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From Charity to Welfare: Disability Movement, Institutional Change and Social Transformation in Post-Dictatorial Greece, 1974–81

Vasiliki Chalaza University of the Aegean Email: vassiliki.chalaza@gmail.com

Christos Tsakas Danish Institute at Athens and Center for European Studies Harvard University

Karolos Iosif Kavoulakos Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Abstract

This article studies the role of the blind movement in the legislative achievements regarding the disabled people, and in the formation of blind identities and broader perceptions of disability in post-dictatorial Greece. By highlighting the institutional impact of the 1976 occupation of the Home of the Blind, this paper shows how a grassroots movement contributed to democratization, and it challenges the dichotomy between institutional and societal accounts of democratic transitions, thus touching upon themes, such as citizenship and empowerment. In doing so, this article seeks to explain the paradigm shift from charity to welfare with respect to disability as part of the broader dynamics of social transformation in Greece in the 1970s and early 1980s.

Keywords:

Greek blind movement; blind identities; democratic transitions; social transformation; citizenship and empowerment

Introduction

In recent years, disability history has become a booming subfield within disability studies. Kudlick (2003) has argued for the use of disability as a unit of historical analysis that is fundamental to both cultural life and material living. More recently, Anne Borsay (2012) has shown how disability history has integrated economic, social and political causation with cultural construction. Disability, however, has not been systematically used as a primary category of analysis to interpret the complex interplay between the institutional and societal level in a historical perspective. This article, by taking a disability history approach and drawing upon the sociology of movements and concepts, such as the Political Opportunity Structure and Alan Badiou's *Event*, makes use of the insights of disability studies to explain the lived experiences of disability within their cultural and political context. To that end, the article discusses how institutions, as well as individual and collective identities, change in response to major social and political events.

By investigating the impact on disability legislation and identities in Greece of the post-dictatorial blind movement, and by tracing broader cultural changes related to this movement, this paper challenges

the dichotomy between institutional and societal accounts of democratic transitions, and touches upon themes such as citizenship and empowerment. ¹ In doing so, it seeks to explain the paradigm shift from charity to welfare ² with respect to disability as part of the broader dynamics of socio-political, ideological, and economic transition in Greece in the 1970s and early 1980s. Our case study focuses on the Home of the Blind, a charitable institution with the stated purpose to 'protect the blind'. In 1979, the Greek state took over and, subsequently, turned it into a Public Law Entity under government control, ³ aiming to achieve 'independence and social inclusion' for the blind. This change was largely the result of a grassroots blind movement, culminating in the six-month occupation of the Home of the Blind by the Panhellenic Association of the Blind (hereafter Panhellenic) from May to October 1976. Our main argument is that this occupation was an *Event*, in Alain Badiou's sense, which subsequently led to the emergence of a new, dynamic societal actor. This *Event*, we contend, transformed the self-image of blind people and, therefore, their identities, signalling a shift from begging as a legitimate practice to collective action as the main form of expression for the blind in post-dictatorial Greece.

Two empirical observations have served as a fruitful starting point for the conceptualization and contextualization of this research. First, its timing and context. The 1970s witnessed the global rise of human rights (Jensen, 2016; Simpson, 2013); the rise of disability rights movements from across the globe cannot be considered a mere coincidence. At the same time, there is a strong regional aspect in this story, as disability movements emerged almost simultaneously in Greece, Portugal and Spain; all three experiencing their transition from dictatorship to democracy in the mid-1970s. Second, the blind empowerment in Greece had a transformative effect upon the disability movement in the long run. At home, this transformation led to the creation of a pan-disability approach and it was reflected on the formation of the National Confederation of Disabled People (NCDP), the third level socio-confederate agency of the country's disability movement, in the late 1980s–early 1990s. The blind played and continue to play a central role in the NCDP from the very beginning. Besides initiating its formation and taking over key posts, including that of the NCDP president from its establishment to date, the blind provided the NCDP with socially aware and alert functionaries, who later came to act as policymakers in relation to disability in successive governments of the socialist party (PASOK). Furthermore, on the international level, the trajectories of leading figures of the Greek blind movement indicate that this episode had a wider impact. Most notably, after assuming key roles within the Greek disability movement, Ioannis Vardakastanis – a student of the Home of the Blind, whose expulsion (along with that of others) triggered the occupation – , came to be the longstanding president of the European Disability Forum (EDF), an officially recognized, non-governmental organization, representing disabled people at the EU level (through the Economic and Social Committee).

Accordingly, these observations help to explain why the 1976 occupation of the Home of the Blind is an important episode and how its study can contribute to wider debates. Moreover, they explain why we opt for the use of the term 'disability' rather than just 'blind' movement, although the episode we examine deals with the role of the blind in it. Our paper makes a twofold contribution. First, it intervenes in the debate over the role of disability movements and the disabled in history. Douglas Baynton (2001, p. 52) has argued that 'disability is everywhere in history, once you begin looking for it, but conspicuously absent in the histories we write'. Yet, since the publication, in 1982, of Henri-Jacques Stiker's seminal *Corps Infirmes et Sociétés*, the field has experienced a remarkable growth. Recent disability historiography addresses themes such as labour, gender, war veterans, movement, eugenics and madness, largely taking a disability-specific approach through national case studies (Barsch, Klein & Verstraete, 2013; Hanes, Brown & Hansen, 2018; Rembis, Kudlick & Nielsen, 2018). Disability historians have made use of the insights of disability studies into people with disabilities as

an oppressed, and, therefore, 'invisible' social group. In doing so, they have challenged the 'absence' of people with disabilities from the narratives constructed in the context of general histories, by bringing the disabled as a societal actor back into the analysis. Following this line, we contribute to the (rather limited) available disability scholarship that seeks to inform wider debates on transitions (see Bregain, 2013; Fontes, 2014), by studying the Greek transition to democracy from the perspective of disability history. Given the synchronies involved, despite the absence of coordination among different national disability moments, the timeframe and socio-political context allows for fruitful comparisons regarding the relations among grassroots movements, democracy, and institutions.

In addition, and more broadly, this paper intervenes in the debate about the position of historical studies within disability studies, and conversely, about the use of the insights of disability studies in disability history (Barsch, Klein & Verstraete, 2013; Borsay, 2012; Kudlick 2003; Rembis, Kudlick, & Nielsen, 2018; Roulstone, Thomas, & Watson, 2012; Trigt, 2013). We do this, informed both by the social and cultural turn approaches to disability and by putting the disability movement front and centre. Reading the *Event* of the occupation of the Home of the Blind through the lens of the Political Opportunity Structure, we demonstrate how the blind movement was formed on a radical basis and was, subsequently, institutionalized through its legal achievements. More fundamentally, by dealing with this radical moment as an *Event*, we venture that the blind revolt had a strong empowerment effect. Through this decisive political action, the disabled people developed an understanding of themselves as political subjects (citizens), with far-reaching implications regarding their collective and individual identities. Yet, by making use of the insights of disability studies, we contend that legislative achievements came at a cost, as relevant laws from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s were voiced in a language that stigmatized.

We analyse the interplay between the institutional and societal level by making use of the concept of the Political Opportunity Structure, which was developed by scholars within the sociology of movements. This concept seeks to explore the correlation between the broader political context and social movements in a systematic way. Thus, it describes the ways in which social movements emerge and are formed, transformed and institutionalized over time. According to Sidney Tarrow (1998), there are five different criteria to identify a political opportunity structure: a) the opening up of political access, b) the existence of unstable alignments and/or c) influential allies, d) divisions among the elites, and e) repression and facilitation. Tarrow identifies increasing access as a process providing groups with incentives to gain participation. The instability of political alignments is an element that, according to Tarrow, also encourages contention, mainly through electoral instability. Identifying divided elites as a criterion of political opportunity Tarrow argues that, 'divisions among elites not only provide incentives to resource-poor groups to take the risks of collective action; they encourage portions of the elite that are out of power to seize the role of tribunes of the people'. Describing the influential allies, Tarrow writes 'challengers are encouraged to take collective action when they have allies who can act as friends in court, as guarantors against repression, or as acceptable negotiators on their behalf'. Lastly, to identify the aspect of oppression and facilitation, Tarrow cites Tilly's definition: 'repression is an action by another group which raises the contenders' cost of collective action. An action which lowers the group's cost of collective action is a form of facilitation' (Tarrow, 1998, p. 77-80).

We interpret the formation of new individual and collective identities in response to major social and political events by making use of the concept of the Event. Alain Badiou (2005) coined the term Event to denote the dynamic entrance of the excluded into the social scene, suddenly and drastically. An Event ruptures normality and opens a space to rethink reality from the perspective of social change (Norris 2009). According to Calcagno (2008, p. 1051), an Event occurs 'when the subject develops an

understanding of itself as a political subject only by executing decisive political actions or making decisive political interventions'.

To trace the transformative effect of the Event of the 1976 occupation of the Home of the Blind on disability identities in Greece, we follow Angharad E. Beckett (2006, p. 735) in her understanding of disability movement through the contextualization of personhood within a definition of disability that 'allows for the "reversibility of impairment and disability" and an understanding of the effect on the lives of disabled people of the simultaneous experiences of pain or debility and associated oppression by a "disabling" society'. In doing so, however, we consider that the distinction between the disabled people's movement and the movement for disabled people, offered by proponents of the Social Model of Disability, such as Oliver (1990; 1996), retains its analytical value.

The paper has five sections. In the first part we describe the methodology of our research. In the second part we briefly present the international context of the disability movement in the 1970s and we examine the role of institutional change with respect to disability on the European level, the impact of the International Year of the Disabled People, the role of the Southern European transitions from dictatorship to democracy and the Greek context for the emergence of the disability rights movement. Next, we focus on the elements of identity change in relation to the Greek case. In the fourth part, we present our case study. In the last section, we give room to the afterlives of the blind revolt and the disabled activists' perceptions as described in their meta-narratives.

Methodology

This paper is based on extensive archival research and narrative in-depth oral history interviews, taking the life story approach. During the collection of our primary sources we used the external and evaluation of internal criticism suggested for historical research (Berg, 2009; Clemens & Hughes, 2002; Neuman, 2011). The qualitative data analysis used in this study included both content and interpretive analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Punch, 2009), focusing on the meanings that the subjects themselves give to the facts under investigation (Dey, 1993; Robson, 2007). The narrative analysis of the interviews, examines how the data serve the interviewees and their stories (Mihas, 2019).

We have studied the Gerasimos Apostolatos Collection held in the Constantinos Karamanlis Foundation (IKK). Between 1977 and 1981, Apostolatos was the deputy minister of Social Welfare of the conservative New Democracy government under Constantine Karamanlis (1974–80) and Georgios Rallis (1980–81), the formative period of Greek disability rights laws. Moreover, we consulted the Proceedings of the Hellenic Parliament (Periods A, B, C, D from 1974 to 1989), held in the Library of the Hellenic Parliament, and the Greek press to trace public discourses on the blind movement and, more generally, about disability. Furthermore, we make use of Maria Hadzimichali–Papaliou's documentary, *The Struggle of the Blind* (Positive EPE, 1977). This footage, documenting the mobilization of the Panhellenic in 1976, is a unique real-time contemporary source on the side of the blind. The article also makes use of the papers of Eirini Laskaridou, founding director of the Home of the Blind held by the Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive (ELIA) in Athens, Greece, to provide background information in a historical perspective. Last, but not least, we studied relevant documents produced by the European Commission, held at the Historical Archives of the EU (HAEU) in Florence, Italy, in order to assess the impact of Greece's prospective EEC-membership on Greek legislation regarding the rights of the disabled.

In the absence of accessible historical archives of the Panhellenic, the main voice of the blind in Greece, we have expanded our research and added to the immediacy of our analysis by conducting a series of oral history narrative interviews. The interviewees include protagonists of the post-dictatorial

blind movement and leading figures of Greek disability organizations. The interviews took place in Athens, in the office of the NCDP and the Panhellenic. More specifically, we interviewed Ioannis Vardakastanis, the president and founding member of the NCDP and president of the EDF; Elias Maryiolas, the long-standing president of the Panhellenic Association of the Blind; Aris Pananos, general secretary and founding member of the NCDP; and Kostas Gargalis, the treasurer and founding member of NCDP.

Institutional Change and Disability Movement in the 1970s

The Global 1970s: The Disability Movement In Historical Perspective

'The '70s were exciting for the disabled'

Clara Clow, disabled American activist (cited in Nielsen, 2012, p. 161)

Scholars and disability rights activists, both in Europe and in the US, agree that the 1970s was a defining period for the disability rights movement at the international level (Charlton, 2000; Patterson, 2018). During this period, a new disability rights agenda emerged both in Europe and in the United States. This emergent agenda largely reflected the rising struggles for social inclusion, accessibility, equal education and work opportunities at the national level; the strengthening of the independent-living movement and the significant reduction of institutionalization; and the resulting formation of the disability rights movement as a trans-categorical movement, bringing about a broader understanding of disability as stigma and discrimination, at the international level (Nielsen, 2012). Although these movements appeared in national settings, their global spread – from Australia to Canada, from the Iberian Peninsula to Latin America, from South Africa to South Korea (Bregain, 2013; Patterson, 2018) – after the global wave of protest in 1968, situate them within the international context of the 1970s: similarly to other 'new social movements [4](#)' that appeared, or, more precisely, [5](#) made their influence felt in these years, the disability movement in the 1970s focused mainly on non-economic issues. Rather, it sought to achieve legislative improvements and promote change in public perceptions regarding disability and the disabled (Brown, 2018; Galer, 2017; Köbsell, 2006; Patterson, 2018; Stroman, 2003).

In this context, disability rights movements, internationally, came to develop a common language and demands. Nevertheless, national grassroots movements retained their own distinct scope, bound on diverse temporalities and spatialities. A key divisive issue cutting across different regions and countries was the role of the non-disabled (usually lawyers) within the disability movement. As movements 'from below' – i.e. disabled activists themselves – started to emerge in the 1960s and 1970s, the question of hegemony within the movement became prevalent (Sabatello, 2013). The very term 'disabled people's movements', requiring that 'at least 50 per cent of the management committee or controlling body [...] themselves, be disabled' (Oliver, 1990, p. 113) was indicative of this tendency. In Britain, for example, during the 1970s there were two different disability-related organizations. Disability Alliance, controlled by non-disabled activists, prioritized the need for disability allowances to be introduced; while UPIAS, controlled by disabled activists, focused on rights, highlighting the social oppression that people with disabilities experienced (Oliver, 1996). The empowerment of the disabled leaders also occurred in the USA, and was influenced by other new social movements, such as the feminist movement and the movement against the Vietnam War; the disability movement controlled by disabled people demanded social change and rights, in contrast with the, until then, focus on the provision of services alone (Pfeiffer, 1993). In other national settings, such as Australia (Cooper, 1999) and Japan (Hayashi & Okuhira, 2001), where local disabled activists developed relationships with British and American disabled activists, the disability movement prioritized

independent living as the main goal, echoing the rise of the new social movements in Europe and the USA during the late 1960s (Scotch, 1989). In the global periphery, meanwhile, in countries such as Brazil and South Korea, the disability movement took the form of a movement *for* the disabled, focusing on policy and legislation without a broader program (Bregain, 2013; You & Hwang, 2018).

Yet, aside other historical and cultural reasons, political conditions bore heavily on the actors and their practices. In the Iberian Peninsula and the Southern Cone, for example, there was a positive correlation between political liberalization and mobilization of the disabled. In Argentina, the first radical mobilization of the disabled arose in 1973 during a short democratic chapter, between two authoritarian phases (1966–73 and 1976–83). In Brazil, disability mobilization emerged in the latter stages of a long-lasting, military-controlled, liberalization process, in 1981–82.

Southern Europe offers a very interesting regional case study in this respect, as the mid-1970s witnessed the almost simultaneous fall of the dictatorial regimes in Greece, Portugal and Spain. The nature and pace of the democratic transitions in the three countries differed, but the parallels between the national disability movements in each case are hard to ignore: in Greece, the occupation of the Home of the Blind started in May 1976 after the fall of the colonels, who had ruled the country from 1967 to 1974. Similarly, in Spain, the disability movement occurred only after Franco's death, culminating in 1976–77, and it often took the form of radical action. On 29 April, just days before the occupation of the Home of the Blind in Athens, 24 disabled people occupied the Servicio de Recupacion y Rehabilitacion de Minusvalidos Fisicos y Psiquicos (SEREM) in Coruna (Bregain, 2013). Among their demands was representation at the local level, accessibility services, and job opportunities. Similarly, Portuguese scholars, such as Fernando Fontes (2014) have pointed out that the democratic transition of 1974, and the exclusion and oppression that disabled people were experiencing, were the main reasons giving rise to the emergence and establishment of the Portuguese Disabled People's Movement.

The European Community And The International Year Of Disabled People

Hallmarked by two oil crises, in 1973–74 and 1979–80, the 1970s witnessed the first serious recession in decades, signaling the end of the Golden Age of Capitalism, as the period 1953–73 is commonly referred to. The correlation between policies against the social exclusion of the disabled and its economic dimensions was already evident before the recession. The first official document of the European Community, a proposal drafted by the Commission in 1973, and later adopted by the Council to become the Community Action Programme for the Vocational Rehabilitation of Handicapped Persons, took an explicit technocratic approach. As stated in the Explanatory Memorandum:

In the countries of the European Community responsible circles are becoming increasingly aware of the problems of handicapped persons.

The number of persons whose working capacity is reduced because of a handicap is increasing ... In economic terms the existence of such a large number is a considerable burden. Non-rehabilitated handicapped persons do not contribute to the production process, they are below average consumers, they do not pay taxes and they account for a considerable share of the social budget. The integration of handicapped persons into active life makes it possible to reduce these disadvantages and provides a considerable contribution to the labour force.

Finally, and most important, vocational and social integration ... helps to make them more independent and responsible. This is one of the major factors in a social policy to help these people. [6](#)

This approach – though shaped in a period when labor shortage had reached a critical point after a two-decade long period of rapid growth, thus making imperative the widening of the workforce pool – remained at the heart of European Community policies in the years to come. In its 1979 Report to the Council on the Initial Community Action Programme for the Vocational Rehabilitation of Handicapped Persons (1974–1979), the Commission highlighted this dramatic change in the economic conditions that had underpinned its adoption. Yet, rather than embarking on its revision, the Commission set out to implement the Action Programme under restricted budget conditions. [7](#)

Reflecting the growth of the international disability rights movement, the United Nations struck a less technocratic tone, when they published the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons in 1975 (Patterson, 2018). The following year, the General Assembly proclaimed 1981 as the International Year of Disabled Persons (IYDP). According to an official UN account: 'The theme of IYDP was "full participation and equality", defined as the right of persons with disabilities to take part fully in the life and development of their societies, enjoy living conditions equal to those of other citizens, and have an equal share in improved conditions resulting from socio-economic development'. [8](#) While another objective of the IYDP was the encouragement of 'persons with disabilities to form organizations through which they can express their views and promote action to improve their situation'. [9](#)

The Southern European Context and The Greek Metapolitefsi Radicalization

The southern European transitions to democracy have conventionally been the subject of scholarly works within comparative political science (Linz & Stepan, 1996; O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1986) and political, diplomatic and economic history (Del Pero, Gavín, Guirao, & Varsori, 2010; Tsakas, 2020). More recently, social and cultural historians have addressed the social transformation the European South experienced during the so-called Long Sixties, mainly through the lens of the changing consumption patterns in those years (Kornetis, Kotsovili & Papadogiannis, 2016). The latter body of literature, by shifting the focus from institutional change to highlight issues such as youth subcultures and gender identities, sheds light on the continuities between the authoritarian past and the democratic period. In doing so, however, this approach tends to neglect the complex interplay between institutional change and the emergence of grassroots movements, which defined the post-dictatorship pursuit of political and social change in the nascent democracies. In this context, disability and the disability movement become conspicuous in their absence from social and cultural history accounts. [10](#)

The *Metapolitefsi* [11](#) represents a major turning point in modern Greek history. Concluding a long period of political instability, royal and military interference in politics, and anti-communist repression, the *Metapolitefsi* is often depicted as a political and institutional success story (Avgeridis, Gazi & Kornetis, 2015). This heroic representation of the *Metapolitefsi*, however, by focusing on the institutional level, misses part of the story. Despite the swift return to constitutional government, hallmarked by the legalization of communist parties, the authoritarian legacy in the social realm (from elite continuity to labour repression to far-right extremism) remained intact for years. In the context of political liberalization, emergent grassroots movements were soon to radicalize, by demanding 'true democracy' in factories, universities, schools and local communities, and challenging the remains of authoritarianism (Kassimeris, 2005; Sotiropoulos, 2010).

New Identities and Old Stereotypes: Empowerment, Cultural Changes and Legal Achievements

[Our mobilization] transformed embedded perceptions and stereotypes – i.e., blind people whom one could see begging in Omonia square, suddenly one saw them rising up in Kallithea

Ioannis Vardakastanis

Identity change involves three different dimensions of operation: the legal impact on identity formation, the cultural changes taking place during, because of and in line with the movement, and the transformation of the collective identity of the movement's members.

Legal scholars have shown the influence exerted by social movements on lawmakers, and the impact that, in turn, legislation has on identities, arguing that legislative measures are a key factor in the institutionalization of the social movements. This process, however, also forms the basis for the legal delimitation of social movements and the use of a certain terminology that stigmatizes the actors involved in identity-based movements (Eskridge, 2001).

Addressing the institutional impact of the post-dictatorial disability movement and, more specifically, the 1976 blind revolt, we find that the way in which the demands of the movement were satisfied impacted upon disability identities and social perceptions about the disabled, as well. Indeed, new legislation protected blind people from begging, thanks to the disability pension and allowance, while it gave them access to the official educational system. At the same time, however, these achievements came at a cost: they were considered of limited capacity, and lawmakers treated them as unable to work and deviating from what was, quite vaguely, labeled as normal. [12](#)

Scholars within cultural sociology conceptualized social movements as social locations in which culture plays a central role in the formation of collective identities (Swidler, 1995). Disability scholars have criticized the dominant culture as an oppressive force, reproducing normative practices and discourses (Kay & Tisdall, 2003), but they have also stressed the emancipatory potential of a participatory culture, through which disabled people set forms of resistance (Riddell & Watson, 2003). For the formation of an emancipatory disability culture, citizenship is a crucial process, as it entails the very notion of participation. [13](#) According to scholars within sociology of movements, such as Polletta and Jasper (2001), identity change is a primary goal of almost every social movement. [14](#) Moreover, Melucci (1995, p. 44) has famously argued that 'collective identity is an interactive and shared definition produced by several individuals (or groups at a more complex level) and concerned with the orientations of action and the field of opportunities and constraints in which the action takes place'. The post-dictatorial blind movement in Greece seems to fit the conceptualizations of both disability studies and the sociology of movements, as the blind activists aimed at a huge shift in their collective representation as educated working citizens. [15](#)

Accordingly, the successful 1976 revolt also gave a boost to the movement in terms of its functionalities, by contributing to the emergence of leading figures in the long run; a process closely related to the transformation of individual identities in the context of mobilization (Andrews, 1991; Fendrich, 1993; McAdam, 1988; Polletta & Jasper, 2001), as the trajectories of key figures of the blind movement in Greece show. The prominent roles the blind revolt leaders played in the Greek disability movement are indicative of a broader shift in perspective, as the blind activists started to develop a pan-disability approach quite early. By contrast, other disability associations, such as the Hellenic Federation of the Deaf (founded in 1968, after several minor organizations had merged), and the Panhellenic Association of Paraplegics (founded in 1977), retained a disability-specific perspective, while most of their demands remained of a narrow scope. [16](#) Most tellingly, it would take the Hellenic Federation of the Deaf some 20 years from its creation to demand the inclusion of sign language into official education. [17](#) Interestingly, both Maryiolas and Vardakastanis agree that it was their participation in PASOK that gave them the opportunity to meet other disabled people and develop a trans-categorical understanding of disability; [18](#) a fact that corresponds with the highly politicized culture of the early post-dictatorship period, but it also prompts us to ponder on the complex interplay between social movements, domestic political change and normative discourses at the international level.

More broadly, the change of the collective identity of the members of the blind movement was in line with cultural changes regarding the image of the blind. For example, the goal of participation is not only a matter of political action, but also – as Melucci argues – a matter of cultural changes taking place in different aspects of everyday life involving personal and collective identity, interpersonal relations, and time and space management (Melucci, 1995). In this context, this ambitious goal started as an effort for cultural change, mainly regarding time and space management. For some time, blind protest was limited to public statements, open letters, and memoranda, demanding free access to public transportation [19](#), permission to vendors to operate in central streets [20](#), and disability allowances. [21](#) It was only in the late 1960s that the Panhellenic prioritized vocational rehabilitation and state education. [22](#) Furthermore, after its establishment in 1973, the National Council of the Blind embarked on a radical approach, by criticizing 'pseudo-philanthropy', and asking for job and educational opportunities. In this context, the merger of the two in 1975, and the subsequent blind revolt in 1976, represents a major turning point for blind mobilization, both in terms of frequency and practices. [23](#)

1976: The Blind Metapolitefsi

The Home of the Blind is determined to help the GOOD, DILIGENT and OBEDIENT children in every possible way

Konstantinos Androulakis, director of the Home of the Blind, 6.3.1976 [24](#)

Thanks to the people's support, we stood

Elias Maryiolas

The Revolt

The Home of the Blind was established in Kallithea, Athens, on 24 May 1906. [25](#) According to the statute, the five-member governing board would be chaired by the incumbent Archbishop. [26](#) The role of the Church in the management of the Home of the Blind, which had been reinforced during the dictatorship, remained prevalent in the early post-dictatorial period. Still in 1976, three out of five members of the board were clerics. [27](#) Archbishop Seraphim had been appointed in the late dictatorship period, which had been marked by an authoritarian backlash and human rights violations, thus symbolizing continuity between the dictatorial and post-dictatorial period.

Two key features characterized the management practices of the board during that period, as experienced and described by the blind themselves. First, the wellbeing of the students was not a priority. Although the Home of the Blind enjoyed significant financial support through benevolent donations, the students had all but good quality of living. Instead, blind students were often pushed to take part in fundraising events, which often made them feel like beggars. Second, strict discipline was implemented, including brutal corporal punishment, surveillance practices, and expulsion. [28](#)

Both the dominant presence of the Church and its outdated practices soon became the target of criticism of the blind; democratization had opened a window of opportunity for them to pursue substantial changes. In early 1976, disciplinary measures increased in response to the blind students' attempt to organize an active student community that would defend their rights and voice their demands to the board. [29](#) This early mobilization reflected broader shifts in both the blind and the youth movements. On the one hand, in 1975, two of the largest blind organizations, the Panhellenic Association of the Blind and the National Council of the Blind of Greece, merged to reach 1,500 members out of 15,000 blind Greek people (under the common name Panhellenic Association of the Blind). [30](#) According to Maryiolas:

At the beginning I participated in another association, the National Council of the Blind. I was enrolled there in 1966 and within two years I managed to reach positions in the Administrative Board [...]. In 1974–75 I was the president of this association and we then made our big movement to merge with the Panhellenic Association of the Blind.

On the other hand, left-wing youth organizations were already expanding their presence in schools and universities, following the steps of the impressive student movement that had emerged in the late authoritarian period (Kornetis, 2013; Papadogiannis, 2015; Serdedakis, 2015).

In the spring of 1976, the board took disciplinary action against four students who had played a leading role in these activities, by expelling them from the Home of the Blind. Following their expulsion, the four students asked for help from the Panhellenic and, as a response, on 2 May, about one hundred members of the Panhellenic along with the blind students occupied the Home of the Blind. [31](#)

Maryiolas again:

The students of the Home of the Blind, along with a quite large group, about 100 persons, we entered the property climbing through the junkyard, we broke a door. We entered and the administration reacted immediately bringing the prosecutor so that we would be expelled.

Although the revolt started as a reaction to the students' expulsion, soon it came to challenge the routines of everyday life in the Home of the Blind, and the management of the board as well. As Maryiolas put it, the Panhellenic was quick to take action against the strong presence of the Church in the administration of the Home of the Blind, because they considered it a residue of authoritarianism [32](#):

The Home of the Blind was passed by in the Church completely during the dictatorship. The State wasn't interested and they just wanted to get rid of us. The Church undertook it as its monastery, they put their terms, clerics as teachers and so on [...] They didn't want to let it go under any circumstances. [...] We considered that this was an opportunity not easy to reach. The people started to gather together; they had a reason to work in league with each other. A slogan that we repeatedly used was 'Clerics and Generals Go Home'.

Indicative of this tendency were the slogans and practices adopted, with a strong reference to the Athens Polytechnic School uprising in November 1973, which had also begun as a reaction against disciplinary action, highlighting education-focused issues before turning into an anti-regime revolt. Paraphrasing its emblematic slogan 'Bread – Education – Liberty', the Blind cried out for 'Bread, Education, and not Beggary' or, in another version, for 'Education, Work, and not Beggary'. [33](#) Maryiolas put it like this:

From the first moment of the occupation, we started to organize our demands against the State. We already had to formulate our first slogans. Bread, Work and not Beggary. It is really important; I think it is something similar to the Polytechnic revolt – I don't want you to take this as blasphemy – and I am thrilled while saying this. Because for the blind 'bread, work and not beggary' is the foundation of a decent life and a change. Bread, meaning to secure the livelihoods and work which is the most righteous route to social inclusion. And 'Bread, Education and not Beggary', a slightly different slogan focusing on the right to education.

But also, the take-over of the Home of the Blind itself, symbolized the continuities with the anti-dictatorial student movement. A 19-member committee of the occupation kept running the school, its facilities, and organizing everyday life: mothers of blind students gathered on the premises and took over the children's daycare; people from the community secured a food supply; educated older

members of the Panhellenic, who had themselves graduated from the Home of the Blind, organized the school courses; staff members refused to leave the premises and against the board's instructions, remained in the School. [34](#) Maryiolas spoke about this aspect:

We, the older ones that had some education, replaced the teachers. We started to negotiate with the Ministry of Education immediately. We asked for the official recognition of preliminary school certification. We made a great effort to supply food to the premises. Many volunteers, parents and friends came and we started to organize the school. Everyday more and more blind people were realizing that something important was happening.

Already at the early stages of the occupation, key features of the political opportunity structure, such as unstable alignments and influential allies, were present. Shortly after the occupation, the board of the Home of the Blind called for the public prosecutor to take legal action against the occupation. The public prosecutor, however, refused to bring charges against the Panhellenic, by arguing that the Home of the Blind was meant to be the home of blind people, and he had no right to kick them out of their home. In turn, the board attempted to force the blind out, by shutting off electricity, and cutting water supply and phone lines to the premises. At this point, the intervention of Yannis Gallos, the pre-dictatorial mayor of Kallithea, who had been re-elected in free local elections in 1975, proved critical, as the municipality restored the power and water supply. Maryiolas explains:

The prosecutor [...] said that here is the Home of the Blind, we can't kick them out, unless they destroy something. Anyway, the truth is that the administration were really cruel. [...] Gallos, the then mayor, came. He was really important for us because he helped us.

Moreover, Gallos called on local community support for the blind: there was massive attendance at a solidarity concert that took place on 11 May 1976. [35](#) Meanwhile, a group of members of parliament (MPs) met with the Panhellenic in the occupied premises, expressing their sympathy with their cause, and promising support in parliament. [36](#)

Enjoying active support from the local community, young people and the opposition parties, the occupation continued for months, and the Panhellenic started to develop a more sophisticated approach and articulate more advanced demands. Apart from the withdrawal of the expulsion decision, the Panhellenic sought to participate in the board, and called for the Home of the Blind to pass under government control. Moreover, the Panhellenic asked for legislative initiatives in the direction of a strong welfare state, which would provide for disability allowances, disability pensions, education and work opportunities. [37](#) Maryiolas:

We started to realize that we had a big opportunity to solve not only problems related to the Home of the Blind, but also to demands from the State. We organized a protest with the help of some artists. [...] We organized a hunger strike outside the building of Parliament. [...] We asked for the increase and extension of the allowance. We asked for legislation, for work and education opportunities. We kept saying the slogan 'Legislative rather than charitable measures'. We spoke out against charity.

Meanwhile, opposition MPs submitted parliamentary questions to support the blind movement, a good part of the Press took a favorable stance to the cause of the blind and an international solidarity movement organized a petition campaign. [38](#)

Aftermath

The persistent struggle of the blind, combined with strong public support, forced the board to concede to the demands of the Panhellenic. In early November 1976, after six months of the Home of the Blind under occupation, the board finally conceded to handing over and transferring its property to the

State, a process that was completed on 6 April 1979 with the foundation of KEAT. [39](#) In the meantime, parliament passed a series of legislative measures directed specifically at blindness, but also extended to other disabilities. Law 612/1977 improved retirement conditions for the blind, [40](#) while the law 963/1979 'on the vocational rehabilitation of the handicapped and, in general, of individuals of limited capabilities' opened up new job opportunities for the disabled, as it abolished physical ableism as part of the eligibility requirements for the Greek public sector. [41](#) Subsequently, two important laws were enacted. The law 1140/1981 introduced the disability pension to individuals 'unable to work due to their disability' and the disability allowance for paraplegics and quadriplegics. [42](#) The law 1143/1981 'For Special Education and Special Vocational Training, Employment and Social Care of Individuals Deviating from Normal' introduced special education into Greek public education. [43](#)

The discourses pronounced by policymakers were in sharp contrast with the image of the blind as dynamic actors who challenged charity practices, by demanding education and employment. This approach reflected outdated stereotypes towards disability and the disability rights movement. During the parliamentary debate about special education, both the Minister of Education and opposition MPs adopted a language with medical connotations, [44](#) characterizing the disabled as 'problematic' or 'maladjusted', [45](#) people the government ought to protect, fulfilling a requirement of the Constitution amended in 1975. [46](#) Strikingly, not even the Left cited the movement of the blind as a factor for the enactment of the disability legislation. [47](#) Instead, both the cabinet members and opposition MPs would adduce the IYDP to support their – often conflicting – views and stress the need for legislative initiatives for the disabled. [48](#) Yet, rather than reflecting changes to value systems, the references to the IYDP were selective and instrumental. Indeed, following the UN guidelines, the Greek Ministry of Social Services established a General Secretariat of the IYDP, albeit excluding representatives of the disabled. [49](#) Thereafter, the ministry took a public relations approach towards the Secretariat as it limited itself in hiring a couple of disabled doctors to create a positive impression to its members, [50](#) while other ministries saw the IYDP as an opportunity to increase their budget through funding for public events. [51](#)

Voices: Nothing About Us Without Us [52](#)

Participation was a key goal of the movement of the blind, as the blind sought to be part of the decision-making process for themselves (in the Home of the Blind, and other relevant institutions) and more generally be part of the labor market and to be included in the education system. As Maryiolas and Vardakastanis mention in their interviews, the main quest of the disability activists for their full and direct participation in disability-related policymaking is encapsulated in the slogan 'Nothing About Us Without Us'. Maryiolas mentioned:

We spoke out against charity. That we don't accept anything to happen for us without us. This is a slogan that we continue to use until now.

And Vardakastanis:

We wanted to give flesh and bones to the slogan 'Nothing for Us Without Us'. Meaning, we wanted to demand our presence in the decision-making centres. And I think that we have managed to have a great presence, not only in the deliberation process, but also in institutions of a decisive nature.

The need for self-awareness, the expression of their opinions and participation in disability policy making was apparent from the very beginning on three different levels: the development of their collective opinion on disability-related policies and issues, the caution against disability-related initiatives that did not involve them and their self-action resulting in a disability-related state policy line.

On the first level, the activists wanted to have an influence on policy making as a collectivity, discussing everything related to a disability initiative and forming an opinion. For example, regarding the law of 1975 providing for free access of the blind to universities was received with mixed feelings by blind organizations, as it gave the impression of favourable treatment with philanthropic connotations. Maryiolas comments:

Then I had an objection [...]. I kept saying in our meetings that this wasn't good, because this facility could have a negative influence on the quality of the studies. Back then only the students that had the guts studied at the university.

On the second level, their caution towards initiatives that did not involve them is apparent in their comments on the initiatives the Greek state took in the context of the IYDP. Maryiolas comments quite sarcastically here:

It was the International Year of the Disabled and every country, every Ministry had to take some action regarding disability. Except for some groups, committees, comprised mainly of non-disabled persons and only a few representatives of the disabled, nothing else happened. As an answer to a question regarding the exact number of the disabled in Greece, during a conversation with people of the Ministry, someone said: 'Do not wake up a sleeping snake' and that charity is in charge for this kind of stuff.

And Aris Pananos:

In 1981 we established the allowance for the children with physical disabilities. Do you know what the IYDP gave us? This and a ramp in the Ministry of Health. That was its biggest success.

On the third level, the blind activists considered their participation in disability-related policy centres of a decisive nature, as a process involving their personal commitment to the goal of making disability-related policy. Ioannis Vardakastanis gives a brief report:

Panagiotis Kouroumplis and I represented the blind. The two of us signed the founding act of the Confederation. Panagiotis Kouroumplis was the first president of the Confederation until 1993, when he became secretary-general of Welfare. From 1993 on, I have been the president of the Confederation. [...] During the 1980s, many people worked, Kouroumplis became a consultant in the Ministry of Health and Welfare, I became a consultant in the Ministry of Education and after that in the Ministry of Work. Many of us occupied board positions on public bodies. For example, Kouroumplis became the first president of the Centre of Education and Rehabilitation for the Blind. [...] I played an important role in the foundation of the European Disability Forum. I was a member of the committee that signed its first statute. From 1997 to 1999 I was the vice president. From 1999 on, I have been the president.

This kind of participation reflects and presupposes a highly politicized and participatory culture, which took place in the early post-dictatorship period. In this context, key figures of the movement came to engage in PASOK. Both Maryiolas and Vardakastanis highlight the role of PASOK in the development of the participation's platforms of the Greek disability movement. Maryiolas is quoted first here:

And we created the first organization inside PASOK, different disabilities, mostly blind and physically disabled. We made our first introductions to each other.

And Vardakastanis:

The role of PASOK in this kind of stuff was crucial. Like in many other sections in Greek society.

Most importantly, Vardakastanis highlights the self-action of the disabled inside PASOK, focusing on their role of shaping PASOK's disability-related policy line:

We formed PASOK's views and proposals regarding disability-related policies. This is important. We are forming it, and even now, we form PASOK's opinions on disability. Nobody dictates to us. Nobody. And when they tried, we just hanged up the phone on them.

The extracts make it clear that Vardakastanis and Maryiolas focus on the achievements on the three levels mentioned above. Their success story reaches today's disability-related policies, by arguing that disability allowances have not been affected to date, although social welfare has suffered severe cuts in debt-troubled Greece over the past decade.

As Vardakastanis states:

I can tell you that today, even after these eight years in economic crisis, you won't find any Greek with a disability begging in the streets [...]. And, for me this is the biggest success of the disability movement.

Conclusions

This article has studied the role of the movement of the blind in the legislative achievements regarding disabled people and in the formation of their identities in post-dictatorial Greece. By highlighting the transformative power of the disability movement, we have shown how a grassroots movement contributed to democratization, thus synthesizing the approaches of political science and social history to southern European transitions. In doing so, we have challenged the dichotomy between institutional and societal accounts of democratic transitions. The Greek case is part of a larger southern European story. After the downfall of the dictatorial regimes in Greece, Portugal and Spain, radical mobilization of the disabled emerged in all three countries. Those movements were disabled people's movements rather than movements *for* the disabled and adopted a hard action strategy, including occupations and sit-ins rather than government lobbying. Therefore, they were part of the broader grassroots mobilization against the authoritarian remains, which flourished during the Southern European transitions to democracy.

More than one element of the Political Opportunity Structure is present in our case study: first, the radicalization triggered by the Greek transition to democracy, reflecting a dynamic opening of the political system, gave several societal actors – including the blind – the opportunity to access and participate in the political realm. Therefore, and second, the Greek transition to democracy, by rearranging the political system, shook traditional alignments and created social space for the emergence of new societal actors, such as the disabled. Third, the fact that the blind enjoyed support from strong allies that favored their revolt encouraged them to insist on collective action. Lastly, at a later stage, the coming to power of PASOK reflected the weakening of the ability of the state to oppress, giving space to the representatives of the movement of the blind for action at the level of high politics.

As an *Event*, the 1976 blind revolt gave room for self-empowerment and positive identities. In this context, the disabled activists in Greece were empowered, managing to make policy for themselves. This process, involving both their self-awareness and the transformation of the social locations in which they performed, enhanced identity change. In other words, disabled people in Greece managed to become citizens, bringing about the reduction of the proportion of blind people begging, and of deaf and paraplegic people living isolated in asylums or their homes, and the increase in educated working people with disabilities in Greece.

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Endnotes

1. For the concepts of citizenship and empowerment in relation to transitional identities see Arthur (2011). [Return to Text](#)
2. For a historical overview of charitable practices see Bremner (1994). For the historical interplay between charity and welfare see Barry & Jones (1991) and Quine (2002). [Return to Text](#)

3. Under a new name: Centre for Education & Rehabilitation for the Blind (KEAT).
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4. For the main theories and basic prerequisites of new social movements see Laraña, Johnston and Gusfield (1994), Lee (2007), Scott (1990), Tilly (2004), della Porta & Diani (2006). For a detailed presentation of converging definitions of the social movements see Kavoulakos & Gritzas (2015).
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5. As Patterson (2018) argues, the disability movement in the United States had a long tradition dating back to the late 19th century.
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6. Commission of the European Communities, European Social Fund (ESF): proposal for a decision of the Council on action by the ESF to assist the social and occupational integration of handicapped persons, 16/11/1973, Historical Archives of the EU, Florence, Italy (HAEU), BAC-COM (1973) 1958.
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7. Commission of the European Communities, Report from the Commission to the Council Council on the Initial Community Action Programme for the Vocational Rehabilitation of Handicapped Persons (1974–1979), 26/10/1979, HAEU, BAC-COM (1979) 572.
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8. Available at <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/the-international-year-of-disabled-persons-1981.html> (last visited on 3/2/2019). For the official document, see United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 31/123: International Year of Disabled Persons, 16/12/1976, A/RES/31/123, available at <http://www.un-documents.net/a31r123.htm> (last visited on 3/2/2019).
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9. Available at <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/the-international-year-of-disabled-persons-1981.html> (last visited on 3/2/2019).
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10. On Greece: Avdela, Gallant, Papadogiannis, Papastefanaki, & Voglis (2018). For few recent works by Greek historians, who have touched upon neighbouring areas, see Chalaza (2018-19), Kokkinos (2018), Kritsotaki (2009), Paloukis (2014), Savvakis (2008) and Troumpeta (2013).
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11. The term used to describe both the transition process after the fall of the military dictatorship (1967–1974) and the historical period inaugurated with the establishment of the Third Hellenic Republic (1975).
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12. According to law 1143/1981, which included Special Education in the Official Educational System, disabled people were 'individuals deviating from normal' (Government Gazette, FEK 80/A/31.3.1981), while according to law 1140/1981, which introduced the disability allowance, disabled people were characterized as individuals 'unable to work due to their disability' (Government Gazette, FEK 68A/20.3.1981).
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13. The discussion of citizenship in the field of disability studies began in a controversial way: scholars basically argued that citizenship is based on the discrimination resulting in the exclusion of certain citizens due to their identity (Oliver, 1996; Tisdall, 1994; Kay & Tisdall, 2003).
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14. On the interplay between identity and social movements, see Bernstein (2005). On the role of collective identity in the emergence of a social movement see Morris (1992), Mansbridge & Morris (2001).
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15. The term collective identity describes both the imaginary and the active real identity. In other words, the term includes both the present perception of identity and its imminent reformation (Polletta & Jasper, 2001).
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16. The first claims of the paraplegic were expressed in 1979 regarding the disability allowance (To Vima 18.4.1979). Regarding the deaf, the first broader requests – except for the changes in their lives in their institutions –, however, was in the 1980s regarding Greek sign language: in 1985 they requested the State to consider the Greek sign language as the formal language of Greek deaf people and to include Greek sign language in education (Authors' interview with Kostas Gargalis, Athens, 26/4/2018).
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17. However, sign language was not included in the education system before 2000 (law 2817/2000). The development of the demands of the deaf has many similarities with the development of the deaf movement in Brazil, where sign language was officially recognized as the language of the deaf in 2002 (De Brito & Prieto, 2018).
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18. Authors' interview with Elias Maryiolas, Athens, 10/4/2018 and Authors' interview with Ioannis Vardakastanis, Athens, 12/4/2018.
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19. To Vima, 23.10.1955, 21.1.1956, 29.1.1961, 9.11.1969
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20. To Vima, 5.11.1958, 23.8.1959, 24.9.1959, 1.11.1960
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21. To Vima, 6.11.1962, 9.6.1966, 9.11.1969
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22. To Vima, 30.6.1971, 13.5.1972, 25.5.1973, 16.4.1975
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23. More specifically, there are 17 references to the blind movement in the newspaper *To Vima* from 1977 to 1980, in contrast with 16 references from 1947 to 1975; the Panhellenic Association of the Blind in the years 1977–1980 performed demonstrations, strong protests and occupations (*To Vima*, 2.4.1977, 13.7.1978, 20.1.1979, 23.3.1979, 23.9.1979, 19.5.1979, 5.2.1980, 7.2.1980, 19.3.1980, 21.3.1980, 25.3.1980, 28.3.1980, 29.3.1980, 15.11.1980), in contrast with the open letters and memorandums in which the Association chose to function

before the 1976.
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24. Maria Hadzimichali–Papaliou's documentary *The Struggle of the Blind* (Positive EPE, 1977)
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25. For a detailed account of its history, see Tsavalia (2015).
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26. According to the Activity Report on the 40th anniversary of the Home of the Blind, published in 1948 (Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive, folder Home of the Blind (Oikos Tiflon) 1).
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27. Maria Hadzimichali–Papaliou's documentary *The Struggle of the Blind* (Positive EPE, 1977)
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28. Maria Hadzimichali–Papaliou's documentary *The Struggle of the Blind* (Positive EPE, 1977)
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29. Maria Hadzimichali–Papaliou's documentary *The Struggle of the Blind* (Positive EPE, 1977)
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30. Author's interview with Elias Maryiolas, Athens, 10/4/2018.
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31. Author's interview with Elias Maryiolas, Athens, 10/4/2018.
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32. Author's interview with Elias Maryiolas, Athens, 10/4/2018.
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33. Maria Hadzimichali–Papaliou's documentary *The Struggle of the Blind* (Positive EPE, 1977)
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34. Author's interview with Elias Maryiolas, Athens, 10/4/2018. Maria Hadzimichali–Papaliou's documentary *The Struggle of the Blind* (Positive EPE, 1977)
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35. Maria Hadzimichali–Papaliou's documentary *The Struggle of the Blind* (Positive EPE, 1977)
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36. G. B. Magkakis, K. Alabanos (EDIK), S. Akrita (PASOK), A. Fleming, G. Kabounidis were some of the MPs who met the Panhellenic (Maria Hadzimichali–Papaliou's documentary *The Struggle of the Blind* (Positive EPE, 1977)).
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37. Author's interview with Elias Maryiolas, Athens, 10/4/2018.
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38. For example, *To Vima*, 18/3/1976, 12/5/1976, 15/5/1976, 25/5/1976 and *Rizospastis*, 19/3/1976, 20/4/1976, 5/5/1976, 6/5/1976, 7/5/1976, 8/5/1976, 11/5/1976. Parliamentary questions were submitted by 15 opposition MPs (Proceedings of the Hellenic Parliament (Period A), Session B, 2505, 5533, 6172, 6173 and Maria Hadzimichali–Papaliou's

- documentary *The Struggle of the Blind* (Positive EPE, 1977))
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39. Presidential Decree 265 (see Government Gazette, FEK 74A'/17.4.1979).
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40. Government Gazette, FEK 164A'/14.6.1977.
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41. Government Gazette, FEK 202A'/1.9.1979.
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42. Government Gazette, FEK 68A/20.3.1981
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43. Government Gazette, FEK 80/A/31.3.1981.
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44. The medical connotations of disability are present in the so-called medical model of disability. The medical model of disability, as an approach of thinking and practicing over disability, considers disability as an illness to be cured and focuses on rehabilitation practices as an intervention aiming to reserve the 'personal tragedy' of the individual (Hodge, 2005; Fisher & Goodley, 2007). On the other hand, the social model of disability deals with disability as a socially constructed system of oppression, which excludes some people from participating in education, the job market and other social activities (Gleeson, 1997; Oliver, 1990).
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45. Proceedings of the Hellenic Parliament, Period B, Session LB, 1524.
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46. Proceedings of the Hellenic Parliament, Period B, Session LB, 1521.
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47. And more generally, disability issues were conspicuous by their absence in left-wing discourses, as reflected in major publications at the time, such as *ANTI*, a left-wing hub for investigative journalism, and the Eurocommunist theoretical journals *O Politis* and *Synchrone Themata*.
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48. Proceedings of the Hellenic Parliament, Period B, Session D, 7022.
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49. Authors' interview with Elias Maryiolas, Athens, 10/4/2018.
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50. Gerasimos Apostolatos (deputy Minister of Social Services) to Averkios Karalis (governor of the Social Insurance Foundation–IKA), Hiring a disabled dental technician, 28/7/1981, Gerasimos Apostolatos Collection, Constantinos Karamanlis Foundation, Athens (GAC/IKK), F21.
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51. Ministry of Northern Greece to Ministry of Social Services, 13/1/1981, GAC/IKK, F21.
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52. Although the slogan 'Nothing About Us Without Us' was first introduced in disability activism during the 1990s, and it was strongly related with disability activism after the publication of James Charlton's book titled *Nothing About Us Without Us: Disability Oppression and Empowerment*, in 2000, this motto reflects the practices and demands of national disability movements and their emphasis on participation as early as the 1970s.

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