

“Grassroots politics within and beyond institutional and state solutions: Collective action and the re-politicization of everyday life in crisis-ridden Greece.”*

Abstract

This paper aims to broaden and deepen the debates on the everyday practices of grassroots initiatives and institutional agency during the crisis in Greece. In doing so, it presents three main research findings from an ongoing research project with the title “Collective action and the production of alternatives in times of crisis: self-organized projects and everyday politics in crisis-ridden Greece and Spain”. Initially, in terms of identities, the paper investigates how the global crisis is understood, embodied and contested through the participatory forms of collective action and political organization in Greece. Second, it highlights the ‘re-politicization of everyday life’, a process grounded in the establishment of novel and open, participatory spaces of solidarity and trans-local collective action. Finally, by drawing on radical political theory’s conceptions on horizontal and vertical forms of emancipatory politics it seeks to revalue the concept of the Common as a bridging point between the two, seemingly, opposing strategies of grassroots politics today. Building on these, the paper reflects on how participation in self-organized ventures and everyday activism constitutes an essential element in the transformation of cultures and subjectivities, and the development of novel dynamics for international political action. It is argued that the recent collectively self-organized ventures build a hybrid matrix of alternative democratic institutions. By maintaining a perspective of direct-democracy and self-governance in here and now, they seek to challenge wider political and economic configurations beyond the geographies and temporalities of local political confines. To this end, the paper endeavours to provide theoretical and empirical substance for the ongoing dialogue on the relations between institutional and non-institutional channels of collective human agency and develop a distinctive approach of grassroots collective action; the practices and discourses of which shapes the conditions for the emergence of democratization processes from below and open up also the horizon for a social transformation that will not, primarily, be institutionally driven. In order to serve these aims the project’s key questions are:

- i. (how) can contemporary collective action projects serve as laboratories for alternative everyday practices to emerge?
- ii. how do the self-managed projects of activists in Greece engage in and beyond institutional politics and state solutions?

This exploration concludes that such participatory political initiatives and solidarity networks can effectively expand the horizon for an alternative policy co-production and play a crucial role in challenging the prevailing neoliberal crisis politics. The paper draws upon material collected through in-depth interviews, conducted on March-June 2014 with participants in the *Aganaktismenoi* event as well as during fieldwork research in the three-days mobilisation for “democracy and against austerity in Europe” that took place in Greece on February 2015.

Keywords: Participatory spaces, Democracy, Solidarity, Policy innovation.

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