# From Dusk to Dawn:
# Local Party Organization and Party Success of Right-wing Extremism

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## Abstract

A marginal racist organisation, Golden Dawn, managed to attract first the votes of almost one out of fourteen Greek voters and then global media and public attention. How did an extreme right groupuscule invade the political terrain of an EU-10 member state? Existing attempts to account for this phenomenon point to demand-side explanations, related to the political turmoil that followed the notorious debt crisis and the accompanying austerity measures. These explanations, however, fail to account for the genesis of this trajectory. We delve into this exact question, focusing on the election that marked the emergence of the Golden Dawn and permitted further electoral penetration. Combining qualitative and quantitative methods, we show that the party took advantage of favourable political circumstances developing a grass-roots network of protection that helped it enter the central political arena.

Keywords: right-wing extremism; grass-roots activity; Greece; political opportunity; new party success

## Introduction

On the night of the elections of May 6th 2012, overwhelmed by the score of 6,97%, Nikos Michaloliakos, leader of the Golden Dawn (Greek:ΧρυσήΑυγή[Chryssi Avgi], GD), shouted on camera 'Veni, vidi, vici'. A few minutes earlier and as a way to prepare his entrance in the press room, a dozen of party activists had impudently obliged Greek and foreign journalists to stand up, as a way to pay respect to the party leader. This image marked the unprecedented electoral success of the GD in the May 2012 Greek election. With this result the GD became one of the most successful right-wing parties of European extremism. Hardly surprising, since then it has been the centre of media attention throughout the world.[1]

Almost any successful entrance in an established party system merits systematic investigation.When this comes from 'one of the most extremist political parties' (Ellinas 2012) contemporary Europe has witnessed, the need to delve into the roots of this phenomenon becomes hardly debatable. How did the GD manage to convert from a marginal acitivist group into the third largest party –according to all opinion polls from late 2012 onwards– of the Greek political system?

Abiding by the tides of media coverage, most academic accounts on GD tend to allude to the importance of exogenous factors related to the country's debt crisis and the accompanying austerity measures. What remains remarkably neglected, however, is that the turning point in the party's electoral fortunes is not the 2012 election. Rather, the first electoral success for the GD comes in the 2010 municipal election, won by the then incumbent PASOK, in a political context still largely unaffected by the crisis. It was in that election and in particular in the election for the municipality of Athens that GD's leader received an unprecedented 5.3% of the vote and was elected in the municipal council. This was the first representative of GD at a legislative body since its foundation in 1983. Much of what followed one-and-a-half year later at the parliamentary elections of 2012, when its appeal diffused nationwide, is well known through the international media commentaries. But the Athens Mayoral Election is crucial to understanding this phenomenon, since it has marked the emergence of the GD in Greek politics and has permitted further electoral penetration at the parliamentary elections of 2012.

This paper aims at explaining the emergence of the party in the spotlight at the Mayoral Election of 2010. Coupled by a series of semi-structured interviews with residents, observation of residents' committee meetings and a survey administered in

Athens right after these elections, we will argue that the GD did not emerge as a viable political alternative due to the breakdown of the current party system. Its birth as a significant political party is a story of tie-bridging and bonding with local communities. This is achieved through hightened visibility and the provision of selective incentives to its supporters in ethnically diversed neighborhoods of Athens. GD's strategy, similar to those of National Front and BNP in the 1980s and 1990s (Eatwell and Goodwin 2010: 5), aims at creating a 'local culture' that reinforced anti-immigrant positions through contacts in the local community and cooperation with local initiatives.

After a brief introduction into the ideological and historical features of the party, we provide a list of demand- and supply-side explanations of this phenomenon. We then introduce our organizational hypothesis, which draws on extensitve fieldwork research. This section is followed by a systematic examination of our hypothesis, which attempts to account for a long series of competing explanations. Concluding, we allude to the implications of our findings for the explanation of the rise of GD and for the genesis of extreme-right movements in more general.

**The Golden Dawn: more than an anti-immigration party**

Two aspects with regard to the GD require our attention: its until 2010 extremely marginal electoral appeal and its radical ideological profile. We briefly discuss both aspects in turn.

The party participated for the first time in the 1994 European elections, winning 0.11% of the total vote. Its 0.07% in the 1996 national elections confirmed its marginal appeal. Few things changed since then and until 2009, when the Golden Dawn won just 23,564 (0.46%) and 19,636 (0.29%) votes at the elections for the European parliament and the Greek parliament respectively.

Turning to the ideological outlook of the party, Golden Dawn’s official documents reveal an ultra-nationalist, xenophobic, pro-Nazi political organization that opposes itself to all immigrants, regardless of their legal status. It supports racist ideas with cultural and biological connotations. It is also irredentist, since it denies existing geographical borders. The GD supports anti-parliamentarian, anti-political and anti-communist stances and defines globalization, EU and multiculturalism among its major enemies. The organization defends the idea of an organic interclassist state,

which is a "People's state" that protects the"biological" and "cultural unity" of the Greek nation.

Little is known about the party's internal profile. Following the tactic of other extremist parties, the Golden Dawn refuses to provide specific information concerning its organization and membership. Recent electoral successes and the consequent increased visibility have however validated a series of characteristics, which are common to right-wing extremist organizations. The GD is a rigorously structured, strictly hierarchical, introvert organization with very strong leadership. Since its foundation the GD has the same party leader, who has never been challenged seriously by internal party rivals.

How did such a fringe party manage to establish itself as key actor in the party system? How did 5.3% of Athenian voters suddenly opt for a party until then in the border or non-existence? It is to this puzzle that we now turn, proposing a two-step process, whereby the 2010 municipal election operates as the turning point. Delving into the determinants of GD success in this election, we show that although contextual factors enabled political manoeuvre, significant credit needs to be attribured to the organisational vigor of the party grass-roots and their efficient use of the political opportunities generated in that election.

**The 2010 election as a political opportunity**

Whereas most previous research on extreme right has highlighted the role of historical legacies, socio-structural processes (i.e. modernization, post-industrialization, globalization) and sentiments against the parties and politicians (see inter alia Anastasakis 2002; Betz 1994; Schwank & Betz 2003; Mudde 1996; Merkl & Weinberg 2005), a strand in this literature has advocated the importance of opportunity structures, either institutional or situational (Goodwin, Cutts & Ford 2012; Mudde 2007; Rydgren 2007; Arzheimer & Carter 2006; Eatwell 2003; Roots 1999; Tarrow 1998). Following previous research on far-right (Arzheimer & Carter 2006: 422-3), we distinguish between 'long-term institutional features' (e.g. electoral system), 'medium-term factors' (e.g. level of party polarization or convergence) and 'short-term contextual or conjectural variables' (e.g. immigration) of extreme-right support. As we will see, only the latter has given room to the emerge of the GD. Even this set of factors, however, constitute only part of this story. The other part is explained by the party's grass-roots activities, to which we turn in the next section.

It is clear that long-term, stable features such as the electoral system or the nature of the election cannot on their own account for the rise of the GD. As Norris (2005), Carter (2002 and 2005) and Van der Brug et al. (2005) have shown, there is no statistically significant pattern between the electoral strength of a radical right party and the type of the electoral system. Against the conventional wisdom that the disproportionality of the electoral system decreases the voteshare for the radical right, Arzheimer and Carter (2006) attest the opposite, while Art (2011: 16-7) emphasizes the strategic use of electoral system that mainstream parties attempt vis-à-vis the radical right. In any case, the electoral system used in the 2010 municipal election has not changed.

A typical case of second-order elections, municipal elections usually serve as an opportunity for citizens to express their political opposition to mainstream parties by making centrifugal electoral choices (Reif & Schmitt 1980;Mudde 2007: 235-36). Kitschelt and McGann (1995: 99) argue that local elections represent a political opportunity for new, and especially anti-system, parties to capture media attention. Electoral success in these elections might have downstream effects, if parties succeed in widening their organizational structure throughout the country. To be sure, these side-effects emerge only when parties 'act quickly to broaden their challenge to the political system' (ibid.) and to 'create strategies that enhance their power' (Ramalingan (2012). However, the GD had participated in previous municipal elections with only muniscule vote shares. Moreover, in the 2010 election it was only in Athens where it saw its vote share skyrocketing. Clearly, the second-order thesis alone cannot explain the level of GD support in the country's capital.

Moving to medium-term factors, the ideological divergence between the mainstream parties on policy-making related to immigration has left an ambiguous imprint on public opinion. On March 2010, the Greek parliament voted a law concerning the acquisition of Greek citizenship and the voting rights of legal immigrants (see Christopoulos 2013). The law was highly criticized by the conservative party of ND and the populist-radical right party of LAOS. The issue remained high in the public agenda for several months and denoted lack of elite consensus. The extent to which it helped the GD, however, is far from clear. According to Arzheimer & Carter (2006: 423-24), divergence between the mainstream parties might either legitimise the policies of the extreme right or cause a move to more radical anti-immigration stances by the mainstream right wing party of

the political system (ibid. 439). True, policy divergence between the two traditional parties brings the issue forward and gives anti-immigrant parties the chance to be heard louder. However, the locality of GD success in the municipality of Athens indicates that is highly unlikely that this nation-wide debate played a pivotal role in the GD's success.

A factor that is more likely to have favoured GD support is the absence of another candidate on the right of ND. Greece's established anti-immigration party, LAOS, decided to withdraw an autonomous candidacy in the 2010 municipal elections in Athens. LAOS's support to the incumbent conservative candidate is likely to have produced a gap of representation on the right of the political spectrum, which might have strengthened the transfer of votes towards the GD candidate, Nikos Michaloliakos. What happened after the withdrawal of LAOS from the electoral arena in the municipality of Athens, can be described as the opposite of what Tarrow (1998) referred to as the 'radical flank' effect: non-extremist far right parties seem as "level-headed" in the eyes of the voters after the appearance of extremist parties in the right pole (Rydgren 2009: 25). In the municipal elections of 2010 in Athens the absence of a populist radical right candidate released far right voters to move further to the (extreme) right (Koustenis 2011: 51-2).[2]

Yet again, LAOS would not have opted for the ND candidate unless the latter had provided unambiguous signals regarding his anti-immigration stances. Why, then, would the potential voters of this party shift to the leader of a marginal organization instead of voting for the incumbent?

Indeed, the hypothesis that the GD attracted only LAOS voters does not find support by the data. Even when looking only at the bivariate relationship between the two parties, the pattern of correspondence is far from perfect. Figure 1 depicts the association between the vote share of LAOS in the 58 electoral districts of Athens in the 2009 general election—the most recent election before the 2010 municipal election— and the GD's vote share in the 2010 municipal election. Although there is a positive relationship, it is not monotone. Importantly,several outliers are observed.

*Figure 1 about here*

This between-district variation indicates that at least part of the answer about the determinants of GD support is to be found in the local dynamics generated by the

geographical distribution of new waves of immigrants during the years before the election.[3] Since 2008, irregular inflows of immigrants entered Greece mainly from Turkey and concentrated in certain areas of the centre of Athens.[4] This wave of immigrants was predominantly settled in the neighborhoods of the 2nd and the 6th city district. According to repeated evidence from our interviewees, residents of Agios Panteleimonas, a neighborhood in the 6th district of Athens, faced an abrupt and massive installation of immigrants on their return from holidays in the end of summer 2008:

> *'I have no idea what happened then; what game was played by the government and what we gained in exchange. What I know is that since the end of summer 2008, the neighborhood was invaded by hundreds of immigrants. And it is not by accident that I am using the word invasion. They were sleeping in cartons, living in the playground, selling sandwiches... Where did these people come from? Why were they placed here? We could neither sit nor pass through the square.'* [5]

*Map of Athens' seven districts*

Although we do not dispose official data for the distribution of the immigrant population in 2008, comparative data from 2005-2007 to 2008 validate the rapid increase described by the residents. From 19% between 2005-2007 in the city of Athens, immigrants have risen to 26.5% in September 2008 (for data on the evolution of irregular immigrants in Athens, see Vaiou et al. 2007). Immigrants' concentration in the 6th city district becomes also evident if one observes the locality of offices of the different ethnic groups in this specific area.[6]

A second contextual factor that might have augmented the electoral demand of the extreme right is an increase in crime rates in these areas.[7] Regardless of their political affiliation or ideological predisposition, all interviewees asserted the problem of criminality and the feeling of fear, which followed it. This issue was constantly high in the agenda of the regular assemblies of the 6th city district and was raised by both left wing and right wing residents' associations.[8] This should be related to a generalized decline in the standards of living in this particular area of Athens, which

'concentrates most of the contemporary social and economic problems in urban living'.[9] The situation has been deteriorating since the 1970s by the fact that middle-class inhabitants gradually left the city center for the suburbs (Arapoglou et al. 2009). Immigrants moved into the housing stock since the 1990s. On the one hand, landlords exploited the demand for housing; on the other, immigrants utilizedthe supply of low-rent apartments, as well as the disposition of vacant andabandoned buildings.[10] The huge turnover of people staying temporarily in those properties (the so-called 'rent per hour') and the high density of residents per property contributed to the deepening of urban decline of the citycentre.

The combination of rapid increase of immigrant population, high crime rates and urban degradation boosted the demand for anti-immigrant rhetoric. The propensity to vote for far right parties increases when voters consider immigrants responsible for the rising crime (Dinas and van Spanje 2011). It was therefore a straightforward task for any anti-immigration party —and the GD was one of them— to mobilize support,by equating immigrants with criminals.

Still, however, a crucial part of the puzzle is left out. How could the GD overcome its marginal status so as to become a viable political alternative in this election? Even at their maximium, all these abovementioned factors constitute necessary conditions for GD's electoral performance. Eventually, however, it must have been GD's strategy that materialised this opportunity. The co-existence of increased immigration and crime rates does not help us understand why, for instance, the GD received such a high vote share in the 6$^{th}$ district but not in the 2$^{nd}$, which has similar immigration rates. A careful look at the electoral scores in the 59 electoral districts of the city of Athens per municipal department shows that, whereas the Golden Dawn won more than 5.29% in districts with low (<5%) or medium level of immigration (11-20%), it remained under the total score of 5.29% in the second department. Figure 2 presents the relationship between support for the Golden Dawn and immigration rates. The association is monotone and positive but relatively weak. Even in the 6$^{th}$ municipal district, GD gained a disproportionate part of the electorate in the neighborhood of Agios Panteleiomonas (14.7%, that is 80% more that the average vote share in the 6$^{th}$ municipal district). Such findings indicate that there is a local element in the explanation of the GD vote.

*Figure 2 about here*

Evidence form our survey[11] points to the same conclusion. Both panels of Figure 3 plot the relationship between immigration attitudes and GD support in three different areas of Athens. The left-most panel looks at people's views on whether immigrants undermine (0) or enrich (10) the country's cultural life. We compare residents in the neighrboorhood of Agios Panteleimonas (6th district), which is regarded as the stronghold of GD's activities, and residents in the two other districts with crime and immigrant rates quite as high as those observed in the 6th district.[12] The vertical axis measures people's propensity to vote (PTV) score for the GD, measured in a 0 to 10 scale. The local regression curves shown in the graph trace the mean responses conditional on people's scores in the horizontal axis. Looking at the left-most panel of Figure 3, we see that not only is there a gap between the residents of the 6$^{th}$ district (AP) and those residing in the other two counties, but this gap is relatively stable across the x-axis. At any given point of the cultural dimension, residents of AP denote a higher mean PTV score for the GD than the residents of the other two areas. If GD's support was contigent upon the local level of anti-immigration attitudes, for a given value of the horizontal axis we would observe no difference between the three curves. The pattern observed here indicates that irrespective of people's attitudes on this issue, there is still a remarkable gap.

*Figure 3 about here*

The pattern depicted in the right panel of Figure 3 is analogous. The question refers to the economic pros (10) and cons (0) of immigration. Although the curve for AP is not exactly parallel to the two other curves, we still find a gap among those respondents who hold the least favorable views towards the immigrants. Thus, among people with equally extreme anti-immigration stances, i.e. people who believe that immigrants harm the economy, we find a gap which essentially cannot be explained on these grounds.

Starting from this observation, we will now turn toward highlighting the importance of another factor accounting for GD's electoral breakthrough in 2010, namely the party's intentional organizational activity in specific districts of the city. We develop our argument building on our fieldwork. We then move on to test our

organizational hypothesis using a survey especially designed for this purpose and administered a couple of months after the 2010 municipal elections.

**Mobilization, violence and visibility**

Studying the electoral success of Vlaams Block in Flanders, De Witte and Klandermans (2001) highlight the importance of mobilization processes in bringing the demand for an extreme right-wing party and the existence of a radical core of militants –what they call the supply– together. Notwithstanding the growing negative attitudes towards ethnic minorites in in early 1990s in Antwerp, it was through an intensive neighbourhood-by-neighbourhood campaign that Vlaams Block succeeded in electorally exploiting demand.[13] Lamontagne and Stockemer (2010) also find a strong and persisting effect of region on vote for FPÖ and BZÖ and argue that living in Carinthia -the organizational center of the FPÖ and BZÖ- may have increased popular exposure to extreme right ideas.

The GD has nothing but underestimated the importance of such mobilization techniques. In the aftermath of the first round of the Athens 2010 municipal election, Nikos Michaloliakos unfolded the party's strategy along the following lines:

> *'This fight, which ended by the electoral result of the municipal elections, started through the committees of residents of the squares of Omonea, Agios Panteleimonas, Attiki, Ameriki. From all these special people and the even braver women who stood in the front line in order to resist. We first had the assembly in Omonea, then the fights in the Court of Appeal. We passed through the residents' committees to arrive at this point.'* [14]

However conscious and clear in retrospect the strategy of enhancing power within grass-roots initiatives might have been for the GD, its effectiveness was not taken as given from the very beginning. How did the GD manage to gain political acceptance and electoral support among residents of the 6th district of Athens?

Following a well-known tactic in right-wing extremist European parties (Mudde 2007: 269), the GD chooses the area of AP as a stronghold in order to acquire a local presence and, through it, a further visibility. AP, as well as the adjacent neighbourhoods of the 4th and the 6th department of Athens, become the headquarters of the organisation. In other words, the party adopted the opposite tactic of what it

used to do the last twenty-five years: instead of being present all over the Greek territory, after 2008/2009 GD gathered its forces in few local areas.

Since September 2008, residents of AP were assembling on a regular basis around the square in order to protest against immigrants' concentration and 'reclaim' their neighborhood. Four different kinds of actors constituted the scenery: the 'outraged residents' who belong to an old conservative middle class; the GD; the immigrants; and the 'solidarists', i.e. left-wing activists expressing support *vis-à-vis* the immigrants.

> *'In the beginning I was watching from my balcony. Some residents distributed leaflets and called for protest against the immigrants. I did not like that. Firstly, I did not know them and then they were swearing the government and politicians. I thought that this was not serious: you cannot succeed in solving a problem by speaking this way. It was not civilized. I decided to go down. The GD was present on the side of the inhabitants. On the other side, there were anarchists. I can say that I was with the GD at that point, because after all, they were holding the Greek flag and protecting the residents'.*[15]

Our research in the area revealed that from 2008 to 2010 there have been at least twenty different committees or/and associations of residents. Among them, at least ten have gradually built ties with GD. Progressively people were divided in two camps: the 'outraged residents' with GD, on the one side, and the immigrants with leftist activists, on the other.

> *'In the middle there was the police; on the one side the inhabitants, on the other the immigrants' supporters. And then the show started. They burnt trashcans, the police threw tear gas and they left. Then some other immigrant solidary groups showed up. They were pretending to be in pain for the immigrants, only in order to cause problems in the neighborhood. Because if one really cares for one other, he offers food, blankets. On the contrary, these people brought nothing. They were indifferent about how these people would survive; they only came to make a fuss. At least, the GD was on the residents' side.'* [16]

Hence, the GD progressively merged with some committees of residents. It used a two-fold method, which is a well-known method in the German NPD (Backes and Steglich 2007) in order to penetrate the local population. On the one hand, cultivating the image of a welfare state populist party, it provided goods and services and, on the other, following the neonazi tactics, it used violence in order to "protect" the indigenous against the 'rivals'. As far as the first one is concerned, it offered security services to aged people and to shop owners of the 4th and the 6th districts, like the accompaniment of pensioners to the bank, to the supermarket, the protection of students, of night bars and restaurants. In case of criminal acts – among which the most frequent were street robberies – the GD offered services of persecution of the thief and promised return of the stolen goods. It organized events like food distribution for Greeks in squares of the 4th and 6th districts and, last but not least, it supported the grass-roots movement against immigrants.[17]

A characteristic example of the way that the GD provided services is given by one of our interviewees:

> *'On the corner of Fylis and Epirou street, there was a meeting of the Citizens Committees gathering more or less sixty people. At some point, a group of Africans, which was approaching, threw stun grenades. The GD, which was also around, got in front of the residents, claiming that it will clean up the place. The GD went in front, the residents followed. The police stood still. At this point the GD showed that it can realise at least part of what it defends. The residents saw the GD having power, whereas the policemen being deprived of coverage.'*[18]

This kind of GD's activity in particular has a strong impact on levels of support for the party. By engaging in the local society, GD operated as a 'local industry of protection' (Gambetta 1993: 2). The supply of protection made people more sympathetic to the party, regardless of their atittudes towards immigrants.

Violence is an instrument of double utility in the strategy of the organization: it is used it as a means of confrontation with the perceived enemies and as a symbol of power in order to attract members and voters. From 2008 to 2010, the GD brings into play violence against three social groups: immigrants, regardless of their legal status;

antifa activists; and socially vulnerable individuals, like drug addicts, homeless etc. It hence exploits the presence of pro-immigrant activists and antifa groups in order to create acceptance and proximity with the local population and acquire visibility. *Interactive extremism*[19] between pro-immigrant groups and the GD further divided the inhabitants and reinforced the right-wing extremists:

> *'In the beginning, we didn't know how to handle the situation and we made mistakes. We organised continuously antiracist happenings. This polarised even more the residents and worsened the situation.'* [20]

In terms of political communication, the GD takes under consideration its difficulty in national media penetration and searches alternative ways in order to diffuse its message. A month before the 2010 municipal elections, a high-ranked party cadre was arguing:

> *'The slogan for our political action is "Break the conspiracy of silence". The sign that we already have is that we will face a tremendous war by the mass media. Nobody will mention us; do not expect such a thing. Hence the only thing that we are obliged to do is to be 24 hours per day in the streets in order to propagandize this effort.'* [21]

For this reason, GD utilizes traditional practices of mass parties in the local level. It distributes a journal named "The Voice of the Residents of Agios Panteleimonas". It exploits door-to-door techniques and organizes grass-roots politics, like demonstrations and assemblies in order to create the stronghold. For this same reason, it consciously transfers its headquarters close to the neighborhood of AP. The Secretary General of GD, Nikos Mihaloliakos, clearly admits the importance of volunteers and door-to-door techniques in moblizing support for the party:

> *'They [i.e. the political elites] hadn't calculated some uncertain factors, like the existence of crazy volunteers. Because campaigns do not demand only money; they demand the guts of being a fighter. The same happens in Athens. Dozens of fighters thresh on a daily basis door-to-door, from one car to the other, from a coffee shop to the other, from*

*one neighborhood to the other in order to inform the people. This is how they liberated the square of Agios Panteleimonas and the square of Attiki. And then, there will follow other neighborhoods and quartiers and the whole city. Because the city belongs to us.'* [22]

According to many analysts of the far right phenomenon (Betz 1998, Lubbers et al. 2002, Carter 2005, Art 2008), party organization is considered to be a crucial factor either for the rise or for the electoral success of extreme right-wing parties. Golden Dawn is an organisationally solid party, without internal fracture, that through this seemingly "pre-modern" electoral campaign (Farrell 1996; Blumler & Kavanagh 1999) succeeded in augmenting its sphere of influence, in recruiting and promoting activists,[23] as well as in placing a series of issues in the public agenda. Above all, however, it gained visibility and settled in the local political terrain. After two and a half decades of electoral misery and general disesteem, GD became a local *acteur politique*.

**Empirical Analysis: Our organisational theory against alternative explanations**

The aim of this section is to put our organizational hypothesis to the test. To do so in a systematic way, we use data from a survey targetting a random sample of the municipality of Athens and taking place soon after the 2010 election. Using these data, we will examine our supply-side explanation against other potentially relevant explanations of extreme-right support, most of which have been already highlighted in the theoretical discussion.

A first competing explanation is that rather than being due to is organisational activity, GD's support in these areas is due to their particular sociodemographic outlook. We thus need to control for sociodemographic factors possibly confounding our mobilization effects. Moreover, related to our previous discussion about the contextual conjectures possibly driving GD support, we need to control for objective indicators of immigration and crime rates at the lowest possible aggregation level.[24]

Related to the aggregate level immigration and crime rates are people's attitudes about immigrants. People who notice the GD's grassroots activity might also hold more anti-immigration views than citizens who are not aware of the party's local presence. To account for this possibility, we need to control for attitudes towards immigration.

Attitudes are of course linked with perceptions. People may resort to the GD if they perceive a personal threat from immigrants or if they simply perceive crime as an important problem affecting their living conditions. These people would probably rate positively the party even without having experienced its grass-roots activities in their neighborhood. Thus, we need to take into account individuals' perceptions about the current state of affairs with regard to crime.

Attitudes with regard to immigration are measured by using two indicators. The first consists of respondents' self placement in a 0 to 10 scale on a question about whether immigrants are damaging (0) or beneficial (10) for the national economy. The second question captures concerns of cultural integration, asking respondents to locate themselves in the same 0-10 scale about whether immigrants undermine (0) or enrich (10) the cultural life of the country. Perceptions with regard to the status quo in the issue of immigration are captured with a question asking respondents to locate themselves in a 1 to 5 scale with regard to where they believe the country's entrance policy stands: 1) free entrance; 5) absolute restriction. Crime perceptions are measured by a dummy denoting respondents who think crime is one of the most important problems the country is facing nowadays. Moreover, a question asking respondents whether they or significant others had been victims of a robbery attempt or some other act of violence is also included as a control. Finally, as another way to account for perceptual biases that might be linked to GD support without necessitating direct experience with the local party, we include two binary indicators of media attendance: the first switches on for people who follow the morning news broadcasts, which are more prone to cover issues of crime. The second denotes respondents who watch evening news broadcasts, which tend to focus more on national political matters.

A final factor that needs to be taken into account is that the GD is not only an anti-immigration party. It is also an ultra-nationalist party with a discourse based on racial discriminations. Again, the GD's activity might be more visible among people who hold nationalist views. We thus need to take into account people's ideological predispositions as well as their more generic attitudes towards nationalism and towards other political representatives of this ideological camp. This is why we also include the classic left-right dimension as well as respondents' PTV score for LAOS, as another way to capture some latent underlying tendency to vote for the Golden Dawn.[25]

Finally, we need to discuss the measurement of our key independent variable. Recall that our hypothesis is that, on top of all the abovementioned factors, GD's grass roots acitivity significantly improved the party's electoral performance. Since we cannot effectively measure party activism, we will essentially deduce it by employing an indicator of GD's visibility among our survey respondents. We combine two proxies: 1) whether the respondent received a leaflet from the party; 2) whether people have been informed about the GD's activities in their area of residence either by friends, neighbours or by other acquaintances. Whereas the first indicator captures a specific observational manifestation of local party organization, it is far from an exhaustive measure of GD's activity. This problem is mediated by the use of the second indicator, which encompasses various indirect paths through which the party's organization might have reached the local community. To be sure, both items might be driven by selection into networds favourable to the GD. The next section explains how the selection problem is adressed in the analysis.[26]

**Instrumenting Golden Dawn's visibility**

Despite the inclusion of a long list of control variables, there may still be various unobservable factors making the GD both more visible and more likeable To mediate this problem, we use residence in the 4$^{th}$ and 6$^{th}$ district as an instrument of GD's organizational activity. Although its action eventually spread in various neighborhoods of Athens, the party's core fieldowork during all this period was Agios Panteleimonas and its surrounding neighborhoods, extending in the two adjacent city districts.[27]

The use of municipality of residence is based on the idea that residing in the 6$^{th}$ district is likely to have brought people into contact with the GD. Although such contact is likely to be the outcome of prior predispositions, most people would most likely continue having no contact with the GD had they not lived in this area. To be sure, our instrumental variables estimand will only reveal the causal effect of GD visibility on GD support, if the following conditions are satisfied:

1. Ignorability: People may have chosen to either abandon this area or, reversely, to move in its neightborhoods as a result of the presence of the GD.
2. Exclusion: Knowledge on municipality status should not help us predict support for the GD in any other way than through its increased visibility in that area. In other

words, people living in the 6th district should not be fundamentally different in structural or demographic terms not already captured by our control variables from those living in other areas of Athens.

3. First stage: knowledge on residence status should help us predict perceived visibility of GD's activities.

4. Monotonicity: No-one is discouraged from being mobilized because of living in the 6th municipality.

Assumption 3 states that, conditional on a set of observables, residing either in the 6th or in the 4th district makes it more likely to have witnessed the activity of the GD than residing in another county. In effect whereas 9 percent of respondents residing in other counties received a leaflet from the party, 15 percent did so among residents of the 4th or the 6th district. In the next section, we will examine this assumption controlling also for the set of observables included in X.

Monotonicity, criterion 4, is unlikely to be violated in our setting: people were not discouraged from hearing about the GD as a result of living in the 4th or the 6th municipal county. In other words, it is difficult to believe that the GD would be more visible for people living in the 4th or the 6th district, had they lived in a different municipality.

What is more problematic, however, is to establish ignorability and exclusion. Violation of either of these two assumptionswould imply that living in the 4th or the 6th municipal county is related to higher levels of support for the GD even in the absence of local party organisation.

Our story is a story of observables. We believe that accounting for all factors alluded to above residents of the 6th district are no more different from the other residents of Athens, but for the increased GD organization. Although this assumption cannot be readily tested as it would require observing the same respondents under different residence statuses, the next section provides indirect but supportive evidence in this respect.

**Results: the IV estimation**

The first column of Table 2 presents the results from the first stage. GD organisational visibility is regressed on the set of covariates plus a dummy denoting residents from the sixth or the fourth municipal county. Given the high number of factorized

variables included in the model, we cannot present the full results here. What is of interest is the presence of first stage: knowledge of municipality improves significantly our prediction about whether people were aware of GD's action. In other words, the second column presents the Two-Stage-Least-Squares estimator of the average effect of GD's organizational visibility on the propensity ot vote for GD, as instrumented through residence in the 4th and 6th district. Else equal, knowledge about GD's grassroots work at the local level seems to boost support for the party by more than one point in 0 to 10 scale.[28] This is a remarkable effect when one considers the very highly skewed distribution in this scale, whereby only 4 percent of the population gave a score higher than 5. The third column of the Table presents the same effect using a different estimator. Given the presence of covariates, the 2SLS estimator is consistent under the assumption of homogeneous treatment effects. To allow for heterogeneous treatment effects, the Local Average Response Functions proposed by Abadie (2003) is used. The result from this analysis is almost identical. Again, the same substantive conclusions are drawn. Knowing about the action of the GD almost doubles the party's PTV score.

*Table 2 about he*re

**Conclusions**

Before the GD entered the central political scene and the national parliament, it gained representation in the local politics of the City of Athens. Today, after the entrance in parliament and the escalating trend in the polls, many people try to explain how did that happen. The economic crisis is not the starting point of this electoral rise. Even though the crisis augments the opportunities for penetration of a right-wing party among the insecure and poor strata, GD's exit from the political margin was already a *fait accomplit* before the outbreak of the crisis.

Public debate on the causes of the electoral rise of right-wing extremism and the radical right in general tend to focus on demand-side explanations. Whilst we tried to shed light at both sides, our interpretation originates from the side of the internal supply. Shorty after the 2004 Olympic Games euphoria, when the polishing of the city centre was over, new, massive immigration flows entered the country. The serious degradation in terms of living standards for the city residents coincided with a decisive change in GD's strategy. It shifted from traditional nationalist right stakes

(national issues, anti-communism), powdered with racism and violent activities, to a new anti-immigration and pro-security agenda. At the same time, it no longer opted for national political presence; instead, it penetrated in specific local areas in order to turn them into strongholds.

Exogenous and endogenous factors, as well as their interaction, favoured the electoral breakthrough of the GD. The organisation activated the underlying residents' fears related to massive concentration of irregular Afro-asian immigrants in certain neighbourhoods after the summer of 2008. But most importantly, it was GD that succeeded in accessing the local population through residents' initiatives and committees, mainly interested on anti-immigrant mobilization. It offered goods and services to Greeks and, thus, managed to get identified as an organization, which protects the residents, whilst eliminating the foreigners. It was constantly present in certain city areas, either by taking action on its own, or by penetrating in existing initiatives organised by right-wing and anti-immigrant oriented citizens. The frontiers between the extremist organization and the residents' committees progressively became porous. Hence, without being a mass party, GD managed to become a party that gained entrance and interconnected to grass-roots activities.

In our analysis we highlighted the reasons for the electoral take off of the GD. We found out that internal supply-side factors such as organizational patterns, activist recruitment and political campaign strategies are crucial for the purpose of gaining access to the neighbourhoods of Athens, especially in an early stage, as the GD attempts to establish strongholds in order to move from the margins towards the central political arena. Although explanations for the rise of radical and extreme right parties focus either on the micro (individual) or the macro (national) level, we emphasize on the meso-level, in other words on what has happened in specific neighbourhoods in the city of Athens. Differently from other meso-level studies we have shown that not only the social conditions prevailing in the center of the capital (immigration, crime, violence) and its sub-local terrain but also the political opportunities GD has created for itself (penetration in the grassroots networks, interconnection between local party activists and activist movements) have played an important role for the rise of GD in the Greek party system. In the analysis of the far right party family in the post war European party systems, extreme and radical right parties have been often seen as the consequence of socio-political and economic determinats as well as the preferences of voters. We tried to show the local and even

the sub-local organizational contribution of the extreme right spectrum in Greece for its rise in the political scene.

Last but not least, the GD story helps us delve into the genesis of extreme-right movements. Looking at cases as diverse as the the BNP, the English Defense League (Allen 2011) and the racially motivated neighbourhood defence organizations in New York (Green, Strolovitch & Wong 1998), previous studies have emphasised the importance of local organization through the provision of protection. Focusing on an extreme-right party, we find that the interplay between violence, protection and grass-roots activity shapes the success and longevity of these movements. The osmosis produced by party activists and outraged citizens points to the way supply meets demand and vice versa. Beyond the extreme-right, it might offer an organizational argument on mechanisms of social mobilization and activist recruitment at local level.

**Notes**

[1] Our search came up with more that thirty entries in leading newspapers in France, the UK, the US, Germany, Spain and Italy.

[2] It is worth mentioning that LAOS also staged a national electoral breakthrough in the 2002 local elections, when its leader gained almost 15% of the votes as a candidate for the position of Head of Attica Region. LAOS electoral success in 2002 has been attributed to its media visibility (Ellinas 2012, available at: http://works.bepress.com/antonis_ellinas/10) as well as to New Democracy's decision to support a non-party affiliated candidate. GD's breakthrough in 2010, when the party has not gained as much media access as LAOS had in 2002, reveals that other resources, possibly organizational, can make up for lack of communicative resources.

[3] In the relevant literature, although political opportunity structures were first and foremost thought as "exogenous conditions" for social mobilization (Kitschelt 1986: 58), over the years it became obvious that 'most opportunities and constraints are situational rather than structural' (Uhlin 2006: 27; Tarrow 1998: 77). In other words, they are contingent upon already existing 'consistent dimensions of the political environment' (ibid. p. 76). The content of political opportunities and changes in their nature 'create the most important incentives for initiating new phases of contention' either referring to social movements (Tarrow 1998: 7) or to new phases of electoral resonance concerning the far right parties.

[4] After 2008, Greece became the country with the most irregular entries within the EU. In 2010 almost all irregular immigrants willing to access the EU flowed to Greece (Kassimis 2012). In ten years time, from 2001 to 2010, it is estimated that 358,940 immigrants have entered the country (Drettakis 2011).

[5] Interview with resident from the square of Agios Panteleimonas. Through purposive sampling we conducted twelve in-depth, semi-structured interviews with key figures of the grass-roots movement. Since our purpose was the detailed exploration and understanding of the local dynamics, the chronological order that the events took place from 2008 to 2010, the puzzle of interactions between opposing actors and way that

alliances where created, we carefully selected our informants in order to include all the relevant with our research cases, as well as to succeed maximum variation. The identification of key informants was made possible after the various forms of observation and participant observation took place. Hence, we mainly reached leading figures of the anti-immigrant movement, who developed ties with the GD, but also left-wing activists and (non-implicated/neutral) residents who disposed particular experiences from every-day life, like a schoolteacher of the local public school etc. Generalizability from the sample to the population was not the purpose of our study and for this reason statistical representativeness was irrelevant. Important information was also collected during observation of six regular assemblies of the 6th District Council, as well as obervation of six regular assemblies of the City Council. Last but not least, our knowledge on debates regarding the city centre was nourished by following a multidisciplinar seminar organized by the National Centre of Social Research on the transformation of the city center, titled 'The Athens City Center from the 19th to the 21st century. An interdisciplinary approach', More information available at: http://www.bigbananaadventures.com/seminaria.php?id=2&tp=1&id2=307.

[6] For instance, the Congolese, Tanzanian, Somalian, Kenyan, Aithiopian, Philippinese, Sierra Leonian, Guinean, Gambian, Senegalese, Nigerian, Sudanese communities maintain their offices in the 6th city district. In the municipal market of Kypseli –another neighbourhood of the same district– Greek language courses are given to immigrants.

[7] Source: Annual Data of the Ministry for Citizens Protection.

[8] Information gathered by research in the field and participant obervation of the regular assemblies.

[9] Resident's quote during the regular meetings of the *Movement of residents of the 6th city district*. Notes collected during participant observation. Among these social problems, one ought to mention the dense concentration of brothels (according to residents there are between 105 and 250 in total, many of which function illegally), drug and humantrafficking, installation of homeless and drug addicts, irregular trade, substantial lack of green, open and common public spaces.

[10] For an image of full and vacant buildings in the area of Agios Panteleimonas, see http://www.hiddenathens.info/2010/12/agios_pantelehmonas_casestudy/

[11]The analysis is based on a random survey of 1,630 individuals residing in the municipality of Athens. More about the survey follows in the next section.

[12] To be more specific, the graphs refer to three districts: 6th, 2nd and 5th. According to the Athens Municipality records for 2009, the percentages of non-indigenous population for the three districts were 22%, 17% and 14% respectively. Attempted robberies per person for each of these three districts for 2010 ranged from 0.017 for the 6th district to 0.014 for the 2nd and 0.012 for the 5th. Records were provided by the Athens Metropolitan Area Police Authority at the level of police station and were aggregated at the district level by the authors).

[13] De Decker et al. (2005: 163) have pointed out the strategic choice of Vlaams Block to concentrate on the problems of the old city neighbourhoods in Antwerp in a period of time that 'traditional parties left the neighbourhoods' and 'became alienated from the electorate'. Using the terminology of Warmenbol (2009), these are explanations that focus on 'the meso level', i.e. 'on (social) settings like the neighbourhood, city or region'.

[14] Speech of the GD leader, 26.10.2010, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SyxQlIibYYQ

[15] Interview with inhabitant of the square of AP.

[16] Interview with inhabitant of the square of AP.

[17] Even though the "only-for-Greeks" social services of GD have been challenged, our fieldwork confirms the adoption of such practices even before the 2010 election.

[18] Interview with inhabitant of the square of AP.

[19] For an exploration of the notion see Richards B. (2013).

[20] Interview with left-wing activist, resident of the 6th district.

[21] Speech of Elias Kassidiaris, 12.09.2010,
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0vM1CDNn108&feature=related
[22] Speech of the Secretary General of GD, 26.10.2010,
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SyxQlIibYYQ
[23] The importance of mobilization mechanisms in the electoral endurance of radical right parties is also underlined by Art (2011), who focuses on the "microdynamics of party building" associating those mechanisms to the radical right activists' profile. Within the local activists who built ties with GD, we roughly recognize aspects of the "tripartite typology" of radical right activists ('extremists', 'moderates', 'opportunists') proposed by Art.
[24] We inlcude gender, age, ethnicity, level of education, employment sector and a dummy denoting whether the respondent has property in the 6th district. With the exception of age, all other covariates are fully factorized. Aggregate immigration data have been found in the Athens Municipality records, while crime rates have been provided at the neighbourhood level by the Athens Metropolitan Area Police Authority.
[25] The hidden assumption behind this line of thinking is that the PTVs for the two parties are positively associated. Indeed, their Pearson correlation is .37.
[26] Although more restrictive, the first proxy constitutes a more direct indicator of local party organization than the second. Thus, we replicated the analysis using only the question about whether the respondent received party leaflets. This analysis produces results which are substantively very similar to those presented in the main text.
[27] An important caveat is that although the survey is aimed to be representative for the population of Athens, we cannot necessarily expect that this will be the case when focusing on specific areas of the city. Since we are mainly interested in the conditional relationship between party preference and GD organizational visibility, however, unless this measurement error at the level of the county is correlated with our key independent variables, it only affects the precision of our estimates (Wooldridge 2002).
[28] When using only "leaflets" as a proxy of GD organizational activity, the first-stage estimate becomes .048 (.012) and the 2SLS estimate becomes 3.29 (2.03).

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**Figures – Tables**

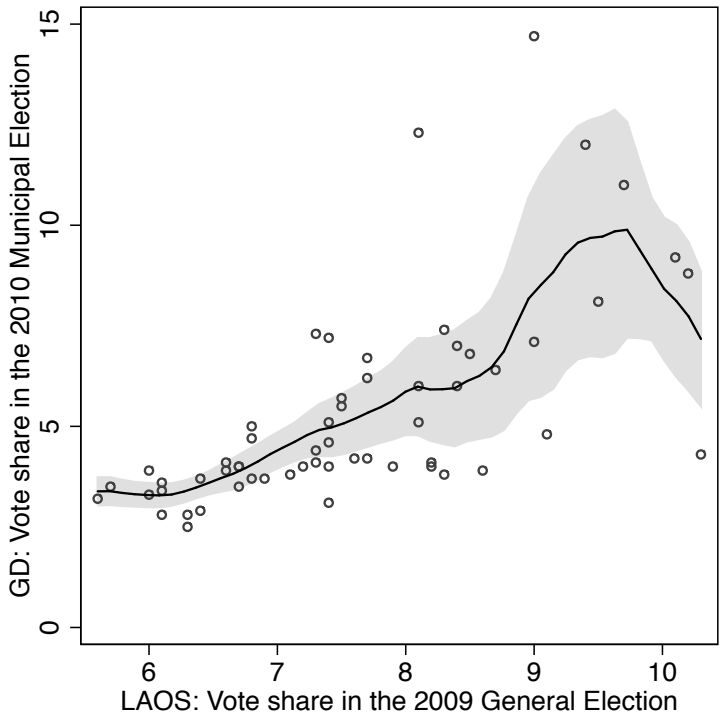



**Figure 1: How well does LAOS vote share in 2009 predict Golden Dawn support in the 2010 municipal elections?**
Note: Dots represent the 58 municipal sections of Athens. The solid black line denotes the local regression curve fitted into the scatterplot (triangular kernel used). The dashed area denotes the 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals. The highest data point represents the area of Aghios Panteleimonas.

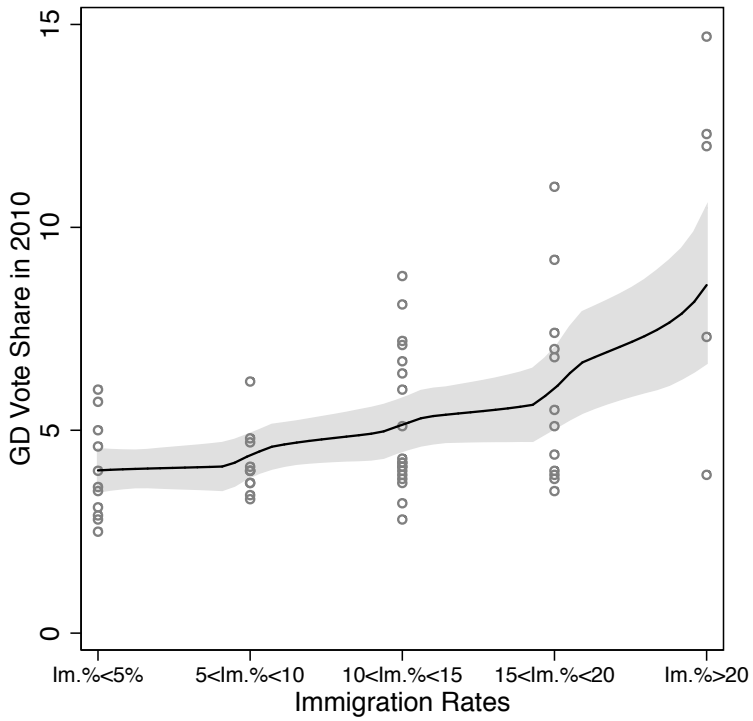



**Figure 2. Immigration rates and Golden Dawn vote share.**
Note: Immigration is measured in five categories according to the level of immigration rates in each of the 58 electoral districts: 1: <5; 2:5-10; 3:10-15; 4:15-20; 5:>20. The solid black curve presents the local regression line (triangular kernel) and the shaded area denotes the 95% pairwise confidence intervals.

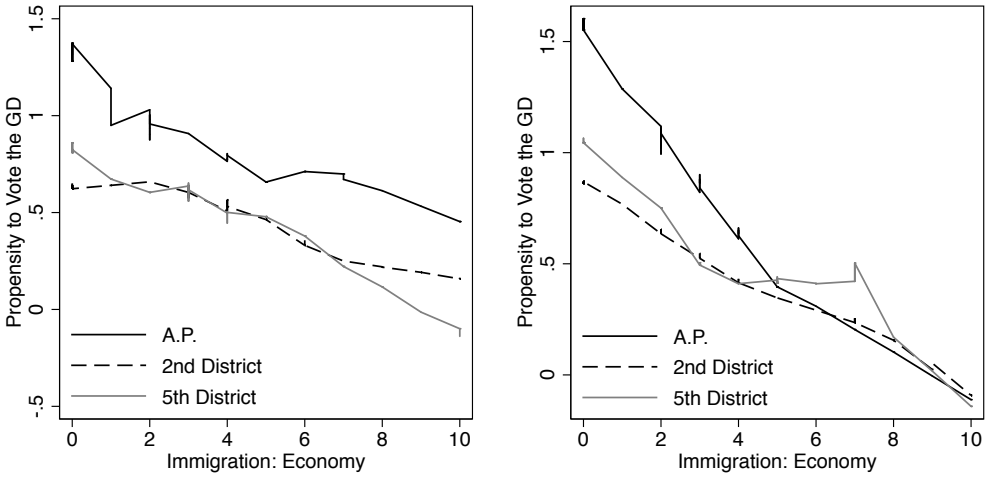



**Figure 3: The local average level of support for the Golden Dawn in one neighborhood of the sixth municipality and in the second and fifth municipal counties.**
Note: Local regression curves (bandwidth .7) are fitted into the scatterplot (not shown) between attitudes towards immigration (cultural integration; economic role of immigrants) and the PTV score for the party.

**Table 1: The Local Average Treatment Effect of GD visibility on GD support**

| | First Stage | 2SLS | LARF |
|---|---|---|---|
| 6th municipal | .131 | | |
| county | (.032) | | |
| LATE | | 1.30 (.653) | 1.28 (.660) |

Note: Entries are OLS coefficients in the first and the second column, LARF estimates in the third column. Robust standard errors, clustered at the neighborhood level, into parentheses. N=1406. The dependent variable in the first column is GD visibility. The dependent variable in the second and third coluns is the PTV score for the Golden Dawn. The following covariates are included in both stages: gender; age; ethnicity; aggregate level of non-indiegnous residents at the county level; crime rates at the county level; level of education;employment sector; "immigrants undermine/enrich the cultural life of the country; "immigrants are something bad/good for the economy"; "the current policy with regard to entrace restriction is far too conservative/liberal;" PTV score for LAOS; prior experience of robbery, theft or other act of violence. With the exception of age, all of these variables are fully factorized.