



Sarajevo 27/9/2018

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Good afternoon to all,

**“Rivers and streams in Attica-Athens.  
Struggles to save the few ones which are still alive”**

With great pleasure we have accepted your invitation! I am Evangelia Dimitriou and represent Ki.P.I., which is a Citizen Movement in Attica-Athens, Greece.

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Well, Attica is Athens and its surrounding area, with about 4 million people, living in a concrete jungle...

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At the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, Attica was an area with about 700 streams and rivers. Nowadays, very few rivers and streams or parts of them (about 70) have survived the urban expansion and remain in their natural state. **Most of them have survived thanks to the struggle and fights of many citizens, simple people who care, for many decades now.**

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Why do we need to continue this fight? Because of **the Flood Management Plans of the State, which prefer expensive projects, for flood protection! Projects that, not only spare valuable natural and economical resources but also destroy the environment!** These include:

1. Deforestation of the slopes and the beds of the rivers, placing gabions or constructing bored pile walls or even worse boxing rivers in concrete, turning them into culverts.
2. Construction of rainwater channels, which have proved to be mostly inadequate during intense rainfalls, in areas with filled and destroyed streams.

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Meanwhile, these plans do not consider demolishing the illegal buildings and other constructions on the slopes and the banks of the rivers. On the contrary, **in many cases, they protect these buildings from flooding by making more constructions, narrowing the bed of the river more and requiring more funds!**

As an example, I will briefly refer to the disastrous plans for three rivers:

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**The Stream of Pikrodafni**

It was a long stream which had a length about 9,5 km and many branches.

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Now only a part of the main branch is still alive, only about 6 km!

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However, it is a stream with lush vegetation, amphibians and over 100 kinds of birds. According to the last Flood Management Plan of the State for Pikrodafni, at 2013, the following interventions are included:

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1. **Cutting down 815 huge trees with all the underwood** on the bed and the slopes of the stream and placing gabions, along it.
2. Even worse in some spots, raising bored pile walls in order **to protect from erosion** scree slopes, made of construction, demolition and excavation waste or, **illegal constructions on the slopes and the banks of the stream!**

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According to an expert of the Assistant Professor of the Athens Technical University, Mr. Konstantinos Loupasakis, **the river bed and the largest part of the slopes of Pikrodafni, is composed of geological formations of millions of years**, which are not easily fretted by the water. Ridiculously, the Region of Attica wants to protect these geological formations from erosion (!) by dressing them with rocks wrapped in wire netting! This construction lives only about 50 to 70 years!

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3. This plan also does not include either the reconstruction of the wrong technical works, for example some bridges, or the demolition of the arbitrary and illegal buildings. They are both the only specific spots where overflow is caused or can be caused in Pikrodafni, as we are informed from the same expert.

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Last month a bulldozer destroyed about 100 meters of the bed of the stream because they wanted to make a retaining wall with the cobbles of the stream, to protect the basement of a house, that has been built on its bank!

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### **The Great Rafina river**

In this case we have a river with a length about 15 km with rich ecosystem and a similar plan for this river, like the one I expounded on the plan for Pikrodafni, above.

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They also **plan to sacrifice 1435(!) trees with all the underwood, without hurting any construction on the bed and the slopes of the river!**

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For example, at this diagram **the river will be changed into a culvert**, to protect a factory which has been built at its meeting with the stream of Valanaris, as you can see! **The river will be narrowed! It will become 20m starting from 40m!**

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### **The Stream of Podoniftis**

In the last 770 m of this stream, which have been left in their natural state, at the boundary of the municipality of Athens, the river crosses a densely-built area and it is an oasis for this part of the city.



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The same “arrangement” has been planned **for this stream also, that is, deforestation and gabions, without affecting the illegal constructions.** As you see, most of them are worthless and at a great risk to collapse into the bed of the river!

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Last year, a big deadly flood happened in the industrial towns of Mandra and Nea Peramos in Attica. Two towns **which have, literally, been built in streams!** At least 24 people were drowned, 1000 houses were destroyed by the flood, a great number of cars were drifted and damaged, by the water! **It was a biblical disaster!**

Unfortunately, the Authorities did not change their minds, their policy and their plans for flood management in Attica, even after this biblical disaster!

That is why many associations, societies, fellowships and simple citizens, struggling to save our rivers are becoming more and more, every day in Attica...

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**In the last three years,** at the beginning of the summer, our voluntary association (Κι.Π.Ι.) with the Boy Scouts of Ilioupolis, organize **a fiesta on the banks of our stream Pikrodafni, under its huge trees and near its beautiful bushes.**

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This event includes photography and painting exhibition, music, songs, dances, poetry reading, playing games and painting for children. **(slide 21)**

Also, we inform people with short speeches and by sharing brochures and of course, treat everyone with food, beverages and drinks. All the participants are volunteers, and the expenses are covered by donations.

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**In conclusion: we all live under conditions of not only global warming and extreme weather but also economical crisis, which we suffer to a great extent in our country. So, we are not allowed to spare natural and economical resources!**

**We should all be taught by the wisdom of mother Nature, to become wiser and more responsible when managing them!**

Thank you very much!