

## *Who are we?*

### **Self-Organized musical group StuΔio**

#### **Introduction**

StuΔio is a self-organized musical group that has now settled in a basement located at Alexandras' Avenue. In this space, the bands of the group rehearse and host self-organized events, such as concerts, jams, screenings, discussions, bars, and workshops. Everything is decided through a weekly assembly. This text attempts to document the history of the group, as well as the positions, values and practices that it adheres to.

#### **How did we start?**

During the Spring of 2020, we found ourselves in an already appropriated space, in the basement of the Old Student Dormitories NTUA (ΦΕΕΜΠ), with the purpose of playing music. We decided to organize in terms of horizontal, nonhierarchical assemblies to discuss and solve various practical matters that arose. Initially these assemblies were purely administrative in nature, but it was not long before it became apparent that there was a need to address our common desire for free expression in collective and political terms. We wanted to create a sense of meaningful cohabitation and not simply share a space as, for instance, subtenants would. Our goal was to be able to express ourselves and create freely, at our own pace, without having external definitions of efficiency and productivity imposed on us. We wanted to shape and assimilate this space according to our needs, staining it, with each one of us leaving their own individual mark, creating a network of unmediated relations with all the people that this effort should encompass.

## Why choose the dormitories?

Many of us were already living in the dorms and actively participating in the political and social discourse surrounding the life of their component buildings, i.e. the Student Residence of the University of Athens [ΦΕΠΑ], the New Student Residences [NEEMIT] and the Old Student Dormitories NTU [ΦΕΕΜΠ] . It was not only familiarity with these spaces that led us to settle there but rather a conscious choice as well. It was important for us to revitalize these spaces which have been systematically fought against, drained, and degraded by the state and the university for years. In order to re-appropriate and rekindle these spaces we decided to take action by organizing open music jams, impromptu cafes (opportunities to discuss and listen to music), and live performances. We consider the dormitories to be like a neighborhood, and like all neighborhoods they too have public places of congregation, where people can come together to mobilize and exchange and clash their opinions. The state's attempts to dominate this space are old as time, but during the period of the Covid-19 quarantines, repression and the feeling of isolation were heightened even more. But at the same time, students have always resisted these tendencies in various forms, and this gave an even greater sense for a group like StuΔio to take shape and begin to act.

ΦΕΕΜΠ, being the oldest of the dormitories, has suffered a multitude of issues, since it was subdued to years of consistent degradation. During the covid years, admittance of new students and maintenance of the dorm's grounds had come to a complete stop. Besides infrastructure negligence, there was an increasing sense of insecurity for the people living there, owing in large part to police raids that took place, as well as the presence and activities of the mafia\*. The state's plans to renovate, and therefore also evacuate all people living there, were publicly known as early as March 2021, without, however, any contingencies in place for where students should be relocated in the meantime. This extreme sense of insecurity reached its peak when the cops decided to raid the building on the morning of September 27, 2022, breaking down doors and wrecking rooms, even

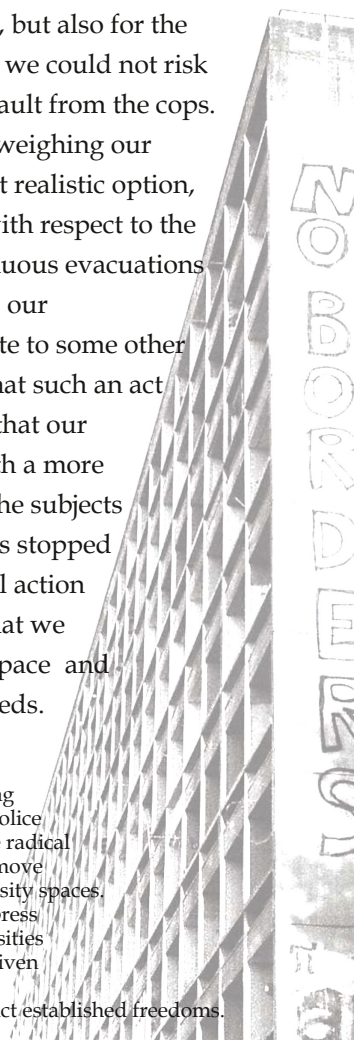
\* <https://stu2io.espivblogs.net/files/2024/12/polisporo.pdf> (text is in greek)

going as far as firing their weapons in the pretext of chasing down the mafia. This caused the dorms to become even more deserted, since a large portion of the people still living there were forced to hastily abandon their home. This took place during a period when police were allowed to be stationed for the first time inside university campuses, with their presence legitimized in the eyes of the public\*.

## Leaving ΦΕΕΜΠ

This event immediately prompted a whole set of discussions around the implications this would have for the people living there, but also for the viability of our stay as a group as well. We decided that we could not risk the possibility of an imminent eviction or some new assault from the cops. And so, we started looking for a new place to go. After weighing our options, we concluded that renting a space was the most realistic option, given the dynamics of the group at that time, but also with respect to the broader political situation (increasing repression, continuous evacuations of squats, cop presence inside universities etc). As far as our self-reflection goes, it must be said that we didn't relocate to some other of the university spaces available because we thought that such an act might carry the risk of instrumentalization. We believe that our existence in such a space should come hand in hand with a more comprehensive political presence and interaction with the subjects that live and operate there. At the same time, many of us stopped having any relation to the university and so our political action inside this space was no longer possible to the degree that we would like. After searching for some time, we found a space and we started to reconstruct it so that it could house our needs.

\* The New Democracy government in Greece did not stop at abolishing university asylum with Act 4623/2019 but also established a special police force for universities. This move reflects its intention to break with the radical legacy of the "metapolitefsi" era. The government's stated aim is to remove movements, assemblies, events, posters, and publications from university spaces. It seeks to enforce discipline in higher education institutions and suppress the student movement, which opposes the full privatization of universities and their transformation into centers producing compliant, market-driven scientists and workers. This approach is part of a broader pattern of legislative measures in recent years that promote repression and restrict established freedoms.



## **Self-organization, Anti-hierarchy, Horizontal Structures**

Our group is characterized by the tenets of political DIY\*. Like we mentioned before, we created this group so that we could express ourselves in our own terms, in a collective and self-organized way. The dominant structures in an authoritarian and primarily repressive world are organized in a way that promotes specialization and competition, with the ultimate goal of maximizing profit. We stand in direct opposition to this, by choosing to promote solidarity, self-organization and collectivization. The mere existence of self-organizing structures, that are based on anti-hierarchical and horizontal modes of conduct, creates a field where we can build meaningful relationships of trust based on selflessness and camaraderie.

Through our collective assembly we create a place of political ferment where all members can participate and make decisions on equal terms. Everything is decided through this assembly, after everyone has taken their stand in a rotation, with disagreements being resolved through a process of co-formation of opposing notions instead of a simple majority vote. This process is the closest thing we have found to an equitable and horizontal way of doing things.

Our group stands against any form of authoritarian behavior. This means that we will not tolerate any racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, or any other violating and intrusive behaviors in general, neither in our own internal processes nor in our interactions with other individuals or groups. It is important for us that all individuals who support and take part in our group and events feel safe.



## **How did we do it?**

In terms of our internal structure, we try to alternate roles in rotation so that any knowledge and experience acquired may be distributed evenly. This helps avoid any hierarchies that tend to arise but also ensures that specific people don't get burdened with the same tasks over and over. Since we're a musical group with an outward focus, we want our events to reflect that same anti-hierarchical spirit. For us, it wouldn't make any sense to claim to operate in a horizontal and anti-hierarchical manner all the while waiting for concerts to be organized by themselves. We consider DIY to be a community in which we are all active participators. We strongly believe that there should be no distinction between those who play music, handle sound, run the bar, patrol the vicinity or simply come to support the concert. Upon inspecting the logic of delegation, we have formulated concerns that it can be problematic and antithetical to our causes and are in the process of finding tools to abolish the hierarchical relations that this tendency creates.

## **Experts and Specialists**

Expertise, as per definition, is the quality of unquestionable credibility held by individuals who have more knowledge than others in a specific field. Deep knowledge of a certain subject renders a person an expert when relations of hierarchy are created. This is a two-way process in which hierarchies create an accumulation of knowledge and power, on the one hand, and an atmosphere of complacency and delegation, on the other. We consider the distribution and articulation of knowledge, as well as the creation of relationships based on trust between both sides, to be essential.

It is our contention that knowledge has no value on its own, but instead attains its value based on given goals. Our goal is to reach a point where we will have collectively accumulated knowledge about everything we do and have built a network of relationships based on trust and solidarity in the process.

In this way we will have accomplished to cooperate with each other exchanging knowledge, experience, opinions, technical know-how, etc against the individualization that is being imposed upon us from above.

## **Anti-commercialism - Against the music industry**

The dominant culture is characterized by relations of power and repression, and we see this reflected in all parts of life. In the realm of expression and musical creation that we engage with as a group, we are confronted with what we call the 'music industry'. In this industry, anything expressed or reproduced will be converted into a commodity with the goal of profit. This creates a complex of economic and authoritarian relations which are apparent in any commercial music venue, in studios and practice spaces, in the record deals of music labels, and ultimately in everything that revolves around music in general. Meaningful relationships are reduced to economic transactions and class barriers are raised that can even lead to the exclusion of individuals. Therefore, we stand against entry fees, face-control at the door, exploitation, and the for-profit mentality that employers express at the expense of the workers.

It is not our intention to create a space that will compete with these commercial venues, for the very simple reason that we do not want our space to abide by such rules. We have no place for working or client-based relationships, tickets, branded bands, sponsors, nor promoters.

## Free Contribution

Our differences are structural because we have simply chosen a different starting point. Our goal isn't to turn a profit but to showcase how it is possible for a structure to arise without mediators and experts, but through self-organizing instead. This is a stark contrast to the bosses who view our need for expression merely in terms of tickets sold and turnover made at the end of the night.

This is why we specify no entrance fee but instead propose a free contribution so that each person can support our events in any way they can. For us the model of free contributions is a conscious political choice which transcends the economic viability of our undertaking. It is a way to not only do without a commercial transaction, but to also spread a broader anti-commercial way of thinking.

The money that we make from each event contributes towards the support of each particular cause that we have decided to promote beforehand. These causes can be fundraisers for medical or legal fees or for the maintenance and upkeep of our own space (i.e. through buying or repairing existing equipment, etc.).

## Collectively and the Why – Setting up an event

The terms and the people with which we can organize an event is a concern that our group shares also with the broader political DIY community. For us it is not enough to align merely on theory alone with the people involved, it is our goal to also be able to accomplish in practice, and in a collective way, our principles and tenets in the here-and-now. Therefore, we do not want to co-organize events with a band or individuals that subscribe to the notions of what we have described earlier as the music industry. Nor do we care for those who build a reputation through DIY or politically adjacent spaces, and try to cash-out on the social and artistic capital they have thus accrued by signing record deals with labels or participating in commercial venues. We consider such a stance to be completely opportunistic toward self-organization and similar political endeavors.

At the same time, we are open to individuals or bands that may not strictly adhere to the same principles as us (they might, for example, never have been given the chance to try, as is the case in places where self-organized spaces do not exist) but are nonetheless sincerely interested in becoming an active part of the DIY scene. Furthermore, we would like to address all those who have experienced firsthand the rot of commercial venues and have arrived at similar concerns. Finally, we want and seek to collaborate with bands from abroad. Even though we often speak in different terms, we consider it possible to agree on the political minimums we have set as a group. We want to share responsibilities and abolish/ dissolve the division between those playing (bands) and the organizing side (team).

In our view, a self-organized event doesn't need big names, nor a huge stage with extravagant equipment nor hordes of people waiting in line at the bar. We don't see it as our goal to make our concerts imitate grand, flashy spectacles. This disruption of the spectacle-process and the rejection of a fixed entry fee are political matters and should be treated as such. It is in this sense that a self-organized concert should not only be considered a cultural event but also a political one as well.

For this reason, when we organize events, we propose to set them up together with the people we collaborate with. It is not at all in line with the values that we wish to propagate for a band to arrive just before their set or if they simply stare at us the whole time as we set up the equipment for the show. Therefore, because we don't want self-organized initiatives to be treated as ready-made structures where someone can participate without contributing anything, we strive to distance ourselves from such logic and promote collectivization instead.





## Public Spaces

Public spaces are not only places where we meet, play and socialize, but also where we become radicalized and learn to collectivize our needs. They represent a field of continuous struggle to retain their character — namely, free and open access, and a shared responsibility for their future — against tendencies of privatization. This is also why they are fought over and contested by both the state and capitalists.

Public space does not shrink and become privatized at random, but rather through a concerted effort of urban planning that readjusts trade movements, imposing stricter control and repression. Beatings and the relocation of people with substance use disorders from visible areas to more “hidden” spots, threats of legal action against events held at parks, squares, and universities without state authorization, the ever-increasing allocation of physical space to shop owners, the cultural redevelopments for alternative entertainment and tourism-driven commercialization. As tough as things have become, we want to exist in these spaces without having to ask for permission, because in doing so, we defy the ownership relations imposed on them.

Since our focus is not on profit and self-interest, but on giving and sharing in solidarity, the defense of public space is important to us, and it is in this direction that we want to move in. We don’t simply want to exist in the public space as transient passersby, but we wish to be consistently present with our concerts, our open mics, our initiatives, alongside the neighborhood and its people.

## Epilogue

The above serves to document some of the thoughts that have troubled us throughout the existence of our group. It is an attempt to establish a theoretical framework around the way we operate and to explain why we have made certain decisions. These positions may not cover everything that concerns us about self-organized expression, and some issues may remain unanswered.

We don't consider this text to contain universal truths, it is simply another piece in the larger context surrounding the discourse of self-organization, a conversation that began many years ago but still exists strongly, continuously striving to confront the present state of affairs of each period.

*\* DIY is not just a catchphrase or a descriptor for the type of music we make. It is, in fact, the very set of values and relationships that evolve over the course of this whole process.*

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