**Spatializing Radical Political Imaginaries:
Neoliberalism, Crisis, and Transformative Experience in the Syntagma Square
Occupation in Greece**

Dimitris Soudias, soudias@uni-marburg.de

Pre-Print of article published in Contention:

<https://www.berghahnjournals.com/view/journals/contention/8/1/cont080103.xml>

Abstract: This article seeks to make sense of why participants in square occupations point to the transformative character of their experience. Drawing from narrative research on the 2011 occupation of Syntagma Square in Athens, I argue that the transformative quality of the occupation lies in the spatialized emergence and practice of radical political imaginaries in these encampments, which signify a demarcation from and an alternative to the neo-liberalizing of everyday life in Greece. By scrutinizing the spatial demarcation between the “upper” and “lower” parts of the Syntagma Square occupation, one can think more carefully about the conditions of possibility for the emergence of the radical imagination.

Keywords: Athens, austerity, Occupy, radical imagination, social movements, space

“If you have not lived it, you cannot understand it,” Vasilis told me of his experience in the 2011 occupation of Syntagma Square in Athens. Back then, Greeks of all ages and across most political persuasions had set up a protest camp in the heart of the city. Lasting more than two months, the occupation contested the Greek government’s course of implementing the infamous austerity “measures” set out by the EC-ECB-IMF troika.¹ Vasilis was not the only

participant to point at the transformative quality of the occupation experience. Many others drew from the arcane and metaphorical to portray what they had lived through in the square, describing Syntagma as a “magical space” not least because of the square’s “aura” or “spirit.” Partaking in the occupation was an inherently transformative experience, one that “changed” them, made them “wake up,” and become “politically mature.” Such accounts are not unique to Syntagma Square. From Gezi Park to Euromaidan, from Zuccotti Park to Tahrir Square, participants have emphasized a “special world” in which people are “unified” and “completely themselves” and where “different rules apply” (Ayata and Harders 2018; Bondarenko 2013; Schumann and Soudias 2013; Soudias 2018).

This article seeks to make sense of why participants in such square occupations point to the transformative character of their experience. Reconsidering the latently functionalist relationship between individual participation and biographical “impact” in the fields of social movement studies and contentious politics (Fillieule and Neveu 2019; Giugni 2004; McAdam 1999; Vestergren et al. 2016), this article views the transformative experience of participation not through the lenses of psychologized individual behavior, but rather as the product of the social relationality of crisis, spatiality, and subjectivity. Conceiving of transformative experience as a dialectical process produced by the relationality of crises, subjectivity, and spatiality allows us to think of each of these concepts in a Bourdieusian manner as structured structures that are predisposed to act as structuring structures. Put differently, the reconciliation between structure and agency allows us to view the relationship between subjectivity and transformative experience as a dialectical process structuring and structured by the particularities of crisis and space that my interlocutors experience and practice.

Building on what I call an “abductive-situational analysis” (Clarke 2005; Tavory and Timmermans 2014) of the 2011 Syntagma Square occupation based on interviews with and observation of 29 participants,² I argue that the transformative quality of the Syntagma Square occupation lies in the spatialized emergence and practice of radical political imaginaries in these encampments. First, this is because the extraordinary practice of occupying is an act against the ordering of the status quo vis-à-vis the neoliberalization of everyday life in Greece. And second, the social order *within* the occupation of the square offered a radical alternative to the status quo.

With the costs of the crisis in Greece being socialized downward through wage cuts and tax hikes, and with institutional spaces for the expression of political disagreement virtually shut down, the country was hit by a wave of protests that began in February 2010 and started evolving soon thereafter. Although mostly organized by such groups as communist labor union organizers, the antiauthoritarian milieu, and members of the radical left (Kousis 2015; Psimitis 2011), people who had so far been barely or not at all exposed to street politics started to join these mobilizations against austerity. Among them were my interlocutors. Inscribed in a wider “movement of the piazzas” (Leontidou 2012) that unfolded in over 38 central squares in cities all over the country, the Syntagma Square occupation lay at the heart of the movement. Starting on 25 May and lasting until August, Syntagma represented the convergence of a socioeconomically and ideologically heterogeneous “multitude” animated by those directly hit by the economic crisis (Kaika and Karaliotas 2017; Katsambekis 2014; Sotirakopoulos and Sotiropoulos 2013) with previously existing groups of anarchist and radical leftist activists.³

This article seeks to theorize the conditions of possibility for the emergence of radical political imaginaries by investigating participants' meaning-making practices with the Syntagma square occupation against the backdrop of crisis and austerity. At the heart of this approach lie crises and their inherently liminal quality. Because "it really does matter *where* the subject is" (Pile 2008: 214, emphasis in original) and because "we usually experience ourselves, and other things, in relation to places and spaces" (Malpas 1999: 10), this article argues that the spatial production of the Syntagma Square occupation cannot be seen separately from how participants signify crisis. The structuring quality of crisis produces the Syntagma Square occupation as a spatiality that is marked precisely by crisis's antistructural capacity. As such, a spatial approach to the square occupation allows for an understanding of Syntagma as both a (structural) consequence of and an (antistructural) answer to the crisis in Greece. To make sense of the conditions for the emergence of radical political imaginaries in Syntagma, this article theorizes on crisis and its significations, before elaborating on their spatial manifestation within the square occupation.

As early as May 2011, the square witnessed a profound demarcation regarding its territoriality. This spatially manifested cleavage was expressed by my interlocutors' talk of the demarcation between the "upper" and the "lower" parts of square. Ever since May 2011, the upper part has been associated with nationalist and even fascist discourses (Bakola 2017; Goutsos and Polymenas 2014), while the lower square has been associated with discourses of political vision, organization, and assembly—discourses grounded in ecological, radical leftist, and antiauthoritarian ideas broadly conceived. Building on these narratives, I claim that this division is due to the "upper" part of the square being marked by a "regressive" signification of crisis—where the imagination of what is possible is reduced to what is

necessary—and the “lower part” being marked by a “progressive” signification of crisis. In a Bourdieusian sense, doxic (i.e., uncontested, unspoken, and prereflective) assumptions are raised to the level of discourse, where they can be radically reimagined. As normative expectations “slip out of alignment” (Crossley 2003: 47) with the actualities of space, individuals are shocked out of their habitual acceptance of taken-for-granted norms and into a more critical attitude. These processes enable what I refer to as the “unthought-of,” an experience that transcends normative expectations and allows for reevaluation of the previously doxic and tacitly internalized.

On Capitalist Imaginaries and Situations of Crisis

In everyday life, habitualized patterns of thought and action guide our conduct in a self-regulating manner, rendering everyday uncertainties and those in the future somewhat manageable. In neoliberal societies, conditions of uncertainty are systematically cultivated, in order to impose stress and precarity upon individuals so as to drive them into competition with one another (Bauman 2008; Dardot and Laval 2017; Davies 2014). Because everyday life is firmly entrenched in the status quo of capitalist social relations—steeped into what Pierre Bourdieu (2013) famously refers to as *illusio*—our normative expectations of the world around us are deeply affected by them. Here, the assumption of being able to compete for middle-class belonging has been key for the pertinence of neoliberalism, for that belonging signifies “a refuge from perpetual insecurity” (Haiven and Khasnabish 2014: 115–116). As a structuring force, the social imaginary of capitalism succeeded in accounting for the constitution of needs and desires, for the existence of tradition, myth, and modernity, for the orientation of institutional arrangements and social relations, and for our imagination of what is worth striving for (see Castoriadis 1998; Lefort 1986; Thompson 1982).

In Greece, this imaginary has been as clearly hegemonic as elsewhere. In times of crisis, however, the cogency of social imaginaries can be called into question. This is because crises are situations in which our ordinary conduct is in turmoil, as normative expectations do not match everyday realities. With the beginning of the crisis in Greece in 2010, the ways in which uncertainties were tackled changed dramatically. The slashing of wages and pensions, tax hikes, worsening employment conditions, and an overall increase in unemployment all had concrete material repercussions for the people living in Greece. As the material consequences of the crisis started to show, normative expectations about the future began to change:

The people . . . started to feel the crisis in all its width. I mean, it's values and such: "I built a house and I'm ok," let's say, everything started to crumble . . .

Back then there were a lot of fears over what the crisis is. "What are we to expect here?" (Kostas, personal communication, 17 February 2016)

In Greek, crisis (*krísis*) refers to judgment or thinking and forces reconsideration upon ordinary habits of thought and action in ways that question the apparent givenness of social reality. Yet the ways in which we reconsider our practices in order to tackle the realities of crisis depend upon how we signify crisis in relation to how elites present it to us.

On Anti-Crisis and its Regressive Significations

By the time the global financial crisis brought Greek banks to tumble, a peculiar frame of critiques started to come apart. Political and media discourses painted a picture in which a productive, efficient, and competitive European north had to bail out a lazy, excessive, and leisurely south. Fueling this narrative, German chancellor Angela Merkel alleged that "too

many uncompetitive members of the Eurozone have lived beyond their means” (cited in Deutscher Bundestag 2010: 4128). When elites deploy such discourses in order to single out member states and scaffold their efforts toward increased competitiveness as insufficient, what they do in effect is elevate the neoliberal dogma of self-responsibility to the national level. As debt was being socialized and responsibility individualized, the mantra of dominant crisis discourses became that nobody is to be blamed for the Greek crisis but Greece itself (see Mylonas 2012).

The ways in which political elites framed the crisis was really through discourses of anti-crisis. Instead of radically imagining alternatives, where principles and techniques of evaluation are themselves subjected to critique and debate, continuous state intervention and executive decisions are aimed at defending the status quo and prevent the moment of radicalized judgment so inherent to crisis (Davies 2014). Anti-crisis perpetuates an imagination that limits normative expectations of what is possible to what is necessary. Worsening economic and social conditions weigh heavily on individuals. This development is to diminish their expectations and guide their conduct by threat, rather than by opportunity, in ways that only strengthen, rather than undermine, the principles of the status quo. Anti-crisis, therefore, is to subject individuals to a regressive signification of crisis. Twenty-five-year-old Petros, about to graduate from university with a degree in economics, provides us with a telling example:

[Crisis] is a violent displacement of normalcy and of reality. So in this period that we talk about, a logic that is harshly, harshly personal is being consolidated. You know: things are very difficult! Exactly because of this I need to study, to finish

quickly, to get a Master's, to find a specialization, to do special seminars, to work so I can enter my industry as soon as possible so I can build my CV. And then I will see whether I can accomplish something. (Personal communication, 9 February 2017)

In this regressive signification, ordinary people are expected to bear the brunt of crisis and try harder, trusting in the assertion that they indeed “lived beyond their means” and that therefore “there is no alternative” to the austerity. For the individual, as Petros's example shows, this framing demands a stricter adherence to individualized subjectivity: increase human capital to be competitive amid ever-increasing uncertainty. It is in an overwhelming feeling of paralyzing uncertainty, in the fear, stress, and anxiety born of uncertainty, that obedient service to the narrative of anti-crisis is rooted (see Bauman 2006). In that sense, anti-crisis is much closer to a Schmittian (2007) state of exception than to the crisis to which it responds. It is still radically extraordinary, but without the possibility of alternative judgments. Instead, the extraordinariness of the situation is decided upon and enforced by sovereign executive authority, rather than by democratic debate (Davies 2014). Any critique that goes beyond self-responsibility and technocratic reform-implementation is rebuked as “impractical” or “unrealistic.”

But as there is no (economic or other) upside to a large number of people, including all of my interlocutors, to the way the crisis is being managed, it becomes increasingly difficult to sustain a narrative of no alternative: the neoliberal justification of austerity as a means through which Greece could exit its crisis, that is, increase competitiveness by cultivating quasi-market conditions, was undermined by the fact that the conditions of austerity ensured that

there were fewer and fewer opportunities and resources to compete over. This refers to the unfulfilled promise of economic certainty by competing for middle-class belonging. Petros offers a striking analysis regarding the limits of that paradigm:

The ideology is deeply rooted in the brains of . . . a generation who has . . . learned that, you know, gradually generations get better, that the child needs to study hard to be better off, to get a good job . . . Yes, [my parents] told me too. But . . . in Greece we're in a phase where youth unemployment . . . is at 50 percent. . . . This means that an expectation of Greek society that was upheld at least for 30 years has collapsed. (Personal communication, 9 February 2017)

For an increasing number of people, it becomes impossible to sustain themselves, let alone compete for middle-class belonging in times of crisis. And the financial crisis that led to the 2011 Syntagma Square occupation was no exception. It is not only that the *illusio* of future prosperity loses its appeal, but it is that, as a result of the state bailing out banks and consequentially socializing the cost of the financial crisis downward, the liberal values of “opportunity” and “fairness” are thrown overboard. Instead, state bailouts, austerity, and structural adjustments ensure that the winners and losers of economic competition will always be the same. With the rules of the market suspended, the management of the Greek crisis undermined competition’s very conditions of possibility. For my interlocutors, these contradictory developments cast doubt upon the justifications for status quo crisis management, and led them to increasingly view crisis through what I call “progressive signification.”

From Progressive Signification to the Spatialization of the Radical Imagination

In contrast to the frame of anti-crisis adopted by European neoliberals, in the progressive signification of crisis normative expectations are rendered so very fragile that previously doxic assumptions are elevated to the level of discourse, where they can be critiqued (Crossley 2003). This signification builds strongly on Bourdieu's crisis theory:

The critique which brings the undiscussed into discussion, the unformulated into formulation, has as the condition of its possibility objective crisis, which, in breaking the immediate fit between the subjective structures and the objective structures, destroys self-evidence practically . . . the would-be most radical critique always has the limits that are assigned to it by the objective conditions.

(Bourdieu 2013: 168–169)

Instead of what Bourdieu dubs “objective crisis,” my interlocutors show how the progressive signification of crisis has as the condition of its possibility disbelief about and a distancing from the ways in which elites present crisis to us. This allows individuals to engage with what I call the previously “unthought-of”: an experience that transcends normative expectations and allows for reevaluating what was previously doxic and tacitly internalized. The experience of crisis-derived hardship forces individuals into questioning the very norms that they are subjected to and that they are subjecting themselves to. To my interlocutors, the material consequences of crisis enable what Luc Boltanski (2011) describes as a metapragmatic kind of critique: an evaluation of not only the status quo of the crisis, but also of the order that is to be restored and perpetuated through austerity. In this regard, former manager Lukas rather

agitatedly made the following remarks:

Do you see in this perpetual contest . . . some sort of progress for humans? I don't see that at all! I could . . . work 8 to 12 hours in a purely hierarchical environment . . . In order to achieve what? To pay back the loan I took out for the house and the car, and to have consumer goods that others like me produce, that live the same lives. Do you see any meaning in this entire situation?

(Personal communication, 23 February 2016)

As crisis violently unsettles people's normative expectations, the rationality of these expectations themselves and the practices that render them manageable are put under scrutiny. Following this critique, crisis comes to be signified through its creative and imaginative capacities:

We have come to the point where we in the [activist] groups amongst us say that the crisis is a fucking important opportunity. If it were not for the crisis, none of this, [and] not Syntagma, would have happened. The way we think, the way we consume, the way we live would have never changed . . . Because inside that crisis the people get worried, [and] they start to think.

(Katerina, personal communication, 19 October 2014)

Arising from the conditions of crisis, Syntagma Square came to signify a spatial manifestation of radically reimagining "the ways we consume, the way we live." In the square, the possibility of critique and resistance was stimulated in ways that are susceptible to what has

been called the “radical imagination” (Haiven and Khasnabish 2014).

As a figure of thought, the radical imagination can be viewed as an aspirational term that signifies a response to crisis, which is not least a “crisis of imagination” (Haiven 2014). It aspires an imagination that departs from the capitalist imaginary. Conceptually, what is radical in the radical imagination is less a question of ethical judgment (although it can be) and more a description of a sociological process (Haiven and Khasnabish 2014). The radical imagination is characterized by a certain balance between anti-politics and alter-politics (see Hage 2015). Anti-politics here is not defined by depoliticization or by being apolitical. Rather, it signifies a reaction against or rejection of the practices and discourses associated with the politics of power. As the radical imagination stems from experience, and our experiences of the world are different (different intersectional experiences of sexuality, race, gender, age, class, ethnicity, for example) on a phenomenological level, the radical imagination emerges from variation: from conflicts over how values and norms are negotiated and imagined in practice (Paulson 2010). The anti-political quality of the radical imagination requires the act of distancing and demarcating oneself from the existing order against and in confrontation with the practices of government, of power, of ordinary conventions. In a nutshell, it is a form of critique that “demystifies” the politics of power to their actualities of domination and subordination.

On the other hand, alter-politics aims at providing alternatives to that order. As feminist psychologist Lynne Segal puts it:

It is only when people’s distress can be turned into solidarity with others who are vulnerable, with anger directed at the injurious practices of those dictating the

conditions that make our lives more precarious, that politicizing depression might connect us with any collective practices of resistance or utopian dreaming.

(Segal 2017: 55–56)

The alter-political quality of the radical imagination lies precisely in the fact that it is ontologically and epistemologically so fundamentally different from the experience of the status quo. In Greek, “radical” translates literally as “root-breaking,” where radical imagination signifies a projection of the future that is marked by what Bourdieu (2000: 68) refers to as “denaturalization” and “defatalization.” The radical imagination begins with the acknowledgment that it is only possible with and within what one is against, so as to then exercise abductive discovery, a willingness to add another meta-level, a quest for rattling the ontological foundations of the social worlds we inhabit.

In effect, the progressive signification of crisis is a key condition of possibility for such a process to unfold. At the heart of this process, I claim, lies the spatial manifestation of the progressive signification of crisis. This claim is grounded in the consideration that the temporality of square occupations as manifest recurring space reproductions allows for the routinization of newly conceived practices guided by alternative sets of norms and ethical principles to those of the status quo.

From a dialectic viewpoint, space is the product of space-making practices, but it also influences our practices. Stamatis, a seasonal waiter in his mid-40s who had little protest experience prior to Syntagma, offers a good example of the square occupation’s spatial dialectics:

How can I say . . . [Syntagma] generally had a changeable character. This means its character changed continuously. It wasn't a steadily organized structure . . . It was a, how should I tell you, an organism. Imagine an organism that reacts to stimuli. (Personal communication, 3 February 2016)

Stamatis's metaphorical use of biology conceives of space as something naturally given, rather than as something socially produced. His tacit assumption of Syntagma's structuring qualities resonate with Trevor Barnes's (2002) claim that biological metaphors in the social sciences often point to the inherent functions of social phenomena. Relatedly, Stamatis's metaphorical use of "organism" and "stimuli" is evocative of scholarly works in critical geography and urban sociology, which assume that people act according to sociocultural factors such as gender, class, race, or age within and in reaction to space but also create and modify particular spaces to express their own needs and desires (Gottdiener and Hutchinson 2010).

A Lefebvrian conception underlines this processual and dialectic character of space. In Henri Lefebvre's own words, the "'object' of interest must be expected to shift from *things in space* to the actual *production of space*" (2007: 36–37, emphasis in original). Here, spaces are constructed through social relations, especially practices, and structures. Acknowledging that spaces are experienced in multiple ways, Lefebvre (2007) identifies the triad of conceived space (representations of space), perceived space (spatial practice), and lived space (representational space), seeing a unity between the (abstract) imaginative, the (concrete) material, and the social (Martin and Miller 2003). Squares and streets have been *conceived*—that is, designed and planned—by experts through labor, technology, and institutions. The

ways in which they are designed and planned are to ensure a particular kind of order. They are *perceived* in everyday life in their materiality and physicality. The meaning of and affectivities toward such spaces, however, are adapted and transformed as they are *lived* by social actors. Lived space, then, is where perception and conception meet and interact, where “the imagination seeks to change and appropriate” (Lefebvre 2007: 39). This conceptual view is a case in point for the transformation of Syntagma Square into the spatial manifestation of the radical imagination. The square was initially *conceived* as a forecourt to Bavarian King Otto in 1834, but how it has been popularly *perceived* has been in flux ever since. As a lived space, Syntagma has been among other things a meeting spot, a transportation hub, a thoroughway for leisure, and a space for contestation. With the beginning of the Syntagma Square occupation, the square has been *lived* as a space of resistance, as one of contestation *against* the status quo, and as one *for* something else entirely, despite its initial conception.

“Waking Up” and the Making of the Square: Processes of Spatialization

We were sleeping a long time. . . . The Greek people were sleeping. I told you: Bouzouki⁴ joints, credit cards, and coffee shops . . . Syntagma was a big bang inside the crisis, where many people *woke up* and decided to unite in order to change all that. (Maria, personal communication, 10 February 2016, emphasis added)

In her analysis of representations as affectively charged, anthropologist Begoña Aretxaga (2005) convincingly illustrates that metaphors are not simply representations that are detached from social reality. Rather, metaphors “do” things: they organize and disguise (unconscious)

significations, and they engender and enact political affectivities. Maria's use of "sleeping" and "woke up" is very much metaphorical, signifying Syntagma as transitioning from unawareness to awareness. Maria's example seems to suggest that sleeping signifies the social imaginary of neoliberal capitalism as a period of unawareness—of ignorant consumerism, overt leisure, and credit culture. "Waking up" points to the fact that Maria and my other interlocutors did not make sense of crisis through what I earlier dubbed regressive signification, despite the elite's concentrated efforts of anti-crisis management and discourses. Conceptually, this metaphorical transitioning from unawareness to awareness can be read as a *rite de passage* similar to Victor Turner's (2008) theorization on liminality. This allows for looking at the Syntagma Square occupation in its liminal and antistructural capacity as a transitory space that is "neither here nor there; . . . betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial" (2008: 95). Structured by the significations of crisis ("big bang inside of crisis"), norms and expectations are negotiated creatively in such a liminal space, allowing for the emergence and prefiguration of alternative, unthought-of practices and imaginations (Schumann and Soudias 2013).

A spatial approach to these considerations is justified not least due to my interlocutors' very own narratives: their talk of the square having an "inside" and an "outside," an "upper" and a "lower" part, indicates their awareness of spatial categories. Many mentioned the word "space" (*chóros*) passingly, whereas others, like Lukas, explicitly urged me to "not underestimate the spatial order" (personal communication, 23 February 2016). Apart from these more explicit empirical hints, a spatial approach also allows for taking into account the interrelationship between the practical, material, and affective aspects of "the social" and its structuring and structured capacities as they pertain to experience and subjectivity.

As I have shown elsewhere (Soudias 2018), the categories of presence, place, and territoriality are key constitutive components of square occupations, which enable strategies of power and tactics of resistance (De Certeau 2002) as practices of spatial (re-)production. At the epistemological heart of this approach lies the study of the social in its Bourdieusian dialectics, reconciling the relationship between structure and agency (Bourdieu 2013). Simply put, this is to say that crises structure spatialities and are structured by spatialities, and that spatialities structure subjectivities and are structured by subjectivities. And subjectivities therefore structure crises and are structured by crises. While there is some discrepancy between the relatively circular conception of reproduction and Bourdieu's recognition that social structures are constantly in process and subject to change, situations of conflict, struggle, and change are ordinary features of processes of reproduction, where novel actions "can both modify existing structures and generate new ones, breaking the 'circle' of reproduction" (Crossley 2003: 44).

As crises are inherently liminal situations, where subjects can become aware of the constructed nature of previously held doxic assumptions (what I call the "progressive signification" of crisis), the structuring quality of crises is marked precisely by the antistructural—that is, by the now visible multiplicity and incommensurability of rival normative expectations. In structuring spatialities and subjectivities, crisis reproduces this multiplicity and incommensurability *in practice*: subjects, with their ordinary conduct in turmoil due to the uncertainties of crisis, collectively produce spatialities that are expressions of and answers to both this turmoil and (the uncertainties of) crisis.

Theorizing Spatial Manifestations of Crisis

As protesters territorialized Syntagma and practiced the spatial production of the square, they were increasingly confronted with the radical changing of norms and expectations. In Petros's own analysis,

you move in a delimited space within a contemporary society—because contemporary society . . . can limit your movement in de facto ways—without you ever realizing that. You work, you go home, you go to sleep, you walk on the sidewalks, you cross the traffic light when it's green. When it's red you stop, alright? When you are so violently moved towards another direction, . . . when you see that this thing can actually happen . . . before that I hadn't thought that such a thing can happen. And I don't think anybody did. That through a movement . . . the everyday life of a city can be so violently disrupted. (Personal communication, 9 February 2017)

Petros's considerations provide telling insights regarding the relation between crisis, normative expectations, and spatial production. In pragmatist thought, there is the assumption that while individuals possess a degree of critical autonomy they nevertheless remain limited in the types of actions, decisions, statements, and routines that are available to them. Such “conventions” (Boltanski 2012) exist as sets of rules that condition and limit the forms of thought and conduct available to people (“without you even realizing it”). As Petros's example shows, however, in situations of crisis people indeed possess the ability to question and penetrate normative orders. This is indicative of the fact that expectations extend beyond the tramlines laid down by any single (moral) system and that taken-for-granted norms and

“truths” are contingent (Davies 2014). After all, the taking over of Syntagma Square in and of itself is a disruption of public order and therefore a “violent disruption,” as Petros would have it, of a normative expectation in everyday life through a collective and participatory out-of-the-ordinary process. It underlines my previous considerations regarding the transition from unawareness to awareness, which is grounded in the metaphors of “sleeping” and “waking up.”

In line with these empirical observations, I argue that crises structure the out-of-the-ordinary use of square occupations and the ensuing construction of space as a situation in which doxic assumptions become visible. In Greece, the visibility of these previously taken-for-granted assumptions relative to the realities of practicing the out-of-the-ordinary constructs Syntagma Square as a liminal spatiality: a temporary reversal of, or even an expulsion from, the social order—a transitional time in which taken-for-granted norms, rules, and cultural templates of what is conventional, appropriate, and justified can be collectively and creatively (re-)negotiated. Being “on the limit” is genuinely a situation where “[a]nything is possible!”—as Turner (2008: 94) puts it. In the case of my interlocutors, the liminal character of the occupation dialectically reproduced the structural characteristics of the progressive signification of crisis, in that the opportunity for critical reflection and debate upon previously unquestioned assumptions is made possible precisely because “the ‘fit’ between objective structures and subjective expectations is broken” (Crossley 2003: 47). As Panagiotis points out, “Syntagma touched upon the established order of things. It did make some people get out of what they were used to . . . It generally surprised many different and heterogeneous people” (personal communication, 6 October 2014).

On the one hand, Syntagma, as a prolonged out-of-the-ordinary copresence of thousands of individuals (*stasis*), signifies a situation in which many “different and heterogeneous” normative expectations slip out of alignment with the actualities of the space, thereby shocking individuals out of their habitual acceptance of taken-for-granted norms and into a more critical attitude (see Crossley 2003). These processes enable what I previously referred to as the “unthought-of”: an experience that transcends normative expectations and allows for reevaluation of the previously doxic and tacitly internalized. To this regard, Lukas remarks that “what is going on exceeds what you considered acceptable and normal until then . . . Perhaps because humans need to expose themselves to something different than what they have lived until that moment so they can really change” (personal communication, 23 February 2016).

On the other hand, Bourdieu reminds us that crisis “is a necessary condition for a questioning of doxa but is not in itself a sufficient condition for the production of a critical discourse” (2013: 169). Therefore, what is argued here is that, although the production of liminal spatialities can enable the radical imagination, it does not have to do so. For Syntagma Square, the spatial demarcation of the “upper” and the “lower” parts of the square is a case in point. In broad terms, for those “below,” the upper square was the part where right-wing and fascist ideologies were dominant. For those “above,” the lower part was a stronghold of the left, especially SYRIZA and the anarchist milieu (Bakola 2017).

Practicing the Upper Square: Spatializing Regressive Significations of Crisis

With the beginning of protests in Syntagma as early as 22 May 2011, people congregated in the upper square, which comprises the area from the broad Amalias Ave. up to the front of

Parliament. By the railings of the upper square, stands and pavilions of such groups as the nationalist-jingoist “300 Greeks”—who were collecting signatures to hold a referendum to abolish parliamentary privilege and the memorandum, and to chase the IMF out of Greece—and priests of the Orthodox Church were set up side by side. According to Achilleas Stavrou (2011: 33), the groups in the upper square formed “the conservative block” of Syntagma. Similarly, Kostas Roussos (2014: 61) describes those participating in the upper square as “people coming from the conservative space of the center-right or the popular right, disappointed voters” of the two major parties—conservative ND and social democrat PASOK—in addition to people who have not previously partaken in either formal politics or protests. But there are also accounts of openly fascist groups (Bakola 2017: 174). From the perspective of the lower square, those above were usually looked down upon:

Now, at Syntagma Square, and this is very interesting, there were two different portions of people. The one portion of the people was at the upper part of the square. They were called “indignants.” In the lower part of the square, you had “our space,” to put it that way. Ok? In the upper part of the square, there were people who complained about what was going on, essentially against the crisis. They . . . banged sauce pans, they did the *Moutza*⁵ and such things. (Aggelos, personal communication, 27 January 2016)

The upper part has been described as having a carnivalesque mood and a more “stadium-like” atmosphere and “psychology” (Stavrou 2011: 32). In the narrative of my interlocutors, the upper square was a space of bodily practices and protest rituals, such as chanting, clapping,

cheering, and dancing. By blowing whistles, banging sauce pans, loudly yelling against the “thieves” and “traitors” inside Parliament, and chanting “let it burn, let it burn, the brothel called Vouli [Parliament],” a cultural performativity of body politics by those in the upper square created a liminal, bodily communality similar to those in parades, festivals, or sports events. This performativity is not a symbol of inclusion represented by those participating in the protests, but it also a way of engaging with politics by way of gesture and affect as opposed to by word and discussion: “The protesters here seem ‘properly’ enraged. They are done discussing; they simply want to shout against the ‘thieves’ and the ‘liars’ inside parliament” (Hager 2011: 552). Indeed, whenever forums of discussion were sought to be established in the upper square, they fell apart due to a lack of interest and participation (Stavrou 2011). In this regard, Margarita Tsomou observes that the upper square’s “hooliganist-aggressive performativity” (2014: 125) was appealing to and compatible with regressive forces, precisely because they sought to drive the affective dimensions of anger and indignation in a more nationalist and fascist direction. Indeed, waving the Greek flag and singing the national anthem as recurring discursive and symbolic performances in the upper square created a sense of *communitas* (Turner 2008) held together by “Greekness” and latent ethnocentrism. This serves the purpose of unifying *against* the perceived neocolonial assaults of institutional Europe as well as the political class that “betrayed” them.

Relating these observations back to Turner’s (2008) work on liminality, the upper square too signifies an antistructural state, which is “betwixt and between” and inherently transitory. Keeping in mind the etymology of liminality as deriving from the Latin word for threshold (*limen*), liminality can lead from one structure to another but it can also lead back to the same structure. Chanting “thieves,” “traitors,” or “liars” suggests a broken promise, an

expectation of state-institutional arrangements that has not been met. As a critique, it is immanent: it seeks the reestablishment of an order and the satisfaction of a demand prior to the crisis, rather than a radical departure from it. In this sense, the ways in which the upper square performed contestation denotes a performative display of what I have previously termed as “regressive signification” of crisis. The insecurities and uncertainties conditioned by neoliberal modernization and aggravated by the crisis perpetuate an imagination that limits normative expectations of what is possible to what is necessary. This imagination diminishes expectations and guides conduct through threat, rather than through opportunity, in ways that only strengthen, rather than undermine, the orders of the status quo. Cloaked in an amalgam of ethnocentric and conservative values, such a critique seeks to find meaning, security, certainty, and order by returning to a mythical moment prior to the crisis—an illusionary past that never existed. By not engaging in discussions, all that participants of the upper square were left with was affect: anger and indignation against “those above” and joy and pleasure within their *communitas*. Despite the liminal character of the upper square, the near absence of articulated ideas and (political) proposals arguably impeded their formation and transformation, making the emergence of the radical imagination and the generation of “demystifying” critiques difficult to materialize.

Practicing the Lower Square: Spatializing Radical Political Imaginaries

Thirty-six-year old refugee activist and café co-owner Eleftheria, who partook in the protest activities in the lower square, noted that the two squares “rarely interacted. Some from the upper square sometimes came down out of curiosity. But they never took part in our actions” (personal communication, 6 October 2014).⁶ In my interlocutors’ perception, it was the lower

square that went beyond merely containing a bodily presence and affect and that came to symbolize political vision, organization, and assembly:

In the lower part of the square, the choice was more collective and direct democratic. This means, groups started being created. The artists' group, the group of the economy . . . many different groups. We decided to live there, to put up tents, and to try to function collectively and organized . . . different from those banging sauce pans and complaining. So it was a different approach. That we can do things here and now. Whereas the [people] above were like "we will kill them . . . and what have they done to us" . . . On the one hand, there is the confrontation without (emphasizes it) a proposition for something new. And then there is the "we can here and now do things." Thus, I was participating in the lower square. There, where you had self-organization. It's organization within groups, with large assemblies where everybody could speak and take decisions in a more direct democratic way. (Aggelos, personal communication, 27 January 2016)

Aggelos, like my other interlocutors, generally viewed the upper square in negative terms. While this may not necessarily tell us something about the "realities" of the upper square, the contrasting nature in which my interlocutors represent it provides us with insights into their own expectations and ideas about politics and the political, their signification of crisis, and therefore their (changing) positions as subjects. Practicing "something new" provides us with a glimpse into the radical imagination of the lower square's practices. Equality and mutual respect, self-governance, self-organization, and solidarity were the inherent guiding principles of my interlocutors' practices in the square. The radical imagination of Syntagma is grounded

in an egalitarian and antiauthoritarian ethic (see Breton et al. 2012). The guiding principles signify a radical departure from everyday life and neoliberal reason. They do so because, as anti-politics, self-governance stands in stark contrast to competitive representation; because solidarity forms the antithesis to competition; and because self-organization signifies attempts of practices that are autonomous from the centralist authority of the state. At the same time, an egalitarian and antiauthoritarian ethic provides an alter-political alternative to the status quo precisely because it is inconceivable and incomprehensible to both neoliberal reasoning and the state.

These practices of the lower square have been accompanied by such affectivities as “belonging,” “being among like-minded people,” “not feeling alone anymore,” and “feeling united.” As Thanos remarked:

It’s magical, without understanding the “why”: connecting with people and feeling like you are in a group . . . Such magical . . . *homopsychia* . . . That people want to belong to a group and feel they have something in common with the others.

(Thanos, personal communication, 3 February 2016)

Literally translating as “same-soulness,” *homopsychia* signifies a sense of togetherness and unity that is perhaps best captured with Turner’s concept of *communitas*. This term frames a radical departure from our societal everyday vis-à-vis structure, differentiation, and hierarchical systems of politico-economic and legal positions, and instead signify an unstructured, or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated “communion of equal individuals” (Turner 2008: 96). This signifies a further departure from neoliberal everyday

life, as collectivism trumps notions of individualist subjectivities. All these affectivities among protesters, the space of the square occupation, and its ideas, practices, and principles furthered a particular sense of (political) community among my interlocutors that radically differed from both the upper square as well as from everyday life.

Conclusion

In this article, I have scrutinized the relationship between significations of crisis and the spatial production of the Syntagma Square occupation as the conditions of possibility for the emergence of the radical imagination. I have argued that, despite the fact that crises are inherently liminal situations, they do not necessitate the emergence of radical critiques, judgments, and alternatives to cope with and overcome crisis. Instead, the ways in which crises come to be signified by subjects reveals the potentiality for the emergence of the radical imagination and demystifying critiques of the status quo. The ways in which political elites justified and managed the Greek crisis is really signified by anti-crisis. Analogous to a Schmittian state of exception, anti-crisis is radically extraordinary, but without the possibility of alternative judgments (Schmitt 2007). Instead, the extraordinariness of the situation is decided upon and enforced by sovereign executive authority in an effort to uphold the *illusio* (Bourdieu 2013) and delay critique or even debar it entirely. In this narrative, to overcome the crisis individuals must adhere to the immanent logics and measures of neoliberalism in even stricter ways, reducing what is possible to what is necessary. In effect, this is to nudge individuals toward a regressive signification of crisis, demanding them to subject themselves to a neoliberal (governmental) rationality (in a Foucaultian sense) in ever more competitive, “flexible,” and “resilient” ways.

But as anti-crisis suspends market rules, it also strips competition of its alleged fairness and “justice of inequality” (Davies 2014: 186), undermining competition’s conditions of possibility. For my interlocutors, therefore, neoliberal discourses and justifications became increasingly difficult to confirm: in addition to the increasing precarization of life, the “belief in the game” lost its appeal precisely because neoliberalism’s anti-crisis signification was literally *unjustified*. This forced upon them the chance for reconsideration, allowing for the emergence of what I have dubbed the “progressive signification” of crisis. Here, normative expectations are rendered so very fragile that previously doxic assumptions are elevated to the level of discourse, where they can be critiqued (Crossley 2003). In this progressive signification of crisis, my interlocutors were able to conceive the “previously unthought-of,” where possibility is stimulated in ways that are susceptible to the radical imagination and demystifying critiques of the status quo.

The significations of crisis found their spatial manifestation in the Syntagma Square occupation. Whereas the upper square was marked by a regressive signification of crisis that reproduced logics of the status quo, the lower square’s progressive signification of crisis built the ground for the emergence of the radical imagination. The spatial manifestation of this signification allowed for the routinization of space-making and meaning-making practices. For my interlocutors, the juxtaposition and demarcation between the two squares strengthened how they valued their own practices and ideas in ways that rendered their experiences as inherently transformative.

Dimitris Soudias received his Dr. phil. in Political Science from Philipps-University Marburg. His dissertation, entitled “Neoliberalism as Crisis: Radical Imagination in Syntagma

Square and Beyond,” focuses on transformative experience and processes of subject formation against the backdrop of neoliberal restructuring and crisis. Email: soudias@uni-marburg.de

References

- Aretxaga, Begoña. 2005. *States of Terror: Begoña Aretxaga's Essays*. Reno, Spain: Center for Basque Studies.
- Ayata, Bilgin, and Cilja Harders. 2018. “Midān Moments: Conceptualizing Space, Affect and Political Participation on Occupied Squares.” In *Affect in Relation: Families, Places and Technologies*, ed. Birgitt Röttger-Rössler and Jan Slaby, 115–133. London: Routledge.
- Bakola, Maria. 2017. “Crisis and Concomitant Forms of Collective Action: A Critique of the Greek Indignant Movement.” PhD diss., Newcastle University.
- Barnes, Trevor J. 2002. “Reading the Texts of Theoretical Economic Geography: The Role of Physical and Biological Metaphors.” In *Postmodernism: Critical Concepts*. 3rd ed., ed. Victor E. Taylor and Charles E. Winqvist, 25–44. London: Routledge.
- Bauman, Zygmunt. 2008. *The Individualized Society*. 5th ed. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bauman, Zygmunt. 2006. *In Search of Politics*. 3rd ed. Cambridge: Polity.
- Bondarenko, Andriy. 2013. “Letter from Ukraine: The Maidan Experience.” *Public Seminar Review*, 30 December. <http://www.publicseminar.org/2013/12/letter-from-ukraine-the-maidan-experience/#.UuE992Q1gy4>.
- Boltanski, Luc. 2012. *Love and Justice as Competencies: Three Essays on the Sociology of Action*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Boltanski, Luc. 2011. *On Critique: A Sociology of Emancipation*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Polity.

- Bourdieu, Pierre. 2013. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. 28th ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 2000. *Acts of Resistance. Against the Myths of our Time*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Breton, Émilie, Sandra Jeppesen, Anna Kruzingsky, and Rachel Sarrasin. 2012. "Prefigurative Self-Governance and Self-Organization: The Influence of Antiauthoritarian (Pro)Feminist, Radical Queer, and Antiracist Networks in Quebec." In *Organize! Building from the Local for Global Justice*, ed. Aziz Choudry, Jill Hanley, and Eric Shragge, 156–173. Oakland, CA: PM Press.
- Castoriadis, Cornelius. 1998. *The Imaginary Institution of Society*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Clarke, Adele. 2005. *Situational Analysis: Grounded Theory after the Postmodern Turn*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Crossley, Nick. 2003. "From Reproduction to Transformation: Social Movement Fields and the Radical Habitus." *Theory, Culture & Society* 20 (6): 43–68.
doi:10.1177/0263276403206003.
- Dardot, Pierre, and Christian Laval. 2017. *The New Way of the World: On Neoliberal Society*. 2nd ed. London: Verso.
- Davies, William. 2014. *The Limits of Neoliberalism: Authority, Sovereignty and the Logic of Competition*. London: Sage.
- De Certeau, Michel. 2002. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. 2nd ed. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Deutscher Bundestag. 2010. "Plenarprotokoll" [Plenary minutes] 17/42. *Deutscher Bundestag*, 19 May. <http://dipbt.bundestag.de/doc/btp/17/17042.pdf>.

- Fillieule, Olivier, and Erik Neveu, eds. 2019. *Activists Forever: Long-Term Impact of Political Activism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Giugni, Marco. 2004. "Personal and Biographical Consequences." In *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, ed. David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule, and Hanspeter Kriesi, 489–509. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Gottdiener, Mark, and Ray Hutchinson. 2010. *The New Urban Sociology*. 4th ed. Boulder, CO: Westview.
- Goutsos, Dionysis, and George Polymenas. 2014. "Identity as Space: Localism in the Greek Protests of Syntagma Square." *Journal of Language and Politics* 13 (4): 675–701. doi:10.1075/jlp.13.4.05gou.
- Hage, Ghassan. 2015. *Alter-Politics: Critical Anthropology and the Radical Imagination*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.
- Hager, Philip. 2011. "The Protests in Athens: Indignant Dramaturgies and Geographies in Syntagma Square." *Contemporary Theatre Review* 21 (4): 550–553. doi:10.1080/10486801.2011.617521.
- Haiven, Max. 2014. *Crises of Imagination, Crises of Power: Capitalism, Creativity and the Commons*. London: Zed.
- Haiven, Max, and Alex Khasnabish. 2014. *The Radical Imagination*. London: Zed.
- Kaika, Maria, and Lazaros Karaliotas. 2017. "Athens' Syntagma Square Reloaded: From Staging Disagreement Towards Instituting Democratic Spaces." In *City Unsilenced: Urban Resistance and Public Space in the Age of Shrinking Democracy*, ed. Jeffrey Hou and Sabine Knierbein, 121–132. London: Routledge.

- Katsambekis, Giorgos. 2014. "The Multitudinous Moment(s) of the People: Democratic Agency Disrupting Established Binarisms." In *Radical Democracy and Collective Movements Today: The Biopolitics of the Multitude versus the Hegemony of the People*, ed. Alexandros Kioupkiolis and Giorgos Katsambekis, 169–190. Farnham, UK: Ashgate.
- Kousis, Maria. 2015. "The Transnational Dimension of the Greek Protest Campaign against Troika Memoranda and Austerity Policies, 2010–2012." In *Spreading Protest: Social Movements in Times of Crisis*, ed. Donnatella della Porta and Alice Mattoni, 137–169. Colchester: ECPR Press.
- Lefebvre, Henri. 2007. *The Production of Space*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Lefort, Claude. 1986. *The Political Forms of Modern Society: Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Leontidou, Lila. 2012. "Athens in the Mediterranean 'Movement of the Piazzas': Spontaneity in Material and Virtual Public Spaces." *City* 16 (3): 299–312.
doi:10.1080/13604813.2012.687870.
- Malpas, Jeff E. 1999. *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Martin, Deborah G., and Byron Miller. 2003. "Space and Contentious Politics." *Mobilization* 8 (2):143–156.
<https://www2.clarku.edu/departments/geography/pdfs/Deb%20Martin/martin.miller.Pp.%20143-156.pdf>.

- McAdam, Doug. 1999. "The Biographical Impact of Activism." In *How Social Movements Matter*, ed. Marco Giugni, Doug McAdam, and Charles Tilly, 117–146. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Mylonas, Yiannis. 2012. "Media and the Economic Crisis of the EU: The 'Culturalization' of a Systemic Crisis and Bild-Zeitung's Framing of Greece." *tripleC* 10 (2): 646–671. doi:10.31269/vol10iss2pp646-671.
- Panagiotopoulou, Roy. 2013. "www.real-democracy.gr: Οι επικοινωνιακές πρακτικές του κινήματος των Αγανακτισμένων." [www.real-democracy.gr: The communicative practices of the movement of the indignants]. In *Η Κρίση και τα ΜΜΕ* [The Crisis and Mass Media], edited by Giorgos Pleios, 421–461. Athens: Papazizi.
- Paulson, Justin. 2010. "The Uneven Development of Radical Imagination." *Affinities: A Journal of Radical Theory, Culture, and Action* 4 (2): 33–38.
- Pile, Steve. 2008. "Where Is the Subject? Geographical Imaginations and Spatializing Subjectivity." *Subjectivity* 23 (1): 206–218. doi:10.1057/sub.2008.9.
- Psimitis, Michalis. 2011. "The Protest Cycle of Spring 2010 in Greece." *Social Movement Studies* 10 (2): 191–197. doi:10.1080/14742837.2011.562365.
- Roussos, Kostas. 2014. "Όψεις της συλλογικής δράσης και διαδικασίες υποκειμενοποίησης: το συμβάν των 'αγανακτισμένων' της πλατείας Συντάγματος" [Views on collective action and processes of subjectivation: The occurrence of the "indignants" of Syntagma Square]. MA thesis, Panteion University.
- Schmitt, Carl. 2007. *The Concept of the Political*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Schumann, Christoph, and Dimitris Soudias. 2013. "Präsenz und Raum in der Arabischen Revolte: Ägypten im Jahr 2011" [Presence and space in the Arab Revolt: Egypt in the year 2011]. In *Präsenz und implizites Wissen: Zur Interdependenz zweier Schlüsselbegriffe der Kultur- und Sozialwissenschaften* [Presence and tacit knowledge. On the interdependency of two keywords in the cultural and social sciences], ed. Christoph Ernst and Heike Paul, 297–315. Bielefeld: Transcript.
- Segal, Lynne. 2017. *Radical Happiness: Moments of Collective Joy*. London: Verso.
- Sotirakopoulos, Nikos, and George Sotiropoulos. 2013. "'Direct Democracy Now!': The Greek *Indignados* and the Present Cycle of Struggles." *Current Sociology* 61 (4): 443–456. doi:10.1177/0011392113479744.
- Soudias, Dimitris. 2018. "On the Spatiality of Square Occupations: Lessons from Syntagma and Tahrir." In *Riots and Militant Occupations: Smashing a System, Building a World—A Critical Introduction*, ed. Alissa Starodub and Andrew Robinson, 75–95. London: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Stavrou, Achilleas. 2011. "Η 'πάνω πλατεία' ή όταν μιλάνε οι μάζες 'Οε, οε, οε, σηκωθήκαμε απ' τον καναπέ.'" [The "upper square" or when the masses speak: "Oe, Oe, Oe, they got off the couch."] In *Δημοκρατία under Construction: Από τους δρόμους στις πλατείες* [Democracy under construction: From the streets to the squares], ed. Christos Giovanopoulos and Dimitris Mitropoulos, 31–40. Athens: A/Synechia.
- Tavory, Iddo, and Stefan Timmermans. 2014. *Abductive Analysis: Theorizing Qualitative Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Thompson, John B. 1982. "Ideology and the Social Imaginary: An Appraisal of Castoriadis and Lefort." *Theory and Society* 11 (5): 659–681. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/657343>.

Tsomou, Margarita. 2014. "Der besetzte Syntagma-Platz 2011: Körper und Performativität im politischen Alphabet der 'Empörten'" [The occupied Syntagma Square 2011: Body and performativity in the political alphabet of the 'indignants']. In *Versammlung und Teilhabe: Urbane Öffentlichkeiten und performative Künste* [Assembly and participation: Urban publics and performative arts], ed. Regula Valérie Burri, Kerstin Evert, Sibylle Peters, Esther Pilkington, and Gesa Ziemer, 113–141. Bielefeld: Transcript.

Turner, Victor W. 2008. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. 2nd ed. New Brunswick, NJ: Aldine Transaction.

Vestergren, Sara, John Drury, and Eva Hammar Chiriac. 2017. "The Biographical Consequences of Protest and Activism: A Systematic Review and a New Typology." *Social Movement Studies* 16 (2): 203–221. doi:10.1080/14742837.2016.1252665.

Notes

1 The European Commission, the European Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund.

2 An abductive-situational analysis requires a recursive movement between data collection and analysis, so as to facilitate theorization and creative inference through the discovery of peculiar findings. Therefore, interviews were conducted in multiple rounds and my analysis builds on subsequent constructivist-grounded theory-coding in initial coding rounds and subsequent focused coding rounds. Apart from interviews, participatory mapping techniques, participant observation, and ethnographic walks over Syntagma Square were used as means of

making sense of participants' experiences in and the spatial order of the square. As for sampling, there is variation between those interlocutors who described themselves as having been "apolitical" and those with a "firm political identity" prior their participation in the square protests.

3 Roy Panagiotopoulou (2013: 445) tries to capture the demographics of this multitude with survey data as follows: gender: 45.7% female; age: 15–24 (13.6%), 25–34 (25.3%), 35–39 (27.4%), 50+ (33.2%); party support: Social Democrat PASOK (22.7%), Conservative ND (14.2%), Communist KKE (9.6%), Left-Wing SYRIZA (12.0%), Radical Right-Wing LAOS (2.6%), Other / No vote (31.6%). Though this data certainly does not depict a complete representation of Syntagma, it does indicate the heterogeneity of participants that many of my interlocutors point to.

4 The *bouzouki* is a popular plucked string musical instrument in Greece that was brought there in the 1900s by Greek immigrants from Turkey.

5 The *moutza* is a longstanding everyday gesture of insult in Greece. The gesture is practiced by holding one's palm toward somebody else in order to express condescendence. It is an affective display of anger, disdain, and, above all, indignation (Tsomou 2014).

6 My interlocutors' criteria of identifying those they perceived to have been participating in the upper square protests are often vague, and their accounts would often remain on an affective level. Examples include the short haircuts of participants (they were mostly male in my interlocutors' perception) in the upper square protests, their aggressive posture and vulgar expressions, and their carrying of the Greek flag or other national symbols.