

## Dogs of Democracy

Director: Mary Zournazi

I made my film *Dogs of Democracy* almost by accident. I took my first ever trip to Athens in October, 2014. I had gone for a holiday and in search of my cultural roots. But I had arrived in the middle of the Greek economic crisis. I could feel the tension on the streets, but walking around the city, I also noticed something else, something unexpected and unique. All round the city there were stray dogs, they seemed to occupy the city like 'citizens' – they crossed the traffic lights, they socialized, they were part of the urban life and feel of the city. Immediately I fell in love with them, and I became curious about their 'lives'. In a very short time, I realized that the dogs were looked after by volunteers in Athens, who cared for and fed the stray dogs. I became fascinated by how in the middle of Greece's worst economic crisis people were willing to take care of the animals. I began to consider what this might say about our ideas of love, community and care. That's how the story began: a love of the animals, and the love of the city and its people

The film also took somewhat unexpected turns: I travelled to the island of Lesbos and documented not only the economic crisis but also aspects of the migrant crisis as it unfolded in Greece. The film is a story about the stray dogs of Athens, but it is equally a story about peoples' courage and dignity in times of crisis. The film is my love letter to Greece: to its people and to its stray animals.