Anti-austerity Protest and Democratic Vision: The struggle for a new politics – the case of the Greek 'Do Not Pay' social movement

Maria Rovisco (University of Leicester), Anastasia Veneti (Bournemouth University), Stamatis Poulakidakos (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens)

The final copy will be published in: Rovisco, M., Veneti, A. Poulakidakos, S. 'Protest, Indignation and Democratic Vision: The struggle for a new politics in a post-ideological world'. In B. Axford, D. Buhari-Gulmez and S. Baris Gulmez *Bridging Divides: Rethinking Ideology in the Age of Global Discontent*. London: Routledge. (forthcoming 2018)

Introduction

The twenty-first century witnessed the emergence of an unprecedented series of protests around the world that showed much discontent with the financial and political elites. Against the backdrop of the global financial crisis and the implementation of austerity policies in many European countries, the global wave of post-2010 activisms illuminates how depoliticization, civic disaffection and the rise of individualism go in tandem with the struggle for people's social and economic rights and the crisis of legitimacy of representative democracy. In this chapter we look at the case of the anti-austerity Greek social movement 'Do Not Pay' Movement (To kinima den plirono) in order to examine whether and how the protestors attempt to define their political presence and affirm their collective identity by exercising a new form of politics that goes beyond established ideological divisions between Left and Right. This is important to investigate because research (see e.g., Fominaya, 2017, Gerbaudo, 2017) has showed that recent European anti-austerity movements not only reject hegemonic narratives of the crisis, but also emphasise the failure of the political establishment to represent the interests of the people.

While most research on anti-austerity European movements focuses on mass social mobilisations, occupations, and large-scale demonstrations, much less attention has been paid to mobilisation for everyday forms of grassroots resistance and solidarity initiatives. Our interest in this case study of the 'Do not pay' movement stems from the recognition that the protestors use less explicitly political acts that could be understood as micro-acts of resistance that do not involve mass mobilisations. The 'Do not pay movement' [kinima den plirono] was established in 2009 primarily as a loosely organised, impulsive reaction against the high fares at toll stations at national roads. Starting off with a series of toll occupations, the movement soon evolved into an organised collective formation with steady presence in public life through diverse forms of protesting against various anti-austerity policies that have been imposed to the Greek economy under the bailout treaty. The determination of its members and the persistent protest acts attracted international media attention from media outlets such as The Guardian and Reuters (*Guardian*, 2017; *Reuters*, 2017; *Reading Eagle*, 2017). In our research, we aim to understand the message of the movement, the collective identity of the protestors and the tactics used to mobilize the people that will support it. In so doing, we also seek to examine how the protestors discursively construct their opponents and how they respond to austerity policies and ideologies at national level and beyond.

The rise of European anti-austerity movements

The twenty-first century witnessed the emergence of an unprecedented series of protests around the world whose politics has challenged traditional ideological cleavages in the Left-Right spectrum. Anti-austerity mobilisations and protests are part of the so-called global wave of post-2010 activisms (Fominaya, 2017; Biekart and Fowler, 2013). As demonstrated by –(Kaldor and Selchow, 2013: 88), frustration with formal politics is what connects different types of protests, actions, campaigns and initiatives from long-term occupations of

public spaces to mass mobilizations. Inspired, to some degree, by the pro-democracy struggles of the Arab uprisings in 2011 (Glasius and Pleyers, 2013: 551), the grievances and discontent of anti-austerity European movements have a rather domestic reach. They are directed primarily towards national political and oligarchies (Fominaya, 2017: 3; Gerbaudo, 2017) with the aim at highlighting the crisis of legitimacy of representative democracy. In the European context, anti-austerity resistance is intrinsically linked to a public debate about the nature and meaning of democracy as activists in Spain, Portugal and Greece and other European countries go on to reclaim state democracy and its institutions. As argued by Fominaya (2017), European anti-austerity movements are essentially counter-hegemonic movements because they seek to contest specific austerity policies, while also targeting the capitalism system and the neo-liberal drive of the state. Differently from other previous social movements (e.g. the European social forums and the European counter-summits), which were open to representatives of all civil society groups and emphasized mobilization for concrete demands, much of the new resistance against austerity is enacted by autonomous actors (Kaldor and Selchow, 2013) who embrace principles of non-partisanship and advocate a range of protest tactics from the Spanish Indignados' occupations of public space and large-scale mass mobilisations to everyday forms of grassroots resistance and solidarity initiatives in Greece (Vaiou and Kalandides, 2017). What is striking in this wave of anti-austerity protest is that while the protestors direct their discontent towards the neoliberal capitalist agenda and often explicitly challenge supranational structures - such as the EU, the European Central Bank, or the IMF – they have showed little interest in transforming European governance structures and policies. As noted by Pianta and Gerbaudo (2014: 1), 'anti-austerity protests have largely developed at a national level with limited transnational coordination and vision'. Anti-austerity protest in Europe is also different from those new social movements (e.g., Global Justice Movement) that during the 1990s and early 2000s

were mobilising for issues such as peace, the environment, and global justice (Rudig and Karyotis, 2014: 487; Fominaya, 2015). It is against the backdrop of the financial crisis and the rise of austerity policies across Europe that a new counter-hegemonic politics and resistance has been carried on by two main sets of actors: the institutional Left (e.g. unions, smaller parties) and more autonomous 'subterranean' actors that adopt the principles on non-partisanship (Fominaya, 2017:3). This unprecedented combination of 'old' and 'new' actors – which position themselves beyond traditional political ideologies in the Left/Right Spectrum – has enabled the protestors to explore new forms of collection action and new forms of political participation beyond formal politics. For example, the Spanish and Portuguese Indignados actively rejected banners representing organized groups or unions in their collective self-representation as a global non-partisan movement of ordinary citizens that speak and act for themselves (Baiocchi and Ganuza, 2012: 115). Unsurprisingly, the indignados were not particularly interested in devising a coherent political programme which could represent the interests of different organized groups and institutional structures and categories (e.g. class) (Rovisco, 2016). Against the backdrop of the loss of trust and faith in party-political systems, media manipulation, precarious working conditions and voter apathy that are primarily experienced at the national level, the counter-hegemonic narrative of anti-austerity protest pitches 'us' (the people, ordinary citizens) against them (the political and economic elites that fail to represent the people). By questioning the legitimacy of the political and economic elites to represent the people, anti-austerity protestors have sought to contest those hegemonic narratives that define the financial crisis as unavoidable and austerity policies as the inevitable result of these same processes (Fominaya, 2017: 15). The new protest politics is, as noted by Gerbaudo (2017~~6~~: 37) uses the discourse of citizenship – 'us' (ordinary and indignant citizens) - as a means to construct an inclusive 'common ground' for protest mobilisation. The new anti-austerity resistance is, arguably, as much a response to

the financial and political crisis as an attempt to find new political solutions at the national level for the questions of the distribution of wealth and the distribution of political power (see Prentoulis and Thomassen, 2012: 6-7) at a time when many ordinary citizens lost trust in traditional institutions of democratic representation. As Kaldor and Selchow (2013: 86), showed in their study of subterranean politics in Europe, distrust in the political elites applies not only to national governments, but also to the political class in general regardless of their political alignment within the Left-Right spectrum. One of the key reasons why the state becomes the focus and target of anti-austerity protest is because the protestors refuse to accept hegemonic narratives that sanction austerity policies by laying the responsibility for the financial crisis and austerity to global economic processes beyond state control (see Fominaya, 2017: 5). Not surprisingly, in Greece and Spain, the majority of protest targets, issues, participants and identities in anti-austerity protests are domestic (Bourne and Chatzopoulou, 2015 cited in Fominaya, 2017: 6). In the Greek context, claims for a genuine democracy go often in tandem with demands for a stronger and more effective state (Simiti, 2014: 9). As insightfully argued by Gerbaudo (2017: 37), anti-austerity movements put forward a radical and anti-oligarchic discourse of citizenship that 'that frames the contemporary conflict as one between the citizenry and the oligarchy, and sees the solution to the present predicament in a reintegration of 'aggrieved citizens' within state institutions, from the municipal to the national level, seen as the only available means to reassert collective control on the economy and society'.

However, it is important to recognize that the anti-hegemonic or anti-oligarchic narrative is not solely underpinned by frames of meaning that seek to demonise the economic and political elites. There is clearly in the narrative frames employed by anti-austerity protestors an attempt to mobilise, on the one hand, for new forms of state-based direct democracy, online referenda and popular initiatives (see Gerbaudo, 2017: 37), and, on the other,

mobilisations for more participatory forms of democracy beyond the state. For example, by reclaiming the square as a place where citizens can congregate again, the Spanish and Portuguese indignados tried to reinvent democracy as a practical, performative and participatory component of publicness. Square politics offered the possibility to both imagine and put into practice a more participatory democracy. Through a range of innovative offline and online communicative practices and long-term occupations of public space, the protestors were able to re-imagine the urban square as the site of active democracy where ordinary citizens can come together to discuss issues of public concern (Rovisco, 2017; Rovisco and Ong, 2016). The new anti-austerity protest politics can, therefore, be seen as an experiment with democracy that opens new avenues for 'projects of collective re-imagination of democracy' that are tied to– 'the subjective experience of participating in politics in a new way' (Selchow and Kaldor, 2013: 88). But while 'square politics' enabled the protestors to reclaim public spaces to play out democratic struggles and new political subjectivities, European anti-austerity resistance does not rely solely on social mobilisations or attempts to implement direct democracy in local public spaces, which is what Glasius and Pleyers (2013: 556) call 'prefigurative activism'. Forms of anti-austerity resistance can also be found in everyday forms of grassroots resistance, including new 'survival tactics' and solidarity initiatives such as neighbourhood food banks, solidarity economy initiatives, alternative currency networks, and new alternative media initiatives, that typically receive little attention in the mainstream media (see Karyotis and Rudig, 2017: 5; Fominaya, 2017: 15). Arguably, then, anti-austerity resistance plays out alternative forms of political participation and a new way of doing politics. This new 'civic politics' can be seen as 'a politics of citizens who do not feel represented by existing political institutions, including parties and trade unions, as expressed by recurrent slogans like 'no me representan' (they don't represent me)' (Pianta and Gerbaudo, 2014: 2; see also Gerbaudo 2012). What is at issue here is the articulation of

democratic struggles that respond to the crisis of political representation with tangible and real alternatives to the politics of austerity, rather than a programme of political demands that is aligned with specific ideologies in the traditional Left-Right spectrum. Although there is already an emerging body of research on European anti-austerity movements, much of this research focuses on collective action that involves small and large-scale social mobilisations and protests that have succeeded in galvanising the attention of mainstream media. Much less attention has been paid to everyday grassroots forms of dissent, 'survival tactics', and new forms of social organization that are also part of the make-up of European anti-austerity movements.

Anti-austerity resistance in Greece

Anti-austerity protests involving mass mobilisations not only of the working class but also middle-class strata were much more prominent and visible in Greece than in other European countries whose governments had to respond to the demands of the so-called Troika by implementing austerity policies. Anti-austerity resistance since 2009 can be seen as a response to the dismantling of the welfare state, which involved austerity policies that slashed wages and pensions in the private and public sectors and the tax raises (Simiti, 2014: 4-5). Unlike other anti-austerity protests in Western Europe, the wave of protest and mass mobilisations in Greece was not primarily carried on by relatively young, educated middle class groups, but by ordinary people of different educational backgrounds and age cohorts. In fact, as noted by Rudig and Karyotis (2013: 507-508), it was 'those in full-time employment who are most likely to be involved in both strikes and demonstrations (…). In other words, those involved most closely in economic life, rather than people on the margins or outside of the labour force, are the main carriers of this protest movement'. In addition, unlike other anti-austerity protest like the Spanish Indignados, anti-austerity resistance in Greece,

collective action involved a mix of ‘old’ and new actors, trade unions, Left-wing political parties and the Greek Indignados for a short period in 2011 (see Kanellopoulos at all, 2017: 115). It is important to note that ‘old’ actors linked to trade unions and partisan political organizations were central to mass anti-austerity protests in Greece. As argued by Rudig and Karyotis (2013: 509), ‘protest against austerity also has a feeling of ‘old’ politics about it that may be reminiscent of the strike movements of previous decades. With four out of five participants having taken part in protest before, it is evident that many of the usual suspects were re-mobilized; that is, employed people who are trade union members and have left-wing political views’ (Rudig and Karyotis, 2013: 509). In the Greek anti-austerity protests ‘old’ actors and ‘old’ partisan politics remain more firmly entrenched than in other European anti-austerity protests. Notably, anti-austerity protest in Greece needs to be understood against the backdrop of a peculiar phenomenon where political parties (in particular, the Greek leftist parties) are strongly involved with grassroots protest taking place in the streets (see Kanellopoulos at all, 2017: 114-115).

Anti-austerity protests in Greece cannot be reduced, nonetheless, to mass mobilisations and public demonstrations. Collective action against austerity was also carried on by activists who became engaged in social economy and solidarity protests, which is a dimension of protest that requires further research. It is important to recognize that there has been emphasis on collective action that is carried on by everyday practices of resistance that take the form of solidarity economy from food parcels and social pharmacies to electricity reconnection and community self-help centers (Ishkanian, Glasius and Ali, 2013: 10; Karyotis and Rudig, 2017: 5). As insightfully noted by Vaiou and Kalandides (2017: 451) ‘beyond the ‘heroic’ moments of overtly political actions, daily routines of solidarity produce new interactions between people, create new spaces of emotional or material support, induce practices of exchange and inevitably conflict’.

Methodological approach

To answer our research questions, we primarily draw upon empirical material from four semi-structured, in-depth interviews with the founding members - more specifically members of the administrative committee - of the Greek 'Do not pay movement'. The interviews were conducted in January 2017 in Athens, Greece with the founding members of the movement namely, Elias Papadopoulos, Leonidas Papadopoulos, Maria Lekakou and Yannis Damoulis. It is worth noting here that the first three members mentioned above are part of the same family, i.e., mother and the two sons. The interviews allowed the researchers to gain an understanding of the movement's mission, values, motivations and tactics (Arksey and Knight, 1999). Using discourse analysis, we analysed the interview data across two main thematic categories, namely (a) their collective self- identification defined in terms of the opposition towards those they protest against, and (b) their protest activities and tactics to which we refer here as 'micro-acts' of resistance. Our methodological approach is complemented by discourse analysis of public documentation about the movement's aims and collective action found in the movement's official web page (http://www.kinimadenplirono.gr/). The movement keeps a much updated and well-organised web page. Specifically, we analysed the following sections from the movement's web page: the manifesto, Main Positions [vasikes theseis], Our Actions [oi draseis mas]. Several researchers (Tonkiss, 2012; Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012) support that our lives are conducted through language; hence, discourse analysis of our data helped us understand the relationship between language, subjectivity, social practices and power. Language constitutes a field of values and ideas, thus an ideological field that forms the way we see the world (Matheson, 2005: 3-4). Under this rationale, language can be used to understand human behavior and experience, through the examination of the dialectic frames (discourses), their

role in the construction of social phenomena and the relationship between discourse and power (Burr, 1995: 2). In this vein, discourse analysis, allowed us to investigate bidirectional and complex relations between the members' discourses and their social practices. The human understanding of the world stems, therefore, from its classification in "discursive analytical terms" (Burr, 1995: 3) in specific narratives. For the purposes of this study, we focused on the members' political narrative on issues related to social (in)justice and (in)equality in the Greek society as well as on their interpretative repertoires. In this context, we are primarily interested in understanding the ways they construct reality and place themselves and their actions within it (Tonkiss, 2012: 412).

Us versus them framing – the people contra the elites

In this section, we look at the "us" versus "them" framing that underpins the political narrative of the 'Do not pay movement' and their collective self-identification as a movement of opposition to the elites. Our interview data and discourse analysis of some of the public documentation available in the website of the movement suggest that the interviewees' articulate their ideological stance and collective identity in terms of a stark opposition with the ideological orientations of the political and financial elites. The "us" (the people) vs. "them" (the corrupt political and financial elites) framing is primarily aimed at stressing their opposition to the "unfairness" and "inequality" stemming from the actions of these elites. It is crucial to pay attention to the "us" versus "them" framing because this is significant in terms of articulating the construction of a collective identity and their grievances. As noted above, the initial grievances of the 'Do not pay movement' were the protests against the increased tolls' prices imposed by private construction companies in newly constructed or renovated Greek national roads. This remains a controversial issue in Greece.

According to Maria Lekakou, the expensive toll rates constituted the trigger that activated the birth of the movement, since their reaction to the newly established high toll rates was initially the protests at specific toll stations of the national roads in Greece which led the protestors to the occupation and "opening" for free drive through of several toll stations, mainly the ones closer to Athens. This incident constitutes this first act of injustice that is framed as "inequality" by all interviewees. As Elias Papadopoulos argues, "the regime of big construction companies in the country was receiving privileged funding by the Greek state and was actually taking no investment risks". This was because the Greek state had been the guarantor of those loans. This situation was for us an extra motive to keep on fighting against this 'diaploki'" (the word used to denote the vested interwoven interests between the political and financial elites in Greece)". Such vested interests have been constantly supported, according to Mrs. Lekakou, by all Greek governments and the majority of the Greek political system since 2007:

> "This whole thing began in 2007, during Souflias's ministry,[1] but with the agreement of all other parties. In 2010 the constructors claimed huge compensations from the state, because the banks could not fund them. Papandreou,[2] having signed the first memorandum could not give them the amounts of money they asked for, but later on, in 2013, Samaras[3] gave them huge compensations. Everyone is guilty, since they gave away our national roads to big constructors."

The members of the movement also stressed out the efforts of the Greek political and financial establishment to eliminate the tolls protests. In Leonidas Papadopoulos words, "the

[1] George Souflias has been a Greek conservative politician who held various offices during the Conservative's party (New Democracy) administration.
[2] George Papandreou is a Greek socialist politician who served as Prime Minister of Greece from 2009 to 2011. Papandreou signed off the first bailout treaty (Memorandum of Understanding) in May 2010.
[3] Antonis Samaras is a Greek politician who served as Prime Minister of Greece from 2012 to 2015 and leader of the conservative New Democracy party from 2009 to 2015.

expansion of the movement hurt them a lot and they were forced to vote for two 'photographic'[4] laws, legislating junta methods[5] to restrict our actions. Even the traffic police became the security service of the big constructors", and Mrs. Lekakou adds, "they started suing us, because they were backed up by the state with consecutive, "photographic" laws". It is noteworthy that the movement's members do not hide themselves and that they fully disclose their identity. A consequence of their eponymous action is that they have been repeatedly prosecuted for their activism and are "trapped" in ongoing legal battles.

In their view, social inequality was further intensified by the implementation of the various memoranda and the consequent austerity policies, which hit mainly the lower - in financial terms - social groups. According to Elias Papadopoulos:

> "We should not forget that the current crisis is an over-concentration crisis. Thus, the wealth has been concentrated in the hands of few people and the vast majority of society cannot consume the goods they produce. In that sense there is a huge imbalance created in the production and consumption system, including the huge unemployment rates as well. The crisis actually diminished the available income per household and made us expand our action beyond the tolls issue".

[4] 'Photographic laws' is a commonly used Greek expression denoting that a statute is being enacted in order to serve specific interests. Thereupon, it is an expression that has a negative connotation by emphasizing that the specific law is not dictated out of the necessity to serve the orderly function of a democratic society, but rather to serve the interests of specific stakeholders that hold interlocking interests with public agents.

[5] The Laws that criminalized the denial of the payment of the toll posts are laws 3920/2011 and -mainly- 4070/2012. The criminalization of the denial of tolls' payment is based on a specific type of crime called "idionymo" (delictum sui generis, crime sui generis, special legal notion, idionym). In legal terms, "idionymo" is the crime for which the law dictates special (stricter) penalties compared to other crimes of the category to which it belongs. The term first appeared in a law of 1929, under the Eleftherios Venizelos government, aiming at criminalizing the public expression of subversive (mainly communist or anarchist) ideas. Until 1974, when the junta regime came to its end, the "idionymo" was used to criminalize the public endorsement and dissemination of communist ideas (Imerodromos.gr 2015; Left.gr 2016).

Concurrent with other studies (Fominaya, 2017: 3; Gerbaudo, 2017), we argue here that the 'Do not pay movement' is an anti-austerity social movement that primarily directs its discontent towards national politics and oligarchies. The 'Do not pay movement' can be seen as a counter-hegemonic movement that overtly challenges austerity policies and opposes those supporting and implementing them. It could be argued that the members of the movement adopt, what Gerbaudo (2017) has called a radical and anti-oligarchic discourse of citizenship, which allows the protestors to clearly distinguish themselves from the national political and financial elites and their neoliberal rhetoric. That becomes even more explicit in their manifesto. In their collective self-identification, it is clear that they see the movement has having gradually developed into an "innovative political movement of resistance" that fights against "barbaric policies" that threaten people's rights and living conditions. The movement is associated with "the exploited social strata" and as such its main aim is to secure people's free access to public goods along with the creation of a solidarity network.

Moreover, to accentuate their objection to austerity policies and those supporting them, in their manifesto, they employ a war rhetoric emphasizing words such as: fight, battle, resistance to a rotten political system. Nevertheless, it is important to argue here, that such powerful language is not just been adopted in order to demonize the opponent but also to mobilise the citizens (see Gerbaudo, 2017). As mentioned above, the creation of a sustainable solidarity network is a vital objective of the movement. Leonidas Papadopoulos refers to the electricity cut-offs in private households by the main power provider in Greece (DEI- Public Power Corporation), as a consequence of the crisis and the diminished household income. This power cut-offs were reckless in that they affected poor families and people with serious health problems who could not afford to pay their electricity bills. In a smaller scale, the Athens Water Supply and Sewage Company (EYDAP) followed a similar policy by cutting off water provision to those households that failed to pay their water bills. As Leonidas

argues “due to their cold-heartedness they have started cutting off the electricity to totally weak social groups, to people that will never be able to pay their debts”. In a similar vein, Yannis Damoulis also notes,

> “We haven’t found anyone that had his power cut off and was ok in financial terms. Everyone is impoverished, people with zero income. I don’t know what to say. We are talking about tragic conditions! They cut the power in the middle of the winter off impoverished families with zero income. It is tragic, it’s a crime”.

According to the interviewees, another major target with regards to the intensification of social inequality and social injustice in Greek society, was the way in which the political and financial elites failed to represent the people also with regards to the issue of house confiscations by the banks as more and more families incurred overwhelming debts and failed to pay their mortgages. “It has to do with the Greek government of course” (referring to SYRIZA), according to Elias Papadopoulos, “which has changed sides and serves the interests of the financial elites and several notaries, who are very close partners of the banks”. From the discussions with the interviewees, it became obvious that they target all recent Greek governments regardless of their political ideologies within the Left-Right spectrum. This is consistent with the main finding of Kaldor and Selchow (2013: 84) in their study on ‘subterranean politics’, which is shared across different types of protest and initiative - the extensive frustration with formal politics. It is also clear that the members of the ‘Do not pay movement’ do not accept hegemonic narratives that suggest that austerity measures are beyond state control and, therefore, their view is that blame for austerity should be placed upon all political parties, including the radical left party of SYRIZA. Maria Lekakou elaborates on this issue when she states that, “Kontonis (current Minister of Justice) recently

said that they are going to implement electronic confiscations. This is barbarism. It denotes illegal alliances and pre-determined enslavement". As the above statement makes clear, the movement condemns such acts as illegal and having devastating results to people's lives. In the same vein, Yannis Damoulis underlines the unethical dimensions of house confiscations by the banks:

> "The banks confiscate the houses of fellow citizens. One could ask, why did they get a loan if they didn't have the money to pay it off? When one got the loan, one had a job as well. One had his own schedule to pay it off. The banks have been re-capitalized two, three times already. Where is that money? Since they are re-capitalized should we keep on paying these loans? This is the mafia that is governing the country. The international mafia. These are our opponents".

Other actions in the struggle against inequality and social injustice perpetrated by the elites discussed by the movement members, especially by Maria Lekakou, were the - nowadays abolished - five euros ticket for the use of health services in public hospitals, and the closing down of several small public healthcare units in downtown Athens - in the area of Patisia - which were serving the needs of several thousands of people who cannot afford private healthcare.

It becomes obvious from the discussions above that the movement clearly adopts a counter-hegemonic narrative of 'us' (the citizens) versus 'them' (the political and economic elites) (Gerbaudo, 2017) in order to contest neoliberal policies and to question the legitimacy of the elites to represent the citizens. By doing so, the movement aims to construct what Gerbaudo (2017: 37) describes as an inclusive "common ground" for protest mobilization. It is

important to mention that the ‘them’ is constructed in terms of political elites who are supported by the capitalist system and the neo-liberal order.

The political narratives we have been discussing focused on specific causes and situations of social injustice and in constructing an ‘us’ that is against their ideological enemies. The interviewees see these situations as directly linked to the political administration sector in Greece and the local and international capital, which in a context of crisis have managed to successfully pursue their interests against the highly indebted lower and middle social classes. As it is also clearly stated in their web site, the movement maintains strong positions with regards to a range of issues beyond those discussed above such as: popular sovereignty, a demand of national independence and social justice, rupture with neoliberal policies and the European Institutions that support them, fight against fascism, ceasing of privatisations and a restructuring of the society on socialist foundations. The ‘Do not pay movement’ members use this narrative mainly to designate their ideological opponents and establish their activist tactics, which aim at disseminating the rationale of civic disobedience, through a grassroots activism, against the unfair legislations and policies that suppress the lower and middle classes of society. It is worth noting here that although supranational structures - such as the IMF, EU, and the European Central Bank- are frequently present in their denouncing rhetoric, their immediate actions and agenda target primarily national politics. This finding concurs with Pianta and Gerbaudo’s (2014) argument that such movements are less interested in transforming European governance structures since they are primarily focused on domestic politics.

Notably, the narratives and interpretive repertoires of the members of the ‘Do not pay movement’ are grounded on a specific political-ideological orientation. According to Elias Papadopoulos, “the framework for the function of the movement is a political one. We do not favor an apolitical activism. When you act against the biggest interests in the country, the big

constructors, the banks, the big international funds, the international capital, anybody can understand that our activism is a deeply political one". The movement goes on to advocate a new form of politics that is carried on by a 'us' that is discursively constructed as open to everyone who wishes to join the struggle against a 'them', political elites and financial elites that fail to represent the interests of the people.

Even though most members referred to their communist beliefs (L. Papadopoulos, M. Lekakou, Y. Damoulis), they all underline that the movement is open to anyone who shares their anti-establishment, anti-austerity activist values, with the exception of far-right party Golden Dawn. It is important to note that the 'Do not pay movement' participated in the Greek general elections in 2012 as an independent party, gaining almost 1% of the votes and, again in the September 2015 general elections as part of coalitions [e.g. with Laiki Enotita (People's Unity)]. It is also important to mention here that the parties that were part of the coalition cannot be considered part of the political establishment, being, in fact, radical voices from the left ideological spectrum. The movement's participation in the general elections indicates, to some extent, their belief that the corrupt political establishment should be fought 'from within'. This constitutes, in fact, a popular position that is usually adopted by both parliamentary and non-parliamentary voices of the left spectrum in Greece. After all, it is clear from the movement's manifesto and their testimonials that they do not share an anarchistic political orientation. Instead, they support and fight for the transformation of the national structures of governance and parliamentary representation in a way that would promote the restructuring of society on socialist foundations.

The construction of a collective identity – "us" - ideologizes " them" in terms of a capitalist, neoliberal enemy which is primarily associated to the domestic political and financial elites. Yet, it is important to note that their ideological strategy is not expressed in terms of a political programme or as part of their function as a political formation, even though they

have participated twice in general elections. Their ideological strategy is, in fact, underpinned by beliefs and ideological motivations that are articulated in collective action that takes the form of micro-acts of resistance. As we shall see in the following section, this type of collective action is motivated both by their willingness to actively intervene and support the lower social strata that are suffering under austerity policies. Unlike the post-2010 social movements (e.g., The Indignados) and major mobilizations that were short-lived, the 'Do not pay movement' has lasted several years. The interview data suggest that this is, in part, because of the existence of a stable core of people - all interviewees are members of the movement since its very beginning. These close bonds between these members – notably, the fact that M. Lekakou is the mother of Elias and Leonidas Papadopoulos - and their continuous engagement with tactics that involve everyday acts of resistance suggest that what matter to the protestors are the everyday struggles encountered by those living Greece.

Finally, considering that their activism emerges at the grassroots level without directly involving any elite members (e.g. established politicians, entrepreneurs), it could be argued that it functions as a left-wing counterweight to the far-right activism of Golden Dawn (GD). Borrowing the terms "inclusionary" and "exclusionary" from the theory of populism, where the first denotes leftist populism (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis, 2014: 135) and the latter right-wing populism (Betz, 2001: 2), we could argue that while GD's activism is an exclusionary one, aiming at serving - according to their ideological manifesto - strictly the Greek citizens -the Do not pay social movement implements inclusionary activism, aiming at helping everyone in need regardless from racial or ideological affiliation. This kind of activism is something that the members of the movement perceive as needed in Greek society, which suffers with the implementation of consecutive austerity policies.

Grassroots forms of dissent and micro acts of resistance

In this section, we look at how the strategies of everyday resistance developed by the movement can be understood in terms if micro-acts of resistance rather than fully-fledged mass mobilizations that galvanize media attention. Even though austerity policies were not from the beginning a direct target of the movement - the tolls protests have been taking place since 2009- the emergence of the crisis and the austerity policies gave an additional impetus to the movement's activities. These activities, according to the interviewees, fall under the rationale of civic disobedience. According to Elias Papadopoulos:

> "We are active in various domains, a multi-level action, whose basic law is solidarity. It is resistance and disobedience. In our opinion, we can't achieve anything without disobedience, when the unfair is being legislated. We believe that the disobedience against these unfair and anti-constitutional laws is an obligation for all citizens. That is something mentioned in the Greek Constitution as well. Our action is an anti-capitalist one. It's the sand in the gears of the system, even though many people do not approach it that way. It can adopt itself in different situations and tackle specific problems that have emerged mainly during the crisis, but are actually issues deriving from capitalism itself. Thus, we cannot separate those things. Our action is anti-memorandum, opposite to the crisis and against capitalist standards, like hyper-consumption."

The framing of protest actions in terms of civic disobedience anti-capitalist resistance underpins the interpretative repertoire of the 'Do not pay movement' members. Hence, it is not surprising that the protestors place themselves in a dystopic capitalist environment that permeates Greek life in financial, political and social terms. This needs to be understood against a political backdrop in which consecutive memoranda signed by the Greek

governments since 2010, which brought with them a series of severe austerity measures (Triantafyllidou, Gropas & Kouki 2013).

The movement first emerged in to demonstrate its grievances against the toll posts in the national roads as previously discussed. According to Mrs. Lekakou:

> "We were going with our flags and our banners, because we studied the franchise contracts of OUR (emphasis placed by the interviewee) national roads to the big constructors and first and foremost our biggest national constructor, and we fought to diminish the tolls. In the beginning, to create a charge per kilometer to construct the roads in a proper way. They (the constructors) were already claiming the tolls for unconstructed roads. This was happening until very recently with the Olympian national road."

In addition to the toll posts protests, the movement directs its attention to power cut-offs that the public supplier of electricity was imposing on families who were failing to pay their bills. Their actions were two-fold: firstly, the movement's members intervene by reconnecting the power supply to households; secondly, they assist families with the set up of financial settlements between the consumers and the public power supplier. Our interviewees argue they have helped hundreds of citizens reconnecting their electricity supply from the New Democracy administration[6] and under the current SYRIZA government.

Another major activity of the movement is the resistance against the confiscations. Yannis Damoulis gives a rather illuminating description of the rationale of their presence in the civil courts:

[6] Reference to the coalition government of Greece between June 2012 and January 2015. Its primary party was New Democracy (right-wing party), escorted by PASOK (socialists) and DIMAR (Democratic Left), a center-leftist party.

> "For three and a half years now we are in civil courts with the confiscations, an activity that has begun from Ilion (a municipality in the wider area of Athens). We have prevented confiscations for people that have a single house, or a little store, but we do not prevent private confiscations, between individuals or companies that have to pay off their staff. For example Ledra Marriott (a recently bankrupt hotel in downtown Athens). We asked them (the employees), do you want the confiscation to take place or not? And they answered yes, because a new owner might re-open the hotel. We don't interfere with these confiscations".

The members of the movement have also staged occupations as part of their activism tactics. For example, they have occupied the cash registers of hospitals to prevent them from taking the five-euro ticket from the people and, more recently, civil courts, in order to prevent confiscations.

Conclusion

The findings of this research suggest that the movement's collective identity is predicated on the stark opposition between "us" (the people) vs. "them" (the corrupt political and financial elites) as a capitalist and neoliberal enemy that is primarily embodied by the domestic political and financial elites. We have also seen that what is distinctive about the protest tactics of the 'Do not pay movement' is how their collective action is underpinned by everyday forms of grassroots resistance, which bear little resemblance with the actions and initiatives of other European anti-austerity movements, which involved large-scale activities such as mass demonstrations and occupations and assemblies in public space. The actions and initiatives we discussed in this chapter suggest that civic disobedience and anti-austerity

protest are carried on through activities that punctuate the fabric of everyday life with micro-acts of social justice. With these small acts of social justice, the members of the movement seek to have a direct and immediate impact on the everyday struggles of Greek families afflicted by austerity measures. What is at issue here is a type of grassroots everyday resistance that is articulated through what Vaiou and Kalandides (2017: 442) call 'solidarity initiatives'. These are small-scale acts of solidarity that involve a 'broad range of practices that share a common goal of alleviating or easing some of the effects of the crisis (…) and reciprocally engage and empower those who are hardly hit by it'. Arguably, then, we are dealing with a social movement that pursues a 'collective re-imagining of democracy' (see Kaldor and Selchow, 2013: 88) through a new kind of politics that is more participatory and articulated at the micro-scale of everyday life.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the School of Media, Communication and Sociology at the University of Leicester for providing funding for the transcription of the interviews.

References

Arksey H and Knight PT (1999) *Interviewing for Social Scientists*. London: Sage.

Betz, H. (2001) 'Exclusionary Populism in Austria, Italy, and Switzerland', *International Journal*, 56(3): 393- 11.

Baiocchi, G. and Ganuza, E. (2012) 'Politics without Banners. The Spanish Indignados' Experiment in Direct Democracy'. In E. Stetter, K. Duffek, and A. Skrzypek (eds.) *Building New Communities - Notes from the Transatlantic Dialogue of Dialogues*. Brussels: Foundation for European Progressive Studies, Renner Institute, pp. 110-117.

Biekart, K. and Fowler, A. (2013) 'Transforming activisms 2010+: Exploring ways and Waves', *Development and Change* 44(3): 527–546

Burr V. (1995) *An Introduction to Social Constructionism*. London: Routledge.

Fairclough I., Fairclough N (2012) *Political Discourse Analysis*. London: Blackwell.

Flesher Fominaya, C. (2015) 'Debunking spontaneity: Spain's 15-M/Indignados as autonomous movement' *Social Movement Studies*, 14: 142–163.

Flesher Fominaya, C. (2017) European anti-austerity and pro-democracy protests in the wake of the global financial crisis, *Social Movement Studies*, 16:1, 1-20, DOI:10.1080/14742837.2016.1256193

Gatopoulos, D. (3 May, 2017). Meet the brothers fighting for indebted Greek homeowners. *Reading Eagle*. Available at: http://www.readingeagle.com/ap/article/meet-the-brothers-fighting-for-indebted-greek-homeowners

Gerbaudo, P. (2012) *Tweets and the Streets – Social Media and Contemporary Activism*. London: Pluto Press.

Gerbaudo, G. (2017) The indignant citizen: anti-austerity movements in southern Europe and the anti-oligarchic reclaiming of citizenship, *Social Movement Studies*, 16:1, 36-50, DOI: 10.1080/14742837.2016.1194749.

Glasius, M. and Pelyers. G. (2013), 'The global moment of 2011: Democracy, social Justice and dignity', *Development and Change* 44(3): 547–567.

Kaldor, M. Selchow, S. (2013) 'The "Bubbling Up" of Subterranean Politics in Europe', *Journal of Civil Society* 9(1): 78-99.

Karyotis, G., Rüdig, W. (2017). 'The Three Waves of Anti-Austerity Protest in Greece, 2010-2015', *Political Studies Review*, 1-12 DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/1478929916685728

Kyvrikosaios, D (~~30 March,~~ 2017). As austerity digs in, Greek courts are battleground on foreclosures. *Reuters*. Available at: http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-eurozone-greece-repossessions-idUKKBN17125B?il=0 (accessed 13 July 2017)

Ishkanian, A. and Glasius, M. and Ali, I. S. (2013) *Reclaiming democracy in the square? Interpreting the movements of 2011-12. Department of Social Policy*, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK. Available at: http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/53474/ (Accessed 13 July 2017).

Left.gr (2016). As if today the Greek Parliament voted for the "Venizelos' idionym" back in 1929. [online]. Available at: https://left.gr/news/san-simera-1929-psifistike-sti-voyli-venizeliko-idionymo. Accessed on May 20th 2017.

Matheson D. (2005). *Media Discourses: Analyzing Media Texts*. Berkshire: Open University Press.

Pianta, M. and Gerbaudo, P. (2014) 'In search of European alternatives. Anti-austerity protests in Europe" Basingstoke *Subterranean Politics in Europe* (2014) Available at: http://works.bepress.com/mario_pianta/112/ (accessed on 12 July 2017).

Tonkiss F. (2012) Discourse analysis In: Seale, C., (ed.) *Researching Society and Culture*. London: Sage.

Poulakidakos S (2014) *Propaganda and Public Discourse. The presentation of the MoU by the Greek Media.* Athens: DaVinci Books.

Rovisco, M. (2016) 'A new 'Europe from below'? Cosmopolitan citizenship, digital media and the indignados social movement' *Comparative European Politics* 14(4): 435-457.

Rovisco, M. (2017) 'The indignados social movement and the image of the occupied square: the making of a global icon' *Visual Communication* 16(3): 337-359.

Rovisco, M. and Ong, J. C. (2016) *Taking the Square: Mediated Dissent and Occupations of Public Space* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International).

Rüdig, W. and Karyotis, G. (2013) 'Beyond the usual suspects? New participants in anti-austerity protests in Greece' *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 18(3): 313-330.

Rüdig, W. and Karyotis, G. (2014) 'Who protests in Greece? Mass opposition to austerity'

British Journal of Political Science 44(3): 487-513.

Simiti, M. (2014) 'Rage and Protest: The Case of the Greek Indignant Movement', *Hellenic Observatory Papers on Greece and Southeast Europe*, GreeSE Paper No. 82. Available at: http://www.lse.ac.uk/europeanInstitute/research/hellenicObservatory/CMS%20pdf/Publications/GreeSE/GreeSE-No82.pdf (accessed on 12 July 2017).

Smith, H. (11 March 2017) Greek activists target sales of homes seized over bad debts. *The Guardian*. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/11/greek-activists-target-sales-of-homes-seized-over-bad-debts

Triantafyllidou, A., Gropas, R. and Kouki, H. (2013), *The Greek crisis and European Modernity*, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

Stavrakakis, Y. and Katsambekis, G. (2014) 'Left-wing populism in the European periphery: the case of SYRIZA', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 19(2): 119-142.

Imerodromos.gr (2015). *Venizelos Government votes for "idionymo" (idionym)*. [online]. Available at: http://www.imerodromos.gr/idionymo/. Accessed on May 20th 2017.

Vaiou, D. and Kalandides, A. (2017) 'Practices of solidarity in Athens: reconfigurations of public space and urban citizenship' 21(4): 440-454, DOI: 10.1080/13621025.2017.1307605