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Το παρόν τεύχος εκδόθηκε με την οικονομική στήριξη του Ειδικού Λογαριασμού του Πανεπιστημίου Κρήτης και του Ιδρύματος Bourdieu. Η έρευνα, τμήμα των αποτελεσμάτων της οποίας παρουσιάζεται στο παρόν τεύχος, χρηματοδοτήθηκε από το Κοινωφελές Ίδρυμα Ιωάννη Σ. Λάτση. Ευχαριστούμε τη Sandrine Garcia και τη Φανή Λιάπη για τη συνδρομή τους στην υλοποίηση του τεύχους αυτού.

Franz Schultheis, Michael Gemperle & Patricia Holder

«The basic human rights I want, nothing more!»

It is 11 o'clock in the morning. Five people are sitting in the lounge of a hotel in the centre of Athens and begin an approximately one and a half hour long discussion on the social situation in Greece. Three of them are sociologists from the University of St. Gallen in Switzerland, who are travelling to a workshop of the Fondation Bourdieu on the island of Tinos and are taking advantage of the stopover in Athens to carry out several interviews on the present crisis with discussion partners of differing status, profession, age and gender. The contacts were organized by their Greek colleagues. This time they are sitting opposite two female teachers in their 40's who had agreed to participate in such a discussion. In the first few minutes, first contacts are made, names and courtesies are exchanged and the initial shyness about such contact without any previous acquaintanceship is overcome. The three sociologists from Switzerland briefly outline the reason why they have come. They explain that on their way to Tinos they would like to witness with their own eyes and ears the testimony of Greek people on the present situation of the Greek population, instead of being content with the stereotype reports in the media at home, regardless of whether these are sympathetic or plaintive. After this introduction the discussion begins with a swift presentation of those present. The two Greek teachers depict their working conditions and the place where they work, which is not stated here in order to protect their anonymity. They then answer the opening question: «You are working in a school. Your work, how is it affected by the crisis?». Alexia sees her position as privileged, as she is working in a school financed with foreign funds, whereas her colleague Marina explains that she works in a «normal» school under the customary conditions in the country.

AN INTERVIEW WITH TWO TEACHERS

«I see a kind of depression which is not normal for a 14..., a 15-year-old kid.»

[...] **Marina:** I am working at a school, a high school. Actually, it's not in the centre, it's in a neighbourhood..., a very degraded area...where you find large percentages of unemployment, and... kids with serious problems. And, during the last couple of years, the last year actually, this was really the problem... I had the feeling that the problem was expanding; from day to day.

[...] **What are the signs when you say: «it expanded»? In which manner? What did you observe?**

Marina: I can give you a lot of examples. First of all ..., there are many kids, in proportion to other years, that are deprived of basic things. I know that there are at least eleven families in our school that the Association of Parents gives, eh, food and things to..., because they need..., they don't have..., they can't fulfil basic needs. I want to give you an example. You know how..., gym teachers, you know, they want the kids to wear a tracksuit. So, our teacher, the gym teacher, said to a kid: «again? You don't wear your tracksuit? You're suspended» or «get out of the classroom!». And, a few days later, her father came, a working-class guy, you know, worn out face, worn out hands and everything... and said: «sorry, I can't... afford it». You know, when I tried to narrate this to a friend of mine who lives in northern suburbs of Athens, she didn't believe me. And she told me: «ah, come on..., you exaggerate. There are tracksuits which cost 7 euros». But I know he doesn't, he can't afford it. And we are also, we are taken by surprise, we don't know how to handle... [...] Actually, there are two problems. How can you know which are the families? You have to be very... sensitive not to insult. So, we know for eleven families, we don't know about the others. It's not easy to know. You can... Maybe you suspect but you cannot go and say: «come on...». [...] Of course, the basic needs are the first thing but, eh, you observe also a difference in the classroom.

Alexia: [...] My son's school is in the centre. It's a middle-class area. And it's more difficult to detect the problem there. Because there is a problem and there is a huge problem but people don't... speak about it. Because middle-class people are just in a shock and they don't want..., they are still ashamed of their situation.
Marina: That's true; that's true, I agree.

And there are changes in the classroom? I suspect that the pupils also have to deal with the..., they realize that there is a problem or there are many problems...?
Marina: Yes. I remember one day there were two girls and they asked me, eh...: «Do we have to pay for the party?» It was, eh..., «Apokries», like a Halloween. There is a party and the Parents' Association organizes this party. So, they told me: «do we have...» –during the break– «...do we have to pay?» and I said: «no, I think this year is..., you don't have to pay, the parents pay», for instance... So, they started to jump [*they all laugh a bit*] around and say: «Oh, yeah, we're going to do this and we're going to have fun!». This was something that... Because usually they pay 3 Euro..? Not more... 3, 4 Euro. Yeah. That's the price.

Alexia: Yes, for instance, at the centre, we used to give them a small cookie as a welcome when kids were coming. But since last year, mostly this year, we realized that we have to give something more. So, cheese-pies, orange juice, eh, you know something more like a food apart from the cookies. And they..., they [*laughs a bit*] are eating a lot. And we said..., that's why I said that since we have the money it's..., we are concerned that..., we can help; this is a little help, but, you know, we are very concerned to distribute... this money.

Are there discussions in your classes about future...?
Marina: Yes, yes.

...And do young people already say: «what will I do later on; will I leave Greece; will I go abroad?
Marina: Yes. That's what I had in mind to say just now, about the classroom. They talk about it; when I ask sometimes: «what are your plans for the future and what...», I see a kind of depression which is not normal for a 14..., a 15-year-old kid. It's not normal.

As is clear from what was said above, our discussion on the current social situation in Greece begins with a topic which turns out to be the leitmotif of the entire interview, a concern which seems to be the focus of our two discussion partners' view of their life world. It is a concern about the children in their classrooms and, later, about their own homes. Instead of the spectacular scenarios with which we are acquainted, at the moment, through the media, we begin with the little things of everyday life, with episodes from daily life in the school, which could, at first sight, seem to be peripheral or even banal but, in reality, are at the heart of the social issues they are experiencing. Are we dealing here with a *déformation professionelle* or with a «female bias» in this view of the present social crisis or are the teachers giving a sensitive and understandable account of the way this crisis affects the little things in the lives of children and telling us how they see a threat to «childhood» in the situation and attempting to soften these little hardships with the limited means at their disposal? It is, first of all, a matter of material shortages, i.e. of a lack of the resources needed to be able to afford small things, such as money for the bus or a tracksuit, as it was possible in the past. But it is also a question of shame and embarrassment for the children concerned and their parents, who have to admit to the situation. Here, material need turns into symbolic misery. To be ashamed of the lack of economic resources, a state they share with so many of their fellow-countrymen since the beginning of the crisis, means «privatizing» a collectively suffered fate, accepting it as an individual stain, and viewing the situation as self-inflicted.

As is clearly analysed by the two teachers, this shame affects, in a particularly hard way, the families of the middle-class, whose collective mentality obliges them to aspire for upward mobility and a lifestyle characterized by decency and respectability. Here, one has more to lose than the achieved standard of living, namely a social identity gained by means of an ascending family (and educational) trajectory, which now seems to be coming to an abrupt end at an all the greater falling speed. The children already experience this suffering in which Marina and Alexia see an injustice which affects them deeply. Children should be allowed to be children and their evident depression is much less tolerable for both women than is the case with adults. It is then seen as a ray of hope when a free little school treat provides an occasion for spontaneous joy among the children and is accordingly appreciated by the teachers.

Later in the interview more is said about the adult world and the question of personal responsibility for the crisis is dealt with, whereby ambivalent diagnoses of its causes are expressed. But where the talk is about children and adolescents, about the fate and gloomy future of the coming generation of young people, we are confronted again and again with feelings of guilt towards them. The

two mothers seem to be concerned, above all, because their children are threatened by a massive restriction in their future life opportunities and because they cannot offer them better perspectives. It is this fate which concerns and touches our discussion partners much more than personal material restrictions, an attitude which seems to be closely linked with the increasingly insistent demand, made later, for commitment and solidarity in civil society.

«...They feel bad..., bad about being Greek.»

[...] **Marina:** I can give you an example. There was a girl and she was very depressed and she was crying and we talked about it because she had also a personal problem, her uncle was very ill and something like that... And then we started talking..., I tried to cheer her up. And she said: «there's..., you can't do anything. I feel there's nothing for me to do». And there is... Also, what makes me really sad: they feel bad..., bad about being Greek.
Alexia: Hmm-hmm.
Marina: Lots of kids say, eh: «...oh, we Greeks!...»
Alexia: Yes.
Marina: «...We do nothing...».
Alexia: Yes.
Marina: «...We do nothing good. We are corrupted, we are...»; I mean, they heard all these things that the media say all the time and they..., some of the kids have really, eh, believed it and made it a part of their..., of who they are. So, our job should be to try and turn this thing around but they really... Their parents also talk about this thing: «so, we are corrupted; what do you expect? Greeks will never do something»... They feel bad about their country, about their...
Alexia: Their identity.
Marina: ...Their identity, their identity, yes.

And this was different before, maybe five years ago?
Marina: Yes, it was different. Eh, it was different and it was not...
Alexia: I think we always had this, eh, eh, this opposition with the State, this conflict. Greek citizens always are in conflict with the Greek State. I..., I don't believe that we estimated politicians a lot before. We knew it. But we estimated ourselves more. Because we had..., remember, 2004, the Olympic Games... All this was a discourse of national pride, let's say. And, suddenly, from one day to the next, it was «like this»; suddenly, we became «PIGS». And this was... this cost us, I think, a trauma; a collective trauma. And kids have..., because we..., during our programs at the centre we have lot of discussions about environmental issues, political issues and social issues, so, a lot of discussions about such things and, of course, we realize this; that everything is corrupted, that we don't have any future here and eh, eh, it's the first time in my life that I try to, eh..., I found myself, you know, eh..., defending Greekness. The first time in my life, you know, I could never imagine myself doing such a thing... But we..., I..., I try to say to them that: «don't..., don't adopt all this discourse that the media... »; but it's very difficult. It's very difficult to be optimist and to feel proud again of themselves.

[...] **When you talk about all these problems of the young generation and so on, do you also look on other countries like Spain, Italy where you have similar problems or is it only seen as a Greek problem?**
Alexia: Hmm. It depends on your political position. [*laughs*]
Marina: Yeah. Some people, for instance. Eh, as left, eh, left people say: «it's not a Greek problem, it's a problem of... it's the capitalism, it's the crisis of capitalism...». And it's a...

European.
Marina: ...global problem.
Alexia: Of course, European and global.
Marina: It's global.

Ok.
Alexia: But if you are with the government, the government party, parties... –they are three now... the government parties–, you belie..., you believe and you argue that it's our... problems. Greece is... What makes me furious..., at the beginning of the crisis, was that our politicians and everybody blamed us.
Marina: Yes.
Alexia: Because we didn't behave...
Marina: ...Properly.
Alexia: ... Properly! And that's why we are..., have the crisis. And they blamed us and made us...
Marina: Co-..., co-guilty. I don't know. We are also guilty.
Alexia: We were also guilty.
Marina: And we are guilty as much as they're guilty. I mean, it's the..., our part of...
Alexia: Yes. And it was a way to manipulate people..., to manipulate the reactions.
Marina: And they insist that it's Greek people who are corrupted, who don't pay the taxes, who...

But these are the government parties that say: «it's the Greek people who are corrupted».

Marina: Yes. The government…

And they have been in government for years.
Marina: Exactly, exactly. But…, unfortunately, I think that this kind of rhetoric… persuaded a lot of people.
Alexia: Hm!
Marina: So, many people internalized and believed this. Because…

So, it's a question of national character or this is what people are made to believe?
Marina: That's it… Maybe Greek genes have something wrong [*laughs*]. This is the one thing. Because a party like Golden Dawn believes that Greek people…, exactly the opposite, which is equally awful, I mean…, that they are greatest, that their blood is different than that… And so, everyone who is a refugee or…
Alexia: Immigrant…
Marina: …Immigrant should… They even…
Alexia: …Be shot.
Marina: They even reached the point of saying, and newspapers wrote it without any…, that they are going to go into schools…
Alexia: Hm!
Marina: …Into infant schools, kindergartens… and throw out all the kids of immigrants. They are going into hospitals and they promised that they will throw out all the immigrants. And there are people who say: «oh, yeah!»; I mean this is…
Alexia: And that's why I said we are «exposed». Because let's say this happens in your class. Let's say that this happens in my seminar. I'm responsible for this…, these people there. And…
Marina: Because they're talking. The kids are talking. They…, there are some, in all classes, but geography, for example, or in history class… There are lot of chances that this subject comes up all the time.

But how do you deal with these… topics? Do you try to avoid them or do you try…?
Marina: No-no, I don't try to avoid them. I try to…, to plan a class, a lesson with lot of conversation; I don't want to be…, I want to hear all the opinions… without diminishing anyone. But then, slowly, try to… with examples and with talking and… But I, eh, I… For example, there is this lesson in geography about European…, about all the goods that European Union did in the last thirty years. So, the book…, it says… [*laughters*] …, it's really funny. Because the book says: «number one: some countries that used to be poor, like Greece and Ireland and Spain, are now, eh…»
Alexia: «…Flourishing».
Marina: «…Flourishing» [*Alexia & Marina laugh*]. So, some colleagues told me: «Just don't do this lesson». And I said: «No, I am going to teach this lesson». We were going to read this and comment on this. And it was also funny because when we read this, children laughed! Even a 12-year-old kid can laugh at this.
Alexia: And this issue is the number one reason of our shock because we thought that we were a very… eh, a developed country… an almost rich country and suddenly we realized that we are not! We are «PIGS», we are under-developed, we are poor, eh, we, we…, we are everything bad. So, it was like the myth was destroyed. From one day to the other.

You think you were living in a big illusion… collective illusion…
Alexia: Hmm! Exactly!

…And you had more expenses of money than you could have thought? Something like that? Where did this money come from, European Community? Had it or hadn't it been produced in your country? You hadn't got the infrastructure, the economic infrastructure for this prosp…
Alexia: From the European funds you mean?

Yes, yes.
Marina: No, but we were not told, nobody told people how, eh, this money, was, eh, …invested. We were not told, eh, how this debt was created. So, the truth is that a kind of strange lifestyle was created during the last twenty years and many people thought that a good life was, eh, to loan money from the bank to get a… luxurious car. But this was not for everyone. Ok, this is true and this was bad. But is this only a Greek…?
Alexia: Yes, ok, some people had… did a bad thing and…
Marina: Yes, but this was not…
Alexia: They consumed more than they could afford.
Marina: It was not the majority either. I don't think it was the majority.
Alexia: It wasn't the majority but the fact is that the politics…, the politicians in Greece push everybody to this direction.
Marina: Of course.
Alexia: So, if you have a country that the whole system… is pushing either to the… eh, to the stock house…, they traded all the money to the stock house and this…, it was a push, eh, people were pushed there by the government… to invest their money and after that, and, after a while, they lose…, they lost their money. Eh, it was the whole state, the politicians that organized, eh…, this system… of

consumption, of lifestyle. And it was like a trap. You know, they created the problem... and then they...
Marina: They use it as an excuse...
Alexia: Yes.
Marina: ... To impose...
Alexia: They use it as an excuse and, at a third phase, they..., they present themselves as the only...
Marina: ...Saviours. [*laughs*]
Alexia: ...Solution to the problem they created. It's absurd. If you realize what happens and the political discourse – what you said earlier about this–, it's not logic. It's just absurd but we don't realize how crazy, how absurd this is.

In the course of the discussion, the question touched upon, at the start, about «collective guilt» and the subjectively felt shame about a collective state remained the recurring theme which was discussed more and more intensively in terms of emotional and moral concern. On the one hand, it is clear how people were hit by this crisis fully unexpectedly, out of nowhere, and how the present status quo is an upside down world where the signs have been reversed. For years, one was firmly convinced to have arrived in and to belong to the league of the well-situated, stable and successful countries in Europe. One believed in a linear advancement and stable prosperity and trusted the political discourses which strengthened the conviction that one should participate actively in the economic miracle through consumption. And then came the abrupt crash, which left those affected by it, numb and baffled.

We are dealing here with a collective disappointment, with a brutal disillusionment which gives the feeling of having fallen blindly and naively into a trap. And although it is emphasized that the government and the political parties are to blame for this deception and reference is made to the long historical tradition of lack of trust in the state and the political class among the Greeks, the accounts, at the same time, reveal a bad conscience, as the earlier economic policy, which had allowed the state debt to grow, had also brought undreamt of material advantages on account of the favourable credit which had been available for some years. This ambivalent position surely played a significant part in the «collective depression» which seems to have affected the members of the middle class in a particularly massive way. Nonetheless, our discussion partners raise their voices vehemently and even indignantly in assessing the reproaches of the political parties they regard to be essentially to blame, when these claim that the Greek people are corrupt and morally at fault for the present misery. The reactions are highly sensitive and show how scandalous and unacceptable, even perverse, such lines of argument and rhetoric appear to be.

The brutal disappointment about the loss of the illusions on which one's own existence was based is described as a «collective trauma» from which one awakens with a damaged social and subjective identity. And the fact that even children are ashamed of their country of birth and membership of the nation has a particularly shocking effect on our two committed teachers. They react vehemently against the tendency to whitewash the political string-pullers by culturalizing the causes of the crisis and attributing it to the Greek people and their national character. Accordingly, both of them are fundamentally concerned about the right-wing populist and fascistic parties who take advantage of the cultural stigmatization of the population in official discourse in order to offer people an interpretation of their situation which gives them positive feelings of self-value. We are here presumably dealing with the historically frequently documented connection between external stigmatization and symbolic power and the reaction in the shape of resentment and the reversal of the stigmatization by means of self-aggrandisement. In their resistance to the predominant rhetoric and the resultant nationalistic self-aggrandisement, Marina and Alexia, much to their own surprise, find themselves in a position to defend «Greekness», an indication that they have themselves yielded to the culturalistic point of view.

In addition to the anger expressed about their own gullibility, in regard to the «flourishing landscapes» conjured up in political discourse, which strongly recalls the West German promises to their brothers and sisters in the former GDR after the fall of the Wall, comes the fact that their earlier lifestyle appears in a new light and is now perceived voluntaristically as the result of a conscious and ruthless pursuit of material wealth, although these needs first had to be created in the earlier political economy. Like a bad pupil, whose misbehaviour is publicly denounced point for point, they see themselves as being pilloried by the international media and are hurt by the scorn heaped upon them. And to top it all, the ensemble of political parties to whom they attribute a central share in the problems, praises itself as part of the solution: a crazy world without reliable standards. In this discussion, the visitor from Northern Europe understands better and better how the discussion partners with their injured identity must feel in view of the ups and downs of cognitive and moral dissonance, the contradictions between self- and external ascriptions of responsibility

and guilt, the feeling of awakening from illusions and of having one's eyes opened after years of criminal disinformation by the political elite. And although the visitors cannot slip into the skin of their counterparts, a growing feeling of sympathy is accompanied by increasing empathy and, in the course of the discussion, they increasingly gain the impression that the subjective testimonies they are given transport very personal, intimate avowals of a collective fate in a very authentic way.

«"You want to live? This is luxury!"»

[...] **Marina:** Could I add something?

Sure.

Marina: They use all these things which were true but they amplified those facts to impose a number of measures which are demolishing every..., every kind of social protection. Every kind of..., I mean, everything. When they stopped, the day they stopped the collective contracts; employment contracts...? And they said: «from now on, from this day, you don't need to work with collective..., each one will make an individual contract». So, the first day, in the company where my husband works, they said: «oh, we have big problems, you have to accept it». It was the first day, not the second.

Alexia: It started right away. And it's all..., it is violence, you know, it's pure violence: unemployment, poverty... Eh, it was like you suddenly opened a window and violence came in the country, with all forms. We don't have money for education, for schools, for, eh, hospitals, unemployment; everything... A political discourse became a threat! It's pure threat: «either you vote us or you will..., you will be destroyed, totally destroyed», ...it's a catastrophe. And everything became a threat. Every two months: «ok, we have to do this and this, this, this, because we did destroy the money, "they'll stop the money"» and things like that, every two months, every one month; it was with a constant threat. For two years I denied to watch the TV news because I couldn't stand all this...

Marina: You can't stand it...

Alexia: ...Threatening discourse...

Marina: ...And this is true. Sometimes...

Alexia: I couldn't stand it.

Marina: Sometimes you really can't stand listen to the news.

Alexia: Hm. Hm. Hm!

Marina: Because..., not because they are so depressing but also they make me very angry.

Angry, I think so.

Marina: They make me so angry. Because I know they are lying, I know they are affecting many people who don't have access to..., even internet, news from the internet, or everything, they don't have... Because, in Greece, half of the people don't have access to the Internet. Because we have so many old people who live in villages in the countryside and all the information they get is from the media, from TV, not the media. They have no other source of information.

Hm. When we try to understand this kind of hopelessness and depression and also we try to understand why the political system can't take responsibility for this and start to change things, could it be that there is a dependency from other forces outside?

Alexia: You are very kind!

European community...

Marina: Yeah!

Alexia: You put it very kind.

Ok. Yes. And so, yeah, eh, finally, everybody's waiting for «what will happen tomorrow»; nobody knows, and it's, eh, an astonishing situation, eh? Even the political class hasn't any power to..., to change things.

Alexia: No, no...

Marina: Not power...

Alexia: ...It's not a matter of will, of how much they want to do things. I personally believe that, eh, they..., they don't serve the interest of Greek people. I am, eh, *persuaded* that they serve other people's interest, which is in conflict with our interest.

Marina: I agree, I totally agree. They're not...

Alexia: So, we don't..., personally, I don't trust them. And I am very scared; very scared, that, you know... I never estimated Greek politicians a lot, not a lot, I never estimated them. But it's the first time... that I am scared; because they are there.

Marina: I don't think that they are unsuccessful. I think, on the contrary, they are successful to what they really...

Alexia: Of course!

Marina: ...Intend to do.

Alexia: I agree.

Marina: Because they say: «ok, we didn't do this, this..., it wasn't right then, we are going to correct this». No, they are very successful in what they really intend to do, which is...

What's that? How would you describe their intention, their interest. You said that «they were working for others, not for Greek people». For whom?
Marina: For whom? For big..., for banks let's say. They call it «the marke...»
Alexia: For the markets?
Marina: They call it «the market».
Alexia: Because this is the, the...
Marina: ...A euphemism.
Alexia: ...The term...
Marina: ...A euphemistic term.

Is this a central term in the discourse? They speak of it...?
Alexia: This is the central term of the discourse and it's a term that we recently, eh, started to use, eh...: «the market, the market, the market» [*different tones of voice*] and, basically, we don't know what is this. And I don't care, I don't care basically. What I care for is that the..., this country is governed by people who are... Maybe I had the same feeling... It's a big word but it's like I feel it: like we have, eh, an occupation from another country. You feel so alienated from these people, from the politicians, as like being...
Marina: I'm not sure if it's an occupation from another country or from trust of interest which will eventually govern all countries.
Alexia: Yes!
Marina: Even Germany.
Alexia: Yes!
Marina: All countries.
Alexia: Yes!
Marina: And...
Alexia: But this is something alienated, it's something strange, you don't feel that...
Marina: You asked: «what is their intention». I think their intention is to lower the wages, as far as possible, so they have a very, eh, cheap labour cost and they use it as an excuse to..., for investors to come and invest... but, eh..., and they want to make people be happy about..., I mean...
Alexia: Yes!
Marina: In these years many..., many Greek people feel that they deserve to live with dignity, they deserve to be educated, not only just eat, just eat to survive, but live! So, now they say: «you want to live? This is luxury! You ask too much». [*Alexia laughs a bit*] «What? Education? You should only want to... just survive, eat, survive, nothing else». But this is no human life or...
Alexia: Speaking about education, you can see that they try to connect education with the labour market. This is a neoliberalism attitude: to connect, to make education respond to the labour..., to the needs of the labour market. And the..., all the changes are towards this direction and we start losing, we lost, we start losing, I don't know, the humanitarian, eh, ...
Marina: ...Point of view.
Alexia: ...Point of view of education. Because everybody deserves a good public general education. And, then, we can see about the future and their professional lives and things like that. But to start with: «everybody deserves public, good, general education» and this is..., this doesn't happen in Greece; we are about to lose it.

Hm. Hm. Ok, what you've been saying about this situation is as if you were in war... It's interesting to remember what Churchill said during the Second World War. He talked to British people and said: «you will have to wait for blood, sweat and tears», eh? But it's necessary because there are enemies outside. But you haven't got any clear enemies, as you said before. It's not clear...
Alexia: No, it's not clear and not everybody believes that we are in war. And not everybody believes that there is an enemy. You know, many people believe that..., that something went wrong with Greece, with us, with ourselves and that's why we have all this mess.
Marina: Before, before the election every..., all politicians try to impose their..., their version of dilemma: «Is it Euro or Drachma? Is it this memorandum or not?»; I think my version is: «neoliberal..., neoliberalism and policies of... of the market»... But if a politician or a journalist *dares* to say, the media, that: «you know, people are suffering and we should see, we should have a safety net or something like this, people are committing suicide in Athens», then he's a demagogue. And that's all. «You are a demagogue».
Alexia: Yeah, exactly.
Marina: Actually, one..., you know, about 2.500, I think, people have committed suicide during the last months in Greece. You have..., we had a lot of suicides. One guy was, eh, we studied together.
Alexia: The geologist?
Marina: He was a geologist, the geologist, yes. We studied together. So..., I was not in touch with him but a friend of mine was..., we have a common friend. So, he..., and she said, she told me it was not psychological. Of course, there is a psychological base..., basis or something but it's not...
Alexia: He wasn't sick.
Marina: He had to fight so much...
Alexia: He wasn't sick.
Marina: Of course he wasn't too strong to deal with this; but he wasn't sick either.

In the further course of the discussion, we came to speak about a fundamental social issue of the present day, which goes far beyond the Greek case and the specific situation there, which appears to be a «national crisis» if not a national tragedy. The diagnoses of our discussion partners now take on a decisively social-critical and political tone. What shimmers through the Greek crisis and manifests itself beyond the supposed singularity of the conditions there, is the critical state of societies in the maelstrom of the neoliberal radicalization of the market. The processes of the dismantling of the achievements of the welfare state, of the solidary protection against the general risks of capitalist wage labour and the uncertainties of the existence of the modern worker, which are reflected in the accounts of our discussion partners, can, after all, also be traced in a scarcely milder form in other South European countries, and even their colleagues from the seemingly privileged northern countries and regions of Europe know and share the fear of a withdrawal of the state and the need for social security in all parts of the population. But precisely this is the magic word which occurs again and again in the talks in order to give a name to the logic of the current processes of transformation. As blind and incomprehensible these seem to be in the first phase of the discussion, in the current passages they are reduced to a common denominator: «the market, the market, the market», they chant as if in an incantation. «They call it the markets», they say, pinpointing the passe-partout magical formula as it is used in both the neoliberal discourse of the Troika and the docile avowals of the political powers in their own country, a formula adopted to justify radical wage cuts, and reversals and losses in the fields of labour and employment law. «You must accept» because you have no choice. You can demand nothing because you have nothing in your hands with which you could exert pressure. The feeling of impotence is expressed so uncompromisingly in these passages of the discussion and is accompanied by a feeling of hopelessness which increasingly moves the visitors and discussion partners from the north. This absolute impotence is also attributed to the political class, to the government of their own country, the so-called «representatives of the people», which makes them seem like a puppet government. This is paradoxical because the dominant discourse is based on a similar assumption, which denies the responsibility of the leading political powers towards the people. The two teachers only seem to see a way out of the current situation against or beyond the dominant «political class».

Our two pedagogues show particular concern in regard to tendencies towards the marketing of education, as here their own professional ethos is confronted with the increasingly hard demands of purely economic rationality and accountability. The subjective mental state which shines through and is reported in these passages reveals a growing vulnerability and precariousness in a society with increasingly limited liability for the risks, needs and uncertainties of its members. Robert Castel has shown that the new uncertainties caused by the discontinuation of the hitherto laboriously created collective security is all the more destabilizing as its existence had already become a part of the affective household and expectational horizons in the life planning of individuals and that questioning it must necessarily have a highly disorientating and destabilizing effect. The connection between these uncertainties and the increasing number of suicides spontaneously mentioned by our two pedagogues is sociology sui generis: since Durkheim's classic study of suicide, which appeared a good hundred years ago, we know that suicide is probably the ultimate and most radical reaction to this kind of undermining of all the reference points of subjective and collective coordination systems for meaningful action.

Leaving Greece?

Do you know any colleagues at your school –probably it's not a problem at your place– that have lost their jobs already? I think they have…
Marina: Teachers?
Alexia: Teachers?

Yeah.
Marina: For the time being… eh, …
Alexia: Not yet.
Marina: …Eh, those who, those of us who have permanent contracts, they are not yet affected. Only the wages are affected. Especially for us who are less than ten years in education…
Alexia: Hmm.
Marina: …The wages are totally…
Alexia: Yes.
Marina: …Cut in half. […] It's hard because my husband…, he works in the private sector, he also had a big cut in his wage. And we have the mortgage, we have two kids! It's hard to keep the level of life that we were used to. And I am not talking about luxurious things and cars or holidays. I'm talking about education which is basic for the need to…, to

pay for your kids to go to a theatre or to go to learn English. Because here, as you might know, you have to pay to learn for a language.

And how do you see the generation a bit, a little bit younger, ten years, fifteen years younger than you, which is maybe in an other way affected by much more unemployment; people who just finished university, who are looking for a job, I think their situation is...

Marina: They're even..., things for them are not easy. Some of my colleagues have kids who are 20, 18 to 20 years old. So, they tell me how hard they try to find a job... There's no job for them. A colleague of mine had a son with a degree and an MBA. He was looking for a job here in Greece for seven months... He didn't find anything and he went to... the Netherlands because his brother was studying there. He stayed there for four months. He tried to find a job, no job... So, he came back here and... Now, people who..., there are very few opportunities to go and give an interview for a job... And, even then, you're facing things... I mean, they told my... My husband tries to give some interviews for a better job. And they tell him: «ok, you'll go, eh, you'll get two or three days leave from your job, so, you come here and you will stay with us for three days and then we'll see if you're good for us». So, he actually did it because the money..., at the current job, it is not enough. So, he did it and afterwards he said: «and now what?» and they, eh, they told him: «ok, I think you are... ok, I'm positive but now we're going to..., we don't need you for the summer because there is no job this summer, so, at the end of August maybe you will take another two days leave from the job» [*they all laugh, Alexia laughs aloud*]. You don't know what to do; should you laugh, should you cry...

Alexia: This generation is..., is very unlucky –this generation between 18 to 30 years old, 35– because maybe, maybe this is gonna be a generation with no opportunity to get a job. There was, I think, a..., a generation in England, about 70's-80's, that didn't have the opportunity to work... eh, but this generation maybe is gonna be the same. And the difference is that they are..., they are very much qualified. Because we are a bit obsessed with, eh, studies and they, they are highly qualified, unemployed people here in Greece. And this is..., this makes things even worse. Because they invested money..., they invested time, they invested labour and a lot of effort... and they have very high expectations. [...] Things are very complicated for this generation. Because they were brought up with other... plans for their future.

Marina: For me, maybe the hardest thing is to think and feel that maybe I won't be able to offer my kids what my parents offered to me. This is a feeling that, for me, is really hard to deal with. Because I was not raised up with... no, no luxury, but: English language, French language, piano lessons and ballet dance... Now, I don't know if I will be able to... have my kids learn music, which I think is something..., the way I was brought up, ...it's important.

Alexia: It's very expensive.

Marina: It's important. But I won't be able to offer something that I feel it's..., eh, important. And this is, eh, this is hard.

Does your experience from the education system, and the crisis also, affect the way that you educate your children? Apart from..., from questions: «can I offer them music lessons», is there anything else that you want them to know?

Alexia: I changed the way... I changed the discourse. That: «ok, you have to be educated. A University diploma is without question; but for your own, eh, for your own education; not connected with the profession or your professional development or things like that. It's a way to organize yourself, your thought, your mind... Eh, but... the job is something else; not connected with education. I will be happy if you have a degree and if you are a technician, or if you are, eh, whatever». This is the change in the discourse after the crisis. And I believe this. I want him to be educated and happy whatever job he'll do. But this is..., this was not my parents' expectation for..., from me. They wanted a degree and they wanted a decent, you know, a decent job, decent, you know...? Social status. Job. So, I think we changed the expectations. [*laughs*] We try.

Marina: My kids are still very young... But, eh, you know, one day my daughter came home and told me: «you know, my friend's parent lost his job». And then I talked about it with the teacher and she told me: «you know, kids, nowadays, know some words that you didn't know».

Alexia: Hmm!

Marina: I didn't know what «unemployment» is. She knows the word, they know «unemployment», what is «unemployment», what is an «unemployed parent»; they know these..., these words. And I don't know if this is good... I didn't..., I don't want my kids to be trapped in this financial need; because if they think all the time that «we don't... we have money for this and we don't have money for this», then, they won't be able to... Of course they..., we should be realistic because..., but I want them to..., to dream also.

Alexia: I faced the same problem because, at the beginning of the crisis, my son was worried: «are you going to lose your job, are you going to... eh». And he was very anxious. And I decided to tell the truth that: «ok, we don't

have any..., we won't lose our job, we have permanent jobs, first, but, second, our wages are cut, are cut then. So, eh, this was..., this is..., this is going to affect some parts of our lives. But I feel that he wanted from me a security net in his life. And I said: «ok, this is fair». Because you can't bring up a child with all this anxiety of..., you know, of the future. It feels frustrating.

Marina: This is not good for... children. We should find a way to protect them. It's not always easy. For example, yesterday: my father takes the kids from the kindergarten. And he told me: «take this document because this kindergarten..., they won't give money to them anymore, so, maybe the next year they are going to close it down. Of course..., my kids won't go, they won't go there any more... but they heard all this story. So, my son: «I went and collected some Euros I found here and there..., I am going to give this to my teacher so that they won't close down the school». [*Marina laughs a bit*]

Alexia: Yes, they are involved. They, they try to invent ways to help other people... –my son too– to contribute in... For instance, they came, one day, they came and said: «do you have any toilet paper?» [*laughs a bit*]. Yes, «because at school we don't have any», the teachers said... «if you have, please...»

Marina: Yes-yes.

Alexia: And, of course I..., I lent the toi..., a lot, a lot of toilet paper from the centre. Because we have a lot [*Alexia & Marina laugh*] and we help the primary school of my son. So..., they are aware, they are aware and..., but they need this safety.

Contrary to our expectations, the option of emigration was not personally central for our two discussion partners. In the Northern European media, Greece is at the moment depicted as a country full of people who are more or less willing to emigrate. In the discussion, the talk was, first of all, about how the crisis affected our discussion partners personally, about their own private material situation, and we hear how great the losses in income and standard of living are for them and their families. Although specific cases of emigration in their own family environment were mentioned, they emphasize that this became possible only due to certain constellations, like a spouse from abroad. A more dominant role was played, however, by the ever recurring discourse about young people with high educational qualifications and diplomas who had no chance on the labour market. This was a «lost generation». What else could they do but flee from the conditions at home? But hasn't this been the fate of the younger generations for a long time? Hasn't a massive problem with the integration of precisely these highly qualified young people into the labour market existed for decades in Greece? The precarious situation of young people in Greece has been proverbial for a long time; but precisely here an, in any case, already existing structural problem is sharpening dramatically at the moment and moving from «difficult» to «hopeless», and this seems to be linked with an existentially threatening phenomenon for our two discussion partners, who are both teachers and mothers.

What should one give children and young people in the way of motivation in regard to education and training? As our mothers put it, they should pursue their education for its own sake and not for a social status which is, in any case, uncertain. Under critical conditions being content in a future profession, no matter which one it is, seems to be the desirable goal. «*To have a decent job*» is the wish they have for the future of their own children, but, at the same time, a certain bitterness is expressed about the fact that one can no longer offer the generation now growing up what one had received oneself from one's parents in the way of language lessons, piano lessons etc. This is bitter because the unwritten moral law on justice between the generations is that one should pass on to one's own children at least what one has received oneself. This seems to express clearly the extent to which the two women come from a well-educated and hitherto economically not badly equipped middle class.

Accordingly, the two women are concerned that children and young people nowadays are confronted early with the feeling of uncertainty and vulnerability, and anxiously ask their parents if they are threatened with unemployment. The extent to which the world view of the two women is determined by their membership of the educated middle class can be recognized in their view of the working class. They present the right-wing populist movements, above all, as a problem for the less affluent [«*poor kids, you can't say anything*»]. To this extent, the concern running through the entire interview about the welfare of children and the future of the young generation, which also seems to be specifically threatened by the right-wing populist movements, also clearly expresses concern about the loss of the power of definition over the future of the offspring of their own social group. It is not surprising, therefore, that both women emphasize in the discussion the penetration of worldly logic (such as the perspectives of the parents in regard to politics and the economy) into the world of children.

«"Golden dawn... My parents vote..., I am proud of it!"»

[...] **Marina:** I noticed that, in this neighbourhood, many kids... start to talk politics. Until now, they didn't talk politics so much. They talk politics and there is a tendency for many kids to go to far-right extremes.
Alexia: Yes, of course, fascism is everywhere.
Marina: So, we had kids after the election – poor kids, you can't say anything. «We're, eh...», you know, «we 're talking to the teacher openly». A boy told me: «I am proud, I don't want to hide it, I am, eh...».
Alexia: «...Golden Dawn».
Marina: Yes. «My parents vote..., I'm..., I am proud of it».

There were some young people yesterday who told us that the «Golden Dawn» people try to recruit young kids at school?
Marina: Yes.
Alexia: The problem is very big at schools because they organize, you know, groups at schools, especially in secondary and upper-high school. And they're very active in those places. I believe that «Golden Dawn» expresses the anger of..., of certain people. And, eh, as I heard in a conversation during the last days, somewhere outside, it was 4-5 people voting for Golden Dawn and they said that the whole point was that: «ok, it's good that they can slap them, the politicians, and even inside the Parliament because we can't do that but they can». So, it's..., it's their hand. Basically..., the Golden Dawn is their hand instead of..., of us. They'll do the dirty job for us. Eh, and this is the most worrying thing in Greece, I believe, now. Even more worrying, for me, than the economic crisis is the fascism.
Marina: But they go together, I think.
Alexia: They go together; of course they go together. Because their point was that they are against the immigrants. And, ok, Greeks never welcome immigrants, never. Even twenty years ago, they had problems with them. But, at certain points, they accepted the immigrants because they are cheap labour force. And they compromised with them. But after the crisis, now, the economic crisis, and the extreme poverty of..., of some people, suddenly, they realized that the immigrants are their enemies... in the labour force market. So, they remembered again their xenophobic feelings and now they have the Golden Dawn justify... and give a new name to these. They are not xenophobic, they are not racists, they are nationalists. Now they have, you know, a nice name. They are in the Parliament, so, everything is justified now. And this worries me very much; very, very much.
Marina: And in the classroom we..., in my classroom, there are many immigrant kids too. So, on one hand, you have these students who are angry and say: «I don't want the immigrants» and, at the same time, in the same classroom, you have immigrants. And then, at the last..., during the last lesson, last class, this year, I told kids: «so, now we finished with the revision and everything. Is there anything you wanna talk about?». And there was this kid raising his hand and say –from Egypt– say: «yes, I want to talk about something. Because a friend of my father was killed yesterday». Actually, he was killed in my neighbourhood. And he said: «I want us to talk about this, about this thing». But I was lucky because at this certain classroom everyone defended him and everyone was, eh..., all kids, eh.
Alexia: He was killed by Golden Dawn?
Marina: By someone. I don't know.
Alexia: By som... Well, look, it's... Being a teacher is... even more dangerous, I think. Because teaching is a political act. Even if you realize it or not, you are performing a political act. And all the decisions you have to..., all the discussions and the content of teaching and the teaching methods are a political choice. So, you are very much exposed to this fascism, all around you. To the parents, eh... It's very warning, eh, for us at the centres. We discuss about the environment, about migration, about refugees, environmental refugees and all this and, sometimes, I feel that we are exposed. We now start being exposed to..., to fascism. I am very worried..., every day.

Worry about the economic situation, the future in general and the future lives of «their» children at home and in school is accompanied by a directly connected concern with even greater consequences. As it has already been mentioned elsewhere, what is at issue is the rise of right-wing populist groups and their racist discourse against immigrants and asylum seekers, which is closely connected with the experience of crisis and the growing precarization and social decline of entire groups of the population. The circumstance that the fascistic groups are infiltrating the schools more and more and are propagating their demagogic ideas in them seems to give rise to all the more concern among the two teachers as they can report examples in which school children adopt this rhetoric and even seek in it a source of a new national pride. If right-wing populism is traditionally characterized by a twofold resentment expressing itself in ranting against the political elites «up above» and in stigmatizing

the weakest people «down below», then, from a sociological point of view, we have a particularly fertile breeding ground for inflammatory propaganda in the Greek situation.

Our teachers experience this problem all the more closely in everyday working life as they have children from an immigrant background sitting in their classes who are confronted with such stigmatization when their school comrades repeat the demagogic slogans of the Golden Dawn. For this reason, the two see an all the more urgent need for commitment in civil society, as is thematized in what follows.

«...In a way, we are activists every day.»

Do you talk with friends or colleagues about the situation?
Marina: Oh, all the time! [*laughs a bit*]
Alexia: Yes, we talk... a lot.

That's such a problem you can't speak about anything else, eh?
Marina: No...
Alexia: No, because I believe that, eh, you..., you'll get mad if you discuss all the time this. And the..., the answer might be to cope with this, to be creative, to still be creative. Yes. Because, eh, I feel that being creative is my personal response to this. I can't discuss every day... and cope, every day, with this madness. Eh, so, I have to retreat myself a bit... and focus on my interests, on my things, related to the situation because education is..., is a political... eh, area, so, we can contribute to this situation with our own means. And my means is teaching.
Marina: We..., we are lucky in a sense. Although we have this, all this cut of wages and we have this fear that, maybe, there's a chance that, maybe, some of us will get laid off or, I don't know, death... we're still..., we're still lucky because we are in this job. Because we..., we have the opportunity to make a slight... difference.
Alexia: ...To intervene.
Marina: I don't know, maybe this is an illusion but I feel... I feel lucky because I have this slight opportunity to make...
Alexia: Hm. Exactly.
Alexia: So, we are... in a way, we are activists every day.

Do you think about your future and the future of your society? And there's still hope that things will change for the better? And in what space of time you imagine that the crisis can be overcome? [*Pause*]
Marina: What is really...

5, 10, 20 years?
Alexia: Oh, a lot!

Quite a lot, ok.
Alexia: No-no-no-no-no, quite a lot. Quite a lot, I mean, more than 30-40 years, I don't know.

As long as you needed to come out of the ancient regime. It was about 40 years ago that Greece was another sort of society. Now you need still 30-40 years to...
Alexia: I believe, yes, and, eh... I'm not very optimist that we are, eh, we're at a stage, we're capable to have a change in our political, eh, scene. I think, I don't think that we are mature enough as voters, as citizens to claim for... for a radical change.
Marina: But we have to invest on this, you know, «solidarity» is the key word or something..., we should...
Alexia: Yes... Until... waiting for the change we have to be... eh, to develop solidarity and be very aware and very active all the day, every day.

Hm-hm. If you have a look on civil society, what are the institutions, besides family, which is very important in your country, who could play an active role: church or, eh...?
Alexia: An active positive role.

Positive; positive role, yes.
Alexia: Schools.
Marina: Schools.

Schools.
Marina: Schools, not church.
Alexia: I believe schools and this, the... «Citizens' Movement». They start now... to create collectivities.
Marina: [...] When I think about this..., when I see people, then, I feel the need to..., somehow, to go and support this thing... and maybe be a part of it. I think these are the only ways we have to overcome through this kind of things. And school..., maybe school has many problems in Greece but, for many kids, school is the only place that might give them a way out of their..., this misery.
Alexia: And hope.
Marina: I think we are teachers, we should, we should understand this. There are many problems. Schools are not perfect in Greece, (*they are*) far from perfect. But, for many kids, schools are their..., their only chance. Church, I don't believe, church..., ok, they do some... [*asks in Greek for the English word «charity»*]

Alexia: Charity!
Marina: ...Some charity. But, in fact, if you look deeper, the...
Alexia: ...it's charity. We don't need charities.
Marina: Hmm.
Alexia: We need, eh, eh, changes; we need to give people jobs, not charity; a permanent way to... earn their lives.

Hm. Labour unions are playing a big role?
Alexia: As they, as they are now?

Yes.
Alexia: No.

No.
Marina: They are so much...
Alexia: They need radical changes too.
Marina: They are so much... devaluated... all these years. And this is...
Alexia: Because they collaborated..., they were collaborating with the government.

They were very close, I think, to the government parties.
Alexia: They were the same thing actually, the same parties and the same thing. No, we need, I believe that we have a long way in front of us until..., to mature society and be active citizens and responsible citizens, that could claim a change. Maybe..., the optimistic thing is... that we..., some people we realized it and now we are...; even more and more people are thinking towards this direction. But we have a long, long way in front of us.
Marina: Because you mentioned the labour unions I want to say that we shouldn't – ok, they have many problems, they are..., because they used to collaborate with the government. So, people don't trust them anymore. But that doesn't mean that we should never have again labour unions. We should change labour unions. Because I think we need to have them.
Alexia: Of course we need parties, we need labour unions, of course. But...

...Not the old one.
Marina: [*laughs a bit*] Yes!
Alexia: Not the old one, no.

What do you think is to be done by the people themselves? What do you think you can do, or your friends can do to change the situation?
Alexia: As persons you mean?

Hmm, individuals. How would you start, what would you propose?
Alexia: To start with, I became more, eh, active... eh, I participate in Parents' Association in my son's school, I became politically more active, and more talkative to people; for the first time in my life I found myself trying to persuade people, to discuss with people; not persuade, to discuss, to argue with people... about the situation, and tried to change their, eh, eh, to change, eh, their minds or... [*Pause as if this wasn't the word –«minds»– she was looking for*], to wake them up a bit, eh, openly. Before, I didn't do that; I was more on..., with myself, with my friends, we discussed everything and that's..., that was it. Now I became more open to people, more talkative, more...
Marina: Ok. We should, maybe, reflect on ourselves more and how we do our jobs and how...; If we see the children we have in front of us, what are the problems, we treat them properly. Because, in schools too, we have many..., we think we should be just and in order to be just to everyone, sometimes, we..., some kids are..., that have very big problems and we say: «ah, I have to be just or he will rip it (the class) or something». So, these are things we should change in order to help. I am talking about this because, just yesterday, at school we had this conversation: some kids which are really «big problems», and we were discussing what we should do with them. But we know their life is not easy at all, and what we should do with them. Also, recently, I feel the need, an urgent need, I don't know, to... to become maybe part of a political...
Alexia: More active!
Marina: ...More active politically. This is the first time in my life. I always had some ideas but... But we used to say: «I don't want to get involved with political parties». And, for the first time in my life, I think I want to go and be active politically.
Alexia: For me, it is the second time of my life because the first time I was active as a student: I was involved and active and organized as a student and for the last, eh, 20 years, eh, I retreated from this, eh, this place..., this public place..., space and now I found myself that it's a need to come back..., to get reorganized and... be more active again.

Do you think there is a movement to political participation?
Marina: Yes.

Are more people...?
Alexia: Yes.
Marina: Yes, I feel..., I'm sure about this.
Alexia: Yes!

Marina: ...Many reasons to believe that they..., they are. And this is maybe something optimistic. Of course there are younger kids who are prone to fascism and things like that, but there is also a big percentage, eh, of young people who are, eh, feeling the need to act politically, to get involved. And this is...

Are there political movements, social movements..., who..., that people can join...?

Marina: There are a lot of small groups... But they are growing. And I think this is a good thing. But, of course, on the other hand, it's the media. Every time a movement like this is growing...

Ah, they're trying... yeah.

Marina: They're trying to...

Alexia: And they don't appear..., these movements don't appear in the media; the only way to be informed is through the social media or the internet. But..., but yes, there is a movement towards these social collectivities.

Marina: And against...

Alexia: But we are at the beginning.

[...] **Marina:** If you see the statistics of the elections, of the recent elections you can see that... and this is a fact: that, eh, all the votes for the government, for the neoliberalistic politics and the people who fear, these people are the older people, over 65. These are statistics; it's not my, my opinion and, eh, they usually live in villages where they don't have access to information..., and maybe the crisis ...has not affected them as much. And if you see the very young people you have a big, eh, change, something that is changing. I don't know if this is permanent or this is just a... something that happened for us...

Alexia: We will see... But the highest percentage of «Nea Dimokratia» was among farmers and housewives! I was, eh, impressed with this: farmers and housewives! [*Pause*] Not young people, not students, not educated people that...

Marina: This kind of [*educated*] people sometimes when they hear the news they feel –I feel it too sometimes– that they... underestimate my, my ability to criticize. They think I'm stupid. That's... I really think that makes me angry: «What do you think? I can't think? I will believe...?».

Alexia: This feeling was very strong, eh, during the elections, during the last months. For the election you have the impression that they, these guys, thought that you are stupid.

Marina: Yes, because they say: «we are going to change it».

Alexia: How stupid can you be...?

Marina: They have said that the wages will be more..., eh, there will be massive lay-offs and things like that and then, before the elections, they said: «oh, we are going to negotiate and we are going to do this and that». Well, who believes in that?

Alexia: 29%... of the Greek people. And another half.

We, as visitors from the North, clearly expected that the crisis would be the dominant theme of discussion for our two teachers, as it would be for all of their contemporaries. We also expected that they would tell us that they could not continuously think and talk about this topic. Instead, they say about themselves that they must look for ways out and practical solutions using the means and possibilities available to them, and, in this case, that is pedagogics. Both women paint a picture of a growing civil commitment in their environment and characterize this in turn with the already mentioned loss of trust in political institutions and the so-called representatives of the people. Those who cannot accord any credibility to these people must awaken public interest, must take collective concerns into their own hands. This seems to be all the more necessary to the two teachers as the traditional forms of solidary self-organization and representation of the interests of the workers are themselves affected by this crisis of trust, as they were closely tied up with the irresponsible and even apparently corrupt political parties. Hence, the development of alternative forms of communal help and solidarity and the creation of new practices of reciprocal support beyond the purely monetary forms of the market economy, and also beyond the traditional forms of state regulation, is necessary. This is an enormous open construction site for new forms of communitization from the bottom up, which do not wait for compassion and pity but raise the claim to practice self-help. In this connection, both discussion partners seem highly committed and even enthusiastic in regard to the potential of these newly awakened civil activities. In comparison to the gloomy scenarios developed earlier in the discussion, for example, in regard to the period of time required to change the critical situation in Greece, which was estimated at three decades, this does, it is true, sound decidedly optimistic. But, perhaps, this calculated optimism is inevitable in order to avoid despairing as a result of permanent reflection on thousands of problems. It seems as if the two activists wanted, in this way, to reassure and encourage themselves and to emphasize a thoroughly justified demand for the observation of fundamental human rights.

«I would dream of a Europe which is different.»

Maybe, one more question? You said that there is a global dimension to the crisis or «it's not just Greece» or not the fault, of course, of the Greek people. If you could choose though, what should be different outside of Greece in order to make it easier for you to deal with the current situation? It's a hypothetical question but, what would have to be different to..., to consider the change.

Marina: This is theoretical but this is... I would dream of a Europe which is different. I think Europe is not what we have today, I mean, Europe is not just Euro zone and this kind of policies and measures imposed on every people just for the markets. I dream of... another Europe. But I believe in Europe. I don't believe in separated... nations with no connections with one another. You know, the contrary; but there is another Europe too. Of course it seems, it sounds like a utopian thing to say: «Europe for the people...», with social policies; but it doesn't matter. We should..., utopia is nice, sometimes, too. It's nice to hope for, it's nice to find...

Alexia: But you realize what you said right now, that the social state, the social policy is a utopia! For me this...

Marina: Which, which..., it should be...

Alexia: ...Which is true.

Marina: It should be self-evident.

Alexia: ...Which is true but...

Marina: It should be....

Alexia: ... It's shocking, I don't know, we are at a point that we believe that the social policy, the social state, it's a utopia! Yes, but for me it is obvious, eh ... What I want is just this...

Marina: This. Yes.

Alexia: ...Education, health, eh, a welfare. And I believe that this is my right.

Marina: Yes, this is..., how can we say...?

...Realistic utopia.

Marina: Realistic utopia, yeah!

Alexia: She just said and she's right that: «this is a utopia!». And, you know, we're at a point...

Marina: It is a utopia but you cannot compromise with anything less than this. Which is..., it sounds likes a utopia. It should be realistic utopia...

Alexia: ...Yeah.

Marina: Yes... What I think, what I want, it's just basic things; the basic human rights I want, nothing more!

Hm.

Marina: Nothing less. And we have to remember what the human rights are, *again*. And this is what we want: basic things.

Hm.

Marina: ...But important.

We have reached the end of our one and a half hour long discussion, which comes to a head on the political and existential implications of the crisis. And we take this as an occasion to make some closing remarks in our socio-analytical commentaries and framing remarks on this exchange. In answer to our deliberately hypothetical and speculative question on their own ideas about more advantageous international framework conditions for the solution of the crisis in their country our two counterparts speak about Europe. They mean a different Europe from the one they and we know, a Europe which does not only reduce itself to Euro and is not limited to a common market. They both dream of *«another Europe»*, a utopian Europe of the people, a Europe for citizens. But this seems, at the same time, to be no less utopian than the idea of a functioning welfare state. Its contributions to the spheres of health and education are not, however, seen as distant unachievable ideals, but as basic rights to which they assert a clear claim both for themselves and for all the members of their society. It is a matter of inalienable human rights, no more, but also no less! And, nonetheless, in these hard times of crisis, in which all long-term projects for the future appear meaningless, it seems to be a luxury to wish to demand such basic rights.

Our discussion runs like an emotional roller-coaster, alternating between pessimistic scenarios of the future, involving a permanent long-term collective decline and enormous losses in life quality and life chances, and signs of resistance and the emergence of new ways of living together in solidarity. One practices self-reassurance in order to avoid despairing in the situation. Both our discussion partners seem to derive their energy and powers of resistance essentially from their concern and responsibility for the young generation. Here, too, the mood of the discussion fluctuates between pessimistic impressions and threatening scenarios, on the one hand, and examples and anecdotes which bring hope on the other. The many little stories from everyday life in a society, shaken by crisis, fit together to create a great narration in which the two witnesses of the crisis provide their own

spontaneous sociological and psychological diagnoses and interpretations and accompany us, the visitors from Northern Europe, like ethnographic informants through the realities of everyday life as they experience it. This occurs without any maudlin sentimentality, without wailing complaints against an undeserved fate and yet with a clearly perceptible anger at the politically irresponsible and incompetent behaviour of those bearing responsibility, who seem, in the meantime, to have finally squandered the last remains of their moral and political trustworthiness. Where the classical institutional bearers of public interest and welfare have abdicated, leaving behind them a political vacuum, a fair degree of collective disorientation and disorder arises, but, at the same time, an opportunity is also created for counter-projects and alternatives of civil society on both a large and a small scale. The policy of taking small steps in one's own professional field, which is practised by our discussion partners, gives room for hope, or at least for a little hope.