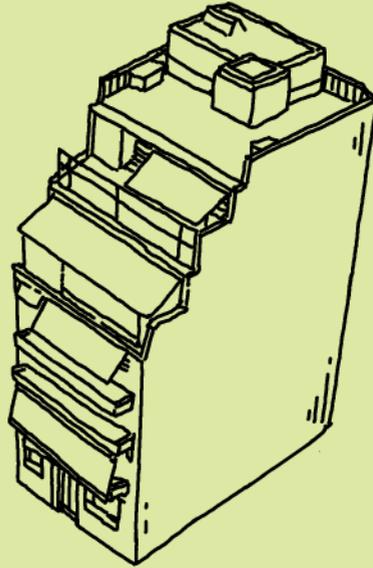


Mirmigi

A solidarity network for everyone in Kypseli
from 2012



60, Eptanisou Str.
11361 Athens
Greece

🌐 tomirmigi.blogspot.com

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Founded in the autumn of 2012, Mirmigi is a volunteer-run solidarity center in the Kypseli neighborhood for people in need, providing them with social support by collecting food and clothing. It is the result of an initiative by neighborhood residents who created a network of help and solidarity available to everyone, without discrimination or exclusion, with the goal of fighting poverty and neglect in their area as well as the increase in racism.

Mirmigi also organizes political events and protests, free shops, open meetings and discussions, and cultural events and projects.

Credits: Google Maps



WHERE

Mirmigi is located in the neighborhood of Kypseli, in the 6th district of Athens, which experienced significant transformations during the 1980s when many of its middle and upper class residents began to move to the suburbs. This led to a perceived “decline” of the area, and when in the 1990s many migrants moved to the empty apartments, xenophobia and racism rose. Since 2008, many of the migrants living in the area have moved out, because the economic crisis struck their professional sectors, like the construction industry, before the others. Although many migrants had to leave the area, Kypseli gradually attracted younger Greeks because of its low rents, its proximity to the center of Athens and its multiculturalism. Forms of resilience in this area tend to be mostly related to the rise of bottom-up social movements and solidarity structures that emerged in social movements in the period from 2008 to 2013 and in opposition to the rise of racism and xenophobia among the remaining Greek residents from the 1990s. Since the late 2010s, Kypseli has been under the threat of gentrification and touristification. Rising rents affect many locals already struggling with economic hardship.

LOCATION

Urban

TYPE OF SPACE

Building

ORIGINAL FUNCTION

Educational

YEAR OF CONSTRUCTION

1950s-60s

SURFACE AREA

100 sqm

OWNERSHIP

Private

CONCESSION

Regular rent

CONDITION BEFORE ACTIVATION

Vacant

COMPOSITION OF THE SPACE

Two rooms

One basement

WHEN

TIME OF DAY USED

Morning 7am - 1pm 10%

Afternoon ... 1pm - 7pm 80%

Evening 7pm - 1am 10%

Night 1am - 7am 0%

Workdays 80%

Weekends 20%

OPENING HOURS

Wednesday: 8pm - 10pm

Thursday: 6pm - 8pm

Saturday: 2pm - 4pm

Sunday: 6pm - 8pm

AVERAGE USERS PER DAY

Around 50

WHAT

The idea of Mirmigi stems from the Agora Kypselis squat in response to the spread of economic crisis, as well as the rise of racism, with the idea of creating a solidarity network for migrants and Greek citizens in the Kypseli neighborhood.

Mirmigi's main activity is collecting food supplies that are donated by the customers of local supermarkets; donations from other individuals and groups are also welcome. All members take turns participating in the weekly food collection. Approximately 30 to 70 families visit “Mirmigi” twice a month to receive one bag of supplies. Mirmigi also offers 100 meals twice a week in collaboration with solidarity cooking groups. Clothes and books are donated too, and classes in Greek language, math-

ematics and other subjects are offered. Mirmigi hosts movie screenings, cultural events and other social activities.

SURFACE IN USE

100 sqm

THEMATIC AREAS

Activism and politics
Culture and arts
Education and training
Welfare

USER DEMOGRAPHIC

Families
Local community
Senior citizens
Under-represented people: asylum seekers and refugees, migrants, poor people

COLLABORATIONS

Citizens
Other: solidarity centers

NETWORK

Local

WHO

Myrmigi is a self-organized social structure whose operation is based on equality and openness, an inclusive space where racist and discriminatory behaviors are not tolerated.

MANAGING ORGANIZATION(S)

1. Mirmigi (Informal group, 2012)

PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE MANAGEMENT

26 core members
12 volunteers

HOW

There are weekly assemblies, which are open to anyone, even new members and beneficiaries, regardless of gender, nationality, religion, sexual preference, during which the people directly involved in the project make the decisions.

NATURE OF THE INITIATIVE

Bottom-up

TYPE OF MANAGEMENT

Horizontal

ECONOMIC RESOURCES

Commercial activities
Donations
Membership fees
Other: donations from
Solidarity groups in Germany

TYPE OF ACTIVITIES

100% Free



How did your story begin?

We started as a part of a large anti-austerity movement. Specifically, everything started in 2012/2013, when the “No Middlemen Movement” emerged as a response to the economic crisis in Greece, promoting a fair and sustainable economy for the benefit of producers and consumers. The goal was to do something to effectively help people who were starting to face poverty. Many people had also participated in the squatting of the abandoned municipal market Agora Kypselis. From there we started being very active in the community and promoting solidarity as a practice and also as a political proposal.

“We started as a part of a large anti-austerity movement. The goal was to do something to effectively help people who were starting to live in the streets”

Is there a practice or value that represents you and you think may be an inspiration to others?

We mostly help people affected by hunger by collecting and distributing

food. This is how people see us, as a solidarity group, not as a political movement. We distribute food, clothing, and shoes, and we have a theater group open to the people living in the neighborhood. Before the pandemic we used to have a movie night every Thursday and a lot more indoor events and entertainment. We organized a rally in March 2021, during which 1.200 people manifested against police brutality during the lockdown. After the rally the situation got better.

What is the secret ingredient that makes your story unique?

We are not an NGO, a municipal service or a governmental agency. We do not receive financial support from the state or corporations: we are an independent organization. During the pandemic we had some economic issues, because we had to stop all the activities to fund the project. Our German friends from the solidarity network gave us great financial help. The neighborhood supported us too, because they understand the role we play and the importance of helping people in need.

Interview with: Gregorio Tsar



Did you know?

The no-middlemen movement

The “No Middlemen Movement”, born in the northern Greek city of Katerini, is a model inspired by ethical purchasing groups that involves entire cities, and consists of buying products in bulk directly from producers at affordable prices, allowing citizens to continue purchasing products despite the economic crisis and producers to continue their work and receive payments upon delivery.

A network of volunteers puts producers directly in contact with consumers.

By cutting out the wholesalers and other intermediaries, who often make significant profits in Greece, consumers get cheaper goods while producers profit more.

