

Interview with the Cyprus Movements Archive

Interviewer: Giorgos Charalambous

**Κυπριακό Κινηματικό Αρχείο/Cyprus Movements
Archive/Kıbrıs Sosyal Hareket Arşivi**

<https://movementsarchive.org/doku.php>

Introduction

In Cyprus, social movements and radical left or progressive, extra-parliamentary politics have not followed the patterns observed since the 1960s elsewhere in Europe. But by today, their absence has evolved into a multitudinous presence, not only in terms of the number of groups and their politics, but importantly also because there is now an online archive, which documents their action and discourse through time, across distinct spaces and in three languages. This is an interview with the Cyprus Movements Archive, looking into the experience of producing and promoting radical history. Under discussion are both the substantive political concerns that animate the initiative, and its practicalities, prospects and challenges. Hopefully the interview can contribute to readers situating the local and particular within the global and universal, also to informing and inspiring initiatives elsewhere that act in a counter-hegemonic fashion towards the place and inequalities of contemporary information.

Q. How was the idea and initiative for a movements archive in Cyprus born? In what historical context, political climate and activist settings?

The idea for the Cyprus Movements Archive (movementsarchive.org) began in the summer of 2016, during a casual discussion over drinks on the topic of the failure of various past Cypriot independent information projects. Having been active in the extra-parliamentary networks of Nicosia at various levels of intensity in the previous years, we considered the lack of easy access to texts and documents produced by various active political groups as a serious shortcoming in the radical politics of Cyprus. While our discussion initially focused on the need for an active independent information website, it brought to the surface the generality of this problem, as the historical texts of Cypriot radical politics remained inaccessible and therefore unknowable even within Cypriot extra-parliamentary radical circles, with their potential physical destruction being a very real possibility.

Our discussion established our common interest in preserving these texts and making them openly available. Previous attempts had of course been made for

the formation of a similar archive, as was the case of the Agrammata self-organized library in Nicosia (2008-15), but there had been no initiative for the creation of an open-access online archive, which would digitalize and thus preserve material from physical wear.

We established some first ground rules, especially in relation to inclusivity, and proceeded with the creation of a beta version of the website in the same year, initially hosted on the server of 3533 (2013-17), then still an active independent information website. We then began cataloguing, digitalizing and archiving the first set of material, primarily sourced from our own personal archives. As the project developed we began to locate, catalogue and digitize an increasing number of material, discovering a plethora of groups, initiatives and magazines that had been unknown to us prior to the formation of the archive, a process which continues until today.

Q. What is the ideological space covered by the texts, campaigns and groups included in the archive? It is obviously the radical, extra-parliamentary terrain, but from your perspective do certain common denominators exist between all or most archived material in terms of principles, ideas, ways of doing things and political positions? More generally, this raises the question of the political criterion for selection into the archive.

As an archival group, our aim is to make accessible past and contemporary material, rather than to maintain any particular political position or ideological commitment. We therefore locate, digitalize and archive material originating from the 'broader Cypriot radical milieu', a term we use rather flexibly in order to be able to include groups, ideological tendencies and political initiatives that are often antithetical, or even opposed to each other. While most of the archived material originates from the extra-parliamentary terrain, we are not opposed to archiving material from political parties – we already have archived material from the Communist Party of Cyprus (1926-44), as well from the Trotskyist Party of Cyprus (1940s), both of which had participated in electoral politics.

Our criteria for inclusion evolve as we gather more information on past political activity. Rather than setting up strict criteria from the beginning, we evaluate, adjust and adapt our criteria in relation to the ever-increasing located material, keeping in mind the context within which the material had been originally produced. On a first level, we begin by a negative criterion, excluding material from large parliamentary political parties, such as the Progressive Party of Working People (AKEL) and the Republican Turkish Party (CTP). While the argument for their inclusion could certainly be made on the grounds of their historical importance, or their past commitment to a leftist ideology, we view them as an integral part of the Cypriot political system and therefore outside the scope of the archive. Additionally, we consider such institutions more than capable of preserving their own material and organizing their own archives,

while their political views and historical significance are generally known and have been documented in countless books and academic papers.

Perhaps our most straightforward key criterion is the ideological content of a group, initiative or publication. As we aim to archive material of the broader radical milieu, we maintain an extensive inclusivity in terms of political ideology, so far as that ideology is understood to be part of the various currents of anarchism or of the radical left – we have so far included material from Trotskyist, Stalinist and Maoist organizations, from groups associated with the New Left, from anarchist and anti-authoritarian collectives, from radical feminist groups and from leftist grass-roots pro-reunification initiatives. Material originating from other sources, such as squats, D.I.Y. bands, social spaces and websites, have been further included based upon this criterion.

Nonetheless, political ideology is not our only criterion, and historical context is at least as important in determining whether a particular group, publication or initiative should be included. One example is that of Drasy-Eylem (2014-16), a bi-communal coalition of various leftists that took part in the 2014 European parliamentary elections, under a programme characterized by positions we can easily associate with Social Democracy. Despite the lack of a radical programme, we have included their material on the archive, as theirs was the first bi-communal initiative to take part in an election of the Republic of Cyprus, an important development in the politics of reunification. Another example is HADE (1998-2001), the first bi-communal Cypriot magazine, published and distributed during a period in which people could still not freely move across the buffer zone dividing the island. Other examples further include *Awake Within the Walls* (2007-11), a citizens' group set up to oppose the commercialization of the walled city of Nicosia, and *Alert* (2009-10), a pressure group formed with the aim of exposing police brutality. While both of these initiatives appear at first glance as mere pressure groups within the broader Cypriot civic society, a closer examination of their activity indicates their links to the extra-parliamentary leftist and anti-authoritarian milieu of Nicosia. As we accumulate and familiarize ourselves with the ever-increasing collected material, we acquire a certain esoteric knowledge that enables us to evaluate a particular historical context, identify connections between the various groups active in the period and decide if a particular initiative falls within the scope of the archive.

Given the above, the collection is understandably heterogeneous, with the collected material expressing multiple political positions, contrasting principles, various organizational structures and often antithetical ideas. For these reasons, the commonalities that we can establish are rather general – for example, almost all groups hold an anti-capitalist and anti-nationalist position of some sort, but the moment we begin to examine these positions, significant differences emerge. More consistency can be established if we are to examine specific ideological currents such as anarchism or Trotskyism, although even in those cases, different views have been expressed in relation to key issues, such as the Cyprus Dispute, identity politics, national self-determination and political strategy.

Q. Commentators and scholars have spoken of a ‘Generation Left’ during the post-2008 crisis and more broadly the political economy of youth in the setting of neoliberalism. Looking back, do you think there is a generational dimension, or rather experience, behind the archive and or some of the movements it documents?

We can certainly locate a shift in radical politicization in the Republic of Cyprus from 2008 onwards, with new initiatives increasingly being formed and disbanded, forming a continuation of succeeding political groups that concludes with the groups active today. During the period between 2009 and 2012 there had been an increasing politicization of the youth hanging out in Phaneromeni square, an area in Nicosia which maintained a vibrant youth subculture and which became a point of reference for the anti-authoritarian milieu. Some of these groups were explicitly organized by high school students, as was the case of Planodio Steki Dromou (2010-11) and Skapoula (2011-14), a trend that we can also locate, perhaps to a lesser extent, in Limassol. In relation to the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), the non-recognized Turkish Cypriot state claiming the northern part of the island, we simply have not located enough material yet and cannot comment, although it would not be surprising if something similar had unfolded. The Occupy Buffer Zone movement (2011-12) is perhaps another interesting case worth mentioning.

It is also during this period that we can locate the formation of an online, left-leaning independent information Cypriot sphere, initially beginning through the popularization of online blogs, followed by the Falies alternative information collective (2005-13), which reached its maturity in 2009-10. At the same period we can locate the creation of island anarchy (2009-13), an online forum dedicated to the co-ordination of the anarchist and leftist extra-parliamentary milieu, the creation of the 3533 website (2013-17) and finally, the formation of Kontrasusta (2017-18), the last attempt at creating an online independent information network. As individuals, we are certainly part of this apparent shift, growing up and becoming politicized during the post-2008 period. New technologies have certainly enabled a younger generation of politicized individuals to access previously unavailable information, come in contact with new ideas and organize themselves in ways unavailable to previous generations. Viewed from this angle, the archive is merely another example of this phenomenon.

We should point out however that we are not social scientists and it is neither our aim, nor our intent to produce an explanatory narrative or conceptual understanding of the historical development of the radical Cypriot political milieu. While we can point out shifts reflected in the archive’s (incomplete) collection, we cannot here make the claim that these developments are fundamentally linked to the financial crisis of 2008, to neoliberalism, or to any other combination of factors. Such an analysis pre-supposes the utilization of conceptual tools which necessitate a commitment to a particular theoretical or ideological framework, an approach we have consciously decided to avoid. The archive’s collection can certainly be utilized for the enrichment and formulation

of such an analysis; but we gladly leave this task for academics and radical political collectives.

Q. Is there a network operating to sustain and enrich the archive? In other words, how have tasks been arranged between those contributing and the main initiators, and what kind of organisational lessons have you learnt from this experience thus far?

The archive functions on a strictly voluntary basis, with the work required being carried out during our available spare time. This structure necessarily results in periods of high activity, followed by periods of low activity or general inactivity. Given the high standards we attempt to fulfill, the process of archiving is extremely time-consuming, beginning with the locating and cataloguing of material, their further digitization and incorporation into the archive's website through the creation of new entries accompanied by the necessary category tags, followed by the transcription of the original scanned text in a digital textual format, concluding with the translation of the transcribed text. Given the tenuous nature of this process, as well as the technical knowledge required, most of the technical work is still carried out by the initiators of the archive, while various documents can remain stacked at any given stage, with most usually pending transcriptions and translations. As we have collected an enormous amount of material, we are forced to prioritize specific documents for transcription and translation, while also continuing to upload and organize new documents in order to at least make them available in an organized manner as PDF files.

The archive would however have had stagnated early on without the support of numerous volunteers, who have contributed to the archive in different ways over the years, assisting in the process of archiving at every stage. Some have provided us access to their personal archives, allowing us to locate and digitalize new material; others have contributed by transcribing already scanned documents, thus making them more accessible, while others have provided translations of transcribed texts, making them available to new audiences for the first time. We sometimes also receive donations for covering our running costs, such as the server and domain name fees, reducing the financial burden of maintaining the archive online. We also maintain guides on the archive's website for people interested in helping; often make open calls for transcriptions and translations and occasionally receive e-mails by individuals interested in helping out. While we have no formal structure when it comes to volunteering, we can point out this dynamic between a core initiator group responsible for maintaining the website, uploading the files and organizing the various entries, and a general informal network of volunteers who assist in the enlargement and enrichment of the archive.

A challenge that we have faced repeatedly is making the archive known to a general audience. We initially attempted to address this by distributing leaflets to Kaymakkin, a social space in Nicosia, by holding a public presentation of the

archive in 2017 and by encouraging various active radical Cypriot groups to include a link to the archive on their websites. We have also agreed in the past to be interviewed anonymously by one of the main Greek Cypriot newspapers circulating in the island in order to broaden the visibility of the archive; and have accepted the invitation to this interview with the same logic. We also maintain a blog on the archive's website, in which we occasionally post important updates, as well as lists of interesting texts available on the archive, written in both Greek and English. This approach has been however only partially successful, leading us to create a Facebook page, in order to establish a better link with the current and potentially interested audience. Despite our personal dislike of social media platforms, we recognize that in the present context, their use remains a necessity.

A more consistent problem has been the opening up of the project to a more collective approach. Initially we had hoped to establish a larger group of regular archivists and editors consistently partaking both in the tasks of archiving, as well as in the decision-making process. Our initial attempt did not however materialize in the formation of such an extended group and co-ordination for a second attempt has been proven difficult, as we are not living permanently in the same country and our limited spare time does not at present allow us to carefully co-ordinate a second attempt.

Q. Self-organisation, through archives like this one, is certainly a way to render radical history present. Part of this process, as you said before, has involved ground rules for inclusivity. These can matter a lot for cohesion, sustainability, direction and so on. Practical matters as you describe them aside, what general principles on 'how far to open up' are behind the rules you initially established? And have you subsequently revised them, at any occasion?

When we began our project we had a clear set of categories, aiming to archive material originating from the ideological traditions of anarchism, anti-authoritarianism, Trotskyism, Stalinism, radical ecology and radical and/or leftist feminism. In addition, we aimed to archive material from the rapprochement movement particular to the island, so far as it was produced by left-leaning, anti-nationalist political groups (rather than NGOs or United Nations-backed initiatives), which were often characterized by a grass-roots approach to the island's reunification. Our choice of categories reflected both international radical traditions and the specificity of radical politicization that had emerged historically in Cyprus, of which we were aware of at the time. Our initial focus rested on the post-1974 period (after the island's de-facto partition), as we initially had access to more material from this period, while it was during the aftermath of the war that the extra-parliamentary milieu active in Cyprus today was originally constituted and ideologically formed. Nonetheless, we

always kept the possibility of expanding our focus to previous decades; and did so in the following years.

We soon encountered a problem of inclusivity, which was further linked to our further concern that we had also taken up the unwanted role of producing a primitive political genealogy, rather than simply acting as an archiving collective. In contrast to other cases of radical politicization, such as the United Kingdom, Greece or Italy (to name a few we are somewhat familiar with), in which radical politics have been documented and analyzed theoretically and historically, writings on Cypriot radical politics remain largely non-existent. Despite the occasional academic article or the rather enthusiastic anthropological doctoral thesis, which tend to focus on specific aspects or dimensions of the politics of later decades, there is still no extensive historical genealogy of the Cypriot extra-parliamentary milieu. This places the Movements Archive in the bizarre situation of producing a sort of genealogy every time we choose to include or exclude a particular initiative, as the archive remains the first point of reference in relation to our radical past.

Most of the time our categories correspond to the historical reality and we thus have no reservations over what to include. The material from the 1970s and 1980s however poses a special case, as it is during this period that we can observe a rapid expansion of political ideologies in the Republic of Cyprus, followed by a series of ideological contestations in the emerging extra-parliamentary milieu, with specific groups holding extreme nationalist positions but nonetheless initially being considered as part of the milieu itself. These groups have their historical origin in the rather short-lived Maoist circles of Cyprus, which drew their emphasis on anti-colonial national self-determination from the Maoist tradition, perceiving the Cyprus Dispute as a case of neo-colonialism that could only be resolved through the implementation of the right to national self-determination.

Nationalism is of course not an alien idea in Cyprus and a variety of nationalist positions have been held historically by the institutional and extra-parliamentary Left. Our concern was that in this case, the positions expressed were identical to those of the post-1974 far-right - the opposition to an independent Cypriot state in any form, supporting the annexation of the island by the Greek state instead. To make matters more complicated, these groups, which succeeded one another throughout the 1980s, expressed a diminishing commitment to radical ideological theorization, leading to their eventual deterioration into a vulgar expression of extreme nationalism; having nothing to be jealous of from local far-right ideologies and lacking any resemblance to any radical political tradition, including among others, Maoism. In addition, the extra-parliamentary milieu, be it in its anarchist, Marxist or rapprochement manifestations, ideologically formed itself in opposition to these positions throughout the 1980s, eventually isolating and expelling these groups from the milieu.

This deterioration of radical politics into vulgar nationalism has re-appeared periodically, with notable examples in the 1990s as well as during the 21st century, forming what we sometimes jokingly and informally call the ‘other milieu’. Our concern then was, where do we draw the line? Do we include these groups or not? Do we include some of these groups from the 1980s but not others? Or do we exclude the original Maoist groups altogether, saving ourselves the trouble of deciding what to do with their ‘descendants’? Given the lack of any satisfactory historical analysis over the historicity of Cypriot radical politics, our decision would determine the availability of information and by extension, the visibility of one set of political groups and ideologies over another, leading the archive to essentially decide what should be considered as part of the history of Cypriot radical politics, and what should not.

In the end we decided that this decision could not be taken by us alone. As part of the public presentation of the archive at the only remaining anti-authoritarian social space of Nicosia in 2017, attended by individuals belonging to different ideological traditions and political groups, we explained this problematic and discussed it with the audience, in order to reach a more collective decision. The conclusion was to include the original Maoist groups of the 1970s, despite their pro-annexation positions, due to the strong ideological commitments in their peculiar reading of Mao, but exclude their political ‘descendants’, due to their close ideological proximity to the Greek Cypriot far-right, rather than to left nationalist currents. This has been the most fundamental decision taken in relation to inclusivity, so far. Whether it was the right decision is of course open to question. We consider however the mechanism through which we had taken this decision a satisfactory one, as it allowed us to take a position through the reflective input of the broader extra-parliamentary milieu, a path we may well take again if we are faced with a similar situation.

Q. You also mentioned a dislike of the mainstream social media platform, which I would say is shared by many on the left, while pointing out to the necessity to ‘get the message out’. Could you briefly elaborate on how you have confronted this tension? More specifically, what kind of technical ‘nuts and bolts’ have you chosen or avoided in operating and disseminating the archive? To what extent do you think we are close or far from an alternative (or the potential for an alternative) to current mainstream digitalities?

The decision to utilize social media platforms has been a strategic one, as Facebook usage in Cyprus is extensive. Our use of Facebook aims to act merely as a stepping stone for people to reach the archive’s website. We thus do not actively engage on the platform and do not post comments or long texts. We also discourage people from contacting us through Facebook’s messaging system, indicating that we prefer communication via e-mail instead. Our posts are characterized by simple updates or small informative comments on

particular texts, publications or groups, with links diverting people to our website. Long updates are always posted on the archive's blog, with the link posted later on the Facebook page, again in order to divert people to the archive's website. This has been our only compromise with mainstream social media platforms so far, a balancing act that attempts to benefit from the usage of Facebook without the platform gaining too much from our side of the 'bargain'. Beyond this compromise, we prioritize the engagement with alternative digitalities.

A fundamental principle we follow is the utilization of open source software, both in relation to the website, as well as throughout most of our digitization process. For example, we seek out and use free PDF editors and Optical Character Recognition programs. For the website we use DokuWiki; an open source wiki software that is surrounded by a vibrant community, covering most of our needs, while for our communication we use services provided by Riseup. The availability of free, open source alternatives is enormous and we take every opportunity to utilize them in our archiving efforts.

In addition, we upload backups of PDF files on the Internet Archive, a non-profit digital library aiming to make access to knowledge universally available. We also use regularly the Wayback Machine, a tool available on the Internet Archive for the archiving of the World Wide Web, both for the location of lost material, but more importantly, for the archiving of online texts. Furthermore, we have also attempted to make the archive known to circles outside of Cyprus by posting informative entries on other alternative media websites, most notably Athens Indymedia. We have also encouraged Cypriot political groups to promote the archive, with a number of them maintain links to our website on their own websites.

Our experience with alternative digitalities paints an interesting picture of a decentralized network of digital communities, non-profit services, open source software providers and alternative media collectives. Nonetheless, there are serious limitations to the establishment of a viable alternative to mainstream digitalities that can truly fundamentally challenge the existing dynamics. The first is technical. Despite these alternative options, maintaining a website strictly through the utilization of open source software still necessitates some fundamental knowledge of coding, barring access to collectives and individuals who have not acquired this knowledge. Alternatives of course do exist for simple websites, such as blogs, with espiv.net being a notable example, but for more complex endeavors; knowledge of coding remains essential.

Perhaps an even more important limitation is the lack of real alternatives for accessing alternative information from non-mainstream internet routes, as commercial websites continue to act as the connecting link between an individual internet user and the World Wide Web. While alternatives to commercial search engines, such as DuckDuckGo, do exist, their usage remains insignificant in comparison to the overreaching dominance of Google, Bing and Yahoo. Furthermore, the expansion of commercial social media platforms

during the last 10 years has further altered how individuals gain access to information through the internet, with social media users using commercial platforms alongside search engines for accessing information online. Profit-maximizing social media algorithms and active manipulation by commercial third parties in order to influence search engine results continue to place us at a disadvantage, as access to information is constantly manipulated. As long as commercial social media platforms and search engines continue to control access to information, alternative digitalities may well be destined to remain on the periphery, offering free access to information and an array of useful tools, but not a viable alternative for the average internet user.

Q. The island's ongoing division line has always been a chief preoccupation of radical social and political forces in Cyprus, on both sides of the barbed wire. How do you assess the archive in terms of bi-communality that is the interest and magnitude of collaboration between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots to facilitate the sourcing and translations of material? And also its potentials and challenges as concerns bi-communal radical struggles?

It should be pointed out that we are not a bi-communal group and that we do not follow a bi-communal organizational structure. This of course does not restrict the participation of Turkish-speaking Cypriots; and many Turkish-speaking friends have helped us throughout the years. We simply point out that since our aim is to make past and contemporary texts as accessible as possible; our task extends beyond strict bi-communality, as we attempt to make texts also accessible to people whose first language is not a variation of Greek or Turkish. In addition, our understanding of accessibility further extends beyond merely linguistic criteria. The incorporation of transcribed text as an integral part of the website's design was originally included to further assist individuals with visual impairment, as the transcribed text can be made accessible through the utilization of text-to-speech software. An unintended but welcome side-effect of our focus on accessibility is that the transcribed text can also be automatically translated using online machine translation tools.

The archive's website is structured in a way that allows its presentation in multiple linguistic versions. At present we maintain a Greek, an English and a Turkish version of the site. The Greek version remains the most developed, while the English version is functional but underdeveloped in comparison to the Greek. The Turkish version is sadly very underdeveloped, with a developed Turkish version remaining at present merely a hypothetical possibility, as we do not currently have a Turkish-speaker as part of the core group managing the archive. We have however finally managed to include a limited number of entries on the Turkish version of the site, assisted by a fellow Turkish-speaking friend who translated our entry templates, enabling us to slowly catalogue some of our collected material. These problems are not new, as they have been ever-

present in bi-communal organizations and the reunification movement, which typically use English as the preferred mode of communication.

As most of the collected material is in Greek, our capacity to translate texts directly into Turkish is restricted, since very few people on the island are fluent in both languages. We could of course reach out to people with the aim of producing indirect translations, by utilizing English translations of Greek texts, but such an approach maintains the very real danger of misrepresenting the content of the original text. Under these circumstances and given the general English proficiency in the island and in the bi-communal reunification movement in particular, we emphasize at present careful translations from Greek to English, facilitating in this way some access of the collected material to Turkish speakers, as well as to other individuals and groups that cannot read Greek, while attempting, in parallel, to organize material written in Turkish, on the Turkish version of the site. Despite these significant shortcomings, we do maintain the necessary infrastructure for the formation of a developed Turkish version of the archive's website, with the expectation that at some point we will be able to significantly enrich the archive with Turkish translations and with additional material originally written in Turkish.

Given the above, the archive's success at disseminating information across the divide has been only partially successful. However, it is worth noting that a number of key historical texts from the south have been made available to Turkish Cypriot political activists through English translations; as we are aware that numerous Turkish Cypriot activists do follow the archive's updates on social media. Additionally, the location of largely forgotten translated texts of Turkish Cypriot groups has also allowed us to make Turkish Cypriot radical politics more visible to a Greek-speaking audience. Recently, the archive has also helped in making available information across the divide, by archiving and organizing the various press releases, online articles and videos produced by the coordinating committee of the 'Os Dame' (literally 'That's Enough!') mass protests that were held in southern Nicosia in February of 2021. After organizing the material on the Greek and English versions of the site, we posted an update on both our blog and our Facebook page. This was consciously done in order to preserve and concentrate the various material scattered on social media, in parallel making them accessible to individuals living in the north who would otherwise not have had easy access to accurate information on grass-roots developments in the south of the island.

Q. The Cypriot context itself, it seems, imposes certain constraints, which the archive has strived to overcome. How about the broader global context? Based on this organisational effort and its particularities, can you point to any challenges confronting voluntary work for radical purposes that can be generalised in today's international settings - the terrain of misinformation,

precarity, authoritarianism and the massively unequal distribution of economic, political and social resources?

While Cyprus, like other places around the globe, has experienced a shift towards a more authoritarian management of society by the state since the beginning of the covid-19 pandemic, the archive has not been affected so far, nor are we expecting it to be affected in the near future. Our main challenge thus remains one of resources. Given the increasingly precarious reality of the contemporary labor market, with reduced wages, flexible working hours and legally questionable employment practices, our spare time and mental capacity are increasingly reduced as we transition from being university students to wage laborers. This situation is further reflected in our limited capacity at financing qualitative improvements to the digitization effort, as we cannot collect the necessary funds ourselves and financial support from the archive's broader network has proven limited.

A recent example is perhaps indicative. In 2020 we initiated an online donation campaign in order to purchase an A3 scanner, which would enable us to reduce the time needed for the scanning of magazines, as well as allowing us to scan larger magazines which cannot be properly digitized using our current A4 scanners. Sadly, the campaign proved a failure, as it did not generate any financial support, leaving us with the limited resources we have today. As most of grass-roots political activity in Cyprus is self-managed and self-financed, either from open donations or from the resources of individuals active in the various active initiatives, prioritization tends to be given to covering the costs of the most immediate tasks at hand, such as the printing of leaflets, the publication of magazines and the payment of rent for the maintenance of social spaces.

Our limited resources are not however merely financial. We have also observed that voluntary contributions to the archive (particularly scanning and transcription) are faced with inconsistencies, as some individuals often indicate that they will carry out a specific task but never actually do so. We are concerned at times that the broader extra-parliamentary circles of the island do not view the archive as a collective project, but rather merely as a kind of contribution by a handful of individuals. While the archive has benefited enormously from the support of volunteers, the lack of consistent support and reliability limits our capacity to open up specific projects within the archive, such as an organized and systematic focus on archiving, transcribing and translating materials with a key theme, of a specified period or of a specific ideology.

Q. This is an interview intended for an international audience and with the broader ethos of internationalism, which also pervades the archive, as you have explained. Part of my duty in this sense is to ask for your signal of solidarity with people putting effort and time into the dissemination of alternative information and information

systems. Or more generally, with activists advocating and prefiguring alternative futures through an egalitarian and democratic lens. Do you have a concluding message, whether caution, hope, motivation or otherwise, for those engaged or aspiring to similar endeavours as the Cyprus Movements Archive?

We would like to express our solidarity to comrades across the globe; and hope that they will keep up the good work for the dissemination of alternative ideas during these challenging times. Despite our structural disadvantage in relation to state institutions, mainstream media organizations and dominant political parties, we believe that it is important to remain optimistic and not be discouraged from continuing to challenge the existing paradigm, whether this is done through online campaigning, direct action or the dissemination of alternative information.

As an archiving team, we would like to encourage people to make their material easily accessible for archiving by organizing them in a logical fashion and transcribing them. We also suggest setting up new archives, regardless of how small or insignificant they might appear at first, in order to secure contextual knowledge on current and past struggles; for future generations. From our experience, radical history tends to be eradicated from the historical record. The creation and expansion of the Cyprus Movements Archive thus did not simply enable us to catalogue and organize past texts, but also to provide us, as well as the Cypriot radical circles we are active in, with a clearer and deeper understanding of our radical traditions, forms of struggle and theoretical insights that would otherwise have been lost, forcing us to begin again and again from the same starting point. Despite the mere academic interest of our collected material, their content informs first and foremost the movements and political circles that have historically been produced and shaped by them, allowing for historical reflection within our contemporary historical praxis.

About the interviewer

Giorgos Charalambous is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Nicosia, co-convener of the Left Radicalism specialist group (LRsg) at the Political Studies Association, and locally active in the Cypriot peace and anti-authoritarian movements. His academic work focuses on comparative European politics and political sociology. Contact: Charalambous.gi AT unic.ac.cy