied the headquarters of ISAP (Athens Piraeus Electric Railway) as a first response to the murderous attack against Konstantina Kuneva on the 23-12-2008. Sulphuric acid was thrown at her face as she was returning home from work. Konstantina is in the intensive care ward of Evangelismos hospital suffering serious sight and respiratory system problems.

*Who was Konstantina? Why was she attacked?*

Konstantina is one among the hundreds of female immigrant workers who have been working for years as cleaners. She is general secretary of the Panattic Union of Cleaners and Domestic Personnel. She is a militant union organizer, well known for her stance against various bosses. Just last week she had a clash with the employer company “OIKOMET” when she demanded for herself and the rest of her colleagues to get paid the whole amount of money of her Christmas bonus. She also denounced illegal procedures in payments. Just a short while ago the same company fired her mother in an act of revenge against her and she got herself an unfavourable transfer to Marousi station. There is also a case of a three-part meeting in the Labour Inspection Office still pending on the 5-1-2009 concerning a denouncement of hers. Situations like these are not at all rare in the field of cleaning and employee lending companies. It’s exactly the opposite.

This is the rule when it comes to cleaning company contractors: delayed contracts, stolen wages, stolen overtime payments, differences between contract assets and what the employee actually gets paid, selection of almost exclusively immigrant male and female workers with green card status (legal residency in Greece ranging from 1 to 5 years – in most cases only 1 year) so they can be held in a state of hostageship, social security benefits that are never attributed. All these under the support of the public sector and enterprises which are aware, incite and support working conditions reminiscent of the middle ages.

OIKOMET in particular, a cleaning company with enterprises all over Greece and owned by Nikitas Oikonomakis who is a member of PASOK (Greek Socialist Party), “officially” employs 800 workers – on the other hand, workers say that their number is at least twice as much and during the last 3 years the turnover amounts to 3000). Illegal procedures on the part of the employer company are commonplace. To be more specific, employees sign “blank page contracts” and they are never given a copy of them. They work 6 hours a day but get paid for 4,5 (including stamps) because this way they appear to be working less than 30 hours per week on paper and the boss is not forced to include them in the “higher stamp category”. Employees get terrorized, they get unfavourable

transfers, they get fired and blackmailed into resigning voluntarily (a female employee was threatened by her employer into signing her resignation after being held for 4 hours in a space owned by the company). The boss organised a “yellow” (company) union in order to manipulate employees while he fires and hires people as he wishes, ruling out any prospect of communication inside the workplace or collective action.

*What is the connection between OIKOMET and ISAP?*

OIKOMET has been assigned as a contractor the cleaning of ISAP (as well as the cleaning of other public sector and corporations) because it can “provide” the cheapest deal that includes the highest level of exploitation and devaluation of work. This “regime” of “offer and demand” is based on public sector organisations such as ISAP. ISAP is an accomplice in maintaining this regime of crude exploitation despite repeated denouncements by the union.

The murderous attack against our colleague was an act of revenge and had the intent to serve as an example.

The target was not coincidental. Female, immigrant, militant union organizer, mother of an underage child, she was the most vulnerable for the bosses.

The method was not coincidental. It resembles the “dark” ages and aims to “brand”, to serve as an example and terrorize us.

The time chosen was not coincidental. The media, the political parties, the Church, businessmen and union bosses have been trying to ridicule the social movement that has taken the form of an explosion and talk about the cold-blooded murder of 15-year-old Alexandros as the result of a bullet getting redirected. In this pretext, the attack on Konstantina is lost in the everyday news.

This murderous attack on the part of the employers was well-planned.

Konstantina is one of us. Her struggle for DIGNITY and SOLIDARITY is also our struggle.

The attack on Konstantina has left a mark in all our hearts. It has left a mark in our memory as have done the racist pogroms, the concentration camps for immigrants, the attacks by thugs working for the state, the workplace accidents, the people murdered by the state, the working conditions that resemble galleys, the purges, the lay-offs and the terror. All these show the long way ahead for the social and class struggle.

Our hearts are filled with sorrow and rage and one sentence comes to our lips:

MURDERERS, YOUR TIME WILL COME

THE EMPLOYERS TERROR SHALL NOT PASS

- *SOLIDARITY ASSEMBLY FOR KONSTANTINA KUNEVA*

Clandestinenglish (2008) *When they mess with one of us, they mess with all of us.* [online] (Updated 28<sup>th</sup> December 2008)  
Available at: <http://clandestinenglish.wordpress.com/2008/12/28/when-they-mess-with-one-of-us-they-mess-with-all-of-us/> [Accessed 7<sup>th</sup> September 2010]

## **2c26. 28<sup>th</sup> December 2008: “Nothing will ever be the same”**

*Nothing...*

On 6 December, at nine in the evening, a man of the special police force stopped, took aim and shot dead a fifteen-year old kid in the neighbourhood of Exarchia, Athens. This murder is not a singular event of police violence. The morning of the same day, immigrants waiting to apply for asylum at the police station of Petrou Ralli avenue were attacked by riot police. A Pakistani man suffered traumatic brain injury and has been struggling for life ever since in the intensive care unit of Evangelismos hospital. These are just two of the dozens of similar cases over the past years. The bullet that pierced Alexis’s heart was not a random bullet shot from a cop’s gun to the body of an ‘indocile’ kid. It was the choice of the state to violently impose submission and order to the milieus and movements that resist its decisions. A choice that meant to threaten everybody who wants to resist the new arrangements made by the bosses in work, social security, public health, education, etc: Whoever works must stretch themselves thin for a mere 600 euros monthly wage. They must work themselves to exhaustion whenever the bosses need them, working overtime without pay, getting laid off whenever businesses are ‘in crisis’. And finally, they must get themselves killed whenever the intensification of production demands it, just like those five dockers who died in the Perama shipyards five months ago. If they are an immigrant, and dares to demand a few euros more, they will be faced with beatings and a life of terror, just like the agricultural workers of both sexes in the strawberry hothouses of Nea Manolada in the western Peloponese.

*...will ever be...*

Whoever is a pupil must spend their time in crummy school halls and intensive tutoring to ‘prepare’ themselves for protracted, annual exam seasons. As a kid they have to forget about playing with others in the street and feeling carefree, in order to bombard themselves with reality shows on TV and electronic gaming, since the free public spaces have become shopping malls or there is just no free time for hanging out.

Later on, as a university student, because this is the natural ‘evolution’ to success, they discover that alleged ‘scientific knowledge’ is in fact geared towards the needs of bosses. A student has to continuously adapt themselves to new study curricula and gather as many ‘certificates’ as possible in order to be awarded, in the end, with a degree of equal value to toilet-paper, but without its practical importance. A degree that ensures nothing more than a 700 euro monthly wage, often without national insurance or health cover. All this takes place in the midst of a crazy dance of

millions landing in priestly businesses and doped-up Olympic athletes who are paid extravagantly to 'glorify the homeland'. Money that ends up in the pockets of the moneyed and powerful. From bribes to 'compadres' and haggling of scandalous DVDs with corrupt journalists in order to cover-up government 'scandals'. While dozens of lives are wasted in forest-fires to allow big capital to turn forests into tourist businesses and while worker deaths in construction sites and in the streets are dubbed 'work accidents'. While the state gives money away to banks to sink us deeper in a sea of debts and loans and raises direct tax for all workers. While the stupidity of heftily paid television stars becomes the gospel for an increasing number of exploited people.

The bullet that pierces Alexis's heart was a bullet to the heart of exploitation and repression for a substantial section within this society who know that they have nothing to lose apart from the illusion that things might get better. The events following the murder proved that for a large part the exploited and oppressed have sunk in this swamp up to their neck, and this swamp has just overflowed and threatens to drown bosses and politicians, parties and state institutions. It's running its course to clean this dirty world that is based upon the exploitation of human by human and the power of few over the many. It filled our hearts with confidence and filled the hearts of bosses with fear.

The destruction of the temples of consumption, the re-appropriation of goods, the 'looting' of all things that are taken from us, while they bombard us with advertisements, is the deep realisation that all this wealth is ours, because we produce it. 'We' in this case means working people as a whole. This wealth does not belong to the shop-owners, or the bankers, this wealth is our sweat and blood. It is the time that bosses steal from us every day. It is our sickness when we start our pension. It is the arguments inside the bedroom and the inability to meet a couple of friends on a weekend night. It is the boredom and loneliness of Sunday afternoon and the choking feeling every Monday morning. As exploited and oppressed, immigrants or Greek, as working people, as jobless, students or pupils, we are called now to answer back to the false dilemma posed by the media and the state: are we with the 'hoodies' or are we with the shop-owners. This dilemma is only a decoy.

Because the real dilemma that the media do not want you to ask is: are you for the bosses or are you for the workers? Are you for the state or for the revolt? And this is the one reason that journalists do their best to defame the movement, talking about 'hoodies', 'looters' etc. The reason

they want to spread fear among the oppressed is simple: the revolt makes their position – and that of their bosses – very precarious. Revolt turns against the reality they create, against the feeling of ‘all goes well’, against the separation between ‘rightfully sentimental revolt’ and ‘extremist elements’ and finally against the distinction between ‘outlaws’ and peaceful protesters.

In response to this dilemma we have one answer: we are for the ‘hoodies’. We are the ‘hoodies’. Not because we want to hide our face, but because we want to make ourselves visible. We exist. We wear hoods not for the love of destruction but for the desire to take our life in our hands. To build a different society upon the graves of the commodity and power. A society where everybody will decide collectively in general meetings of schools, universities, workplaces and neighbourhoods, about everything that concerns us, without the need for political representatives, leaders or commissars. A society where together we will guide our own fortunes and where our needs and desires will be in our hands, not in the hands of the MP, mayor, boss, priest or cop.

Hope for this life was put back on the table by the barricades that were set up everywhere in Greece and in solidarity abroad. It remains to make this hope a reality. The possibility of such a life is now put to the test by public assemblies in occupied municipal buildings, trade union buildings and universities in Athens and elsewhere in Greece, where everybody can freely express their opinions and shape their action collectively, based on their desires and needs. The dream of this life has started taking shape.

*...the same anymore.*

What remains to do to see this dream realised?

We should organise in our paces of study, work and habitation. In our workplaces we discuss our everyday problems and we create nuclei of resistance against the terror of the bosses. In our schools we contribute towards and support their occupations, we create counterinformation groups, we organise lectures and workshops, we question sovereign knowledge, we produce new knowledge geared to our needs and not those of capital. In neighbourhoods and housing blocks we talk to our neighbours, we create gatherings and committees, we share knowledge and skills, we decide collectively for actions. We take part in marches and protests, we stand by each other, we break the fear that is spread by the state, we help the pupils that are now bearing the brunt of the attack of the state. We stand in solidarity to those arrested in the revolt, both Greeks and immigrants, in



Greece and abroad, most of which are now prosecuted with every legal trick in the arsenal of counter-terrorism laws because they are opposed to the dictates of the state.

Everything begins now. Everything is possible.

- *Movements for the generalisation of revolt*

Libcom (2008) *"Nothing will ever be the same" in Greece*. [online] (Updated 28<sup>th</sup> December 2008) Available at: <http://libcom.org/news/nothing-will-ever-be-same-22122008> [Accessed 7th September 2010]

**2c27. 29<sup>th</sup> December 2008: Occupation of the Thessaloniki Trade Union Centre for Konstantina Kuneva - text of open assembly.**

Today we occupy the Thessaloniki Trade Union Centre to resist state oppression manifested in the murder and terrorisation of working people. We occupy the Trade Unions Centre and obstruct its administration; we do not obstruct the workings of 1st degree unions; far from it, we appeal to them and to working people to join this common struggle.

The occupation of the Trade Union Center of Thessaloniki continues.

At today's [30 Dec.] open assembly of the occupied Trade Unions Centre individuals from various political backgrounds, union members, students, migrants and comrades from abroad reached this common decision:

To continue with the occupation

To organize a gathering of people in solidarity with K.Kuneva in front of the Centre on the 31st of December, at 12 o'clock.

To organise information and awareness actions in neighbourhoods of the city

To organize a music gig in the Center to raise money for Konstantina

To have a New Years Day of struggle in the Center, with an open assembly at 18.00.

Confronted with raw and undisguised state violence and oppression against workers' struggles, and the covert but no less hostile mafia-like machinations of the employers, the Trade Unions - controlled by Trade Union Centres across the country, like the one in Thessaloniki - do nothing but stammer, "we try in a democratic way to achieve full social and economic parity for their members, and the other working people", as their statutory document reads.

The same document continues: "the Greek Trade Unions Centres were founded in order to unite local workers' unions, and thus protect the economic, professional and social interests of their members. On the basis of these professional and social interests, the Trade Unions Centres represent struggles for higher wages and better living and working conditions". Nowhere in this document is there any reference of subverting and negating the causes of inequality and misery, or the hierarchical structures within society. Their orientation is plainly opportunist and directed towards some vague "improvement" of the conditions of exploitation; in this sense, the so-called "organized trade union movement" and its managers are basic accomplices in prolonging the

dependencies and suppression of the worker/trade unionist movement, through the latter's channelling of issues along the lines of flaggy, unavailing and partial demands, which, judging from their effects, are ultimately harmful to workers' living conditions: the position of working people does not improve but deteriorates significantly. Precarity, "flexible" working relations, "renting" of workers, no meaningful opposition against the crimes which bosses call "work accidents"...

The fragmented Greek trade union movement cannot and won't go against the government and the clientelistic party-political mechanisms which complement each other in prolonging power and inequality. The fact that some trade unionist managers, capitalising on their "successful" careers in the trade unions, have taken positions in the cabinet or ministry or as corporate consultants is indicative of this.

The General Confederations and Trade Unions Centres in Greece are now integral stakeholders in the regime; members, and all workers in general, must turn their backs on them and their leaders, and follow the example of independent and syndicalist unions, for the creation of an autonomous movement composed of self-directed struggle, beyond and out of the control of the political parties and their mechanisms.

The Trade Unions Center of Thessaloniki is the second largest in Greece. Its constituency includes 275 1st degree unions in the Prefecture of Thessaloniki and the Region of Central Macedonia. The Centre ostensibly represents 350,000 working people out of which 300,000 work in the city of Thessaloniki. Has anybody ever seen even 100,000 of them in the streets demanding anything? Never! Why is that so? It is simple: the working people know that the direction of the Trade Union Centre means nothing but playing to the career aspirations of the Center's management.

If the working people realize their power and break out of the logic of being represented by bosses' accomplices, then they will regain their confidence and thousands of them will fill the streets in the next strike.

The state and its heavies murder people

Resistance - Self-Organisation - Unpatronised Struggles - Social Self-Defence

Solidarity with the immigrant and unionist Konstantina Kuneva

The murderous and hideous assault on Konstantina is an attack on every working man and woman, every unionist; it is an attack against the society that resists. Just like the cop's bullet that killed

Alexandros Grigosopoulos pierced through the hearts of us all, the acid that burned Konstantina's body has fallen upon the flames of our wrath. The rage of the December's insurrection manifested in clashes with the forces of oppression, in the hundreds of arrests of pupils and students, in demonstrations and militant assemblies in neighborhoods and occupied universities, in the wealth of solidarity actions...this rage is developing into a free, autonomous movement for social emancipation, against the mediation of struggle.

The murderous attack against the unionist Kuneva is the state's response, through its heavies, to this movement of rage and emancipation. December made it clear that the state has the face of the murderers it hires. The killing of Alexandros Grigoropoulos, the gunshots by policemen during the protests, the chemical war against protestors launched by the now world-infamous riot police, the injury of the pupil in Peristeri by some "unknown" gunman, the "inscrutable" cases of police brutality against student protestors and the murders of migrants on the borders and in the cities...and now, Konstantina.

After these events, there can be no buts and ifs. Killers in uniforms kill in cold blood. State and corporate heavies loom in street corners and alleyways for us. We are in a war. In this social/class war there can be no zones of neutrality. In this war, silence stands for complicity. The fake tears shed for Konstantina by the state-sanctioned management of the General Confederations of workers and employees (ΓΣΕΕ and ΑΔΕΔΥ) and the Trade Unions Centre representatives fool no one anymore.

The statist, well-fed trade unionists and the sold-off fat cats of the official trade unions are accessories in the murderous attack on Konstantina. With their backing, the regime of renting workers and the modern slave-trade of immigrants have been made into the rule for thousands of workers. The state sanctioned and paid professional unionists have never mounted even a symbolic strike for the stolen wages and the overtime work-hours of rented workers. They have never mounted even a symbolic strike against the modern slave-traders of the migrant workforce, which hire immigrant women workers en masse and keep them hostages in the most inhuman living and working conditions. After all the denouncements Konstantina's Union made, why have they not mounted even a symbolic strike?

Konstantina fought against these medieval working conditions and has payed a heavy price. Her genuine syndicalist practice is what led to this attack.

We occupy today the Thessaloniki Trade Unions Centre to resist state oppression expressed in murders and terrorism against working people. We occupy the Trade Unions Center and obstruct its

administration; we do not obstruct the workings of 1st degree unions; far from it, we appeal to them and to working people to join this common struggle.

We occupy the Centre whose management has lost the trust of workers for many years, since it has been doing everything but playing the role it is supposed to. Instead of fighting for the workers' emancipation, the state-paid official trade union centre managers deceive and mollify society and serve the order of the regime that hired them.

We welcome all students and pupils, workers and citizens, to join the occupation and take part in it: together we can turn it into a liberated centre of action and solidarity with Konstantina Kuneva and the people prosecuted for December's insurrection.

We are not against the working people organized in unions, as the state paid union managers are bound to accuse us of. On the contrary: we ask from every union and individual worker to go beyond the treacherous lead of those in power, and join us in the common struggle.

### *The Occupation's demands*

Workers' rights are on the decline and in a very difficult phase around the world. The employers' demands for more flexible working hours and cheaper wages meet with the utmost willingness of the legal mechanisms of the state to concede to them. The corporate project is to minimize the cost of production on a global scale. To implement this, they have been openly cooperating with states and governments, and because of this they have achieved the minimization import and export duties. This paved the way for an unprecedented decentralization of production. A company now may have its headquarters in some state in the West while keeping its production plants in some other state where wages are much lower. The result is simple: workers in the west struggle with unemployment and workers in poorer countries receive next-to-nothing wages. This situation, euphemistically called globalization, results in the bleak reality workers around the world are confronted with.

The other side of the same coin are the people in poor countries, whose migration to developed countries is part of the effort to improve their lives. As migrants, they work under the worst conditions and receive the lowest of wages. In many cases, being unable to escape the conditions that ruin their lives in their countries of origin, they have to pay large sums of money to slave-traders and as meat for sale to be transferred to the EU job markets.

This huge business of slave-trade secures large profits, and the western states cannot fool us: they do not fight it, they benefit from it, they make money. Cheap working hands and minds, with the minimum of entitlements in protection, welfare and safety, are what maximizes these profits. One

example was the giant sweatshop that was the Athens 2004 olympic games (13 people died in the construction sites, 65 people died in the whole event's supporting work, and hundreds were injured). These should be enough to make clear that the whole thing is orchestrated on the basis of bosses' common interest and that this deadly condition of exploitation is accentuated by the states' compliance; the extent of this accentuation is directly dependent on the extent of decline of the labour organizations' force, which long ago ceased to represent the true workers' interests.

In Greece, the ΓΣΕΕ and the Trade Unions Centres have reduced themselves to mechanisms of mediation for the employers through the workforce and have betrayed the radical and militant history of the workers movement. Their leaders are a bunch of civil servants who operate as a branch of the Ministry of Labour. They abuse everything workers have earned through struggle. They have turned their trade union responsibilities into private and individual privileges.

Our interest in work and life is common, for every worker, irrespective of gender and country of origin. Greeks and migrants we have to reach a common voice and struggle together for justice and equality, equal rights in work and life. Konstanina Kuneva is one of us. Her struggle is for DIGNITY and SOLIDARITY; her struggle is OUR STRUGGLE.

We struggle for the abolishment of the workers-for-rent companies which consolidate the informal market and the legislation behind it. We struggle for equal wages for immigrants and Greeks.

We struggle to include in this all migrants, to raise their voices along with ours and make our common appeal strong and inclusive, anti-racist and interracial, for dignity and justice.

We demand the full investigation and tracing of the murderous assault against Konstantina Kuneva. We demand that perpetrators of the crime and those who hired them are brought into justice and pay for their crime.

That all the evidence about the working conditions at OIKOMET are brought into public knowledge, and that Konstantina's Union's demands are vindicated.

That ΓΣΕΕ and the Trade Unions Center finally assume their responsibilities and call for a general strike in solidarity with Konstantina and those prosecuted for December's insurrection on January 9, 2009, the day of the pan-educational demonstration.

- *The Thessaloniki Trade Union Center Occupation, People in solidarity with the trade unionist Konstanina Kuneva*

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