

THE WICKED NOTES

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The Crisis Within the Crisis: Innovating in a Wicked World

EXPEDITION GREECE

8 NOVEMBER, OPEN CO-OP, AMSTERDAM

It's 6pm and the Open Coop in Amsterdam is rapidly filling up with expedition members of the Hivos-Kennisland 'Wicked Series'. Destination: Greece, the economic crisis. A subject we read about in the newspapers every day. But how are ordinary Greek citizens coping with the situation on an everyday basis? What are they doing to reshape their society and carve out new future trajectories? What can we learn from their experiences about the nature of 'wicked problems' and how to tackle them?

WHO ARE ON BOARD?

There are 45 of us, eager to find out. We are a diverse group: hackers, designers, development workers, researchers, journalists, artists and architects and more. We mingle our way into the room, decorated with expedition paraphernalia. There is Greek food and two Greek guests, Maro Pantazidou (IDS Sussex) and Maria Bakari (SIZ, Greece), accompany us for the evening. Maro and Maria are our tour guides to lead us into our expedition to Greece.

INTRODUCTIONS TO A WICKED WORLD

It's a wicked world indeed, says Chris Sigaloff in her opening words. A world where the complexity of major societal challenges renders



Food, People, Place
and Problem made
for an interesting
start of the Series

Photographer: Marieke Wijntjes



hierarchical models inadequate and linear approaches to change and innovation out of date. We need to move beyond 'old' dilemmas of bottom-up and top-down and states versus markets. New guiding principles and methods are needed and that is what this series is all about. It is a quest that touches the core of Kennisland' mission for social innovation, and Hivos' fascination and experience on supporting citizens to tackle tough challenges in the global south. Structural rescue programs in Greece must ring a bell to all of those who remember the 'lost decade of development' in Africa and Latin America less than thirty years ago. But this is not some abstract comparison or just another case to chew on. This is a real-life situation in the here and now and Maro and Maria will share some of the challenges, pains and dilemmas that come with it.

WELCOME TO GREECE

Maro Pantazidou – who was protesting on the streets of Athens the night before- starts with the dry facts: continuous cuts in wages, pensions and public services, democratic processes undermined by deadlines and prospects of empty coffers. And yet, citizens respond with new forms of solidarity, unruly protests and small-scale alternatives of direct democratic practices. Maria Bakari, from the Systemic Innovation Zone, shares her account of Greece as a potential cradle for democratic renewal through new

collaborative leadership and democratic practices. Although the crisis in Greece seems to be a breeding ground for innovative and creative approaches, the current complex dilemma remains. These initiatives are small-scale and slow-paced while there is a strong demand for quick answers and big solutions.

STRATEGIES AND PRINCIPLES

Based on the insights we derive from our Greek colleagues, which strategies and underlying working principles can we imagine that counteract a systemic crisis? And what type of instruments would help to propel these strategies? Five expedition teams set out to explore and visualize. A vibrant, messy process follows. Some groups focus on concrete action while others take time to analyze and to investigate the problem behind the problem. All expedition members delve into whatever they have got on offer: skills, experiences but also their personal life stories. What would you do if you were a Greek citizen longing for change? 'In a way we are all Greeks', says one person, referring to the deteriorating labor market, failure of institutions and lack of grand narratives in our own current politics. 'Do we really understand the real reasons of this crisis?', wonders another group. Ideas emerge, dominant concepts are being questioned and concrete initiatives make their way onto the paper. From concrete

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concrete initiatives make their way onto the paper. From concrete ICT-based solutions like a social market place for fixing broken stuff and rebuilding social fabric, to reimagining tribalism and value systems. The outcomes are too scattered, but in a sense also too rich to fully harvest immediately.

THE CATCH

After one hour time is up and there is a state of energetic confusion around the room. The expedition has brought treasures, some more tangible than others, and when we step off the boat we probably do so with new questions, new connections and more confusion, but hopefully at a higher level. For those who have

led and facilitated the process this is also a wicked expedition, in terms of the objectives, methodology, and logistics.

NEXT STOP: WICKED TRANSPARENCY

The Greek crisis offered an opportunity to delve into a wicked problem. In wicked transparency we will take a look at how economic and social change may be catalyzed by developing tools for democratizing information, increasing transparency and lowering the barriers for individuals to share their stories. The outcomes of the first wicked series will be looped back into the evening in December. To be continued!

