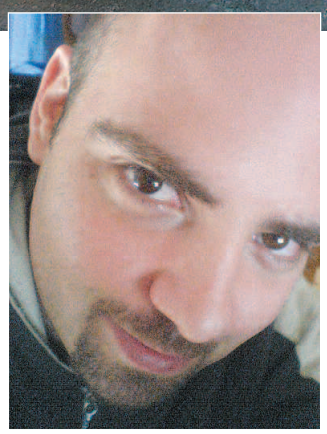


Helping victims after the August 2008 fires in the Peloponnese



IDEA founder Theodosis Tzanos

to set up two e-banking accounts. One for functional costs - paying the accountant, making t-shirts, printing business cards - and one for initiatives only," he explains.

Donors can choose to support either one, while regular updates are published on their website so both deposits and withdrawals become public knowledge.

Pretend IDEA says it spent 50 euros on foodstuff. Every penny will be tabulated online with a matching receipt. It may sound time-consuming, but Tzanos feels confident this procedure will soon be streamlined.

The only thing you can't do is donate money without stating your aim. You need to know exactly what you want to do with it, be it to support an ongoing initiative or to fund a future campaign.

"It's to make people part of the process," the IDEA founder says. "That way it's not like they've donated 100 euros to some NGO. It's more like they've spent 100 euros to buy homeless people sleeping bags."

Self-fulfilling

So far almost all of the association's projects have been self-funded. A group email announcing the latest good cause was usually enough to collect the required sum within a day. But what IDEA also needs is volunteers.

"It's a lot harder to get people to part with their time than it is to part with their money," Tzanos says.

Flexibility is their secret weapon.

"We want to make it easy on you," Tzanos says. "You can do anything from show up, suggest an idea or help us in a professional capacity. We also encourage people to organise their own projects and come to us if they need help raising money or recruiting volunteers." Adds Tzanos: "It's all about taking charge instead of standing on the sidelines.'



A tree planting drive in Melissia, northern Athens

On the flipside



Stavroula Logothettis and 'crowd funding': the next documentary will be 'a real community effort'

A FEW short days after wrapping up production on her recent documentary project, *Made in Greece*, Stavroula Logothettis saw another potentially powerful story about the flipside of the credit crunch unfold right before her eyes.

IDEA, a grass-roots initiative fixated on absolute transparency, not only invites people to donate their time and money to a worthy cause of their choosing, but also challenges them to follow the process all the way through so not a penny or second goes to waste.

At a time when Greece is licking its NGO wounds that cost the government millions of euros in obscure causes that never materialised, IDEA might just be what the doctor ordered: a reason to make us believe all over again.

Humankind can be selfless after all - and it looks like Logothettis has caught the bug.



"It seems to me that the time is ripe for some positive information. People are hungry for it"

"We're bigger than we give ourselves credit for," she says. "When you believe in your convictions, you're more likely to follow them through regardless of what the general climate around you is."

Action, not words

Using this as her production mantra, she is set to start filming IDEA projects this coming summer, even if the current economy is not exactly conducive to great cinema.

"It's frustrating anywhere when you're a filmmaker, but it's particularly hard in Greece right now because none of the major broadcasters are willing to support these kinds of projects," Logothettis says. "They might commit in words but when it comes time to hand over the money they tend to disappear."

So what's the answer to the financial lockdown? Crowd funding, of course, in which folks pool their resources for a cause.

True to the nature of the enterprise that will soon start relying on the kindness of strangers (so far all IDEA projects have been funded internally, but the NGO will soon start accepting donations and having paid membership), Logothettis' next documentary effort will partially rely on fundraisers.

"Due to the nature of the project we plan to organise a couple of fundraisers where the public will be invited to donate money and get a producer's credit on the film," she said. "We want it to be a real community effort."

Smitten

This brilliant idea was recently implemented by the LYNCHthree project (*www.lynchthree.com*), an ultra-independent production about one of the most mystifying personalities in the history of cinema: David Lynch. Even the man himself appeared smitten by the production team's determination, to the point of donating a self-portrait to support the cause.

The artwork was printed on limited-edition prints, t-shirts and tote bags that for a $50 fee bought supporters access to the material and regular updates on the production. Logothettis goes one step further by being willing to dole out producer credits and hoping that a broadcaster will, sooner or later, take the hint.

"It seems to me that the time is ripe for some positive information," says the Athens-born Greek-Canadian, whose acting credits include *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* and 2008's *Athanassia*, directed by Panos Karkanetvatos.

"People are hungry for it," she continues. "They're seeking inspiration and when they see others out there doing it, they're quick to either join up or start something specific to their communities. As Canadian activist/journalist Naomi Klein says, it's time for some participatory democracy."

A trailer for Made in Greece *can be seen on* YouTube.

Despina Pavlaki