

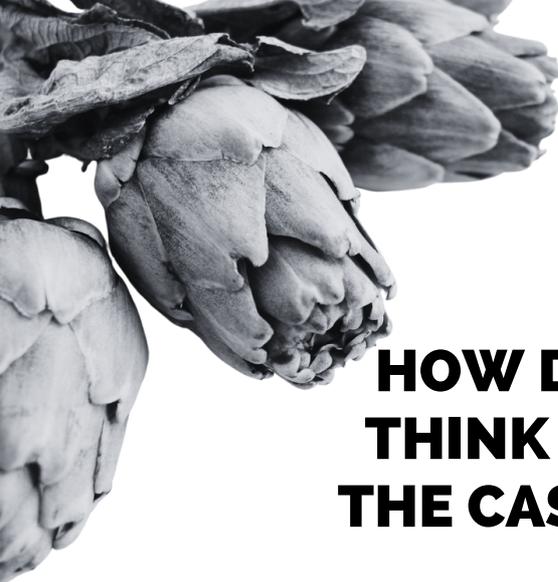


TEN YEARS OF EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE: IS THERE A FIGHTING CHANCE? – OP-ED

A few months ago, the European Commission invited organisations to apply to become ambassadors of the European Citizens' Initiative. As an organisation deeply engaged in deliberative democratic processes in the EU, Inter Alia decided to apply. Our first experiences as ECI Ambassadors confirm that the distance between EU institutions and civil society remains significant. Competent institutions seem to be disconnected from civic struggles and how they are organised, by whom and what kind of resources they require. The EC needs to listen to CSOs, researchers and academics who urge it to change the mindset of an institution that risks a premature and inglorious end.

[Read the Op-ed by Inter Alia's co-founder, Nikos Papakostas](#)





HOW DEGROWTH SHAPES THE WAY I THINK ABOUT ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES: THE CASE OF SUSTAINABLE CLOTHING – OP-ED

It might be difficult to think of clothing practices that are ecologically and socially responsible without being taken over by greenwashing marketing schemes and without disregarding underlying power structures and socio-ecological problems. In a seminar dedicated to critical fashion sustainability, Amerissa Giannouli spoke about issues of social and environmental justice and democracy in an attempt to challenge and transform the mainstream understanding of sustainable fashion. The seminar was organised in the context of the FABLE project and based on Amerissa's reflection and academic analysis originally published by "Research & Degrowth", the main academic association dedicated to research, training, awareness-raising and organisation of events around degrowth.

[Read the full article by Amerissa
Giannouli](#)





OUR PLAN FOR 2022

JANUARY

Welcome to 2022!

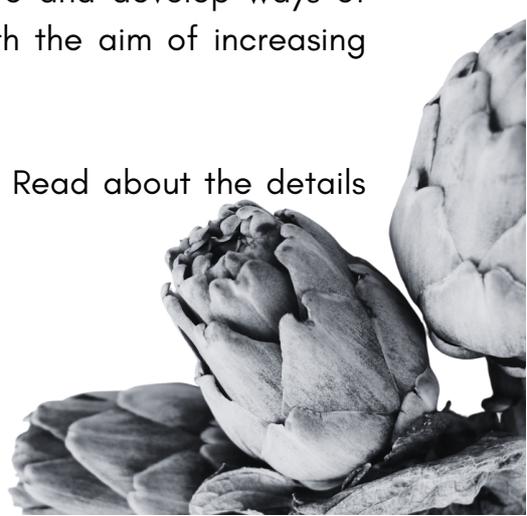
“The more a path is walked, the more a path is walked” is the critical view of Sara Ahmed, on the avalanche effect of certain social phenomena. Through our work this year, we commit to popularise the paths less walked, through the implementation of our 4 strategies and concrete actions planned:

- Education - Our principle of inclusivity was put to test in the past 2 years, establishing the online training as a practice. Naturally, people without access to the internet and computers were left behind, while those who would not be physically present due to their location, could join our activities. As simple as this statement is, it entails the contradictions that we are called to keep in mind and solve every time, when talking about inclusivity and when aspiring to act inclusively. The acknowledgement of internal contradiction is our first step on this path.
- Political Engagement - In our effort to contribute to ongoing change, we will continue our advocacy activities. Among these, we keep developing our community organising theory and practice and host a number of training activities in the framework of the “Advocacy for Youth Employment” project in the next 12 months.
- Youth - Our pilot YouthPool programme came to an end in December last year with a certain number of politicians and policymakers across the world having been approached and called to act. We remain vigilant to their actions and at the same time getting ready for the launch of the second YouthPool edition.
- Culture and Arts - We continue to make culture and arts more accessible for a wider range of users, be it creators, inspirers or audience. In the next three years in a team with 6 European Universities, we are going to explore and develop ways of building an inclusive European memory in the museums with the aim of increasing mental health.

This is only the very rough sketch of what is there to come. Read about the details below and get ready for an exciting period ahead.

Stay creative and above all safe!

The Inter Alia team





WILL IT BE THE PLANE OR THE SCREEN?

FEBRUARY

February of 2022 is the month marked by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. While “the scourge of war” falls on the citizens and people, involved parties seem to apply Realpolitik practices. Once again, the EU seems unable to provide a robust foreign policy in response to the crisis. Inter Alia stands firmly for peace and against war.

In the meantime, in Greece, although the political debate is dominated by the overwhelming rise in the prices of subsistence goods, there is a disturbing pattern of societal violence against the distinct and the vulnerable with an alarming increase in femicides, gender offences, and domestic violence. In the framework of Positively Different Short Film Festival 2022, Inter Alia explores “Symptoms of Masculinity” with artists, specialised lawyers and psychologists offering experiential and scientific insights on identifying and disturbing patriarchal structures.

On the account of shedding light on life paths of “others” PDSFF22 explores the frontiers of different communities and the commonalities of characteristics, oppressions and struggles that constitute them. From 11 to 13 March, this year's festival will feature 35 short films from 17 countries competing for three cash prizes. On Saturday 12 March, Alex Drakos Quartet will offer a jazz concert contributing to the journey of search for "communities".

Persistent in our commitment to boost community participation and action Youth Pool 2022 virtual meetings explore community challenges, share knowledge, and foster local interventions for youth rights and change.

Lastly, we offer a bunch of training opportunities in Lyon, Palermo, Châtillon-sur-Indre and Döbling, and online.

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MEASURING REFLEXES

MARCH

As the situation in Ukraine escalates, the EU eventually shows signs of life. The fast-track procedures for receiving and accommodating refugees is in line with international law and the EU's constitutional statutes. Citizens and leaders alike need to remember and embrace this instance as a fresh start and a precedent of the mindset needed to deal with crises. A mindset oriented towards protecting humans as an absolute priority. Inter Alia applauds the mobilisation of civil society at the European and local levels with peace as its main claim. We continue offering visibility to those in need of space, support and agency. PDSFF is our spearhead of this effort. For this reason, we have created an online platform to make the programme of 2022 available until the 3rd of April.

Greek media reality comes as a disturbing reminder of the hard work still needed in the country as much as in the biggest part of the EU for fostering awareness and skills for coping with a complex reality. A media frenzy about an indeed shocking criminal case, resulted in a cell-phone yielding mob threatening to lynch civilians. This incident surfaced scary reflexes and the stagnation of a part of the Greek society to darker times. Inter Alia continues its work on the micro-level trying to educate youngsters and citizens on the importance of thinking critically, embracing responsibility and fostering solidarity. A series of trainings in the fields of advocacy, precarious labour, housing and social inclusion come to contribute in that direction. Stay creative and, above all, safe!

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CONNECTED EVERYDAY STRUGGLES

APRIL

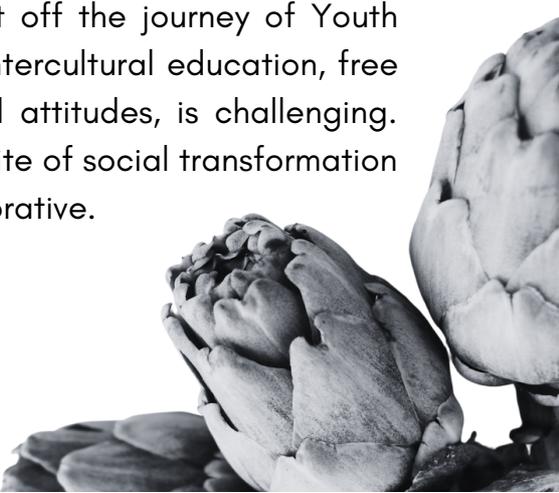
The Russian invasion in Ukraine offers EU leaders a comforting space and an identifiable “other” against whom they feel they can safely claim: “We, are much better”. Still, this war is no more than a ruler and an elite externalising the effect of their denial to share power. Are such practices unknown to the EU? The cases of violations of the Rule of Law by Hungary and Poland heavily criticised, but not sanctioned, by the EC suggest they are not. The unapologetic stance of Orban and Kaczyński offer a smokescreen behind which veiled authoritarianism thrives, and a chance for other EU leaders to claim: “We, are much better”. Identifying a downward spiral that threatens to legitimise inhumane and undemocratic practices inside the EU, Inter Alia co-signed a letter to Vera Jourova, EC vice-president and Commissioner for Values and Transparency, on the alarming state of the Rule of Law in Greece.

It is our aspiration to be the link between transnational patterns and phenomena and their manifestations in local struggles. We view precarious housing as a menace for the global North and a root cause of inequality and exclusion. Our cities are becoming increasingly hostile to citizens and urban planning policies more and more prone to gentrification and spatial stigmatisation. A team of academics, visual artists and journalists from the laboratory of Architecture of Rapid Change and Scarce Resources (ARCSR) of the London Metropolitan University strolled the streets of central Athens to learn and report on community-based responses to centralised, top-down urban planning policies. A 2-day workshop on “Housing and Well-Being” also explored potentials to contemporary housing practices, alternatives and visions for more sustainable and socially just housing schemes.

Against the backdrop of Europe and Eurocentrism, Inter Alia keeps building on alliances and actions that can broaden perspective and foster cosmopolitanism and sustainability. In Dakar and Zhiguinchor, Senegal, we set off the journey of Youth Going Live project and came to acknowledge that true intercultural education, free to some extent from colonial perceptions, dynamics and attitudes, is challenging. Constant reflection on our relative privileges is a prerequisite of social transformation and works better when it is multilevel, comradely and explorative.

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A SUMMER OF UNCERTAINTY

MAY

For Greece, May has been a grim month. The country is in a free fall in terms of rights and freedom of expression. Greece is currently in the 108th place in the RSF freedom of press list of 180 countries. The government remains silent on the case of the journalist Thanasis Koukakis' wiretapping. The murderers of LGBT rights activist Zak Kostopoulos were treated with leniency, perpetuating a negative legacy of gender-motivated crimes. In the University of Thessaloniki, on two occasions, police forces fiercely attacked students protesting against policing of campuses.

In everyday life, people are left unprotected against speculative energy providers on the premise of supposed Green policies and on the excuse of the Ukrainian war. Inter Alia builds grassroots knowledge on energy efficiency and sustainability and revisits traditional, sustainable practices. On top of these, Greece approved further deployment of US forces in military premises across the country. At the same time, it fuels antagonism with Turkey over border policies and continues migrant pushbacks in the Aegean.

In Europe, the Ukrainian war goes on while the EU cannot agree on its intended embargo on Russian oil. Meanwhile, EU's symbolic and actual power gives in to NATO with Finland and Sweden stating their intention to join the organisation. At the same time, EU Frontex border agency continues migrant pushbacks in the Aegean, making us to Rethink Migration in Europe. Inter Alia remains dedicated to intercultural dialogue, by boosting exchange and creation.

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ORGANISING AGAINST REGRESS

JUNE

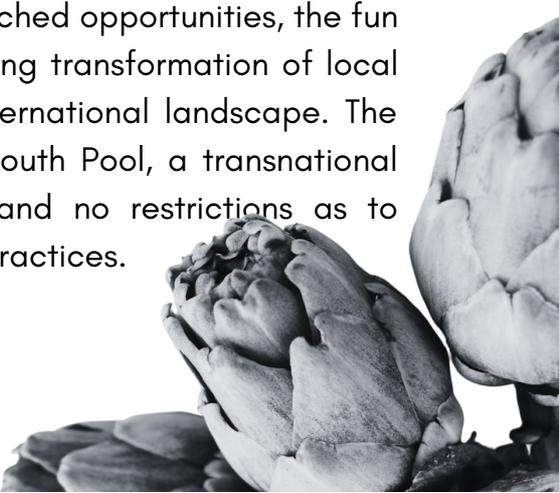
On June 24, the overruling of *Roe v Wade* (1973) landmark decision by a US Supreme Court shocked the world. Claiming that the right to abortion was not "deeply rooted in this Nation's history or tradition", the Court gave the community - through state governments and courts - the authority to decide on a person's choice over her own body. Overturning *Roe* vindicates neoconservative, reactionary forces and proves that social antagonisms go much deeper and far beyond a mere change of ruling party or president. Overruling *Roe* also highlights the power of lobbying and pressure groups to define the fate of political communities. Inter Alia's approach to policy making favours decentralisation and active participation. In June, we hosted a capacity building activity on advocacy and youth employment in Athens. We trained staff and volunteers at European civil society organisations, on ways they can connect individual and collective struggles highlighting that advocacy work depends on personal urgency and community organising.

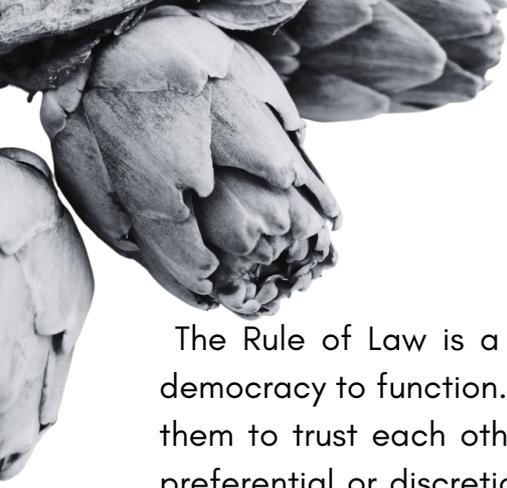
In Europe, at the Spanish border with Morocco, at the infamous Melilla crossing, 23 persons died while trying to enter Europe. Hundreds were injured. Injured also was the professed symbolism of Europe as an advocate of rights and the Rule of Law. It is worrisome and at the same time bitterly predictable, how a professedly progressive government congratulated the deadly intervention by security forces on both sides of the fence. This stance indicates that in Europe, the Rule of Law is not threatened only by the usual suspects - ultra-conservative governments of Hungary and Poland - but from a general downward spiral of dismissing and downgrading. The Rule of Law, as part of a larger debate on the European Political Terrain, was discussed in the context of Inter Alia Council of Members gathering. Along with it, the organisation made plans and decisions along with its community about future projects and processes.

June marks the 35th anniversary of the Erasmus programme of the European Union. Along with appreciation for the accomplishments, the snatched opportunities, the fun times and the memories, we need to be mindful of ongoing transformation of local needs and make adjustments in a radically changing international landscape. The European Academy on Youth Work spotted Inter Alia's Youth Pool, a transnational space for youth with emphasis on local communities and no restrictions as to participation, and invited us to share our experience and practices.

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The Inter Alia team





... AND JUSTICE FOR ALL

JULY

The Rule of Law is a common denominator and a prerequisite for representative democracy to function. Citizens' perception that they live in a lawful context enables them to trust each other and the political system. Lack of equality before the law, preferential or discretionary treatment by the judiciary, favouritism; all contribute to diminishing trust in institutions and foster social cleavages. Sadly, in one short month, all the above-mentioned phenomena coincided in Greece, confirming the country's downward spiral regarding the Rule of Law.

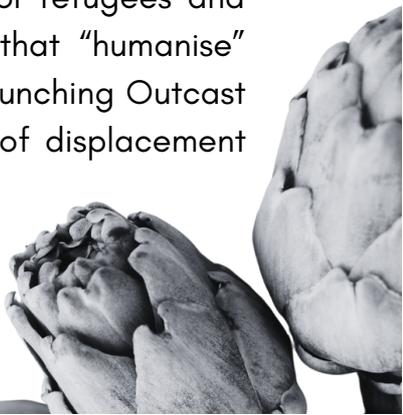
On April 27, on the initiative of Vouliwatch, Inter Alia and 10 other organisations and independent media co-signed a letter to the Commission and to the members of the LIBE Committee of the European Parliament on the state of the Rule of Law in Greece. The response by the EC was published on July 26 and it was generic as always (the EC's sterile responses to civil society claims is an issue that also needs to be called out). However, it raised some interesting insights on the treatment of civil society by state institutions, pushbacks in the Aegean Sea and insufficient measures to protect whistle-blowers. Following the submission of the letter, a number of judicial decisions came to reinforce our concerns and call for our attention, alertness and scrutiny.

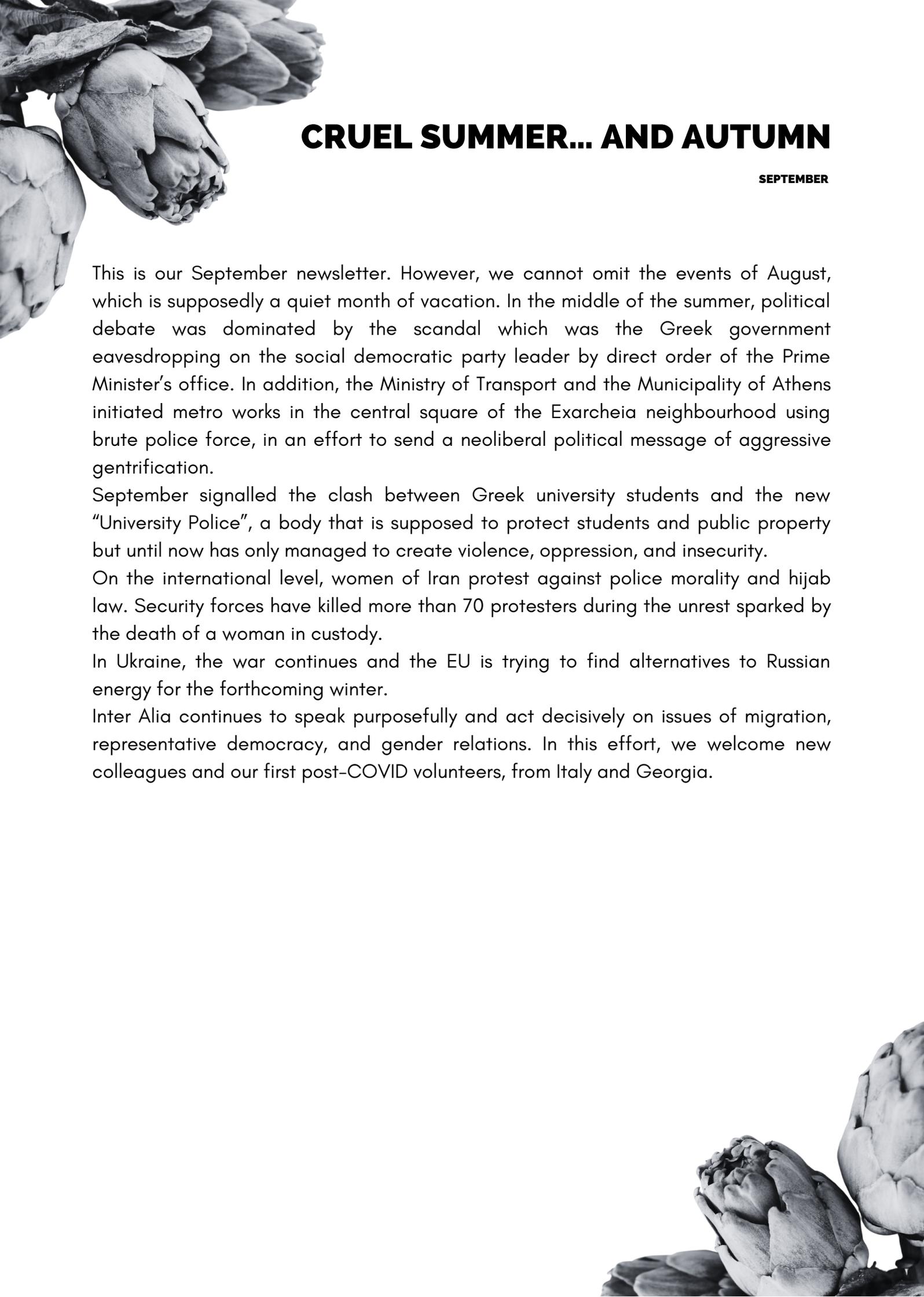
Giannis Michailidis is an anarchist and a convicted felon. He is serving a 20-year sentence for criminal acts including armed robbery and attempt to escape prison. Michailidis has served more than 8 of his 20-year sentence and is entitled to parole. He was on a hunger strike in Malandrinos prison for 67 days risking irreparable damages to his health. In spite of widespread reactions and dramatic claims by Michailidis' doctors and lawyers' unions, the court denied making any concessions to the prisoner's requests. Shortly after, Michailidis decided to quit the hunger strike. A few days earlier, Dimitris Lignadis, former art director of the Greek National Theatre, appointed in 2019, was freed on parole by a court in Athens until his appeal is judged, despite found guilty for the rape of two underage persons.

A landmark decision concerning another group often suffering abuse and oppression - refugees and asylum seekers - was also published in July. The European Court of Human Rights convicted Greek authorities for a shipwreck at Farmakonisi island that costed the life to 11 people and vindicated the applicants who claimed to have been pushed-back by the coast-guard. As the unfavourable conditions for refugees and migrants in Europe become entrenched, we deem that actions that "humanise" incoming populations before the wider public is crucial. We are relaunching Outcast Europe and opening our platform for crowd-sourcing new stories of displacement and movement, thematic exhibitions and educational material.

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The Inter Alia team





CRUEL SUMMER... AND AUTUMN

SEPTEMBER

This is our September newsletter. However, we cannot omit the events of August, which is supposedly a quiet month of vacation. In the middle of the summer, political debate was dominated by the scandal which was the Greek government eavesdropping on the social democratic party leader by direct order of the Prime Minister's office. In addition, the Ministry of Transport and the Municipality of Athens initiated metro works in the central square of the Exarcheia neighbourhood using brute police force, in an effort to send a neoliberal political message of aggressive gentrification.

September signalled the clash between Greek university students and the new "University Police", a body that is supposed to protect students and public property but until now has only managed to create violence, oppression, and insecurity.

On the international level, women of Iran protest against police morality and hijab law. Security forces have killed more than 70 protesters during the unrest sparked by the death of a woman in custody.

In Ukraine, the war continues and the EU is trying to find alternatives to Russian energy for the forthcoming winter.

Inter Alia continues to speak purposefully and act decisively on issues of migration, representative democracy, and gender relations. In this effort, we welcome new colleagues and our first post-COVID volunteers, from Italy and Georgia.



RECENTRING URGENTLY NEEDED

OCTOBER

October was as eventful as it was suggestive of what the winter will bring for people across Europe. National governments will individually manage the upcoming energy crisis. It appears that communities, as well as the EU, will have little say in making decisions on this topic. With fear and insecurity on one side, and introversion and shrinking democratic space on the other, electorates have either given up on politics or continue looking for solutions in the false promises and easy fixes of nationalism.

October was the month that an openly neo-fascist party came to power in Italy. Georgia Meloni, Italy's new PM, is the first female leader in the country's history; unfortunately, this is an irrelevant detail when all the features of the patriarchy co-exist in her political profile. Inter Alia claims that the attack on existing power structures must be smarter and more acute, inclusive and universal. The "Roots Winter School" that we have just announced tackles the notion of "periphery" in Europe. Our training activities this month explored different facets of privilege.

October was a devastating month for human rights in Europe, with migration once more at the forefront. The despicable statements by the head of EU diplomacy, Josep Borrell, that labelled the world outside of the EU as a jungle, proved that colonialism, Eurocentrism and ignorance can co-exist at the highest echelons of the EU. In the same period, shipwrecks near Greek and Italian shores cost tens of lives of people who were pushed into extreme situations by illegitimate and wicked institutions such as Frontex. After years of copious reporting by CSOs and independent media, the European Parliament discontinued Frontex's funding on the grounds that it assists pushbacks in the Aegean Sea. Inter Alia continued working on the levels of policy and public perceptions to recentre the debate on migration. We took part in the 7th Youth Migration Forum and launched a literary call to transcribe stories of Outcast Europe, ensuring that coexistence and mutual understanding are at the core of our interventions.





BALLS IN THE AIR

NOVEMBER

On 20 November 2022, the 22nd football world cup kicked off. The choice of Qatar as a host raised severe criticism for FIFA from the onset, adding another incident of suspected corruption and favouritism to the long dark record of the federation. A country where embedded conservatism coexists with an extreme concentration of wealth is hardly appropriate for the most well-known event in a popular sport, that symbolises the hope of a better life for millions of people around the world. However, what actually led to international outrage against the World Cup were miserable working conditions during the construction of the stadiums. Obscure subcontracting procedures, disregard for workers' rights and safety regulations, widespread irregular and uncontracted work of impoverished migrants, resulted in a death toll of over 6,500 workers.

The explosive combination of greed, favouritism, impunity and disregard for human life is at the core of the system that FIFA and the State of Qatar uphold. It breeds inequality and authoritarianism across borders and this is why we also support the boycott of the World Cup. At Inter Alia, we approach such complex socioeconomic phenomena both from the bottom, through initiatives that foster community spirit and empowerment and at the top, by monitoring and applying pressure on decision makers; November was a month for both. We organised educational activities at local schools in Athens and planned a swap bazaar to bring together our community. On the institutional side, we joined forces with other civil society actors to push the Greek government to legislate the Citizens' Legislative Initiative and launched a monthly bulletin titled "Our Eye on the EU" that monitors agencies and European Parliament committees in our areas of interest.

With the new year coming up, we will continue to raise questions that could lead to more progressive and sustainable answers to contemporary social and political questions and to organise our actions and reactions through our three streams of action:

Roots School for Critical & Explorative Learning

Heart Point of Civic Intervention

Bloom Space for Culture and Arts

Stay creative, stay safe,
the Inter Alia team





HOPES FOR A BETTER YEAR

DECEMBER

The last month of 2022 was intense in Greece and the world, closing the first year of post-pandemic life.

In Greece, on 6th December, citizens marched in crowded protests at the 14th commemoration of the murder of the 15-year-old student Alexandros Grigoropoulos by a Greek police officer. The commemoration coincided with another brutal murder of a Roma minor by a Greek police in the region of Thessaloniki on the pretence of petty theft. Meanwhile, the Greek government insists on curtailing civic freedoms in the middle of an inflationary and austerity crisis. Triggered by growing social injustices and authoritarianism across Europe, Inter Alia's "Roots Winter School" focused a critical gaze on contemporary social, economic and political affairs, placing the concept of periphery in a cross-disciplinary, intersectional context.

On the international level, the winner of the Qatar World Cup was Argentina. The event created controversy and backlash due to harmful working conditions before and during the event. However, a Qatar World Cup/EU Parliament scandal also exposed western hypocrisy and delusions of post-colonial superiority that have produced such high horse criticism. In the European Parliament, the heart of European Consociationalism, a Greek MEP and Vice President of the body as well as three more people, all attached to the European social democrats, were arrested and accused of money laundering. They were caught red-handed with huge amounts of Qatari cash in hand. In view of this fresh blow to public trust in EU institutions, our monthly bulletin "Our Eye on the EU", a new monitoring instrument providing key policy updates in connection to EU policies on Civil Rights, Education & Youth, Gender, Migration & Asylum, seems to have come at a good time.

The entire team at Inter Alia wishes you a Happy - and Better - New Year! ♥

