

Athens Lessons

Athens is a singular case among European capitals. With over 4 million people (LUZ), it is large for European standards, particularly given the size of Greece with its 11 million inhabitants. It thus houses almost half of the nation's population.



Typical Athens urban fabric

Unlike many other European capitals that grew more continuously, modern Athens did so explosively with each immigrant wave, since it became the capital of the new independent Greece in 1834. At that point it was a village of roughly 4000 people.



Athens center master plan

Today, a new immigrant wave as well as significant economic difficulties, once again mark a decisive period in Athens development. This publication draws attention to Athens' characteristics, problems and potentials. On the basis of this reading, the authors develop a master plan for

the city of Athens, which outlines a roadmap for future development. It seeks to particularly address the issue of immigration in the center of Athens.



Neoclassical buildings in the center in decay

This work was conceived in the academic year 2010/2011 as the result of a collaboration between the Laboratory for the production of architecture (Iapa) at the EPFL and the Faculty of Architecture at the National Technical University of Athens.



Project: a new Athens train and bus station

A series of architectural projects centered on 'architecture of integration' illustrate the proposed master plan. The publication concludes with a series of texts by different experts.



Athens Lessons

Teaching and Research in Architecture

2011

Laboratoire de la production d'architecture (lapa)

Institut d'architecture, Faculté ENAC

École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne

Project in collaboration with the Faculty of Architecture
at the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA)

Content

11 – 30	Introduction Teaching and Research in Architecture Athens Lessons
31 – 80	Analysis Understanding the Site Modern Athens – Districts 1 + 3
81 – 106	Urban Constitution Producing the Urban Constitution Athens – City of Immigrants
107 – 188	Projects Project Development Architecture of Integration
189 – 239	Positions <ol style="list-style-type: none">a. <i>On emptying space in Athens</i> Aristide Antonasb. <i>Athens, ... this liquid mass</i> Elias Constantopoulosc. <i>The Plan of Athens, 1833 – 1911. Politics and Society</i> Andreas Giacomakatosd. <i>The eternal presence of the past in Athens</i> Dimitris Philippidese. <i>Athens: From Urban Planning to Urban Geopolitics</i> Georgios-Stylianos Prevelakisf. <i>Athens</i> Luca Turing. <i>Symbolic centrality and stratification: a city in reverse</i> Panagiotis Turnikiotis



1974

My first visit to Athens was a crucial experience in my life. In the summer of 1974, my friends and I travelled to south-eastern Europe on an InterRail train pass. Whenever we could, we boarded night trains and slept on the floor, on seats or in the luggage nets to save overnight costs. On one courageous non-stop train journey, we travelled from Dubrovnik via Skopje to Athens. I well remember the grey morning when the train kept on stopping between Thessaloniki and Athens. The whole time, we could not help noticing trains passing us, loaded with military and war equipment. When we arrived in Athens, we were met by a huge mass of people at the station. Hardly had the train come to a halt that people rushed to get into the already crowded train. It was impossible to get out of the train through the corridor or the carriage doors. At this moment it dawned on us what had happened. The previous night, the 20th July, the Turkish army had marched into Cyprus. The Greek military junta was sending all its forces to secure its borders with Turkey. Whoever could, simply wanted to get out of Greece.

After a 72 hour train journey, my four travelling companions and I could not imagine staying a minute longer on the train. But even the only possible way to exit through the train windows turned out to be a difficult undertaking. Like rock stars we allowed ourselves to be carried overhead onto the platform. This was followed by a wonderful time. Athens was totally empty of tourists and the Greeks were tense and overcome by a strange mood that was a mixture of fear and hope. Fear that the war would escalate, hope that the hated junta would not survive the conflict they had themselves provoked (the Cypriot National Guard had given their support to overthrow the government of Archbishop Makarios III on 15 July). This was a time when we experienced some absurd moments. For example, the five of us found ourselves alone on the Acropolis and we walked through the streets of Athens that was paralyzed and unusually still. Then, when the military dictatorship collapsed and Constantinos Karamanlis returned to Athens from exile in Paris on 23 July to assume office (he was sworn in as Prime Minister on the night of 24 July), Athens exploded with joy and an exuberant street festival began lasting 48 hours.

Foreword

Moments such as these tie a person to the place where they happened. Since then, I have returned to Athens regularly. During this time, there have been many moments of hope and awakening, such as when Greece joined the European Union in 1981, or hosted the Olympic Games in 2004 and even won the European Football Championship in the same year. Unfortunately, it must be said that Athens has not improved over the years. The Neo Dimokratia and Pasok parties that were founded after the demise of the military junta have taken turns at government in single-party rule. Both were based on an economy ruled by special interest groups. This policy expanded the state apparatus out of all proportions. The paradox result today is that nobody trusts the state any more.

This appears to be the logical explanation why the state budget was able to grow out of all control. On the other hand, the second problem, and this refers to galloping immigration, is totally incomprehensible. How can the enormous state apparatus fail to devise a reasonable immigration policy to meet minimum demands?

Today, Athens is obviously suffering from these problems. Not that Athens could be regarded as an urban model of the 20th century in any way. Urban growth happened too fast and with too little planning. But the underlying problem is much different – inner emigration, the gradual move of Athenians to the suburbs. This has robbed Athens of its social integrity and, as a logical consequence, has led to the decay of inner city districts. In combination with the present uncontrolled immigration from Africa and the Asian region, the original centre of the city has become a ghetto that is threatening to spill over like a tumour into the neighbouring areas.

This development must be addressed by an architect and urban planner who is all the more an ally of the city. For this reason, we have decided to focus the academic year of 2010/2011 on the inner districts of Athens. At an urban planning level, we wanted to formulate proposals for future urban development and develop architectural projects on this basis to promote integration of the various social classes and cultures. The aim was to submit proposals to permit the control of immigration in ordered structures and at the same time to stop the inner emigration of the resident population. In parallel, the book (as its predecessor “Havana Lessons”, “Leçons Genève” and “Athens Lessons”) explains the method we applied to this research and education project.

Foreword

The inner emigration of Athenians to the suburbs as described above is only an example of the strange segregation within Greek society. The most important sectors do not intermesh. The private sector mistrusts the public sector and the academic world stands apart from the other two. For example, our academic partners in this project, the Faculty of Architecture at the Athens Polytechnion (NTUA), prohibited the listing of our sponsors wwon the poster for the jointly organized symposium. They argued it would otherwise nullify the academic credibility of the event. On our part, this was a totally incomprehensible romantic position since our academic performance is partly measured by our capacity of raising funds from third parties to support our academic activities. I hope that my friends and acquaintances from the various sectors will soon find the courage and conviction to enter into a true cooperation. This is the basic condition for solving the enormous problems facing the city.

We are dependent on professional and financial support from local organizations, experts and friends to implement the venture presented here. I would like to express my sincerest thanks to them all.

Harry Gugger
July 2011



Participants

STUDIO DIRECTORS

Prof. Harry Gugger (Iapa, EPFL)

Prof. Kourkoulas (NTUA)

TUTORS

Eirini Androutsopoulou (NTUA)

Leopold Banchini (Iapa, EPFL)

Nancy Couling (Iapa, EPFL)

Gwendolyn Kerschbaumer (Iapa, EPFL)

Russell Loveridge (Iapa, EPFL)

Götz Menzel (Iapa, EPFL)

Ariadni Vozani (NTUA)

ATHENS STUDENT TEAM

Argyris Angeli

Symeon Banos

Andreas Aligizos

Konstantinos Miltiadis

Giorgos Anagnostopoulos

Filippos Nabrozidis

Orestis-Nikolaos Anastasiou

Thodoris Poulakos

Maria Voukia

Kiki Zamani

Gregoris Dimitriadis

Christina Serifi

Vasiliki Zoumbou

Elina Pieridou

Egke Hint

Artemis Karaiskou

Marianna Stavridou

Maria-Anna Kapsimali

Artemis Pefani

Eleni Kousouri

Vassiliki Babinioti

Panagiotis Koufos

Angeliki Labada

Maria-Silena Patsalidou

Andreas Mitsiou

Smaragdi Bacha

Eirini Psaltak

Marianna Mpisti

Deborah Donna

Alfredo Sanz

Ioanna Bountouva

Myrsini Petropoulou

Panagiotis Perdikis

Maria-Iliana Roidi

Emmanuel Saratsis

Antonis Tzortzis

Giannis Sourlantzis

Theoklitos Triantafyllidis

Athina Feleki

Katerina Tzachrista

EXPERTS

Prof. Gianni D'Amato, sociologist, University of Neuchatel

Prof. Karl Reber, archaeologist, University of Lausanne

Christian Schmidt, sociologist, ETHZ

Maria Theodorou, architect and director of SARCHA

Prof. Thomas Rutherford, economist at ETHZ

SWISS STUDENT TEAM

Fatma Ben Amor

Davide Di Capua

Marianne Chardon

Malaïca Cimenti

André E Silva de Oliveira

Marco Ferrari

Eva Florindo

Gabrielli Patrizia

Steffan Heath

Alexander Hertel

Shun Horiki

Loïc Jacot-Guillarmod

Joana Maria Lacerda

Pierre Le François des Courtis

Jakob Loock

Thaddée Lucan

Marta Mato Sabat

Elena Núñez Segura

Edouard Philippe

Simon Pillet

Maria Inês Rodrigues

Léa Serikoff

Isabel Stella Alvarez

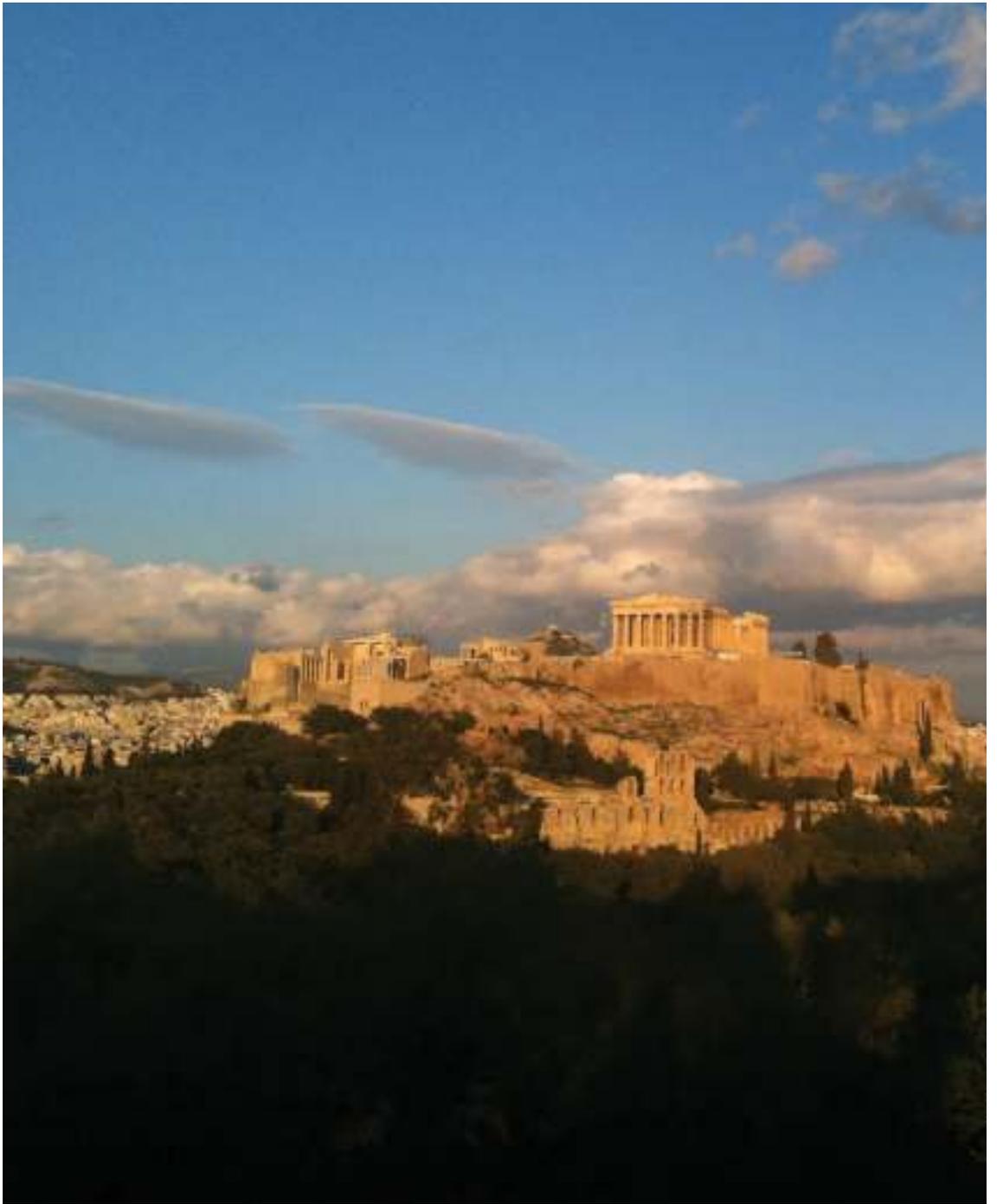
Christopher Tan

Sandro Tonietti

Martina Vesik

Gustav Vrang

Sizhou Yang



Introduction

Teaching and Research in Architecture
Athens Lessons

Athens Lessons

“comment veut-on que des idées nouvelles puissent se développer ? À peine peuvent-elles se faire jour sur le papier ; comment pourraient-elles se traduire en pierre ? C’est à développer l’indépendance de l’artiste et à lui assurer cette indépendance qu’il faut tendre si l’on veut avoir un art de notre temps.”

Viollet Le Duc,
Entretiens sur l’architecture,
Entretiens 14

From classical antiquity to the 15th century, architects were both planners and builders. As “master builders” architects were responsible for both the design and the construction. The master builder was a highly skilled and highly experienced leader of the construction team. He was apprenticed in all the main construction crafts, such as masonry, carpentry, plumbing and roofing. He possessed a range of skills that were immediately related to the design, the engineering, the materials and the overall concept for construction.

From the 15th century onwards, the unity of art and technology, of designer and tradesman, began to disintegrate. This was due primarily to the emergence of a less regulated, expanded concept of art. The preoccupation was not the loss of a unity but the quest for a new complexity. It was at that moment that the concept of the master builder disappeared and the processes of designing and constructing a building became divided. This division was further underlined by the foundation of the “École Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées” in the year 1747, when training in engineering became independent of architecture.

The architect’s influence on the shape of our built environment has declined ever since. There has been a dramatic reduction in both the variety and range of the architect’s activities. Where architects once designed a building by themselves, they now share the task with many consultants. In addition,

the range of the architect’s involvement in the process of planning and construction has diminished over time. In consequence, the architect’s traditional role of integrating and coordinating the entire planning and building process is being undermined. Today, architecture finds itself in the paradoxical situation of being more popular than ever before, receiving enormous media attention, while at the same time being exposed to total decline. Never before has architecture had such a high profile. Yet never before have architects so little influence on the actual construction work.

A few projects by so-called “star architects” draw enormous media, political and marketing attention while at the same time over 90 % of all new buildings are unworthy to be called “architecture” since they show no recognizable architectural aim. On the one hand architecture has become the medium of many : developers, investors, co-operations and institutions, and on the other hand, most construction happens without architects.

Our society seems to find itself in an era that is radically rethinking its terms of cultural identity. Architecture has always been a cornerstone of identity in every society and religion. In an age when the local and the global collide, architecture is faced with the question of whether to embrace specific cultural values or universal goals of civilization. Architecture should pursue both these aims. But with the tendency towards iconic architecture, any radical revival of religious, tribal, family or corporate values harbours the risk of architecture tending to favour the quest for cultural unity and uniqueness, at the cost of universal values of civilization. In other words, architecture runs the risk of losing what Leon Battista Alberti described in the 15th century as its claim to be the “construction of society”. Even though the task of actually constructing a building may no longer be taken for granted by today’s architects, they still have to face up to the responsibility of “constructing society” if their

trade and craft is to survive at all. Technological development and effects of globalization have a deep impact on the building industries and on the practise of architecture. The architect has to take responsibility in constructing for this rapidly changing society. The demands are increasingly complex and the parameters for architectural production in constant shift. The rhythm of project development and realization has dramatically accelerated over the last decades. Scale and complexity have risen with the technological feasibility of conceiving new forms or ways of building. Climatic change puts pressure on the existing stock of buildings and demands new measures for ongoing and future projects. The design integrity of a project needs to be maintained even though it may be informed and challenged by an ever-increasing number of actors. The availability and amount of information to be processed and communicated to the different parts in order to realize a building is soaring. And the success of communication and transfer of information is essential to the translation of an architectural concept into built reality.

The increasing digitalization of planning and production offers a unique opportunity to expand the architect’s field of influence. By regaining the territory of construction the architect can again mutate from a sheer designer to a producer of buildings, thus reconnecting Construction (*Bau*) and Art (*Kunst*). It is only by influencing the construction process that the architect can fulfill his cultural and social responsibilities and, in doing so, lend expression to his or her art. Technology – especially digital technology – permits a more complex perception and a more comprehensive view of the world. The increased efficiency brought about by digital technology has made it possible to research and design highly complex structures. Needless to say, this has also had a direct impact on architectural form. But digital technology has had an even greater influence still on architectural production.

Introduction

'From its inception, Athens was a historical paradox. Its existence based on an ideological twist – the revival of past glory – it possessed no traceable economic base hence no future. Its boundless growth was inevitably based on the concentration of political power, in other words, on the development of a phenomenal bureaucracy that permeated all aspects of life. In terms of physical planning, Athens oscillated between acquired procedures from the enlightened West and derived traditions from the “dark” East.

Its urban history is marked by consecutive relapses and rejuvenations caused by local disasters (war, refugee deportations) and by internationally inspired infusions of order (city plans, grand projects). The “lesson” thus taught from the past is the triumph of transient and ephemeral decisions, either hastily taken or continuously postponed – both ending in the same result. From this perspective, today’s “crisis” seems unexceptional: it will eventually lead to a “new” Athens, in line with all its previous historical phases, i.e. to the eternal Athens dreamed up by its 19th century founders – obviously, a fresh paradox.’⁽¹⁾

Although it is easy to point out the obvious problems Athens faces today – density, congestion, pollution, lack of organization, lack of public and green space, need for more public transport, massive immigration, public debt, and so on – it is a much more complex feat to understand why and how these problems are specific to Athens and what their underlying causes and connections are. Incidentally, the same holds true with regards to Athens’ qualities. Despite the loud complaints Athenians profess about their city, there are also positive aspects which they would not like to be without – these are not necessarily visible at first sight either.

To move past generalities and into the depth and specificity of this urban issue, one has to analyse the history and society that has shaped today’s Athens, as well as the central themes of the city’s current urban landscape. Only then is it possible to elaborate on what might be a viable strategy for future development.

Classical Athens was a powerful city-state on many levels. It was the main naval power on the Aegean Sea and the leader among the Greek city-states in matters of defence against Persia; it had developed an elaborate democratic political system, and was home to many cultural achievements – especially in the areas of philosophy, education and the arts. It is regarded as the cradle of Western civilization as it laid the foundations

We are faced with a paradoxical situation in which computerization presents both a threat and an opportunity for architects. If architects fail to seize the opportunities offered by computer technology and use them to their advantage, we may eventually be faced with a situation in which the built environment is produced without the involvement of architects. Instead the mass customized production of construction will be undertaken in direct negotiation between the client and the contractor. In this scenario digital technology will replace architects as an interface. It is easy to imagine a wcomputer screen in the future. There will be software to guide them through the local building regulations and programmes featuring the structural modules of rival construction companies. Any component will be able to be added or removed at will, building costs can be quickly calculated and the overall visual impression from the street corner or even from the sofa can be viewed at leisure. This is neither a good thing nor a bad thing. It is quite simply the logical and foreseeable consequence of digital information systems.

And yet, the need for architecture will remain, the profession will still be viable. One could draw parallels with the film industry, in which art-house cinema is over shadowed by Hollywood blockbusters, but new independent directors continue to emerge and carve a niche for themselves. Art-house cinema is often one step ahead of what is served up in diluted form to mainstream audiences. This also means that the mainstream industry – be it in the world of film or in architecture – actually needs the creative input of the independents in order to survive. So what does all this tell us about training architects? Authors have to be trained; they are independent spirits who are capable of telling a story and engaging their audience, their collaborators, their advisors and clients. That means we have to practise the creation of concepts and their realization. If the development and the visualization of an idea can’t be done at student level, it certainly won’t work under the

1. The presence of the past in Athens, 2011, Dimitris Philipides.

Athens Lessons

economic and technical pressures of the construction industry. Thus architectural education ought to be a training field for reality and must empower future architects to participate in and moderate the construction process from the conceptual development to the implementation on site.

Education in architecture must prepare professionals to face the multitude of challenges and it is no longer sufficient to teach the craft of design and construction in response to a given brief, if the profession is to survive and regain its authority. Therefore, students need to be trained to integrate topics and concepts outside the subject area, to have a curious and explorative attitude towards the complexity of each specific context, to be able to abstract and translate potentials as much as problems into architecture. This is because design is not a question of solving problems, but of confronting them.

Good architecture is fundamentally the result of the multiple authorship of client and architect. The practise of an architect has to be accommodated in the process of dialogue between the architect, the client and the different specialists. What sets good work apart from the rest is the way that it integrates the individual personality while avoiding too much emphasis on the independent voice. The real challenge lies in commanding authority without laying claim to authorship.

Architecture not only poses formal, structural and technical questions, but also, more importantly, it addresses social, cultural and ecological issues. So architecture is in fact both these things : it is a technical, scientific discipline and at the same time, a discipline of the arts and humanities. Architecture is an instrument of perception and a tool for understanding the world and society. The architectural concept serves first and foremost as a means of designing a distinctive personality for a building. It is only through critical dialogue that the architecture takes form and the most important contribution one can make to architecture is through

for the cultural and political developments of the European and thus western world. And although academics in the field of classics today debate whether the influence of other civilizations on the Greek and thus the western civilization has been underestimated, the symbolic value of Athens remains.

Athens was chosen as the capital of the new independent Greece in 1833 because of its ancient historic significance, and Greeks of the Diaspora that had formed during the Ottoman occupation returned to Athens. At the time, the city's population was a mere 4'000 inhabitants. Athens grew rapidly in the 1920s due to the necessity of accommodating refugees from Asia Minor (almost 1 million people came during that period). Over the course of the 20th century, Athens left the remaining large Greek cities far behind in terms of population, a growth mostly due to inner migration from rural areas to the city. Attracting an increasing number of inhabitants, even after the demographic boom, the metropolitan area of Athens counted 3'700'000 inhabitants at the time of the last census in 2001 – roughly half of Greece's national population.

What first strikes most visitors is how different modern Athens is from other European capitals, at times rather resembling a congested concrete megacity, reminiscent of 'non-western' urban agglomerations. It is ironic that it would differ so dramatically from most of the other more 'classical' and seemingly organized European capitals, given that it laid their architectural and cultural foundations.

This difference is a reflection of Greece's political, economic, and social history over the last centuries, which did not follow the usual, more continuous European path of going from various configurations of kingdoms or empires to nation-states over the course of the Middle Ages, Enlightenment, Industrialisation, and 20th century.

Without a well-established government, both at the national and the city level, or a well-developed economy, Athens was poorly prepared to deal with the quick growth and waves of immigrations it faced during the last two centuries. Given the lack of political and economic power, each crisis lead to quick solutions rather than long-term planning and investment.

Evidence of this practice is found in the lack of sufficient and well-functioning infrastructure, such as an effective public transportation network, which other central European cities managed to achieve in the nineteenth century. The national railway network or the Athens metro system – projects that would require long term planning and investment – lag behind those of

Introduction

other European capitals. On the other hand, there is an extensive bus network, both national and city wide – a solution that requires little additional infrastructure.⁽²⁾

Athens' problems in this sense are illustrative of the problems facing the modern Greek state. And for both Athens and Greece, it seems that aside from material difficulties, a more cohesive development was also hindered by the inability of the main political and economic players to plan and collaborate effectively, as Andreas Giacumacatos writes in the opening paragraph of his text "The plan of Athens, 1833–2011. Politics and Society":

The evolution and "design" of Athens during the last two centuries is a perfect miniature of the organisation and performance of the modern Greek state in all sectors: not only in terms of planning capacity, but also in relation to the perception of the idea of legality and the role of public administration and relations between the common benefit and private objectives. The history of Athens from 1830 onwards, that is to say after the long Turkish occupation, has been characterised by ambitious design often supported by a progressive legislation and, at the same time, by a practice of not implementing and of violating laws due to private pressures and interests – in addition to the parallel pursuit of political leadership jockeying to meet party interests. [...] Within the body of the city, individuals, groups, trade unions and political institutions have sinned over the years, thus transforming Athens and, more widely, Greece into a country of private individuals. The downgrading of the concept of public space or public institution in Greece has historical roots, and this also has consequences in architecture. The demand for collective values, expressed through a more conscious society, is another challenge for Greece.

What at first seemed to be an interesting contemporary urban problematic, turns out to be the youngest crisis in a series of reoccurring scenarios that have shaped Athens, in addition to a crisis larger than Athens that extends to the national level.

Today, Athens and Greece find themselves once more in a difficult situation – one marked by a wave of immigrants from Asia and Africa and by a large public deficit. Athens mainly accommodated Greeks coming from regions outside of the city until relatively recently. The first non-Greek immigrants came as refugees from Asia Minor from 1920 onwards, and then from

2. It must be noted that important parts of the current Greek state were progressively 'returned' to Greece in several steps after 1833, such that a unified railway network proved difficult to establish.

role-playing. The fundamental design approach in architecture should be one of appropriation : appropriating the site, its energies and its history. In doing so, it is extremely important that different kinds of adoption come into play. Anything too personal is quickly unmasked. The anecdotal is stripped away. Strangely, this multiple appropriation automatically pares the design down to the essentials that can be grasped by everyone.

In each and every project, there is an awareness of situations in which not all requirements can be fulfilled to satisfaction. Design requires the evaluation of various aspects of a problem. To consciously accept certain drawbacks of a design is a creative act. We have been taught to think that every problem has a solution – like a mathematical exercise in the classroom. But it isn't as simple as that. Teaching should be about developing concepts – concepts that are not simply aimed at solving a problem.

The most important tool for any architect is abstraction. Most architecture, however, tends to be entrenched in purely technical abstraction. Technical abstraction is governed by rules and standards, making it universally applicable. The abstraction of an idea, however, linked to the idea itself, is unique. It has to be worked out differently from case to case and demands a high degree of flexibility both in approach and in application. In other words, we do not teach our students how to apply recipes but we want them to develop an attitude or approach.

The primary goal of the Laboratory for the production of architecture (lapa) is to ensure the architect's continued role in the planning and building process and to reinforce the architect's position as a central, integrating and coordinating force. Our research therefore aims to improve the understanding of the architectural process and to advance the state of the art of implemented technology. The working methodology proposed merges analytical research methodologies with creative design,

Athens Lessons

developing investigative processes for urban planning and architecture. This procedural approach promotes the interdisciplinary process of architectural production.

The teaching objective is to show that the role of the architect is not limited to the planning and design of the building, but rather that the architect is producer and coordinator of the entire architectural process. The teaching thus emphasizes the fundamental beliefs :

Architects must be capable of working in an interdisciplinary process where cooperation with specialists and tradesmen is a fundamental constituent of the architect's working method.

Architects must study the technologies that are revolutionizing design and fabrication processes. Digital data, generated in the design processes, is a valuable commodity and architects must develop and promote the potential of an unbroken "digital chain" from concept to construction.

Architects must understand the life cycle and impact of their work ; that the development, operation and demolition/recycling of a building pose architectural problems.

How can we foster this awareness and these capacities ?

We teach by guiding the process of a project over the course of one year from urban planning to full-scale construction. The demanding program simulates a simplified reality, thus giving insight into the wide range of the possible involvement of the architect from dealing with development concepts and ambitions to the mastery of a detailed project and to using hands-on experience of actually producing a building part. The hypothesis of the initial brief, be it an urban improvement, the exploitation of a site or the design of a custom-built house, is explored through research in general background information



Athens street view

Poland, Bulgaria, Russia, Albania and Egypt from 1975 to 1990. Today's migrant groups originate primarily from Central Africa, the Middle East and Asia. As a European harbour town located on the eastern part of the Mediterranean, Athens has become one of the first ports of call for migrants entering the EU. Often, it acts only as a transitory stopping place for migrants on their way to other European countries. However, following the Dublin II regulations of 2003, once an asylum seeker is rejected elsewhere, he is sent back to the country he initially entered the EU from. This regulation puts excessive pressure on border areas, such as Spain, Italy and Greece, and these states are often least able to provide asylum seekers with full support. Currently, those being transferred under Dublin II are not always able to benefit from an asylum procedure.

Following open criticism of Greece's asylum system by the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and other non-governmental organisations, several countries suspended transfers of asylum seekers to Greece, which had been carried out under the Dublin II regulation. The situation in Athens' city centre is severe. Gangs of immigrants have occupied an area delineated by Athinas, Euripidou, and Pireos streets, which Athenians refer to as the "evil triangle" or "the ghetto". Here, just southwest of Omonoia Square, each immigrant group has their own mafia and is responsible for a distinct crime, be it drug dealing, arms trafficking, prostitution or robbery. A whole area of the city centre has become excluded from everyday

Introduction

urban life. In addition to this problem, which has been growing over the past decades, Greece and Athens now have to face budget cuts on all levels – pensions, education, social services, etc. – due to national debt.

These burdens are creating a decisive moment in Athens' urban condition. The Greek government's actions are being subject to more public attention than ever, a number of key issues are being reconsidered and new measures put in place to amend the situation. In such severe circumstances, it appears advisable not to rush, nor to superficially patch-up mishaps. Instead, a sustainable overall strategy must be followed, which promotes a healthy and consciously-guided development of the city. The burdens can also have the potential of acting as catalysts in solving a wide range of urban issues.

What does the Athenian urban condition look like today? How do the individual neighbourhoods function? What are their qualities and their drawbacks? What is to become of the city centre? How will the ghetto develop? Is the centre shifting away from its old location towards a new destination, or has it long since dissolved into multiple neighbourhood centres?

The urban constitution presented in this book is the result of our analysis of these issues and outlines a roadmap for the future development of Athens' centre as well as for that of the city at large (around districts 1+3).

Like any other city, Athens is a complex organism and the urban constitution does not offer a single solution, but rather a network of solutions. If there could be one overarching conclusion though, it would be the need for a realistic urban constitution, for a plan that could be roughly followed and implemented, and which would stress the importance of developing public spaces and amenities further.

Even in an environment of scarcity, and especially in one, planning and the implementation of basic conclusions should not be considered a luxury, but instead a necessity – one that will allow resources, material and human, to be used more efficiently and to the best ends.

Districts 1+3

Athens being too large to analyse in depth in a semester, we have chosen to focus on districts 1+3. The chosen perimeter is an east-west cross section, encompassing the city centre, the Acropolis and a heterogeneous mix of residential and commercial neighbourhoods. The two districts were divided into 6 areas:

and evaluated against it. Its adaptation and subsequent translation into an architectural concept is a trial-and-error process which allows one to explore and respond to the ever more specific problems of the city, the site, the client or practical considerations. Bringing the architectonic concept to realization therefore may require radical redesign and reformulation of the brief. This dynamic and nonlinear process is informed by project participants and specialist consultants.

Each year IAPA chooses a location or site as a basis for its teaching and research project. Sites are selected based on a significant research interest related to the issues of architectural production. Each project brings together specialists and project partners to expand the field of research, to ensure the inclusion of contextual factors and incorporate extended relevant issues that affect the overall methodological approach and the designed results.

In 2009–2010 IAPA undertook a collaboration project with the architecture faculty at the University of Bahrain and the Ministry of Culture and Information on the topic of developing a Cultural Master Plan for the Island Kingdom.

The “Athens Lessons” present the teaching method and a synthesis of the results.

Athens Lessons

1. Area A Votanikos

Votanikos is part of Eleonas, a historical area situated less than 2 km away from the Acropolis. Eleonas was a sacred olive grove in ancient times and remained such until the 18th century, becoming a deprived industrial zone in the 1980s. Situated between a highway and the railroad tracks, Votanikos can be described as a hole in Athens' dense urban fabric. Today, the area is divided into five municipalities and is a forgotten part of the city, with many contrasts. On the one hand, it is unstructured, unwelcoming and degraded because of its lack of cohesion and infrastructure; on the other, its former rural history and its neglected aspect generate potentially high-quality spaces. The botanical garden and the Agricultural University of Athens are two of these oases lost in an industrial landscape. Furthermore, some small housing plots serve as islands for community life. Apart from a few small, scattered churches, Votanikos has very few historical remains. However Iera Odos, literally meaning "sacred road", runs straight through the area. In ancient times, it used to be a processional way from the antique cemetery of Kerameikos to Eleusis' Temple. Today, it is the main road that connects the west highway with central Athens.



Athens Lessons

2. Area B Kerameikos, Metaxourgeio, Gazi and Rouf

This area includes the Kerameikos, Metaxourgeio, Gazi and Rouf neighbourhoods, as well as small parts of Votanikos and Kolonas. Located very close to the city centre, these neighbourhoods present a calm atmosphere, which is also reflected in the relatively low-scale construction. One to three-story, neo-classical buildings of mixed condition are dispersed between vacant lots and apartment buildings of up to seven stories, built between the 1960s and the present day (Polykatoikia). The immigrants' presence and influence is felt strongly as one walks through the streets of Kerameikos. They may be attending to shops and small commerce, but are also implicated in the local drug scene and involved in prostitution. This creates a clash with local residents who seem rooted in their neighbourhoods in spite of the increasingly unstable environment. Gazi, in contrast, has been subject to a gentrification process: expensive loft housing as well as new restaurants, bars and night-clubs have established themselves in this neighbourhood. Technopolis, the former gas works, has been transformed into an industrial museum, covering approximately thirty acres and acting as a cultural magnet in the area.



Athens Lessons

3. Area C Petralona and Thissio

The area is located between Philopappou Hill and Piraeus Street. It is close to the city centre and enjoys a good residential atmosphere. A metro line, connecting the port of Piraeus with the northern suburb of Kifissia, divides Petralona in two: High and Low Petralona. “High” and “Low” describe the topographic relationship of the neighbourhoods with respect to Philopappou Hill. The two sides are very distinct from each other especially when it comes to their prevailing building typologies: Low Petralona has relatively narrow streets, which are shaded by the height of the buildings along them. It is also referred to as the “Dark City”. High Petralona benefits from the presence of the hill, the buildings are only two to three stories high and the area has a village-feel to it. Petralona is mainly made up of housing and small neighbourhood shops and its building blocks are also relatively small for a city the size of Athens. This particular aspect contributes to the good quality of life there, something that is immediately felt as one visits the area.



Athens Lessons

4. Area D Psiri, Monastiraki, Plaka, Makrygianni, Gargaretta and Koukaki

This area is the central and oldest part of Athens. It is defined by the topography of the Acropolis rock and Philopappou Hill, which dominate the area, with different neighbourhoods scattered at their foothills. The area's long history has left its footprint in the urban fabric. Archaeological sites lie like gardens behind fences at the bottom of the northern slope of the Acropolis. Mediaeval street patterns, narrow, irregular and organic, collide with large, orthogonal neoclassical grids. Paths climb up through the Plaka, culminating in a big void above the city: the plateau of the Acropolis. The ruptures in scale and character between these different fabrics are striking.



Athens Lessons

5. Area E Omonia, Gerani and Exarchia

This is the northern-most area of our investigation and is comprised of the challenging area around Omonia Square, the focal point of the 1834 neo-classical urban plan of Athens by Schaubert and Kleanthis. This square holds an important place in the history of Athens and has evolved constantly since 1890, with successive 'transformation' plans being suggested regularly and aimed at helping to define the Square's identity as the city's centre. The area surrounding Omonia Square, particularly Gerani in the south-west, is characterized by a high density of immigrants, squatters and drug dealers living in very confined spaces in dilapidated buildings. A ghetto has been established in the triangle formed by Athinas, Euripidou and Piraeus streets. Omonia has become a no-man's land, with a clearly negative and impersonal identity. Omonia Square is a vast, empty and uninhabited square, around which some of Athens' main transport ways circle. Congestion in this neighbourhood is omnipresent, which is one of the main reasons why the city centre does not function well on several levels. If Athens is to regain a pleasant city centre, it is crucial that car congestion be reduced, public transport improved and the overall pedestrian experience enhanced.



Athens Lessons

6. Area F Exarchia and Kolonaki

This area is made up of seven neighbourhoods. The main ones are Exarchia and Kolonaki, both with strong and distinct identities. Exarchia's character is defined by the presence of several universities there (The National Technical University, Athens' Kapodistrian University and the Law School). Political conflicts have been carried out here since 1859 and ever since the bloody student uprising of 1973 against Greece's military rule ('Junta', 1967–74), it has been associated with political opposition and the anarchist scene.

In the recent past, the residents of Exarchia have shown a commitment to change their neighbourhood. Community parks have been established on former parking lots to increase the amount of greenery, displacing drug users in the process to other areas of the town, notably Omonia and Kerameikou.

Kolonaki is an affluent neighbourhood. Exclusive apartment houses line the lush slopes of Lycabettus Hill, and below it, south of Kolonaki, is the neighbourhood of Evangelismos, with its hospitals, museums, embassies and other institutions on Leoforos Vassilis Sofias Street. With all their differences, the neighbourhoods in this area have one thing in common: they appear to be socially well-defined and stable. No larger issues are present here, apart from in the area west of the Hilton hotel where, at the convergence of Leoforos Vassilis Sofias and Leoforos Vasileos Konstantinou, a pleasant opening of the urban fabric at the metropolitan scale seems not to have made use of its full potential.





Analysis

Understanding the Site

Modern Athens — Districts 1 + 3



Analysis

Two approaches were used to analyse Athens' urbanity: first, other Mediterranean coastal cities – Alexandria, Barcelona, Beirut, Malta, Marseille, and Palermo – were assessed. This was done in order to achieve an understanding of the context of the Mediterranean region as well as to analyze how variations within that region have led to different urban structures and solutions.

The second approach focused on five themes that have strongly influenced Athens:

1. Archaeology
2. Economy
3. Environment
4. Immigration
5. Organisation

The maps and statistical data presented in this chapter show the relation of each theme to the evolution of Athens' urban structure. Important general information such as density, population growth and territorial expansion over time, economic stratification or traffic networks are also taken into consideration.

The first maps and data cover general aspects of Greece and Athens, whereas the later maps focus on identifying and understanding relevant features of Athens' urbanity.

1. Archaeology

Greek ancient history is omnipresent on a physical level in the city and on a mental level in the minds of Greeks and visitors. Archaeology becomes a major element in planning and building processes, especially when archaeological finds are present or surface during construction work.

2. Economy

This theme addresses the following questions: taking into account the current financial situation of Greece, which strategies for the chosen area of Athens could foster financial growth and sustainability? What local markets exist and can be enhanced? Is it possible to install light production within the city again? How do the various areas of Athens differ in terms of land value and property value? How is this related to levels of education, to unemployment, to household configurations?

« la clef, c'est : regarder ...//Regarder
observer voir imaginer inventer créer.
» Le Corbusier, *Carnets*, Volume 4,
1957–1964, Carnet 70, ill. 1038, Paris,
éd. Herscher / Dessain et Tolra, 1982

Observation, knowledge gathering and quantification are at the basis of architectural design. The research and analysis of data to understand a specific situation prepares the build-up of an architectural concept or hypothesis. The comprehensive communication of research data and drawn conclusions is crucial in the interdisciplinary environment of architectural production. An important part of lapa's teaching method is the focus on interdisciplinarity. The course follows a specific organizational structure whereby each participating student is assigned a role in two different types of groups : each student is part of a group of five designers, the design team, which concentrates on planning and spatial conceptualization. At the same time each student is a member of a specialist group, which addresses specific design related themes. The design teams present the results of urban design, while the specialist groups develop strategies for themes such as environment, economy, education, urbanism and tourism. Thus each design team consists of the different specialists, who become experts in their topic and advisors to their design team. This guarantees design activities are carried out jointly in an interdisciplinary group with various skills.

In addition lapa builds a bridge to the professional world by involving external participants such as public institutions or industry representatives, enriching its own production with new perspectives. In this way, the sphere of investigation is expanded, more factors are taken into consideration, and the interdisciplinary approach is fleshed out.

The different analytical steps (essay, case study and urban strategy) take into account the various methods of perception, which allow one to grasp the complexity of urban situations : mental constructs (essay), personal, data research (case studies and special-

Athens Lessons

ist research) and tentative interpretation to verify the interdependencies of findings (urban strategy). Each of the analytical steps requires the use of specific modes of research and communication.

The essay confronts the studio participants with the diverse mental constructs of the project site to be found within a group of individuals. A dynamic presentation, be it a short movie, a model or an installation, is produced by each participant so as to allow him or her to reflect upon the highly personal and individual interpretation of the site of investigation. After this playful approach the site of investigation is put into context by comparative Case Studies. Case study topics are chosen to create understanding of the specificities of the investigated site in its larger context. The set of five research themes guides the exploration of the case studies. These themes are derived from the particular situation of the site of investigation. The report on each case is a compilation of the five research themes along with standardized statistical and physical data and an overall analysis and set of conclusions. The conclusions clarify the particularities of the site and identify exemplary features or policies. Once the case studies are compiled and the results evaluated, the focus of investigation shifts to the selected site. For the Urban Strategies, each participant assumes the role of a “specialist” conducting research and analysis on one of the defined research themes. The “specialists” begin by investigating the site and compiling statistics, data and geographic information for analysis. Once the basic data has been compiled, the “specialists” work in consultation with each other to develop a strategic plan for their theme. After having revised the various strategic approaches to the site the teams reconfigure from specialist groups into design teams in order to devise a first draft of an Urban Constitution for the site. This will incorporate the knowledge of the diverse specialists into one proposal for urban improvement. A comprehensive description of the nature of an urban constitution follows in the respective chapter.

3. Environment

This theme includes investigating different means of transportation – public, private and pedestrian – and their impact on the urban condition: the relation between streetscape and the built environment, borders, connections, environmental issues, safety and accessibility. What influence does the climate have on architecture and urban planning? What environmental problems has the city been suffering from in past decades? Sustainable architecture and urban planning options will also be part of the analysis.

4. Immigration

Nowadays, migrant groups originate primarily from central Africa, the Middle East and China. Being a European harbour town in the far eastern part of the Mediterranean, Athens has become one of the first stops of refuge for migrants entering the EU. Often, it acts just as a transitory stop for migrants on their way to other European countries, but once rejected elsewhere, migrants are sent back to the country they initially entered the EU from – putting a larger stress on Greece. Given the size and economic situation of country, the rapid rise in immigration has become a burden both on Greece and Athens in particular, seeing that most immigrants head to the capital city. How does this affect the city? What are the immigrants’ living conditions in Athens?

5. Organisation

To fully understand the driving factors of urban development in Athens, it is crucial for IAPA to understand the different levels of governmental organization. In recent history, the administrative structure has endured much modification and it is still being adjusted; the Greek prefectures, for example, will soon become obsolete. Many of the different levels within this structure can sometimes have an impact on the same local urban planning issue. Decision-making apparatuses and responsibilities appear complex. Which laws and procedures cater to an advantageous development of the city and what courses hinder it?

Analysis



■ EU Member States

■ Greece

0 1'000km

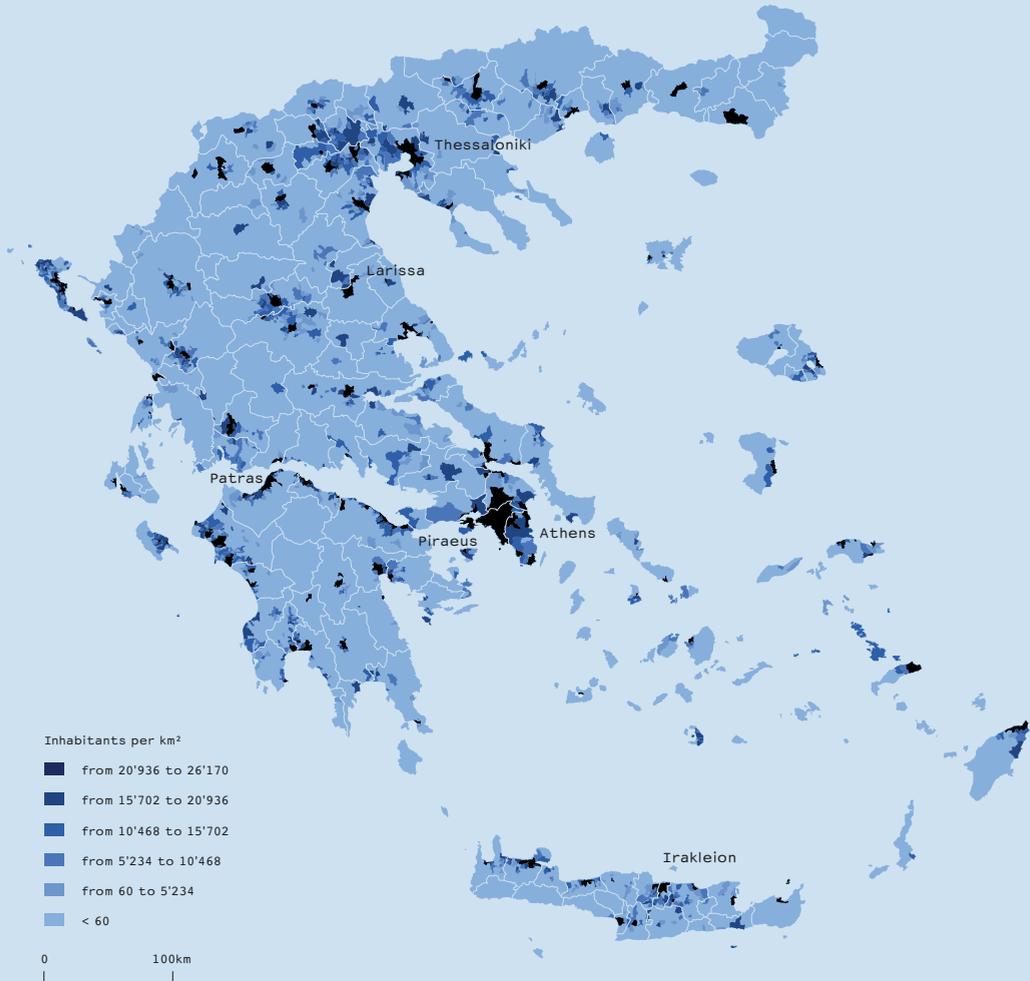
Greece

Officially known as the Hellenic Republic, Greece is located in southeastern Europe, on the Mediterranean Sea. The modern Greek state was established in 1830, following a successful uprising against Ottoman rule. Today, Greece is a member of the EU (since 1981), as well as the euro zone (since 2001). The country is one of the most mountainous countries in

Europe, with 80% of its surface consisting of mountains or hills. Furthermore, with its numerous islands and highly indented coastline, Greece has the longest coastline among EU member states, which explains why it has been so susceptible to mass illegal immigration over the past twenty years. Of the approximately 11 million people living in Greece today, 7% are immi-

grants. Greece has the 27th largest economy in the world with per capita GDP about two-thirds that of the leading euro-zone economies. The tourism industry is very important in Greece, accounting for 15% of GDP. However, Greece has the 5th largest public debt in the world, 144% of GDP.

Athens Lessons



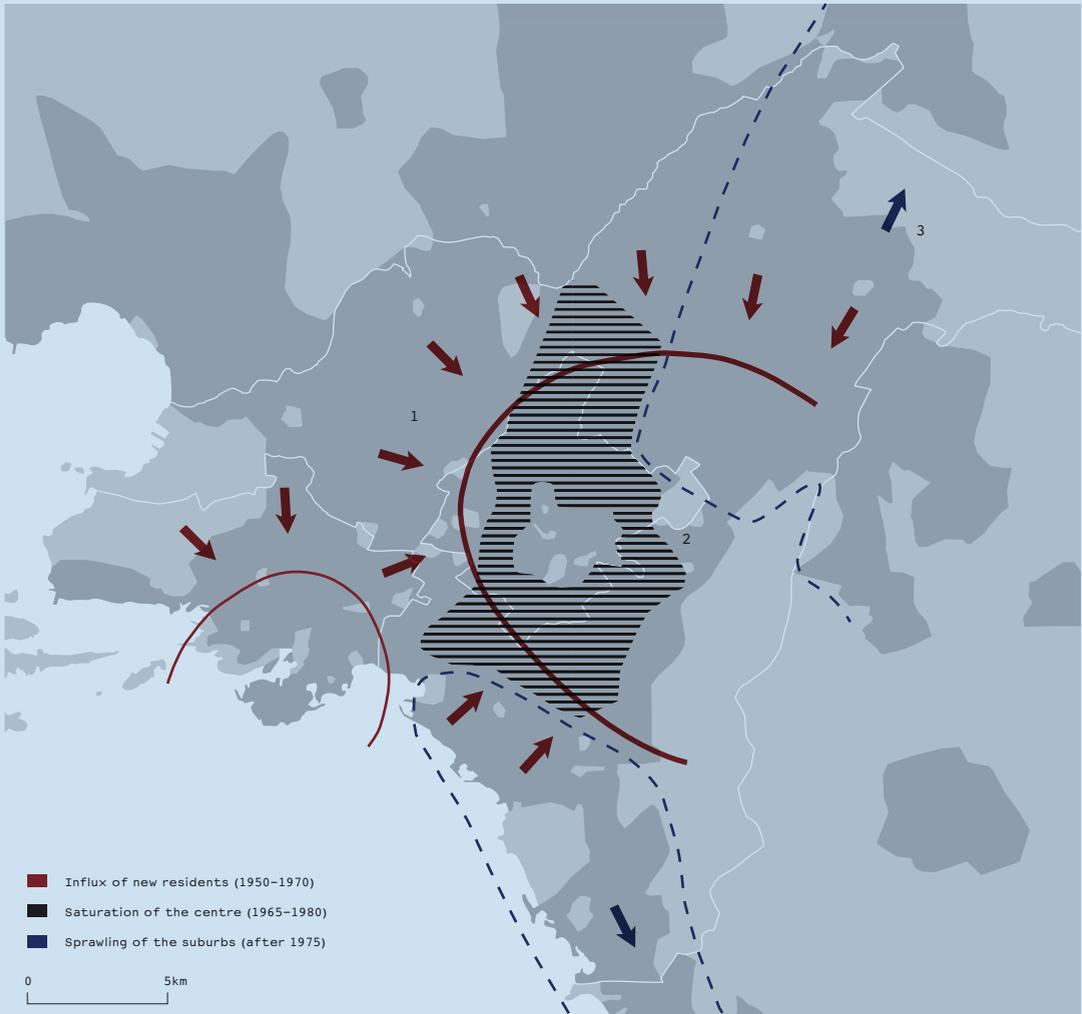
Athens

Athens, Greece's capital, is by far the biggest city in the country and contains one third of the total Greek population (one half of the total when taking greater Athens into consideration). The second biggest city in Greece is Thessaloniki, but its population size is only 26% of Athens'. Greece is therefore a very polarized country with most of the eco-

nomie, financial, industrial, political and cultural activity concentrated in the capital. With 47% of all immigrants choosing to stay in the city, Athens is host to the largest immigrant population. The Greek capital sprawls across the central plain of Attica, often referred to as the Attica Basin. Four large mountains define the basin: Mount Aegaleo to the west,

Mount Parnitha to the north, Mount Penteli to the northeast and Mount Hymettus to the east of Athens' metropolitan area. The port of Piraeus, which serves as Athens' port, used to be a separate city but has now been absorbed into greater Athens. Through constant expansion, Athens has spread to former suburbs and villages in Attica, and continues to do so.

Map and information source: Michel Sivignon, Atlas de la Grèce, Montpellier, CNRS-GDR Libergéo, 2003



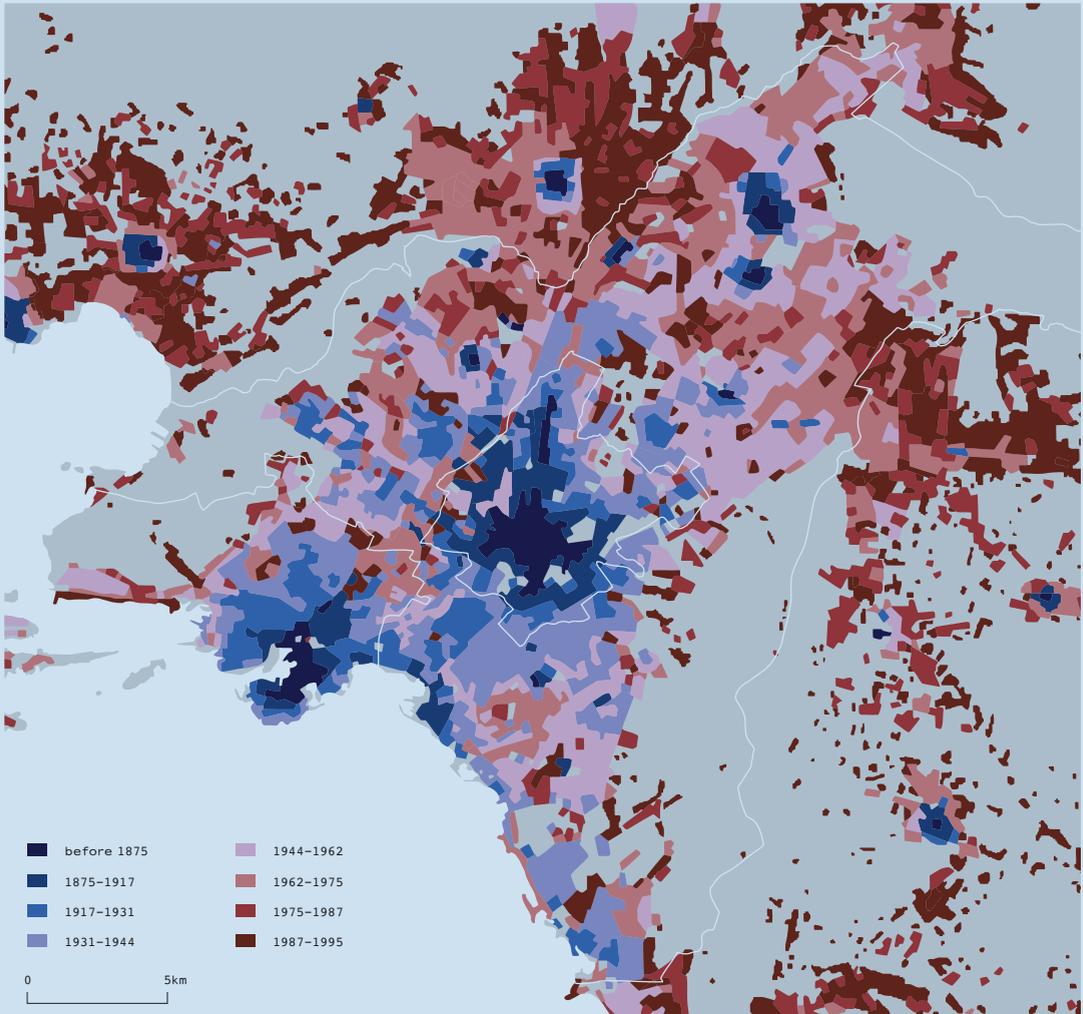
Stages of growth

The 1950s and 1960s were marked by a massive influx from the poor rural population migrating into Athens. Most of them built homes on their own, without much concern for regulations. Later, the practice of “self-construction” became less frequent due to a slow-down of the rural exodus and a shortage of usable ter-

rains in the western part of Athens. At the same time, the *anti-parochi* system gained importance and very much defined the 1960s and 1970s. *Anti-parochi* is a cashless deal between landowners and builders for the construction of multi-family housing, in which the builder is paid through the ownership of one or more flats after

completion. In the 1980s, migratory movements to Athens dropped dramatically. The neighbourhoods resulting from ‘self-construction’ suffered from low-quality housing and inferior infrastructure, leading to a decrease in their number of inhabitants, whereas the suburbs sprawled and flourished.

Athens Lessons



Spatial expansion of Athens

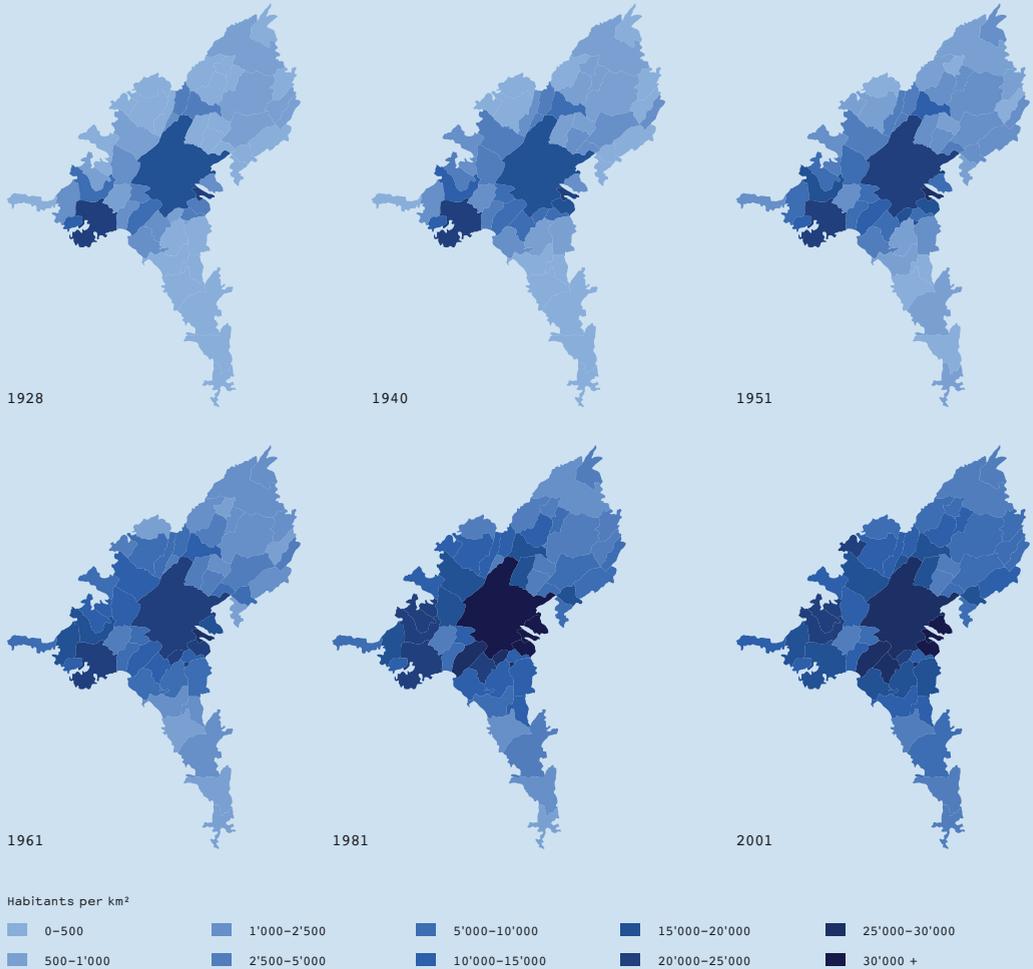
Until 1900, urbanization and urban sprawl were issues of minor significance due to the lack of a large transport network. Athens and Piraeus were two separate cities linked up by a road and a railway. In the early 1920s, the arrival of a huge number of refugees from Asia Minor led to hasty and provisional constructions being built in the periphery of the urbanized space. The areas were soon to be transformed into

working-class and popular suburbs. In the 1950s–1970s, a first intensive phase of urbanization took place, linked to rural exodus and industrial development. Rural migrants colonized cheap suburban land near industrial plants. Athens' built-up area expanded without planning, followed by subsequent 'legalizations'. In the 1980s–1990s, a wave of urban sprawl was not initiated by the landless working class popula-

tion of the earlier periods but by middle-income urban strata seeking better living conditions and yet wishing to remain within commuting distance from the Athenian agglomeration. However, after 1995, the spatial expansion of Athens towards the periphery continued towards the east, where Olympic facilities and the new airport of Spata were built, along with small housing.

Map and information source: Michel Sivignon, *Atlas de la Grèce*, Montpellier, CNRS-GDR Libergéo, 2003

Analysis



Density

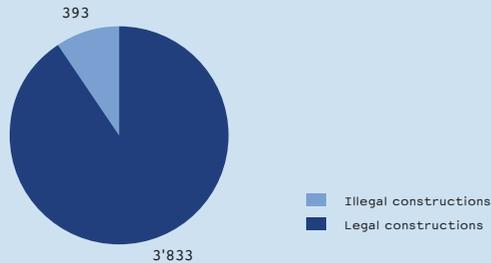
Two interdependent processes characterize the city's growth: the urbanization of the fringes with single-family housing and the subsequent densification of these areas with apartment houses replacing older buildings. The density map of 2001 shows very few spatial niches: after one century of urbanization and densification, the urban area seems to be slowly assert-

ing itself. Overall, the density of the urban area is highest in Europe and that of the city itself is second highest. The western municipalities have risen in attractiveness in the post-war period. This preference is related to a number of reasons already mentioned, such as the traditional flourishing of self-accommodation, informal housing activity in those

areas and small industrial and retail units being located along the north-east-southwest axis, allowing for a shorter commuting distance.

Map and information source: Michel Sivignon, Atlas de la Grèce, Montpellier, CNRS-GDR Libergéo, 2003

Athens Lessons



Illegal constructions

Post-war urbanization of Athens was disorganized and characterized by a sharp increase in unauthorized housing. Indeed, between 1945 and 1969, almost one fourth (23.81%) of the

buildings constructed were unauthorized. Today, unauthorized construction has decreased, yet still 9.3% of new construction falls in this category. These illegal buildings are not limited

to housing, but include other construction programmes such as hotels.

Graph source: Anastasia Paschou, Urban block in Post-War Athens development, form and social context, Thesis p. 280, 2008.



Population density

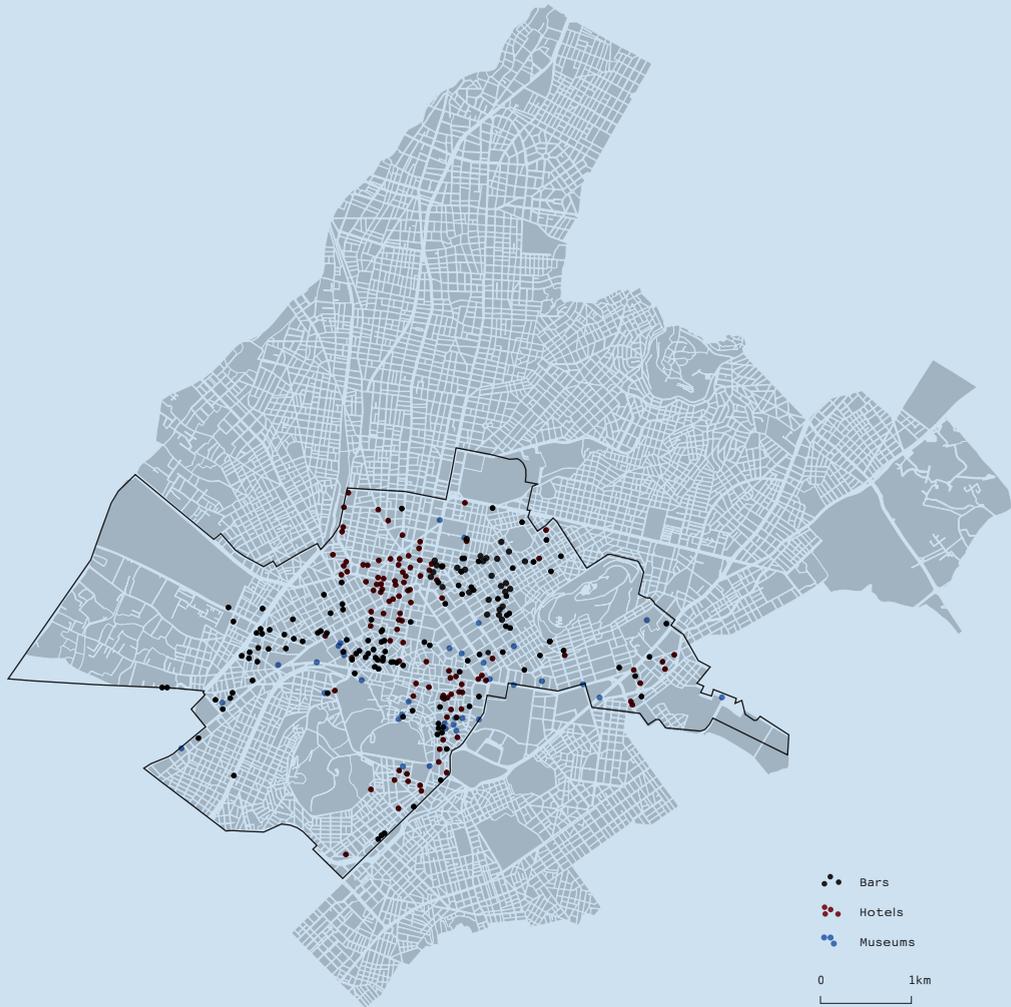
If we compare the population density within the city limits of different European capitals, Athens is the second densest European city, just

behind Paris, with a density of 19'133 inhabitants/sqkm. If we now compare the population density of the urban areas of these different cities, Athens'

density is the highest in Europe, at 5'400 inhabitant/sqkm.

Graph source: Hellenic Ministry of Interior, 2001; <http://www.citymayors.com>

Analysis



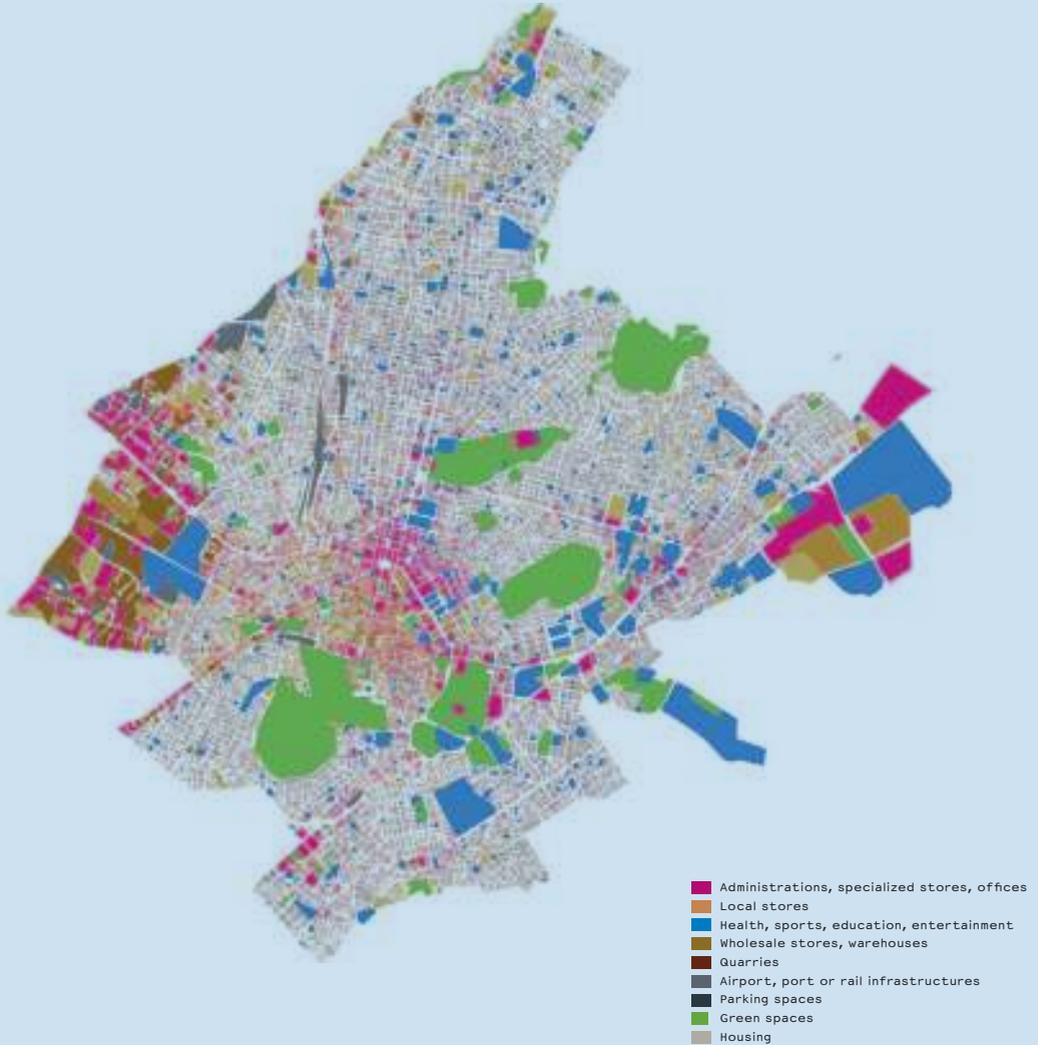
Bars, Hotels and Museums (District 1+3)

In the city centre, most of the bars are found in Psiri, Gazi and Exarchia. Psiri, a gentrified neighbourhood, benefits from its proximity to touristic attractions. Exarchia, close to the National Technical University of Athens, is largely student populated. Gazi

surrounds the old Athens gasworks that have been transformed into a cultural centre and has become a popular nightspot in recent times. Many hotels are situated around Omonia Square, and it is Athens' most important transport hub. Until the

construction of the metro lines 2 and 3, it was the only metro stop in the city centre. The museums are quite dispersed, but some of the most important ones are situated on Vassilissis Sofias Avenue.

Athens Lessons



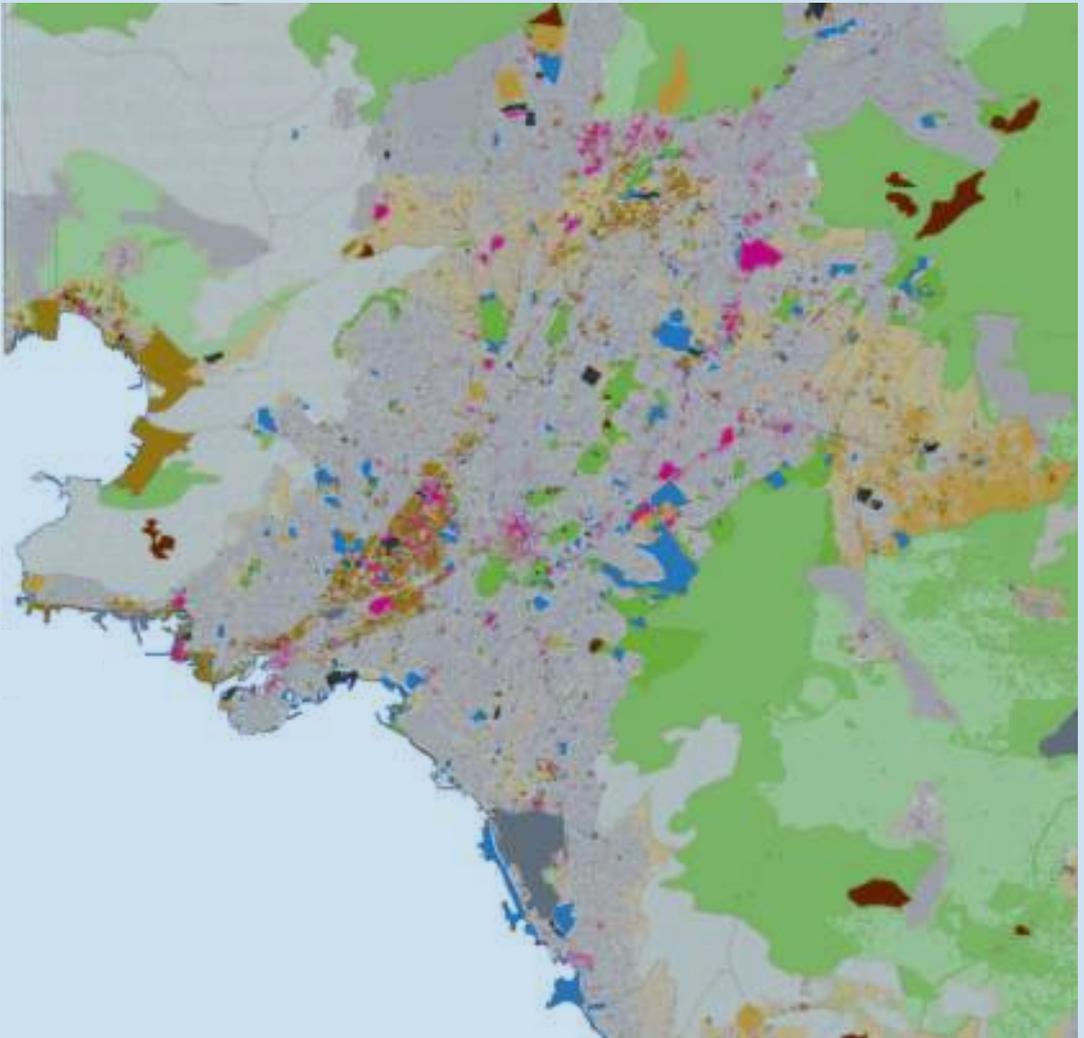
Athens by program

Athens' lack of control over the urban planning of the city has led to a haphazard assortment of various programmes. Even if this mix of schemes has had positive effects, such as reducing the distance between work and home, it has more often than not been problematic, due to a juxtapo-

sition of plans that should not have been adjoining one another, such as industries and residences. Despite the lack of proper planning on a local scale, it is possible to distinguish a zoning plan at the scale of the city. The industries and warehouses are located towards the west of Athens as

well as in Pireaus. Most of the offices, services, as well as governmental and administrative functions are found around Omonia square, in the centre of Athens. Such programmes can also be found along the main axis connecting Athens to Kifissia in the northeast.

Analysis



Dense urban areas

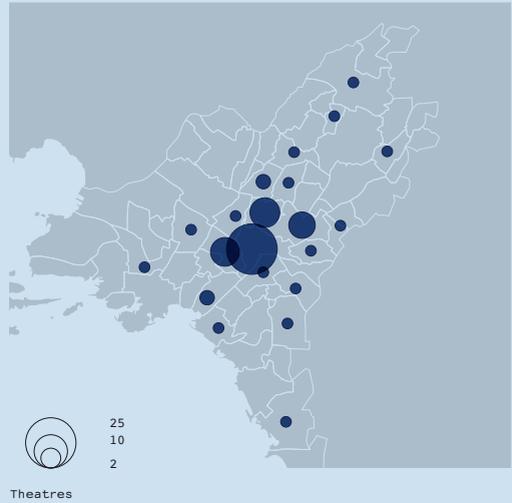
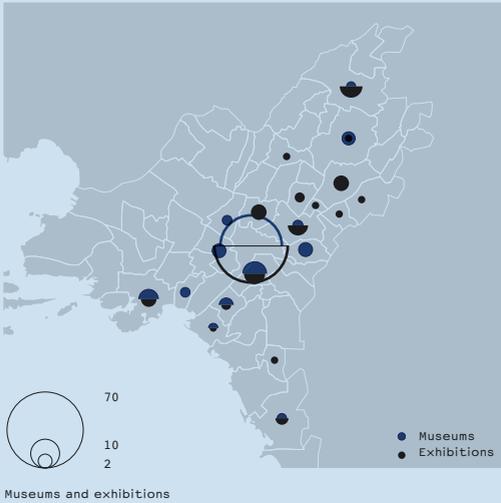
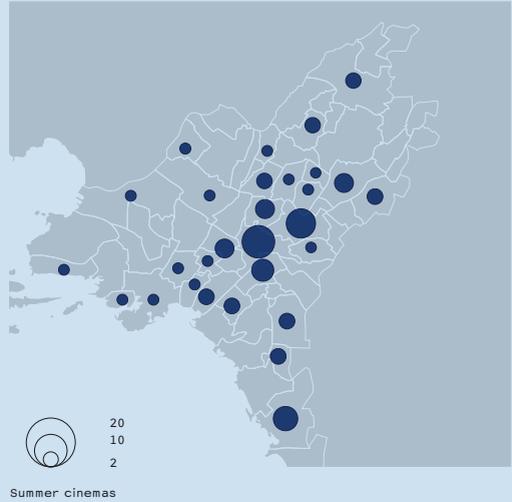
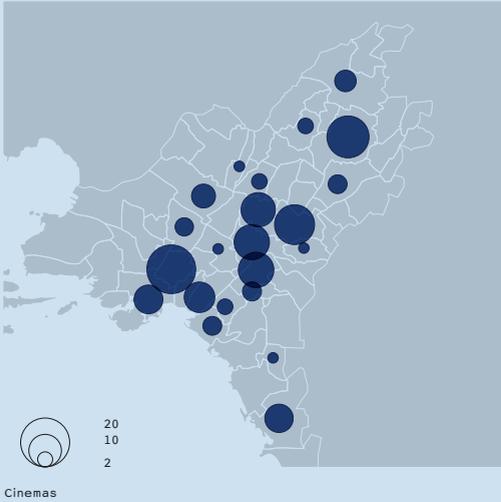
- Administrations, specialized stores, offices
- Local stores
- Health, sports, education, entertainment facilities
- Wholesale stores, warehouses
- Quarries
- Airport, port or rail infrastructures
- Parking spaces
- Green spaces
- Housing

Other areas

- Mixed spaces: housing and vegetative cover
- Open space with constructions
- Uncultivated space
- Cultivated space
- Forests

Map and information source: Michel Sivignon, Atlas de la Grèce, Montpellier, CNRS-GDR Libergéo, 2003

Athens Lessons



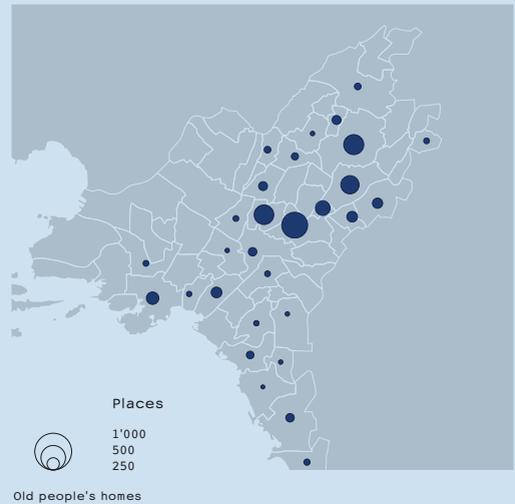
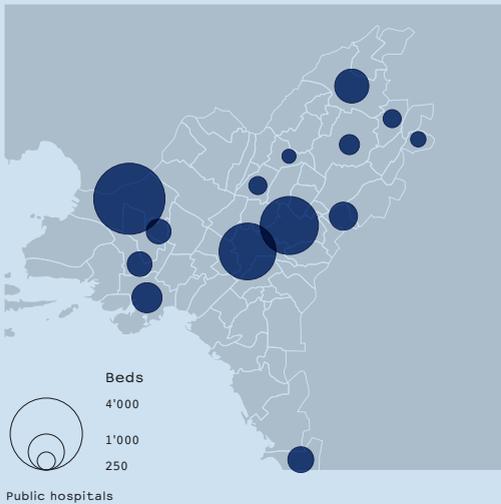
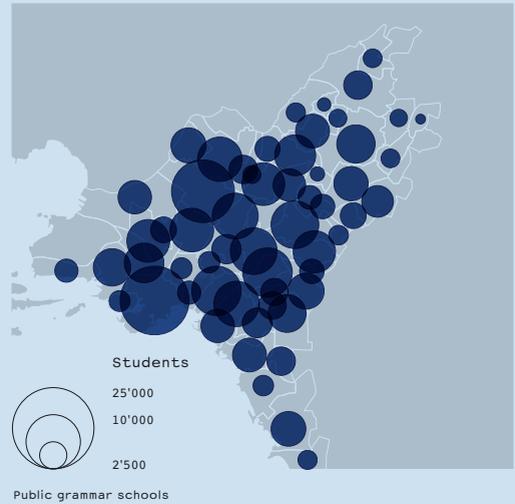
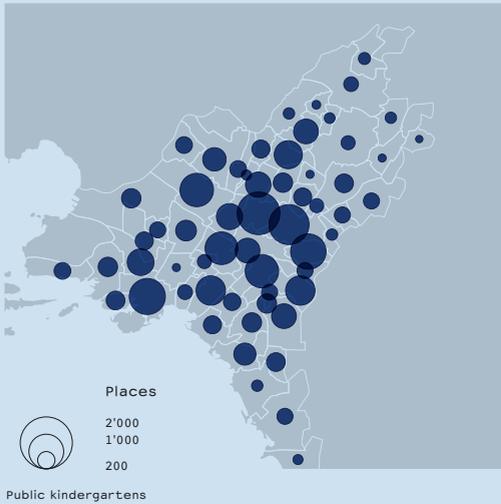
Culture

In terms of cultural facilities, the main opposition is between the centre, where all the museums, exhibition spaces and theatres are situated,

and the suburbs, which are lacking in such institutions. Cinemas, however, extend over the entire agglomeration.

Map and information source: Michel Sivignon, Atlas de la Grèce, Montpellier, CNRS-GDR Libergéo, 2003

Analysis



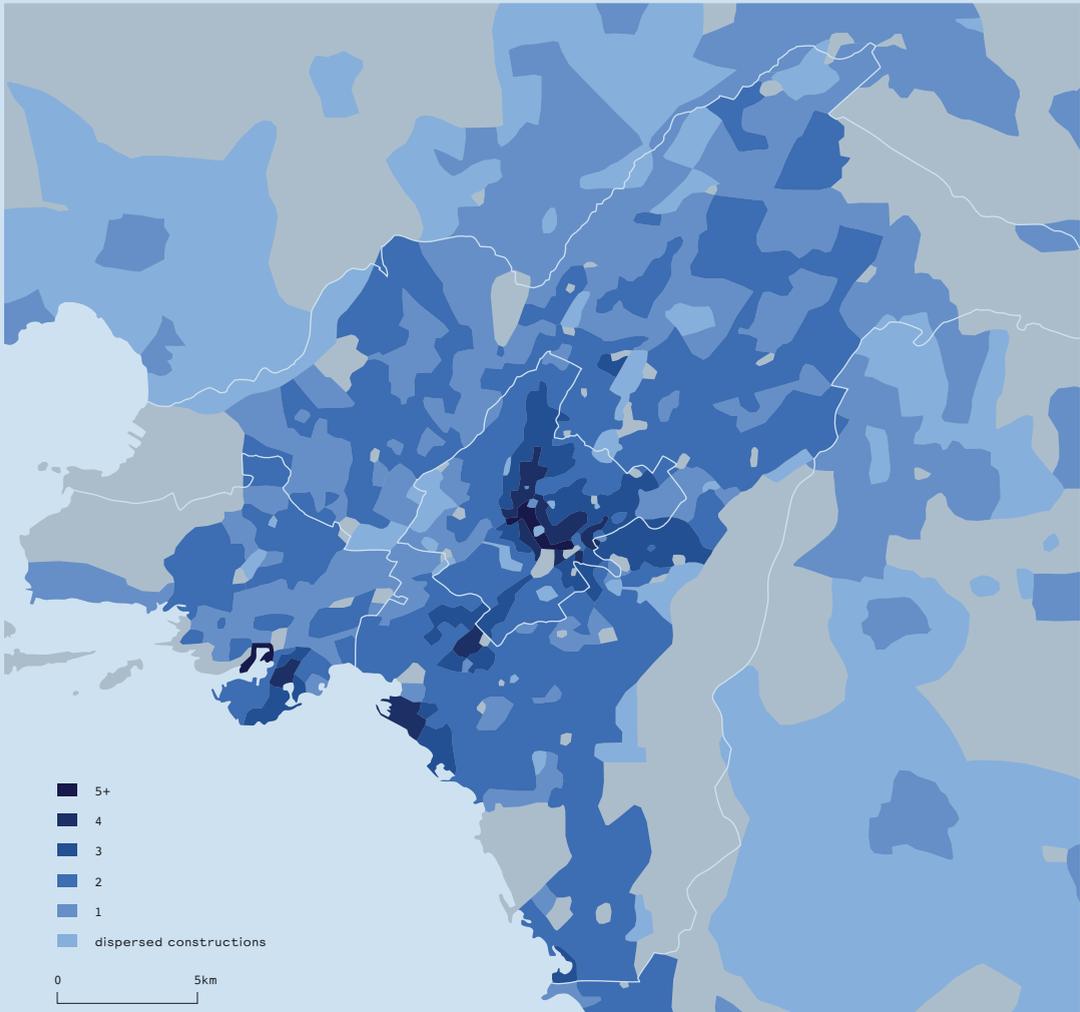
Public institutions

Compared to the facilities of the private sector, which are concentrated in the eastern part of the agglomeration, the public institutions found in the maps follow a quite uniform dis-

tribution. The local distribution of kindergartens and grammar schools depend upon the number of children within the specific urban population.

Map and information source: Michel Sivignon, Atlas de la Grèce, Montpellier, CNRS-GDR Libergéo, 2003

Athens Lessons



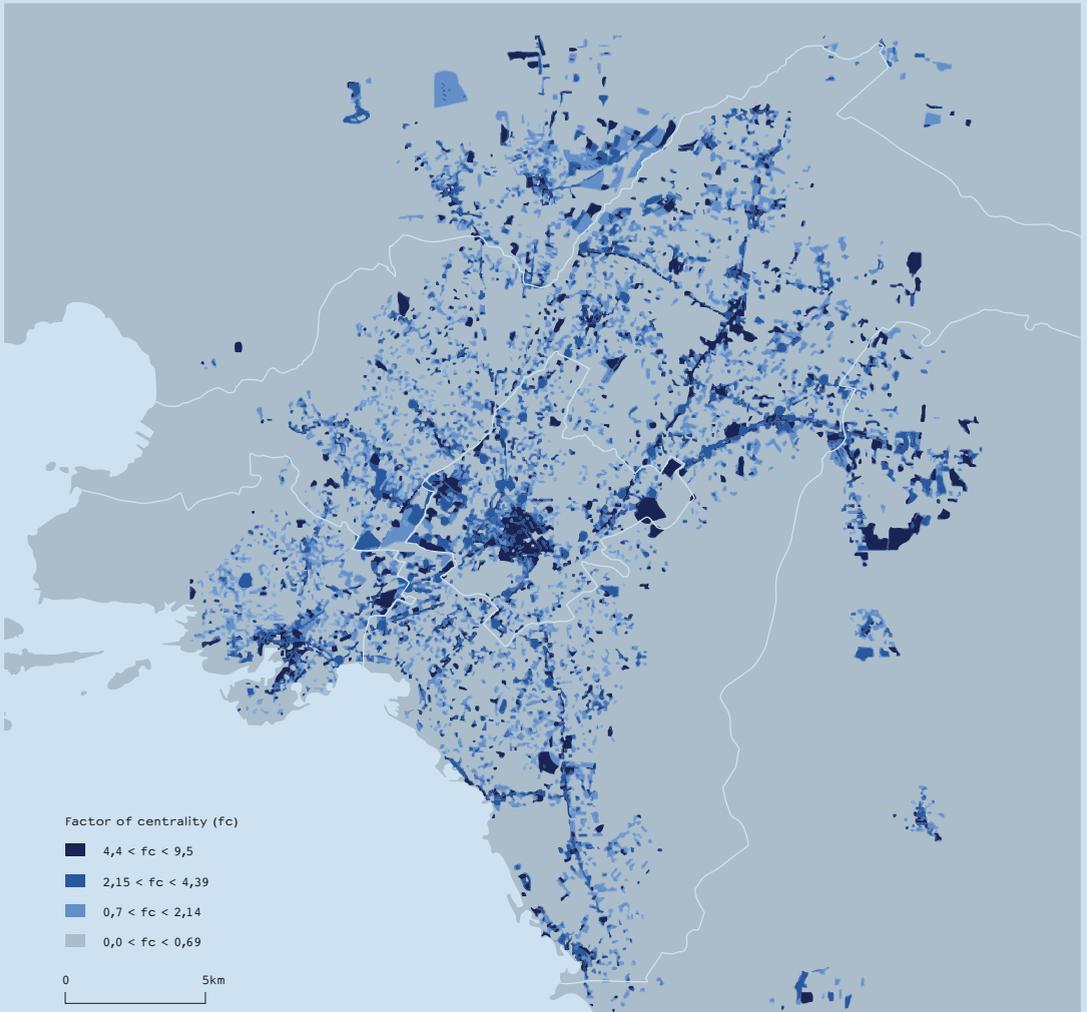
Building heights

The predominant building type in Athens is the *polykatoikia* (apartment building), a system that makes use of elementary construction principles to allow for a flexibility of use and, in its endless proliferation, gave shape to entire Greek cities. The development of this building type, reaching up to 8 stories, is closely linked to the *anti-parochi* system and is still very

frequent. It is surprising that in view of Athens' density there are no high-rise developments. High-rise constructions were pushed for during the military dictatorship (1967–1974) and have ever since been automatically associated with the Junta. The General Building Code of 1985 restricted new buildings throughout Greece to a height of less than 32 metres;

this was recently further reduced to 28 metres. This legal framework has strongly shaped today's urban landscape. Only in recent years has the deeply political discussion of high-rise buildings come up again.

Map and information source: Michel Sivignon, Atlas de la Grèce, Montpellier, CNRS-GDR Libergéo, 2003



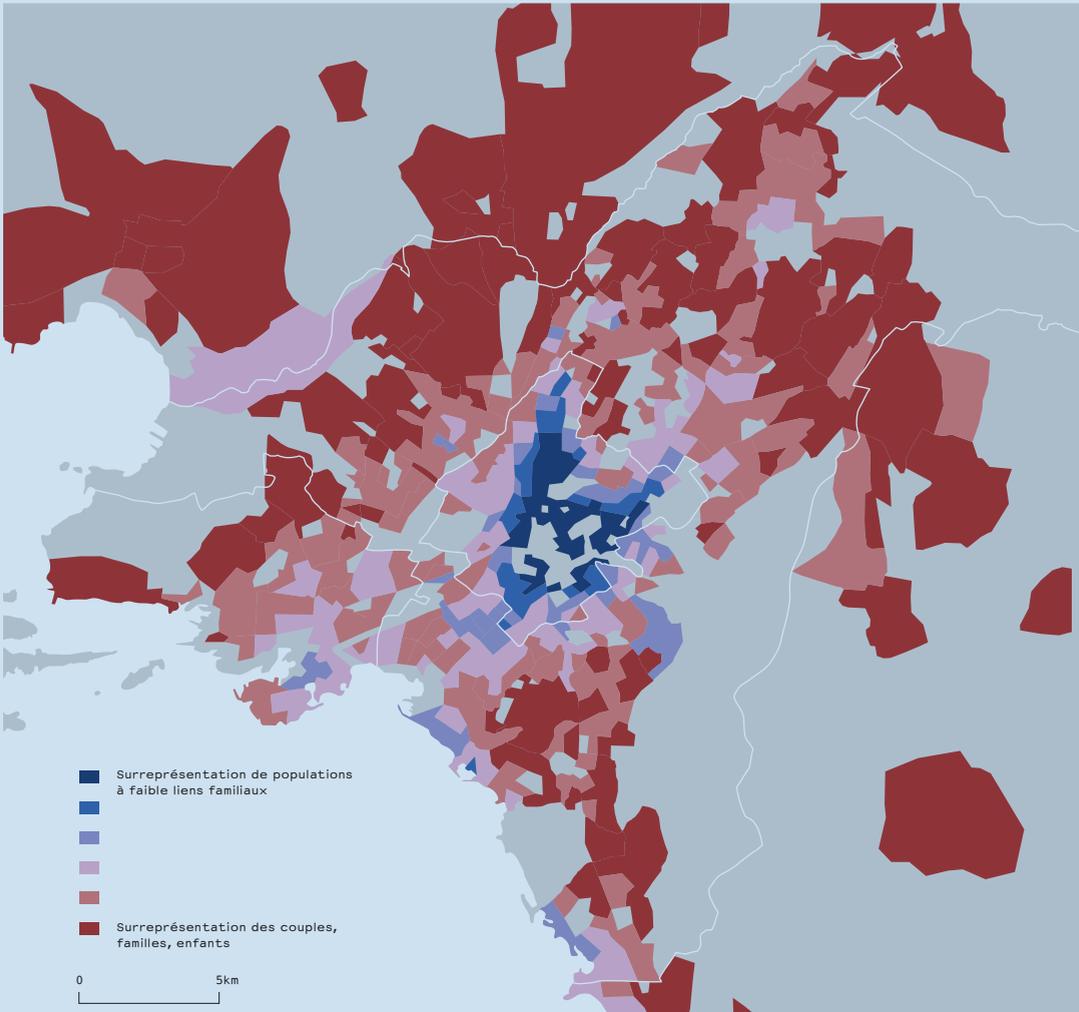
Centrality

Centrality in Athens' urban structure is not strongly linked with proximity to the city centre. Excluding the few square kilometres around the nineteenth century triangle of the city centre and the corresponding one for Piraeus' centre, centrality occurs per neighbourhood and follows the linear structure of the street network.

This network includes all the central streets within a neighbourhood, and often concentrates around the local market area that offers services and other infrastructures related to a 'centre'. Local centres in the metropolitan area of Athens have gained an importance that is more related to the strength of the municipalities' identi-

ties and the socio-professional profile of their inhabitants than to their economic values as urban territories.

Athens Lessons



Households

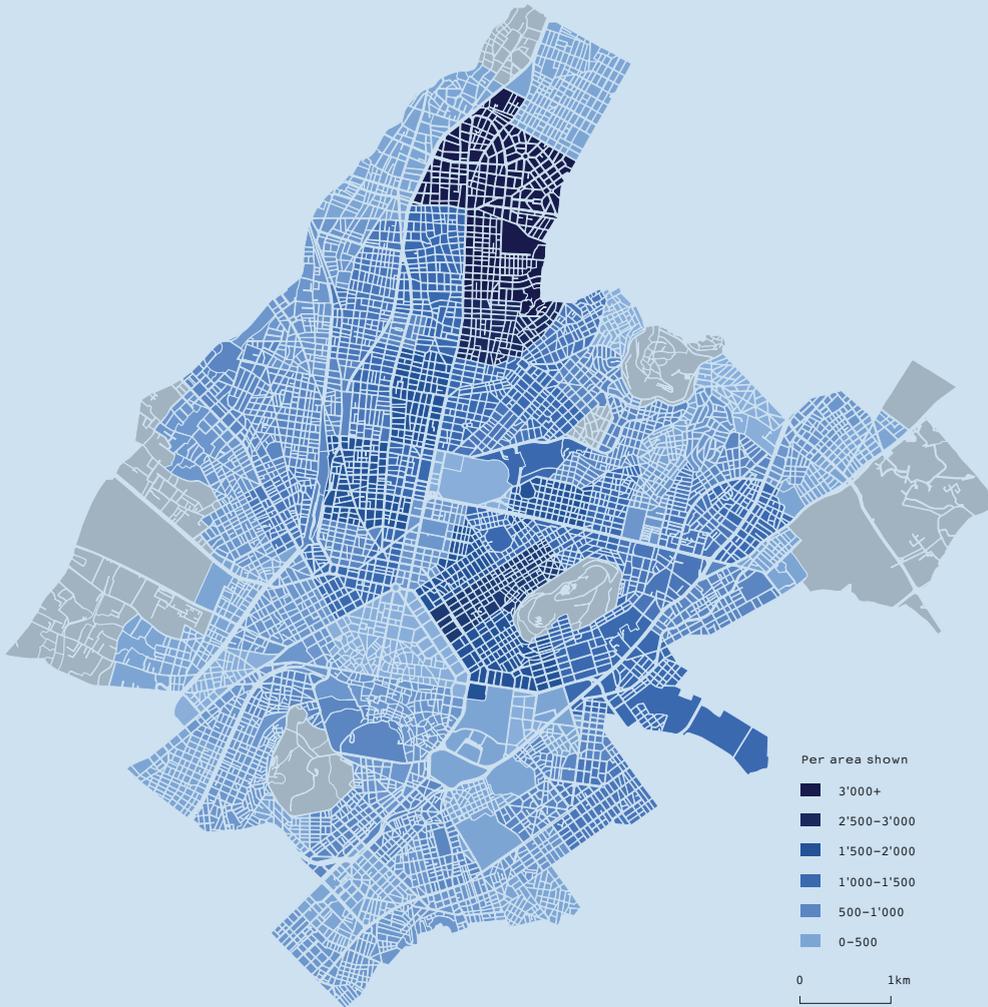
Compared to the rest of the European Union, Greece has a restrained number of one-person households. Divorces are still not very numerous – the traditional model of the family continues to dominate. There is a clear opposition between the centre and the periphery. With the growth of

the city's population, the number of traditional households diminishes. In the city centre, mono-parental families and flat-sharing communities are above average. In the distant suburbs, extended family households are more common, due in part to the lower cost of dwellings there and the possibility

of self-construction that renders such areas more accessible for larger families. Recently though, wealthy households have also migrated to other suburbs to escape the pollution and traffic congestion in the city centre.

Map and information source: Michel Sivignon, Atlas de la Grèce, Montpellier, CNRS-GDR Libergéo, 2003

Analysis



Vacancy

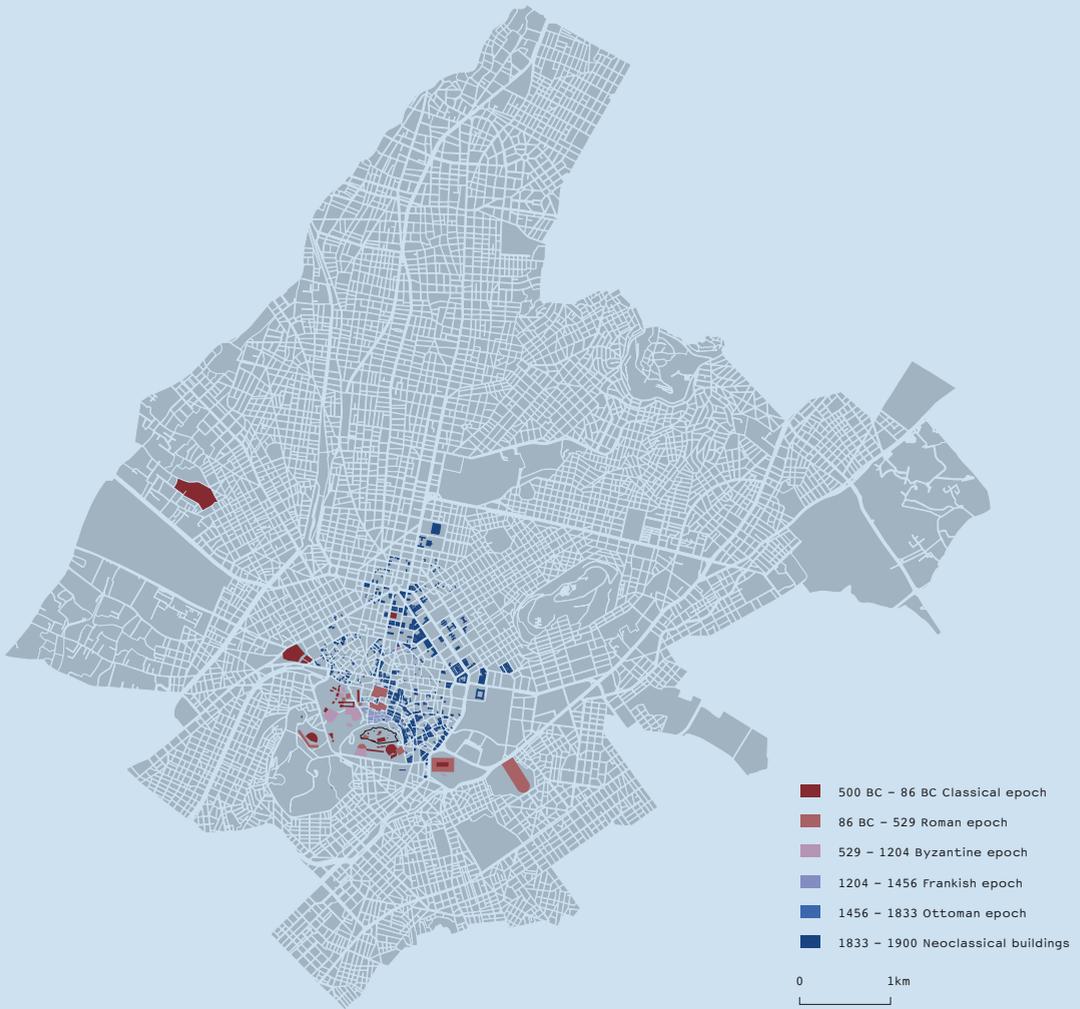
Vacant buildings are one sign of an urban area deteriorating. Cause and effect are not clear, as several factors co-influence each other. Vacant buildings often are occupied illegally, thus attracting an array of illegal activities. This in return further

pushes out previously established populations which now feel threatened by the change. This creates further vacant buildings as well as lower rent prices which make it less possible or enticing for owners to maintain their buildings properly. Such buildings

then further decay. The most current data on vacancy could not be obtained. Current data might show an increase of vacancy in the center.

Map source: <http://www.demography-lab.prd.uth.gr>

Athens Lessons



Archaeologic sites

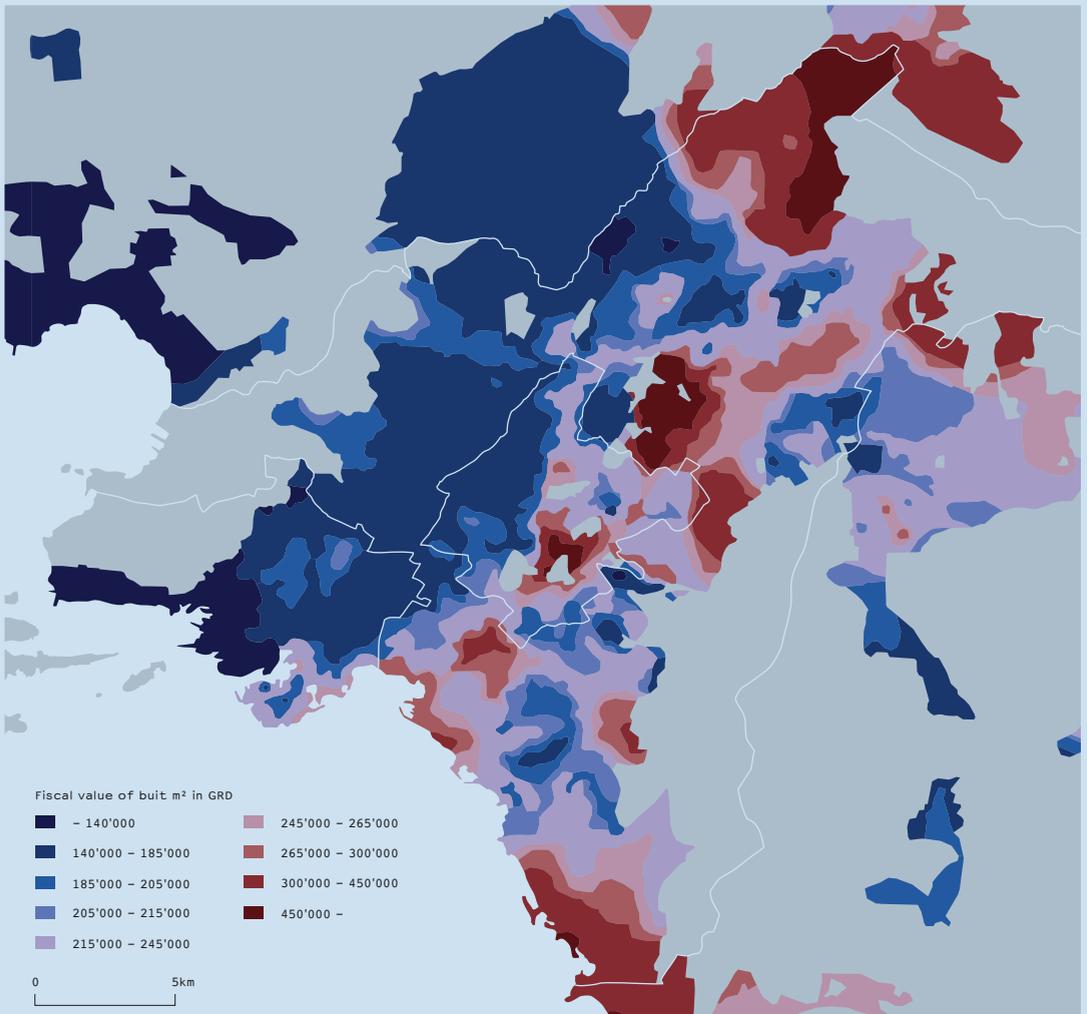
Athens has been continuously occupied for the past 7000 years – caves in the Acropolis hill were already inhabited in Neolithic times. However, Athens is primarily known for its classical heritage. Apart from its touristic value, archaeology also provides a strong ideological value

for Athens. The Acropolis evokes Greece as a birthplace of democracy, and thus its inalienable belonging to Europe. In the city centre, however, archaeological heritage can also be a burden. An archaeological find on a construction site can considerably delay or even stop a development,

leading to very little progress in the city centre. This is also true for the rest of the city, though to a lesser extent.

Map and information source: Jean Tavlos, *Athènes au fil du temps*, Boulogne, Editions Jeol Cuenot, 1972

Analysis



Value of new constructions

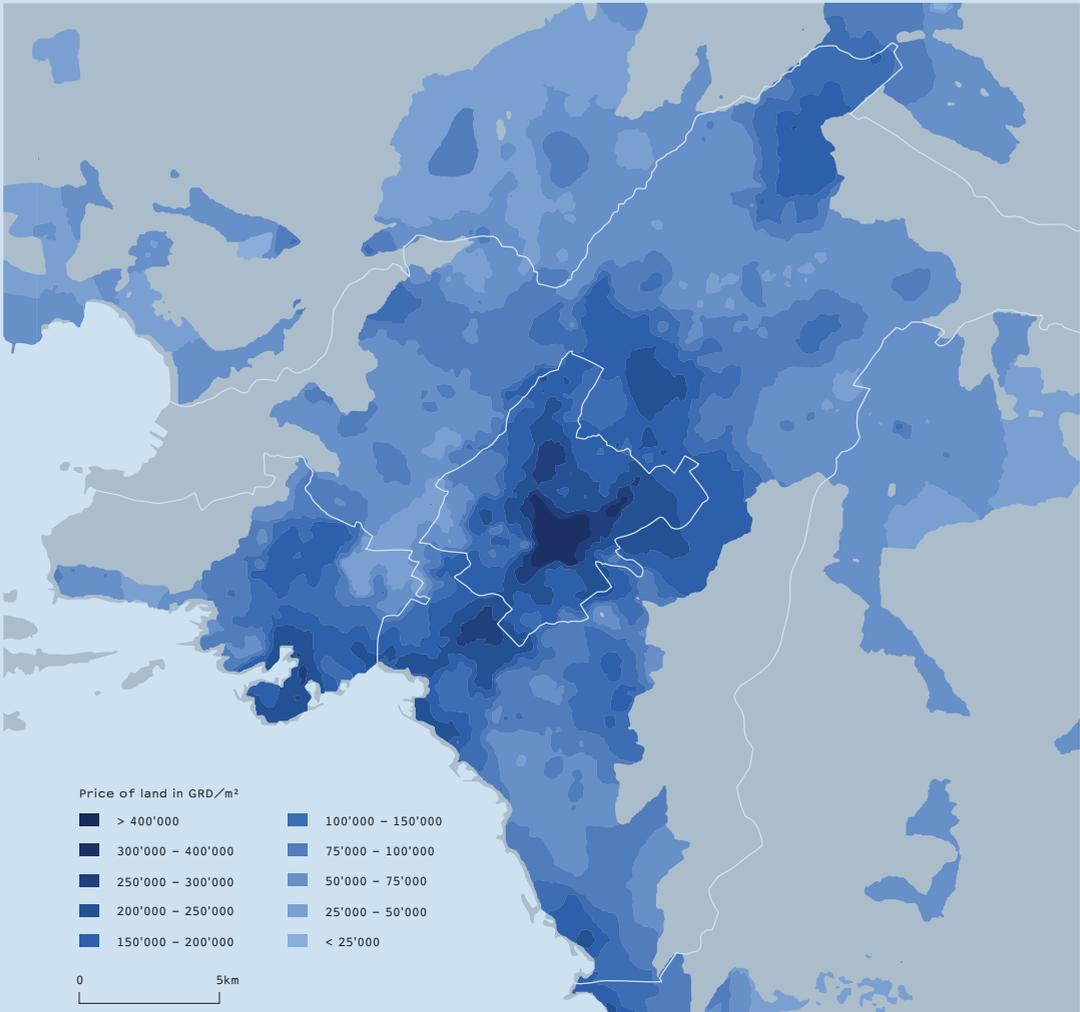
The map depicting the value of new constructions highlights the difference between east and west in Athens. The western part is characterized by low value, whilst the east is one of higher value. This dichotomy reflects the different social categories, the less well-off being situated in the west,

where there is a high presence of industrial facilities and storage buildings and poorer-quality housing, dating mainly from the 1950s and 1960s. Higher income groups are situated in the city centre and along the road axes leading to Kifissia on one side and to the Mesogaian plain

on the other. High value areas are also to be found along the coastline, with the vicinity around the old airport of Glyfada being the sole exception.

Map and information source: Michel Sivignon, Atlas de la Grèce, Montpellier, CNRS-GDR Libergéo, 2003

Athens Lessons



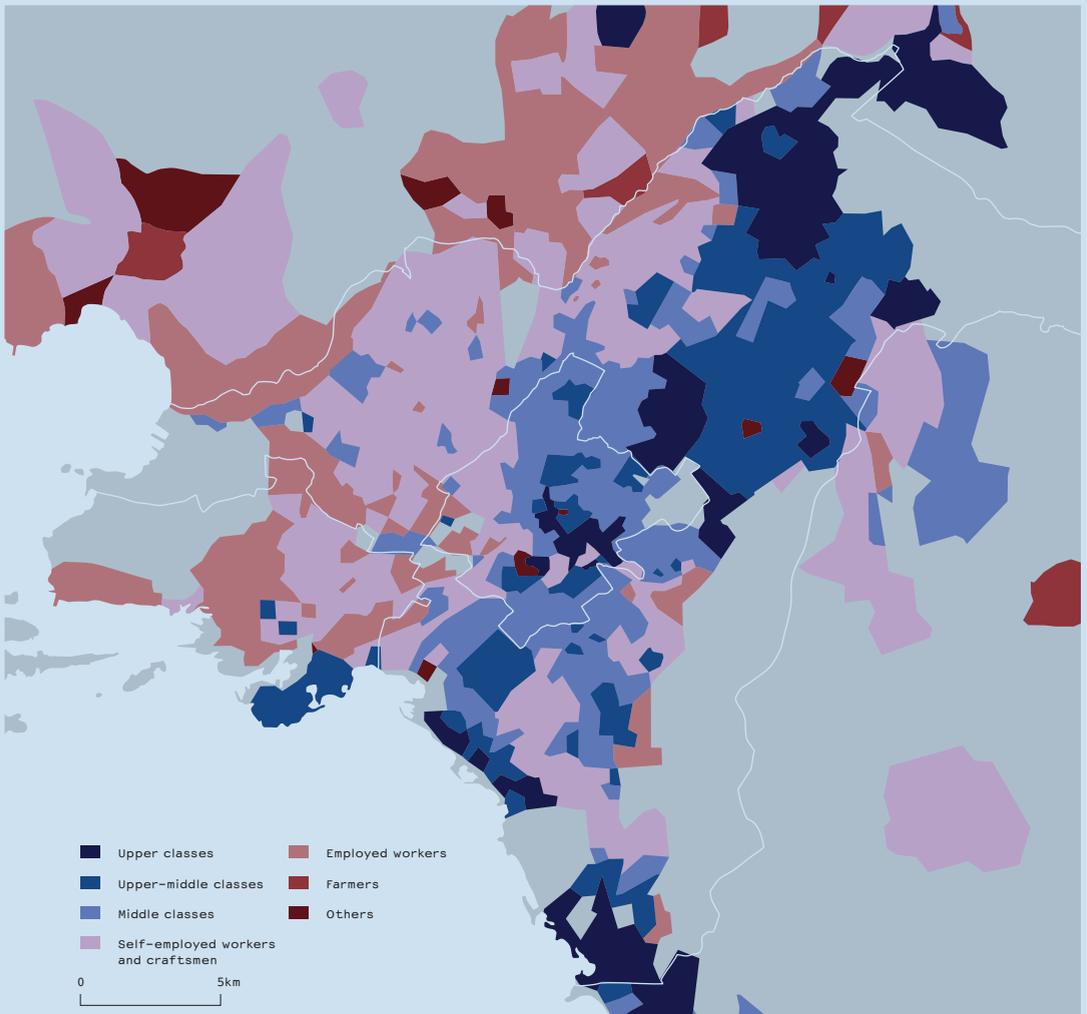
Landprice

The map on the price of land does not draw the same image as the price per square metre built. It shows an opposition between the higher values of the two centres of Athens and Piraeus and the lower values of their peripheries. The land price is

directly linked to the special distribution of the land use ratio, which allows for higher construction in the centres of Athens and Piraeus.

Map and information source: Michel Sivignon, Atlas de la Grèce, Montpellier, CNRS-GDR Libergéo, 2003

Analysis



Social class distribution

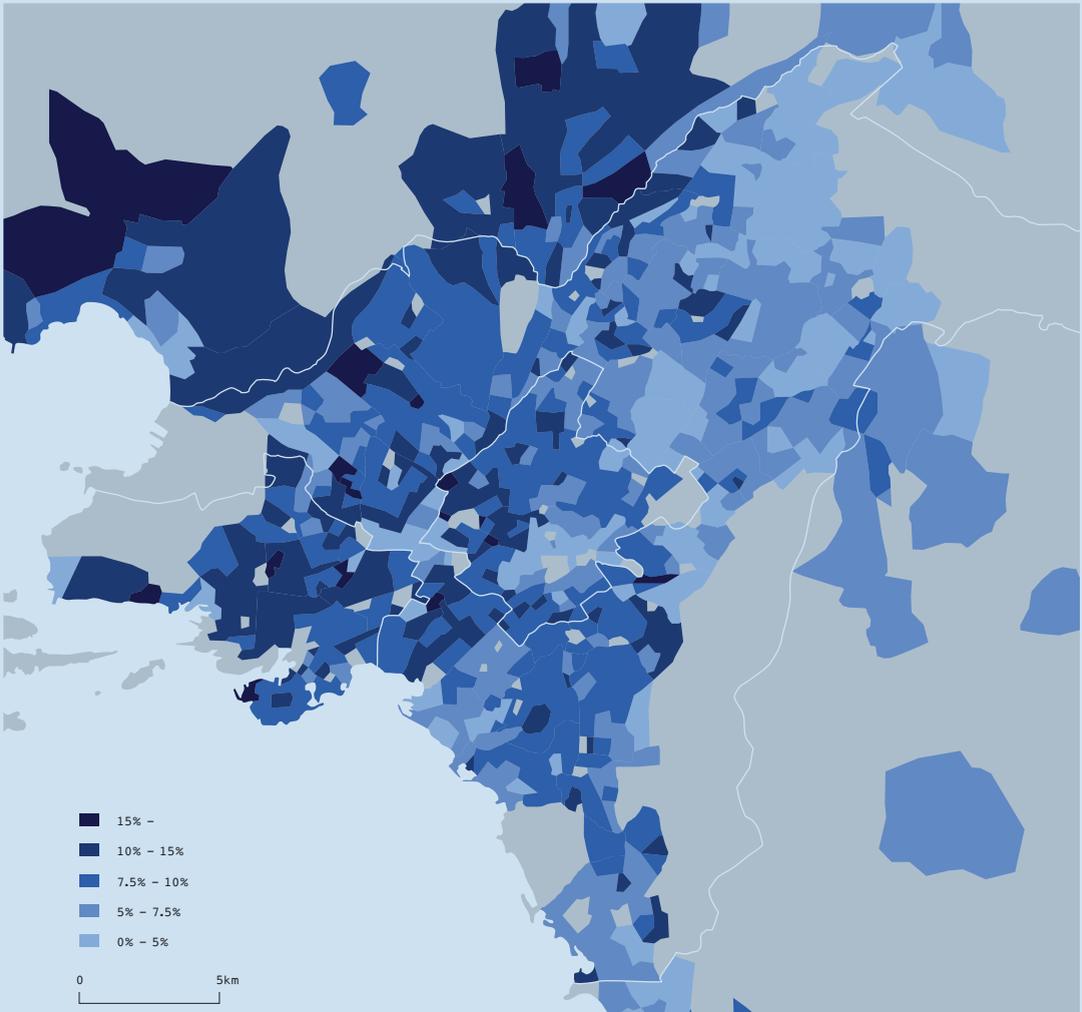
In Athens, the different social classes, whether upper or lower class, are separated into different sectors. In general, we can see that the lower working class live in the western parts of the city, whereas the upper class live in eastern parts of the city, such as the

Kolonaki neighborhood – the richest neighbourhood of central Athens. This social segregation between east and west results in part from the fact that poorer people from rural areas who flooded into the city between 1950 and 1960 settled in the west-

ern part of the city. Furthermore, the upper class citizens have, in recent years, chosen to abandon the city centre in order to move to the suburbs.

Map and information source: Michel Sivignon, Atlas de la Grèce, Montpellier, CNRS-GDR Libergéo, 2003

Athens Lessons



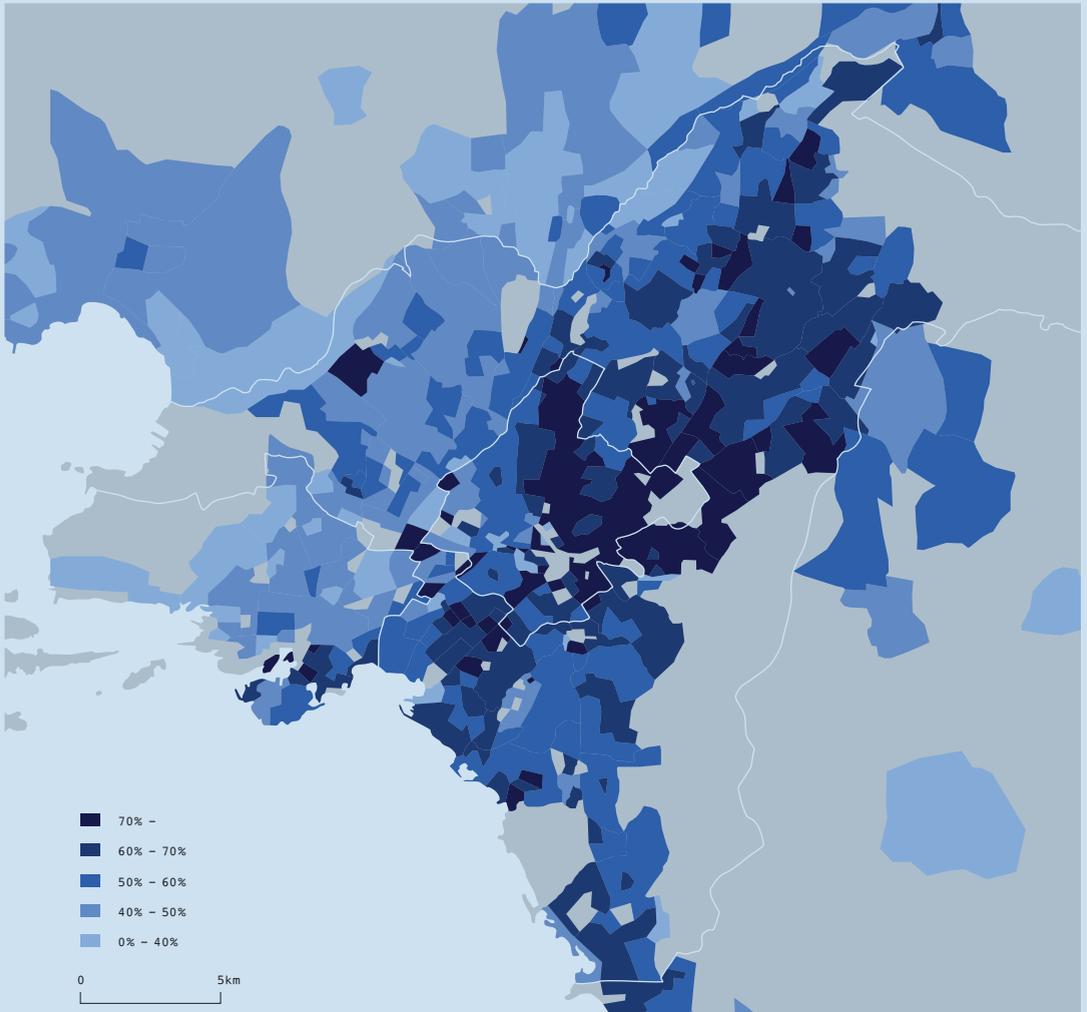
Unemployment

The Greek debt crisis has increased Greece's unemployment problems, with unemployment rates reaching a record high 16.2% in March 2011. Unemployment rates are also high in Athens, and can reach 15% in certain areas

of the city. The working class is most affected by unemployment. Thus, we can see a clear distinction between the western parts of the city, where unemployment rates are high, and eastern parts where rates are mod-

erate or low. Unemployment rates are also high in Athens, and can reach 1% in certain areas of the city. 'This map is from before 2003, yet shows a distribution still valid for today.'

Map and information source: Michel Sivignon, Atlas de la Grèce, Montpellier, CNRS-GDR Libergéo, 2003

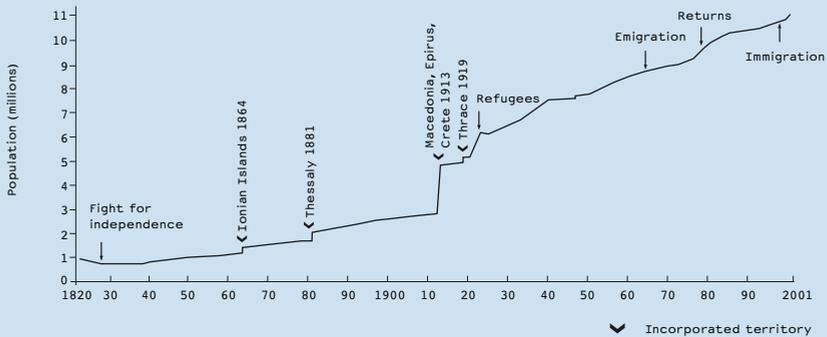


Female employment

The map illustrating the female employment distribution throughout the city tells a similar story as the two preceding maps: a clear distinction between the eastern and western parts of Athens. Indeed, the

female employment rates are generally higher in middle to upper classes areas. This map therefore reflects the city's social morphology.

Athens Lessons



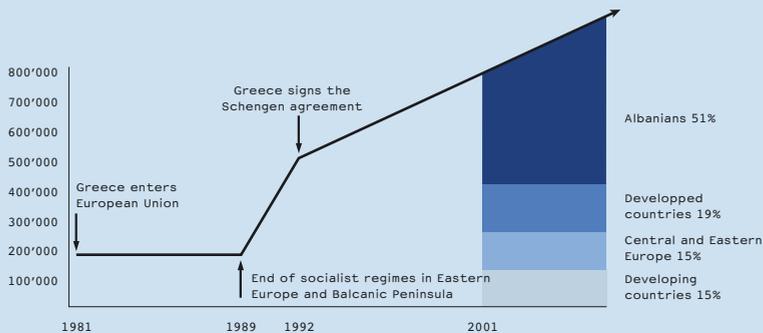
Population evolution

Greece's population has seen a consistent rise since the mid-nineteenth century. This constant growth can be explained by two main factors. The first is territorial expansion, which for

example led to a population increase of 40% in 1912. The second factor is migratory movement, which, due to an influx of immigrants between 1890 and 1924 and later between 1950

and 1980, also led to a population increase. The influx of illegal immigrants represents the most significant factor in population increase today.

Map and information source: Michel Sivignon, Atlas de la Grèce, Montpellier, CNRS-GDR Libergéo, 2003



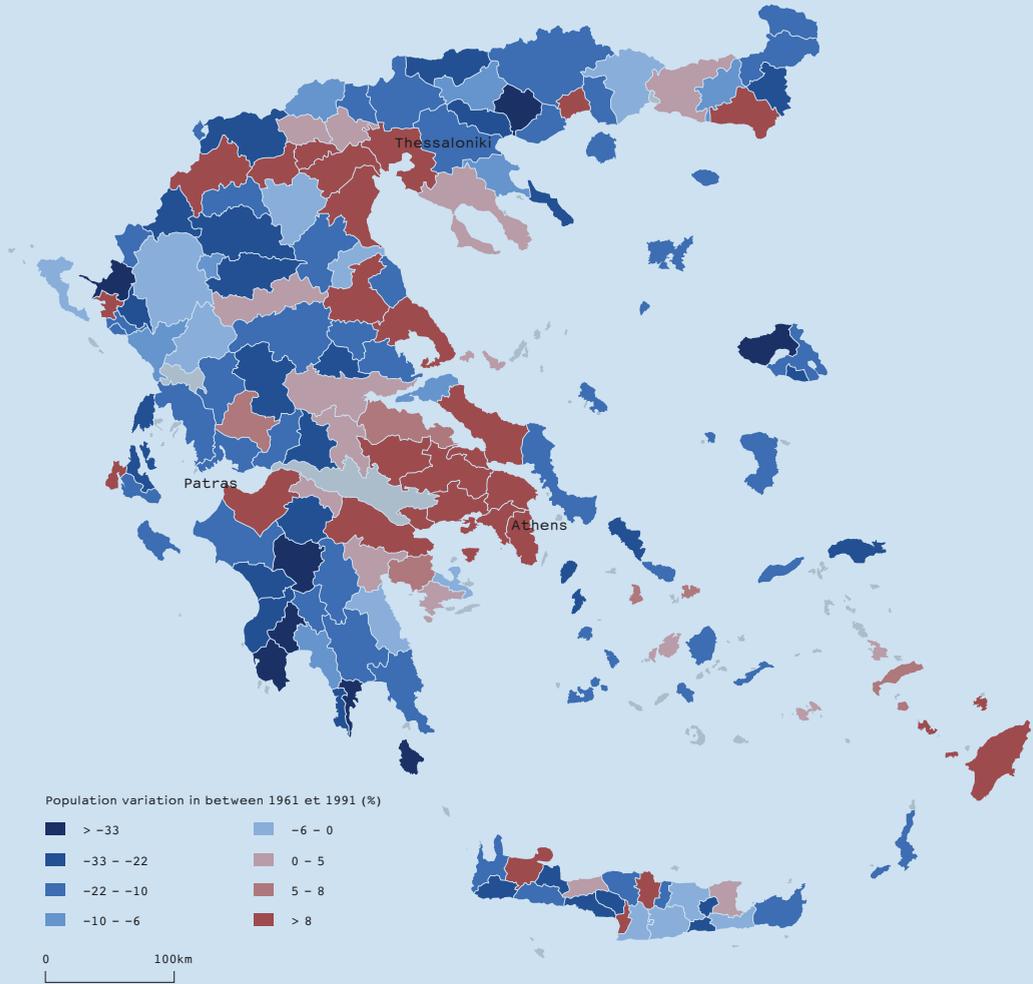
Foreigners in Greece

Throughout its history, Greece has had to deal with waves of immigration and emigration. However, since the early 1990s, Greece has been facing a massive wave of illegal immigrants. This influx was largely set off by the disintegration of the former Communist

bloc in Eastern Europe and the Balkans in 1989. This explains to a certain extent why Albanians still account for more than 50% of the immigrant population. Since then, the number of illegal immigrants has continued to grow, with Greece being an easy entry

point into the EU for immigrants due to its extensive borders, which are difficult to protect. The most current data (2010, 2011) is not available. It would probably show a sharp increase in foreigners from developing countries and a decrease in Albanians.

Graph source: <http://www.emn.at>



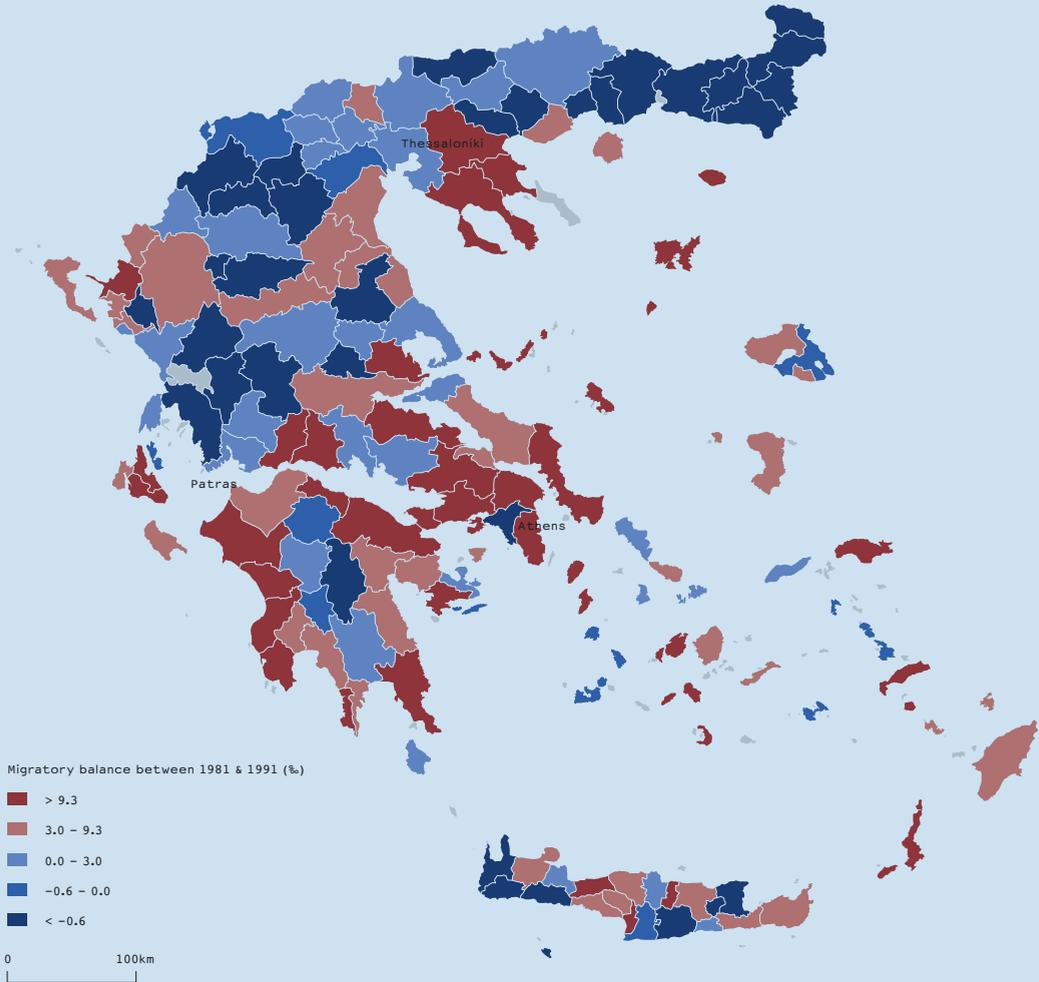
Population evolution

Between 1961 and 1991, Greece's population has risen by 22.3%. Today, Greece has a population of 11'305'118 (7th biggest in EU-15 and 9th biggest in EU-27). However, the rhythm of population increase has not been regular. Indeed, during the early 60s, annual growth rates were around 0.5%,

before reaching its peak rate of more than 1% between 1975 and 1980 due to the migratory return of Greeks, as well as a high fertility rate. Metropolitan areas have been the main beneficiaries of this population increase, as people from rural areas started to move toward the city during the 60s. How-

ever, today's Greece, like many other European countries, is confronted with a slowing growth rate due to an aging population and a decreasing birth rate.

Athens Lessons



Migratory balance

Immigration influx did not contribute much to the strong population increase between 1960 and 1990. Indeed, immigration only contributed to a 1.4% population increase over that period. It was mainly a high birth rate and low mortality rate that were responsible for the growth. However, this situation has changed since

the 1990s, with a high influx of immigrants from the Balkans and the Middle East. Now, immigrants account for 7.2% of the total population. In Athens, the immigrant population is even higher, accounting for 10.4% of the total. Looking at non-EU population densities, the highest (13 to 25%) seem generally concentrated

on islands (Mikonos, Kea, Skiathos, Zakynthos), in Attika, nearby Athens, or on the northwestern Greek border. The lowest (0 to 1.7%) are in north-east Greece, around Alexandroupoli, as well as in a few economically disadvantaged regions of the country.

Map and information source: Michel Sivignon, Atlas de la Grèce, Montpellier, CNRS-GDR Libergéo, 2003 / Statistical Data on immigrants in Greece, Mediterranean Migration Observatory, 2004

Analysis



Origin of the immigrants to Greece

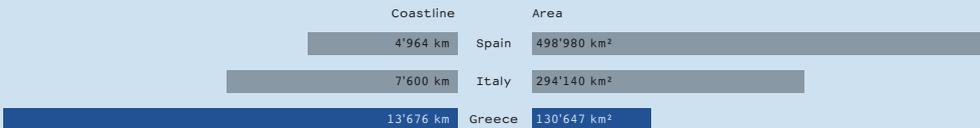
Due to its position on the Mediterranean and its proximity to Northern Africa as well as Asia, Greece has immigrants coming from a large number of different countries. However, Albanians can be singled out as the one dominant group, constituting 56% of total immigration and mak-

ing Greece the only EU member state to have a dominant immigrant group in excess of 50% of its total immigrant population. The next biggest immigrant group is Bulgarian, which accounts for 5% of total immigrants, followed by Romanians, who represent 3% of immigrants. Recently, though,

immigrants from the Middle East, Asia and Africa have increasingly used Greece as an entry point to the EU.

Map and information source: Michel Sivignon, Atlas de la Grèce, Montpellier, CNRS-GDR Libergéo, 2003; Statistical Data on immigrants in Greece, Mediterranean Migration Observatory, 2004

Athens Lessons



Dublin II convention

Implemented in 2003, one of the principal aims of the Dublin Regulation is to prevent an asylum applicant from submitting applications in multiple Member States*. However, since the country that a person first arrived in is responsible for dealing with the application, this puts excessive pres-

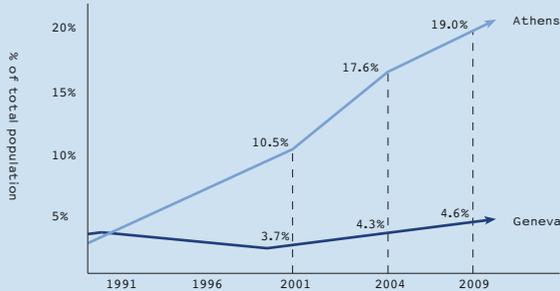
sure on border areas, where states are often least able to offer asylum seekers support and protection. The enormous land and sea border with Turkey makes Greece the weakest link in this system. In combination with the highly inefficient asylum system, this led in 2008 to a humani-

tarian crisis in the detention centres, which were chronically overcrowded. In 2011, the UK, Sweden, Norway, Germany, Finland and Denmark decided to stop sending asylum seekers back to Greece for humanitarian reasons.

* EU, Norway, Iceland and Switzerland.

Map source: CIA World Factbook, 2011

Analysis



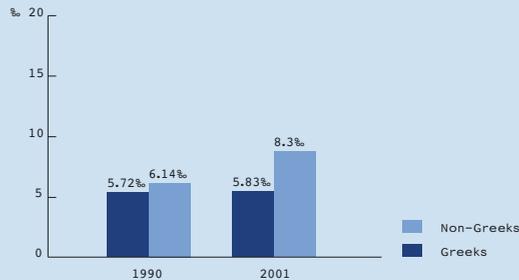
Immigration boom

The number of immigrants in Greece has risen dramatically since 1990. This is associated with the collapse of the communist regimes in Albania, former Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union. Faced with a large amount of illegal immigrants, the Greek state has launched a series of legalisation cam-

paigns since 1998 to integrate the long-time resident immigrants into Greek society. However, these new and less restrictive laws attracted immigrants from as far away as Bangladesh and Afghanistan. The introduction of the euro in Greece in 2002 presented yet another strong incen-

tive for unskilled labour to immigrate en masse into the country, and thus gain access to a hard currency to send back to relatives in their home countries. Furthermore, Greece is an important gateway to Northern Europe for human traffickers, due to its geographic proximity to the Middle East.

Graph source: Office cantonal de la statistique Genève/Hellenic Statistical Authority (census 2001)



Serious crimes

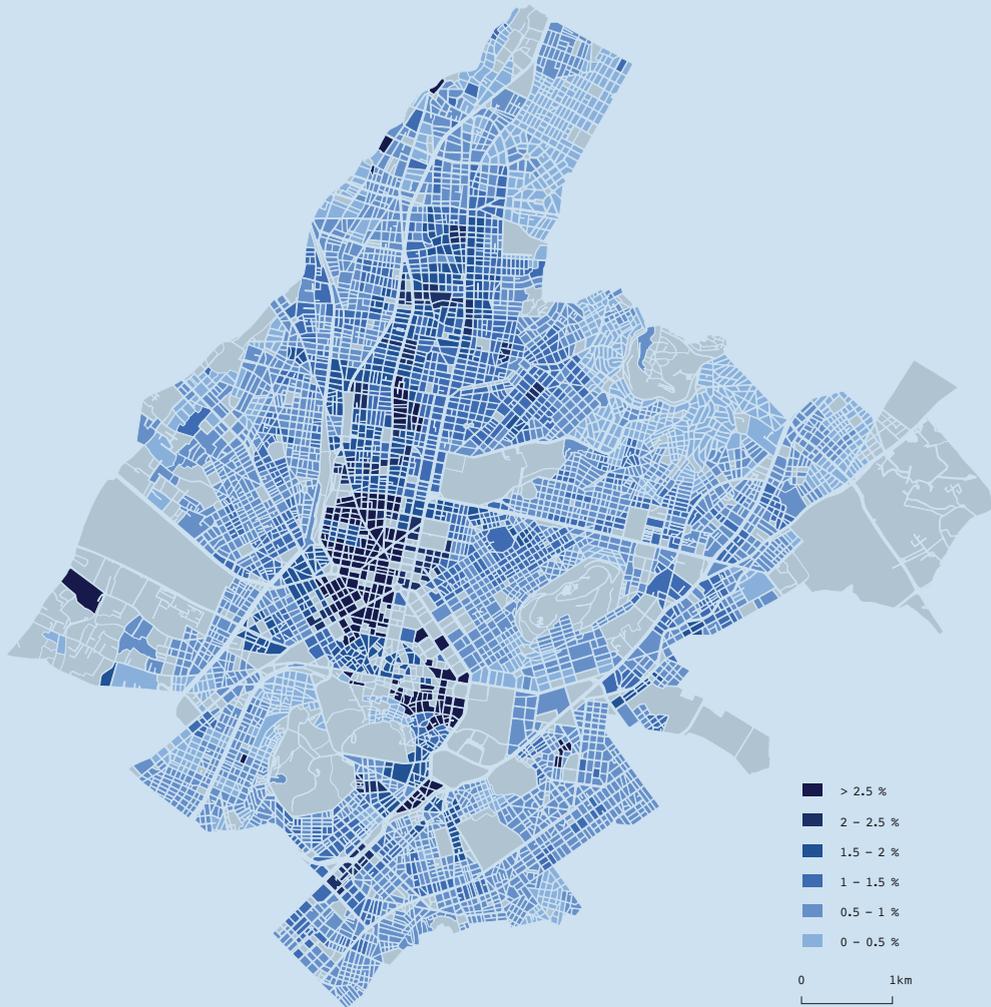
Serious crime consists of crimes such as murder, rape, theft, drug trafficking, arm trafficking etc. The statistics show that while the crime rate among Greeks has remained stable over the

last ten years, the crime rate among foreigners has increased significantly. Data on crime in 2010 was not available. It is estimated though, that crime from Non-Greeks has increased

sharply, due to the difficult situation illegal immigrants face to make a living.

Graph source: T. P. Lianos and T. Benos, Criminology of Foreigners; The Statistical Data, Athens, KEPE, 2003

Athens Lessons



Immigrants in Athens

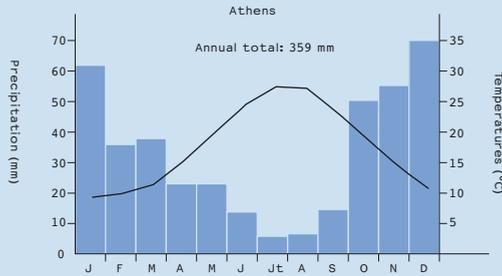
Immigrants move primarily into the metropolitan areas, which offer substantial employment opportunities. This explains why 47% of immigrants in Greece live in Athens. Within the intra-urban distribution, newcomers tend to concentrate in the inner-city districts, where lower-priced housing can be found. Surprisingly, these are

not the traditional working-class areas where the native lower social strata live in homes they own: most immigrants live in densely built-up areas around the centre, which were depreciated and progressively abandoned by many upper-middle and middle-class households. Immigrants tend to group within proximity of each other, in order

to take advantage of their closely integrated social networks and to retain valued elements of their cultural heritage, such as language and religion. This has led to the Omonia and Metaxourgeio neighbourhoods becoming attractive locations for immigrants.

Map source: Kathimerini, <http://news.kathimerini.gr>

Analysis



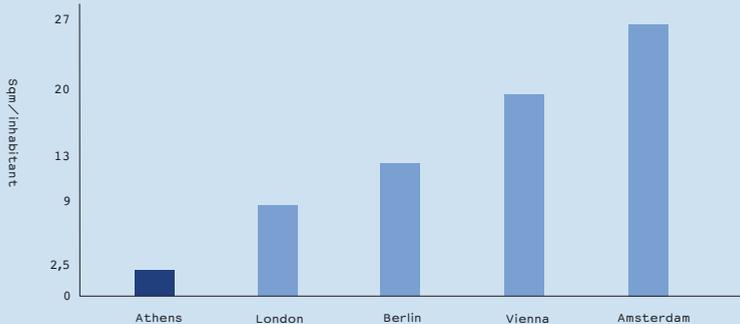
Climate

Athens and its region have a Mediterranean climate, characterized by prolonged warm and dry summers and mild, wet winters. The climate in Athens also

faces continental influences due to the mountains bordering the city. With an average of 359 mm of precipitation per year, Athens is considered a

dry city, with the driest period being from April to October, during which temperatures often surpass 38 °C.

Graph source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athens#Climate>, 2011



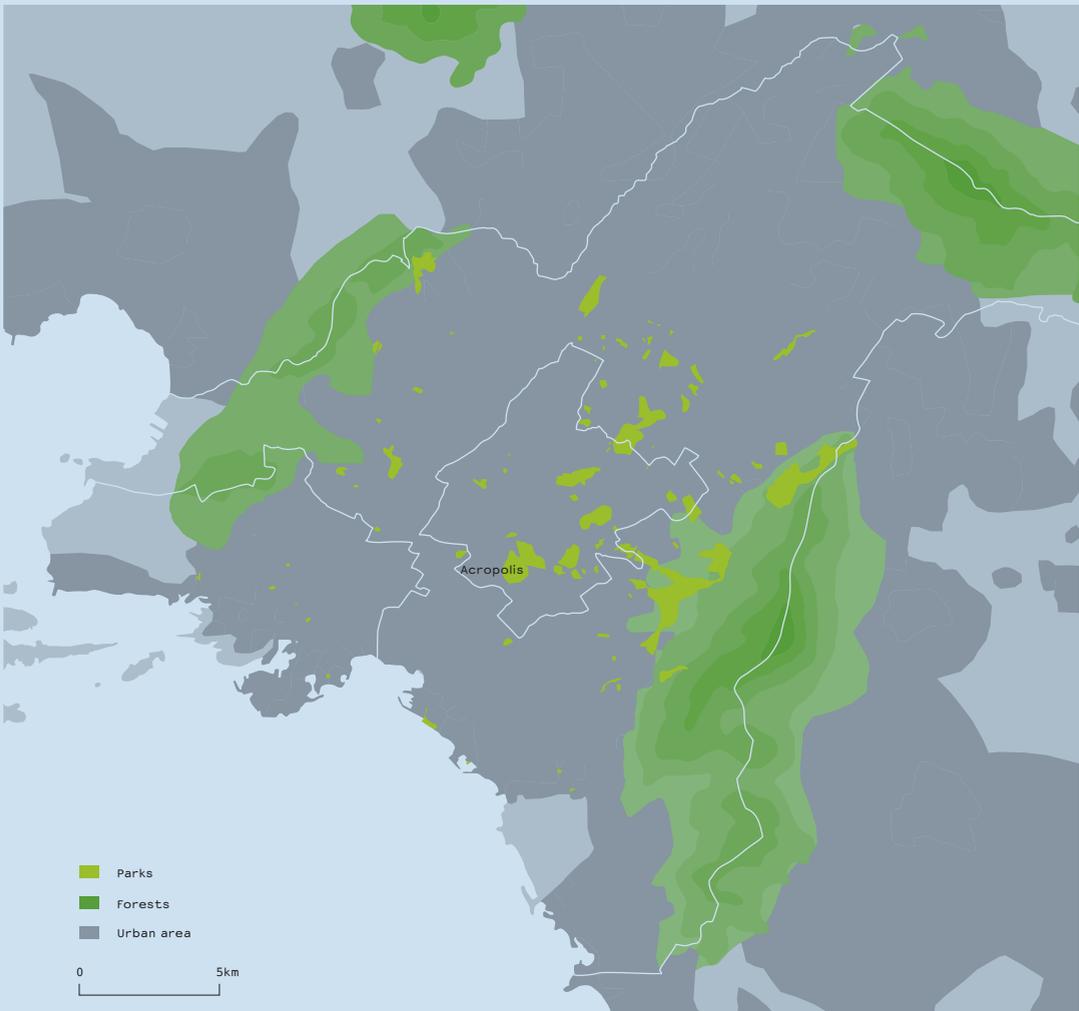
Amount of green area in Athens vs. other European capitals

Compared with other capitals, Athens has one of the lowest amounts of green space per person. This is a result of the fact that it mostly

grew through illegal but tolerated urban sprawl, without urban planning. For this reason, Athens is sometimes called 'the cement city'.

Graph source: <http://www.minenv.gr>

Athens Lessons



Green spaces

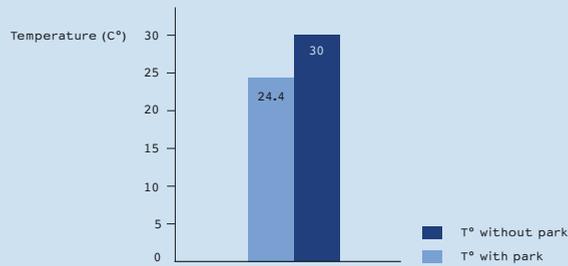
Athens is severely deprived of green spaces. Most of the remaining green spaces have only survived because they hold an archaeological site. Compared to other European capitals, Athens has one of the lowest amounts of green square meter per inhabitant;

this is especially a problem given that the Greek capital is one of the most densely populated cities in Europe. The lack of green space can be explained on the one hand by a lack of planning and on the other by the harsh climate that makes

maintaining a park challenging. In addition, there has been until recently a cultural preference for squares over parks.

Map and information source: Michel Sivignon, Atlas de la Grèce, Montpellier, CNRS-GDR Libergéo, 2003

Analysis



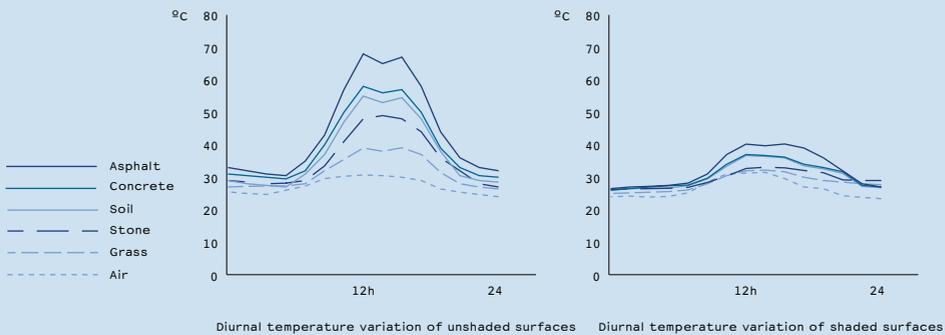
Decrease of temperature in parks

A heat island is a phenomenon common to large cities during the summer months. It occurs when the temperature in a metropolitan area is significantly warmer than that of its surrounding rural area. Urban heat islands are primarily attributed to horizontal surfaces such as roofs

and pavements that absorb solar radiation. Additionally, vegetation is known to mitigate the heat island, mainly by providing shade, but also by producing water (transpiration) that evaporates and cools the surrounding air. In the case of large green areas such as parks, vegetation affects

the surrounding air temperature and thus improves the thermal environment of the urban area. Studies have shown that the influence of a large park (500 ha) reaches a radius of up to 2km. The temperature difference can reach between 3.3 and 5.6°C.

Graph source: I. Zoulia, M. SSantamouris, A. Dimoudi, Monitoring the effect of urban green areas on the heat island in Athens, 2009

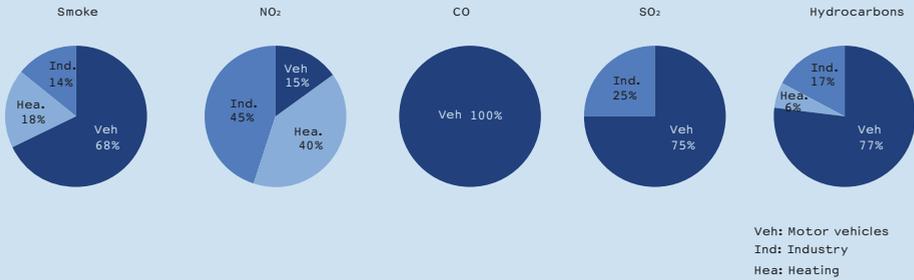


Temperature of various surfaces

Various surfaces have different temperatures because of their density, colour and humidity percentage. Vegetation thus heats up signifi-

cantly less during daytime than, for example, asphalt does. The difference is especially noticeable on surfaces that are in direct sunlight.

Athens Lessons



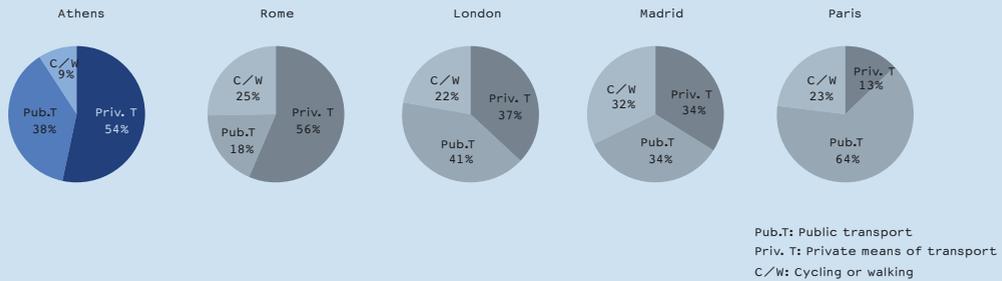
Athens air pollution

For the past thirty years, Athens has had to deal with increasing air pollution. Air pollution is due to the emission of man-made chemicals that can cause harm or discomfort to humans, but also damage the natural environment. The main pollutants produced

by human activity are smoke, sulphur dioxide (SO₂), nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), carbon monoxide (CO) and hydrocarbons. The main sources of air pollution related to human activity are industrial activity, motor vehicles and heating. Apart from nitrogen diox-

ide, the main emission source is motor vehicles. Athens has the highest per capita car ownership in the European Union, which explains why cars are the main source of pollution.

Graph source: P. Polymenasa, C. Pilinis, Athens air quality and importance of biogenic emissions, 2008; <http://www.eea.europa.eu>



Modes of transport

Congestion is a big problem in the city centre. The almost permanent traffic jams around Omonia Square, an essential node of Athens, makes travel from one side of the city to the other a hard task. This high level of con-

gestion can be explained by the fact that people still use their personal vehicles as their main mean of transport instead of public transportation. With the road network nearing saturation, simply walking in Athens has

become a challenge in itself, something that is also reflected in the very low percentage of people who walk or cycle as their main form of transport.

Graph source: conduits.eu, 2010 ; <http://www.thredbo-conference-series.org>



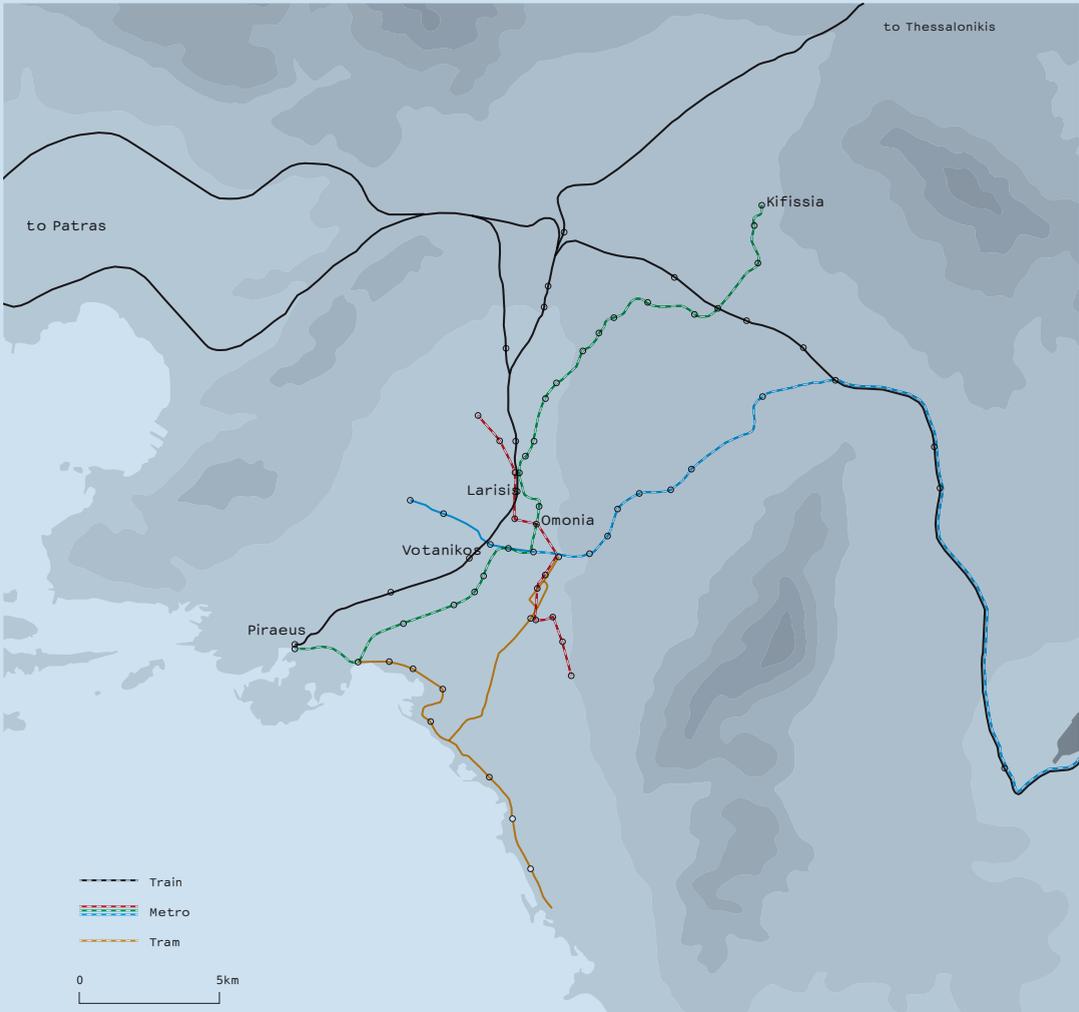
Congestion

Suburban sprawl along with a large increase of car ownership, has led to an overload of the already inadequate road network. Athens has to deal with the problem of traffic congestion, which mainly occurs in the city centre and which has numerous environmental impacts, as well as lead-

ing to disturbances in the economic and social life of the city. A system of traffic restraint has been in operation since 1982, allowing access within a ring covering the historical and commercial centre for private cars on alternate working days, corresponding to odd-even last digits on number

plates. After an initial success, this system was soon undermined by a significant increase of double-car ownership, exemptions (special licenses for journalists, state officials), some violations and an increased use of taxis. The congestion is expected to worsen.

Athens Lessons



Train, metro and tram network

The first rapid transit system in Athens was built in 1869 and connected Athens to Piraeus. This line, which was extended to Kifissia in 1958, is one of the three existing metro lines in operation in Athens today. The metro continues to be extended in an attempt to reduce congestion in the city centre, and new stations are

under construction on the blue and red line. However, the construction process is often slowed down by archaeological findings being unearthed. Hosting the Olympic Games in 2004 has contributed a lot to modernizing the existing stations, as well as developing a new tram line going from Parliament Square down

to the coastline. Even though the suburban railway system connects Athens' sprawling suburbs with the city centre, the rapid transit network as a whole is still largely insufficient for a city the size of Athens.

Map source: <http://www.amel.gr>



Bus network

Despite the fact that metro lines 2 and 3 were constructed in an attempt to reduce air pollution as a result of congestion in the city centre, buses still remain the main means of developing public transport in Athens. A bus network requires less time and effort to put in place, and since it does

not require any particular infrastructure, it has developed at a much faster rate than the metro, tram or suburban train networks. Bus lanes have been put in place in the city centre in order to give preferential treatment to public transport and increase the speed of buses. However, respect for

bus lanes has been difficult to implement, and on some of the main arteries of the city, such as Panepistimiou, buses have taken to going against the flow of traffic in order to prevent private vehicles from using bus lanes.

Map source: <http://www.oasa.gr>

Athens Lessons



Road network

Athens' road network is quite chaotic due to the many small streets reminiscent of the ancient city, but also because of inadequate urban planning that has led to a sometimes-uncontrolled development of the city. The city therefore lacks sufficient hierarchy between main roads, that should allow one to cross the city relatively

fast, and small roads that should serve a particular neighborhood. As a result, this inadequate road planning has increased Athens' congestion problem. In order to go from east to west for example, one must almost always pass through Omonia square (the centre), which makes this area almost permanently con-

gested. In order to fight against the congestion problem, the government has put in place measures such as the Athens Ring restriction that limits the use of one's car on certain days according to whether one has an odd or even license plate number.

Map source: <http://www.ametro.gr>

Analysis



Main roads and railroads

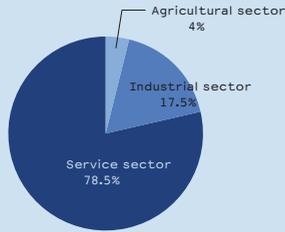
Compared to most European countries, Greece was slow to implement a national rail network. The War of Independence (1821–1828) with the Ottoman Empire as well as numerous external loans hindered the development of the network. Furthermore, the mountainous terrain and sparse

population discouraged private enterprises from investing in the development of a rail network. Today, Greece lags behind most of its European neighbours in terms of railroad coverage. A large part of the rail and motorway network is concentrated on the country's eastern coast. The main

rail line connects Athens to Thessaloniki via Larissa, and serves more than half of Greece's population.

Map source: J. Paravantis, *Railroads in Greece: History, Characteristics and Forecasts*, 2001; <http://www.alleuoperail.com>

Athens Lessons



Economic sectors

Greece's current economy is largely focused on the service sector, which contributes 78.5% of total GDP. Service sector employment includes public administration, education, and transportation, but also tourism, one of the

main contributors to Greek GDP with 15%. The industrial sector accounts for 17.5% of GDP, which is relatively low when compared to other European nations such as Italy (26.7%), Spain (34%) or Germany (27.9%). Finally,

the agricultural sector, which used to be the driving force of the Greek economy, now only accounts for 4% of GDP.

Graph source: CIA World Factbook, 2011



Industrial production index

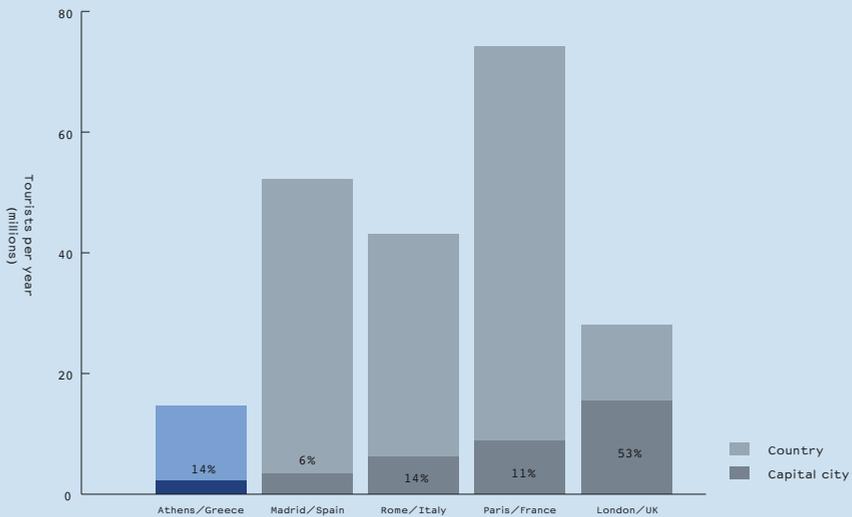
The industrial production index is an index covering production in mining, manufacturing and public utilities (electricity, gas and water), but excludes construction. This index therefore allows us to examine the growth of the industrial

sector and gives insight into the general performance of the economy. The reference period for the index is 2005 (2005=100). At the end of 2010, Greece's IPI was measured at 81,61, one of the lowest among the EU member states.

The fact that Greece never developed a strong industrial sector can explain why it has such a low index.

Graph source: <http://ep.eurostat.ec.europa.eu>

Analysis



Tourism

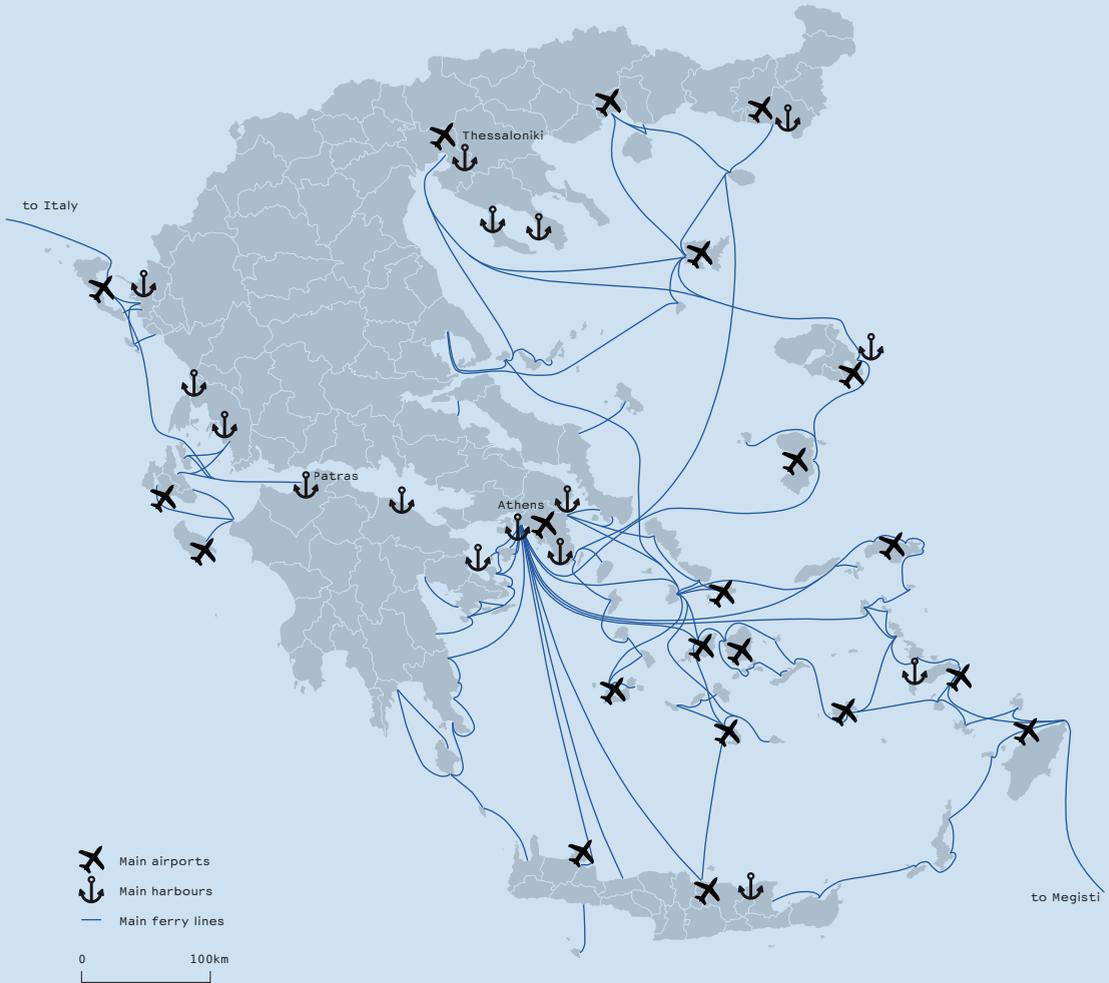
Greece's tourism industry is a major source of revenue, accounting for 15% of total GDP and employing, directly or indirectly, 16.5% of the total workforce. However, most of tourism activity is concentrated in

the Greek archipelago, with 63% of hotel beds located on the islands. Tourism in Athens accounts for 14% of Greece's tourism. This percentage is surprisingly high when comparing it to other European capitals

such as Rome, Madrid or Paris, yet it is still well under London's, where tourism accounts for more than 50% of total tourism in the UK.

Graph source: <http://www.americas-fr.com>

Athens Lessons



Ports and airports

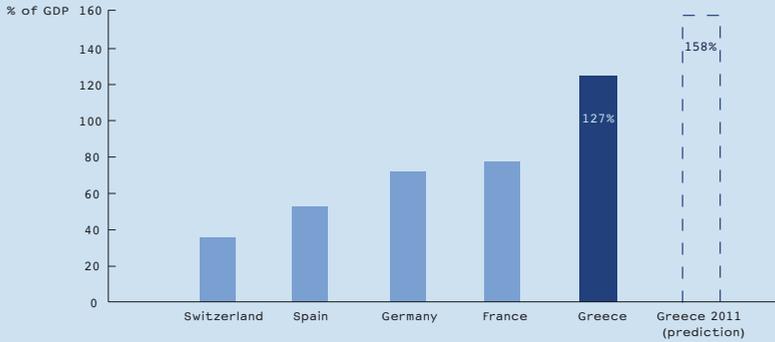
Greece has a great nautical history, and due to its strategic position on the Mediterranean Sea, it has developed many ports along its coastline in order to promote trade with its Mediterranean neighbours. Among its many ports, Patras, Thes-

saloniki and Piraeus (port of Athens) form the three main ports, with the latter being the biggest port in Europe. Piraeus is not only a commercial port, but also the main departure hub for ferries going to the islands. Piraeus therefore has a large impact

on tourism in Athens as most tourists heading to the islands must pass by Athens first. However, tourists can also reach the Greek islands by plane, as several islands have an airport.

Map source: Google Maps, 2011

Analysis



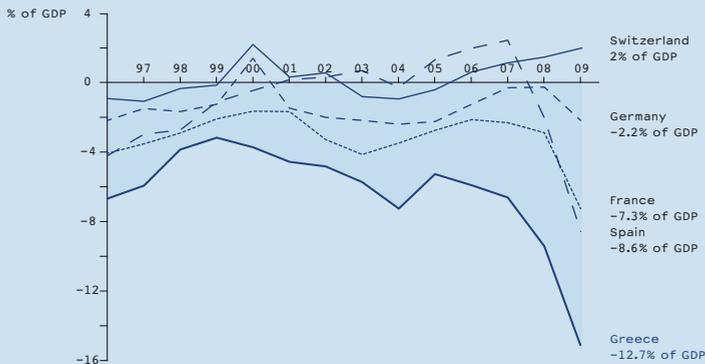
Public debt in 2009

Public debt is the money owed by a central government and broader public sector. In the early 2000s, Greece had one of the fastest growing economies of the Eurozone, growing at an annual rate of 4.2% between 2000 and 2007. A strong economy and fall-

ing bond yields allowed the Greek government to borrow money easily. However, if Greece has such a big public debt today, it is because the government has run large deficits to finance public sector jobs, pensions and other social benefits. If the

predictions are accurate, the public debt is set to continue to rise, and could reach as much as 166% of GDP by 2012. A public sector without a strict budget has in turn influenced the private sector to more inefficiency and lack of competitiveness.

Graph source: Eurostat, 2009



Government deficit

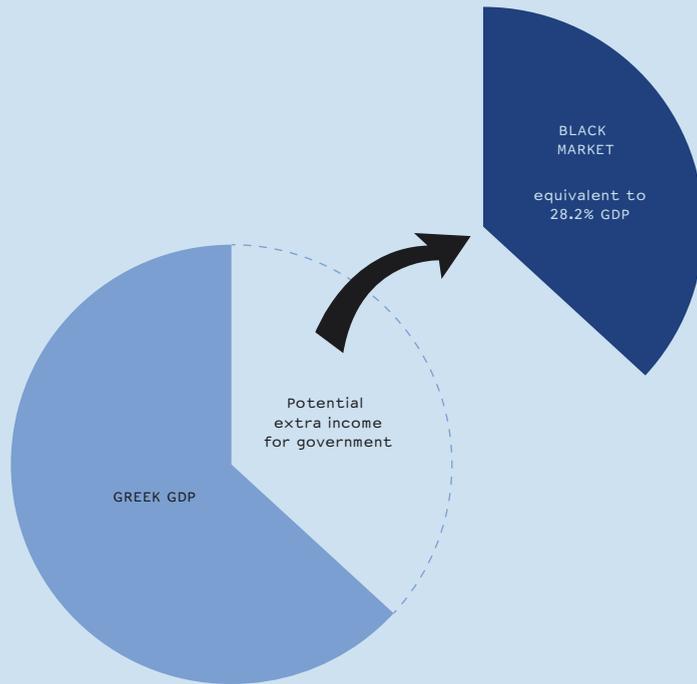
Government deficit is the amount by which a government's spending exceeds income over a particular period of time. The current economic crisis was triggered by a spectacular loss of market confidence after the public deficit figures were revised

up sharply from 3.7% of GDP to 6% in September, and then up again after a general election in October to 12.7%. However, the EMU financial regulation stipulates that each state's deficit must not exceed 3% of GDP. In order to reduce the defi-

cit, the Greek government has had to put in place a harsh austerity plan. Unfortunately, this means that important sectors such as education will experience a funding cut.

Graph source: www.banquemoniale.org, 2009; <http://business.timesonline.co.uk>

Athens Lessons



Black labour market

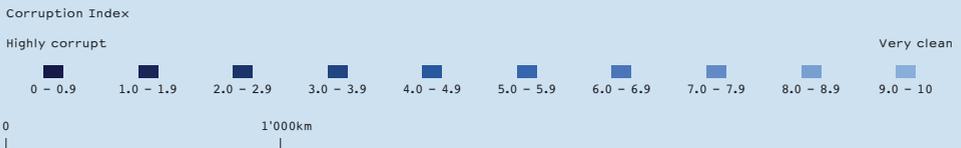
A 'black market' is a market of goods or services that operates outside the legal framework established by the state. The black market can consist of criminal activities such as drug sales, smuggling, or prostitu-

tion, but can also include legal transactions that are mainly conducted in cash and unreported to fiscal authorities. Since these activities remain untaxed, the Greek Government is deprived of a significant amount of

money that could greatly contribute to correcting the government deficit. Estimated at 28.2% of GDP in 2003, Greece has the biggest black market among EU member states.

Graph source: Stavros Katsios, 2006, The shadow economy and corruption in Greece

Analysis



Corruption index

Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) ranks countries in terms of the degree to which corruption is perceived to exist among public officials and politicians. It is a composite index, draw-

ing on corruption-related data in expert surveys carried out by a variety of reputable institutions. The lower the score, the higher the corruption is perceived to be. With a

score of 3.5, Greece has one of the higher corruption indexes of the EU-27. In 2010, corruption is estimated to have cost 532 million euro.

Graph source: <http://www.transparency.org>

Athens Lessons



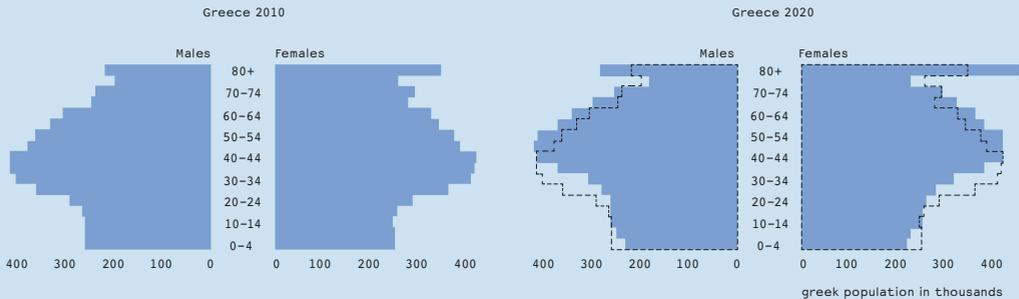
Youth unemployment and braindrain

Youth unemployment is an important issue for Greece, as many qualified young people fail to find work after finishing university. 11% of students who graduate take three

years to find a job, which is mainly due to the large mismatch between job offers and education. As a result of this lack of opportunity, Greece is suffering from a “brain drain”,

where many young qualified people decide to study and work abroad.

Graph source: <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu>, 2009



Aging population

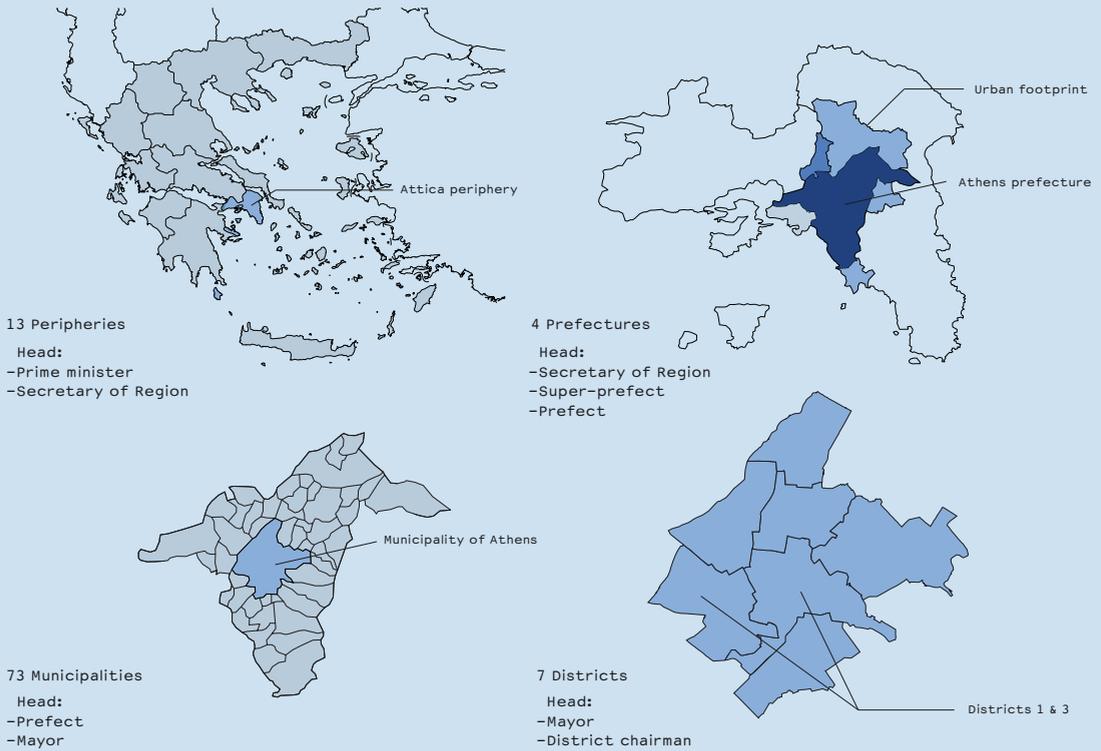
Greece, like many other European nations, is suffering from the 'Ageing of Europe' demographic phenomenon, which is characterized by a decrease in birth rates, a decrease in mortality rates, and a higher life expectancy. With almost a 6% increase in the

elderly population between 1961 and 2001, the Greek population is ageing rapidly. These days, almost one fifth of the Greek population (19.1%) is aged 65 or over, putting the country third in Europe behind Italy and Germany (20%). Immigration has played a

large role in fighting against the ageing of the population and will play an important role if Greece is to maintain an appropriate worker to retiree ratio.

Graph source: <http://www.nationmaster.com>, 2010

Analysis



Administrative layers

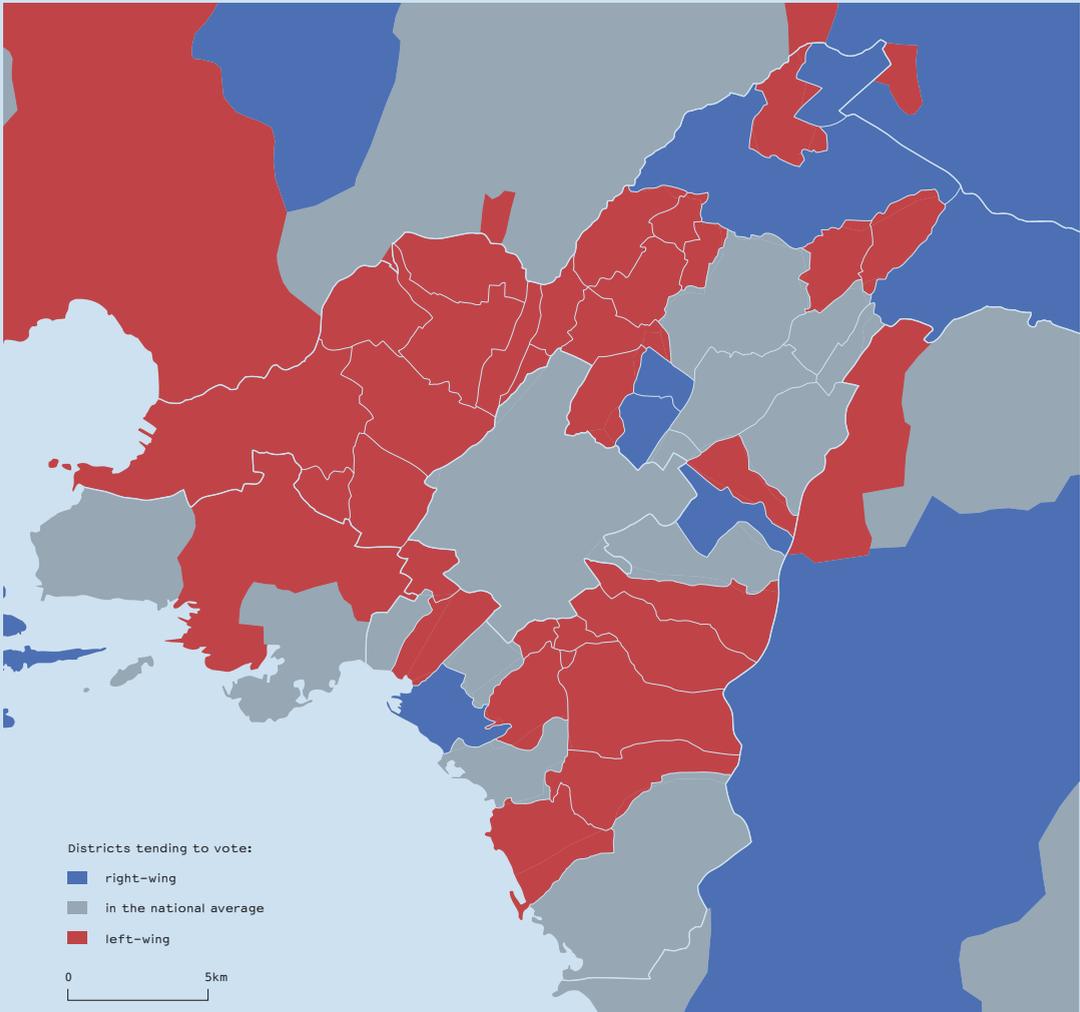
Greece is divided into thirteen administrative divisions, called peripheries. Athens is located in the periphery of Attica. Attica itself is divided into four prefectures. The city has grown so much that there are now five local administrations that regu-

late the metropolitan area of Athens. Furthermore, some administrative divisions overlap, such as the Athens prefecture and the Super-prefecture (which includes Athens and Piraeus). Consequently, conflict arises between the different levels

of power. With so many administrative layers, decision-making becomes a very difficult and lengthy process.

Map source: Anastasia Paschou, Urban block in Post-War Athens development, form and social context, 2008

Athens Lessons



Political map

Like many large cities, Athens' urban population tends to vote for the centre-left. This is especially true of the working class neighbourhoods in the western part of town.

Map and information source: Michel Sivignon, Atlas de la Grèce, Montpellier, CNRS-GDR Libergéo, 2003

Urban Constitution

Producing the Urban Constitution
Athens – City of Immigrants



Urban Constitution

An Urban Constitution for Athens Districts 1+3

This document is Iapa's Urban Constitution (UC) for Athens' districts 1 and 3. Like previous research projects for the 10 de 10 neighbourhood in Havana, Cuba, and the Borough of Southwark, London, the UC consists of a series of rules that propose a scenario for planning development patterns within the locality. It is a synthesis of Athens' contextual milieu, channelled into a conceptual strategy for spatial planning and urban design. The intention is that the UC will influence the debate on how to produce liveable and locally-rooted urban structures for people.

The importance of civic space

The constant increase in population in a very short time is responsible for the fact that, to a large extent, Athens' urban fabric is relatively new. Few cities have a history of urban civilisation dating as far back as Athens, yet the majority of the urban fabric dates only from the 20th century. Driven rather by building speculation than an urban master-plan, apart from Schaubert and Kleanthis' implemented neoclassical design for the city centre, the city expanded in a rather haphazard and improvised way. In post-war times, the majority of Athens' streets were still neither paved nor tarmacked. This lack of attention towards civic space is noticeable in the absence of streets with a certain metropolitan character, such as the Avenida Diagonal in Barcelona, the Champs Elysées in Paris, Regents Street in London or Unter den Linden in Berlin. All of these examples convey a certain stateliness, a metropolitan character, be it through the mere width of the street section, the consistent height and alignment of the buildings, the tree-lined sidewalks, the urban furniture or the materials employed. Apart from Panepistimiou Street, comparable streets are missing in Athens.

On the one hand, this is due to the fact that Athens did not install a certain grandeur during the 18th century, when the Ottoman occupation continued, whilst most European cities boomed under the influence of a lavish aristocracy. The critical built mass of these cities was later transformed in the 19th century, frequently giving the proud bourgeoisie the opportunity to put their stamp on the built environment.

On the other hand, this neglect of public space in Athens can also be attributed to its fairly young stock of inhabitants, mostly immigrants from more rural areas of Greece, who for generations still had strong ties to their village of origin and lacked identification with their new living and working environment.

A constitution is the body of doctrines and practises that form the fundamental organizing principle of a political state. (Encyclopedia Britannica)

Following the definition of a political constitution, an urban constitution is a set of rules and guidelines for the development of a distinct urban entity. (Iapa)

The results of the preliminary analytical work and strategic design stages are reflected in the development of an Urban Constitution for the site. The constitution is drafted in a collaborative effort by the whole team. The goal for this overall urban constitution is to define a set of guiding rules that will allow for an appropriate and consistent response to changing urban and societal influences. The urban constitution addresses the perceived local needs in the short, medium and long terms, and is represented as a schematic strategy that integrates the multiple overlapping aspects of planning. The urban constitution is adaptive, flexible and not prescriptive ; it is based on a rule system whose ultimate goal is positive development. The basis for an urban constitution is an amalgamation and prioritization of the specialists strategies developed in the previous project phase. The resulting urban constitution is a designed synthesis of the urban strategies, combined to be flexible and responsive to future influences.

The urban constitution consists of two elements : the constitution text and a strategic development plan (SDP) which illustrates the objectives.

The formulation of the constitution text is a discursive process involving all participants of the studio as well as local experts and external specialists. The aim is to sound out fundamental beliefs and different expectations for planning and to generate a common vision for the future development, based on the knowledge and

Athens Lessons

data acquired during the analysis, the on site experience and through the mediated discussion. Once the team has agreed on the constitution's text and its general goals, its principles are applied to design a SDP for the site of intervention. The SDP translates the text into a planning tool and prescribes density, maximal exploitation and use for identified zones in accordance with the goals of the constitution's text. The prescriptions through zoning are non-descriptive with regards to design and allow for adaptations over time.

This may also explain why important and ancient streets such as Piraeus Street or Iera Odos, the Sacred Road, seem to not be considered civic space when it comes to judging their urban quality. The relative deficiency in residential continuity led to a lack of identification and understanding of the urban fabric. From this point of view the lack of attention attributed to public space becomes comprehensible.

Furthermore, these social groups composed of internal immigrants did not seek urban splendour. The overruling character of Athens is domestic: it is a large village at the foot of the Acropolis. Large parts of the city are mostly small-scale, located on very small plots that form small blocks. This phenomenon is quite consistent and stretches out over an extensive area. The small scale has established itself on a large scale and constitutes a fairly homogenous fabric, favourable to community life.

Gentrification or urban decay?

A city changes and so does the mentality of its inhabitants. It can be observed that the behavioural patterns of Athenians have altered over generations. The younger generations of former immigrant families have truly adopted Athens as their place of origin, despite keeping strong ties to their family's villages. They start to reclaim public space, use the parks for sport and leisure and become true urbanites.

Moreover a change in the social structure of Athenian neighbourhoods is noticeable. This process can be witnessed in larger cities around the globe and two directions are distinguishable: upgrading and downgrading. The first usually implies a gentrification process, inevitably meaning the replacement of the former, poorer population with a more affluent one. This phenomenon has occurred in the western neighbourhood of Gazi, which in recent years boasts rents that are only topped by Kolonaki, the traditional wealthy neighbourhood in the East. Gentrification challenges the historic polarity between the poorer parts of Athens in the west and the more affluent neighbourhoods in the east.

The second direction, downgrading, occurs when formerly stable and attractive neighbourhoods lose their appeal and in the worst case, an urban area stops to function well on a social, economic and simply material (buildings, infrastructure) level. Urban decay has no single cause; it results from combinations of interrelated social and economic conditions, including the city's urban planning decisions, the poverty of the local population, the construction of infrastructure that bypasses the area,

Urban Constitution

depopulation of the area through suburbanisation of the periphery and other factors. As a result, former inhabitants leave the area making room for a socially less privileged group. The public hand invests less and less in the area, causing streets and buildings to dilapidate and criminal activity tends to rise in such circumstances.

Unfortunately, downgrading tendencies are spreading in the city centre of Athens. Urban decay can be detected in Gerani, a neighbourhood just west of Omonia square. For decades this square has been the public space where immigrants, formerly from other regions of Greece, gathered on a Sunday for social and economic interaction. This tradition is still being kept alive at Omonia Square, yet nowadays, mostly by irregular or illegal immigrants from Central Africa, Iraq, Afghanistan and China. Their activities are not restricted to Omonia – the sheer quantity of illegal immigrants in Athens has led to an overflow to Gerani, where they plainly occupy the streets on a permanent basis. Mixing with poor Greeks and drug addicts, they constitute a group of people living in precarious conditions right in the city centre. A ghetto has been established in the triangle of Athinas, Euripidou and Piraeus Street.

The future of Athens

For the future of Athens it is of utmost importance that Athenians affirm their interest in the city. Beyond the current economic crisis, issues of immigration, urbanism and environment need to be addressed in order to maintain a city that offers all of its inhabitants a certain quality of life. Because of the limited means, all interventions in the near future will be operating in an environment of scarcity. Actions need to be well considered, but measures need to be taken. The UC presented here serves both as an analytical reflection on the city as it is and as it could be.

Athens Lessons



GENERAL PROPOSALS

ATTEND TO EXISTING PUBLIC SPACES

- Redefine Omonia. After decades of change and adjustments, the heart of Schaubert's and Kleanthis' plan has still not found an appropriate spatial character. Close all the gaps in the surrounding buildings up to an equal construction height of ten stories, except for the neoclassical buildings. Emphasize the square's symbolic orientation towards the Acropolis.
- Attribute to Piraeus Street the metropolitan character that it deserves. A continuous and closed street-front shall be established. All new construction will be set on a new alignment, which is offset 5 metres from the curb, allowing for a generous continuous pavement.
- Re-establish the balance of the Omonia, Syntagma and Kerameikos urban triangle by resolving the public space west of the Kerameikos archaeological site. Make this public space tighter, more defined, and add an institutional building of municipal importance. By creating the triangle, which focuses on the Acropolis, Schaubert and Kleanthis introduced meaning to their urban plan, which is no longer legible. The lack of care for the urban substance can be attributed to this loss of legibility.

REVITALIZE THE CENTRE

- Address the social problem on a political level by offering support to a disadvantaged population. At the same time, reclaim Gerani through urban measures. Break up the ghetto by drilling through it: introduce a tram-line with a series of stops on Sofokleous Street, which runs east-west from Stadiou Street to Piraeus Street. This infrastructural measure will reinstate civic life in an area that Athenians have come to avoid.
- Demolish the selected buildings within the Gerani area that are detrimental to the urban condition and replace them with new constructions, which are able to define urban spaces as well as providing their programme.
- Build a programme of municipal importance in Gerani to attract Athenians from all over town. Locate it strategically in the vicinity of the new tram stops along Sofokleous Street to start a revitalization of the area at infrastructural and programmatic concentration points.

Athens Lessons

EXPLOIT UNUSED POTENTIAL

- Make use of the urban potential at the convergence of Leoforos Vassilis Sofias and Leoforos Vasileos Konstantinou Streets, by turning it into the new Evangelismos campus. Convert the traffic node into a green space which links Ilision Park with the existing green area of Evangelismos. Traffic will be transferred underground. Reinforce the status of a European capital by establishing a campus configuration of towers. Adding to the existing cultural, institutional and educational programmes and redefining public transport will affect not only the lifestyle but also the economy of the whole city; it is an opportunity to create new jobs and a representative space for Athens.
- Continue the high-quality public space of the saddle between the Acropolis Rock and Philopappou Hill (Dionysiou Areopagitou and Apostoulou Paviou Streets) into the city centre, by extending it into a closed circuit. Add another such circuit around Philopappou Hill. The urban circuits are spaces that favour movement: slow, un-motorized movement. Promote slowness in the city centre in order to enjoy the architectural heritage and the picturesque urban fabric. Locate bike rental stations at metro stops and where the circuits intersect with main traffic arteries. The combination of public transport with bicycles is a way to promote sustainable transportation in Athens.

PRESERVE URBAN IDENTITIES

- Preserve the distinct identities of well-functioning neighbourhoods such as Petralona, Plaka, Exarchia and Kolonaki. The neighbourhoods have different social identities, programmes, building scales and types of green spaces. Preserve these identities.
- Protect the hills. Due to the steep topography, green areas on the hill-slopes have not been affected by construction. Preserve these green spaces and create stronger pedestrian links between them and the city.

REINFORCE URBAN IDENTITIES

- Reinforce Kerameikos' and Metaxourgio's identity as a network of distinct villages. Articulate streets that function as boundaries between the villages by setting the building height at 6 stories. Construction within the village boundaries remain heterogeneous, ranging from 1 to 6 stories. This will create a "bowl section" which is already typical in certain areas of Athens: a higher ring of buildings surrounding a more intimate and lower urban fabric.
- Sustain Exarchia's power of self-organization. Strengthen local activities by giving support to initiatives dealing with abandoned buildings and by introducing new regulations.

Urban Constitution

ARCHAEOLOGY

RENDER ARCHAEOLOGY MORE TANGIBLE

- Classify the city's archaeological sites according to their need for protection. Evaluate the current research activity on the site, the fragility of the remnants and the true heritage value versus the atmospheric value.
- Increase citizens' contact with cultural heritage. Embed certain sites in non-paying urban archaeological gardens. These spaces are open to the public 24h. Fragile sites will remain fenced with regulated accessibility.
- Make the presence of archaeology part of the Athenian's daily life.

EXTEND THE ARCHITECTURAL UNIFICATION PROJECT

- Extend the network linking archaeological sites throughout the city.
- Continue the Grand Promenade to Plato's Academy.
- Revitalize Iera Odos by making it the main boulevard within the Eleonas neighbourhood.

REVEAL DIVERSITY OF HERITAGE

- Promote Byzantine archaeological sites and remnants throughout the city.
- Promote the industrial heritage of the Kerameikos area. Revitalize old workshops and industrial sites as has been done in Gazi.
- Protect and preserve the younger heritage ranging from neoclassical buildings, to art-deco and modernist constructions.

Athens Lessons

ECONOMY

CHANGE MENTALITY

- Reinstall the trust of the Greek population and EU members in the state by streamlining the administration.
- Initiate cooperation between the private sector and the public authorities.
- Reduce tax-evasion and retrieve unpaid taxes.
- Fight corruption on all levels.
- Encourage Greeks to buy Greek products.

REVITALIZE ECONOMY

- Decentralise Greece. Strengthen the economy all over the country in order to relieve Athens of job pressure and uncontrolled growth.
- Diversify economic activity. Streamline the public sector, concentrate less on services, favour small industry and agriculture in the periphery.
- Support small local businesses that contribute to the liveliness of their neighbourhoods and reinforce the concept of a compact city.
- Encourage local centres of excellence in specialist crafts and manufacturing.
- Create 'special economic zones' for a temporary time using the workforce of illegal immigrants.

DECLARE EDUCATION AN ECONOMIC INVESTMENT

- Encourage a more cooperative relationship between the academic world and the private sector. Private funding should be considered acceptable in times of economic hardship, in order to provide the financial means required to maintain a high level of education.
- Promote research and innovation by increasing collaboration between students and companies. A better coordination between universities and the professional world will foster the employment of Greek graduates in adequate positions in Greece.
- Reduce brain-drain. Create special programmes for Greek academics to stay in Greece or to return to Greece after studying abroad.
- Promote apprenticeship programmes to train young Greeks in traditional crafts – a unique small business branch.

Urban Constitution

ECONOMY CONT.

DEVELOP TOURISM AS A STRATEGIC INDUSTRY

- Rebut the image of Athens as being a noisy, polluted and not very attractive city.
- Increase the number of tourists staying in Athens and not only in transit to the islands.
- Target different economic and socio-demographic groups to diversify the tourist market.
- Focus on attracting well-educated and affluent guests. Broaden the range of cultural activities. Complement visits to archaeological sites with music, theatre and art events.
- Raise awareness that the value of Athens as an attractive travel destination also boosts foreign investment in other branches of the economy.

Athens Lessons

ENVIRONMENT

STOP THE SPRAWL

- Promote the concept of a compact city, organized in neighbourhoods with a good infrastructure and local centres; working and living locations are close by, traffic congestion is reduced, the liveliness of the area is enhanced and the robustness of the urban fabric is increased.
- Offer attractive, green housing typologies in the city centre as an alternative to single family housing in the ever-expanding periphery.
- Densify neighbourhoods such as Eleonas, Kerameikos, Metaxourgio and Exarchia to battle the urban sprawl.

PROMOTE GREEN SPACE

- Promote green spaces of different sizes and character throughout the city to cool and filter the air and to increase the outdoor quality of Athens.
- Increase the density of attractive green spaces in the city by attending to vacant plots, which have the potential of being converted into either public or semi-public gardens. Clarify their property status, make them public or define a lease agreement with interested user-groups, which will be made responsible for their maintenance.
- Introduce elongated green spaces in the urban fabric that have the capacity to link neighbourhoods and to incorporate non-motorized traffic. Reinforce Thessalonikis Street's green character along the train line in Petralona by eliminating the circulation and increasing the vegetation, articulate a "Green Circuit" around Philopappou Hill and revitalise Konstantinoupoleos Street.
- Link Ilision Park with the existing green area of Evangelismos by converting the traffic node of Leoforos Vassilis Sofias and Leoforos Vasileos Konstantinou Streets into a green campus.
- Revitalize and reveal the "Profiti Daniil" stream through Eleonas: establish a waterside green space through the neighbourhood in the form of a river-bank promenade.

Urban Constitution

ENVIRONMENT CONT.

REDUCE TRAFFIC CONGESTION

- Implement further private transportation regulations. These include a pollution tax, congestion pricing as well as strictly regulated inner-city parking.
- Introduce park-and-ride parking at important public transportation nodes at the edge of the city centre.

PROMOTE PUBLIC AND ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION

- Promote sustainable public transportation by making it cheaper, more attractive and more reliable.
- Augment the bus network as a fast and affordable means of providing public transport for the municipality. Dedicated express buses cover longer distances in the city with fewer stops.
- Introduce a new tramline on Piraeus Street.
- Strengthen the train station as a hub of public transportation at the scale of the greater region, if not the country. The city's public transport network needs to tie into this hub.
- Encourage the use of bicycles in the city centre. Pair the city-scale pedestrian network with fast-track bike lanes such as the Grand Promenade, the Slow Circuits and Thessalonikis Street in Petralona.

Athens Lessons

IMMIGRATION

RAISE AWARENESS

- Address immigration as one of the most consequential issues of the nation.
- Raise awareness among the Greek public that an increasing number of people in Athens live in precarious conditions. This new group is composed of illegal immigrants, poor Greeks and drug addicts. Acknowledge the fact that this group is detrimental to the development of Athens if it is not assisted in a dedicated and professional manner.
- Appease anti-immigrant feelings amongst Greeks by recalling the country's history of Diaspora and by showing that new measures are being taken.

IMPROVE THE GREEK ASYLUM SYSTEM

- Increase the efficiency of the country's immigration policy and implement it with rigour.
- Improve the inadequate conditions of immigrant detention centres; issues to address are staffing, size and number of centres. Do not encourage irregular immigrants to move to Athens before their case has been fully attended to.
- Conclude bilateral negotiations with Turkey in order to limit the eastern access to the Schengen countries through Greece.

MAKE IRREGULAR IMMIGRATION A EUROPEAN ISSUE

- Revise the Dublin II agreement. The current immigration situation in Greece exceeds the expectations of 2003, when the agreement was implemented. A new EU regulation needs to be installed that calls for the shared responsibility of all member states.
- Demand funds from Dublin II states to invest in educational and other support facilities for immigrants.

ADDRESS INTEGRATION

- Provide integration measures and assistance to local immigrant communities, as well as language-learning initiatives and other training programmes.
- Facilitate immigrants' access to a work permit.
- Implement economic incentives for businesses to hire immigrants.
- Promote the "multicultural economy" such as foreign restaurants, foreign shops, open-late-stores, markets, etc., in neighbourhoods with a high immigrant ratio.

Urban Constitution

ORGANIZATION

STREAMLINE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

- Define clear responsibilities within the governmental structure. Urban planning issues in Athens would be more efficient if resolved at the municipal or regional level, but not the national level.
- Establish a more powerful overseeing role for the mayor, especially in planning and coordination of social services.
- Improve the building department's efficiency. The issuing of construction permits needs to be a transparent process that takes place within a defined period.

IMPROVE THE CITY THROUGH NEW REGULATIONS

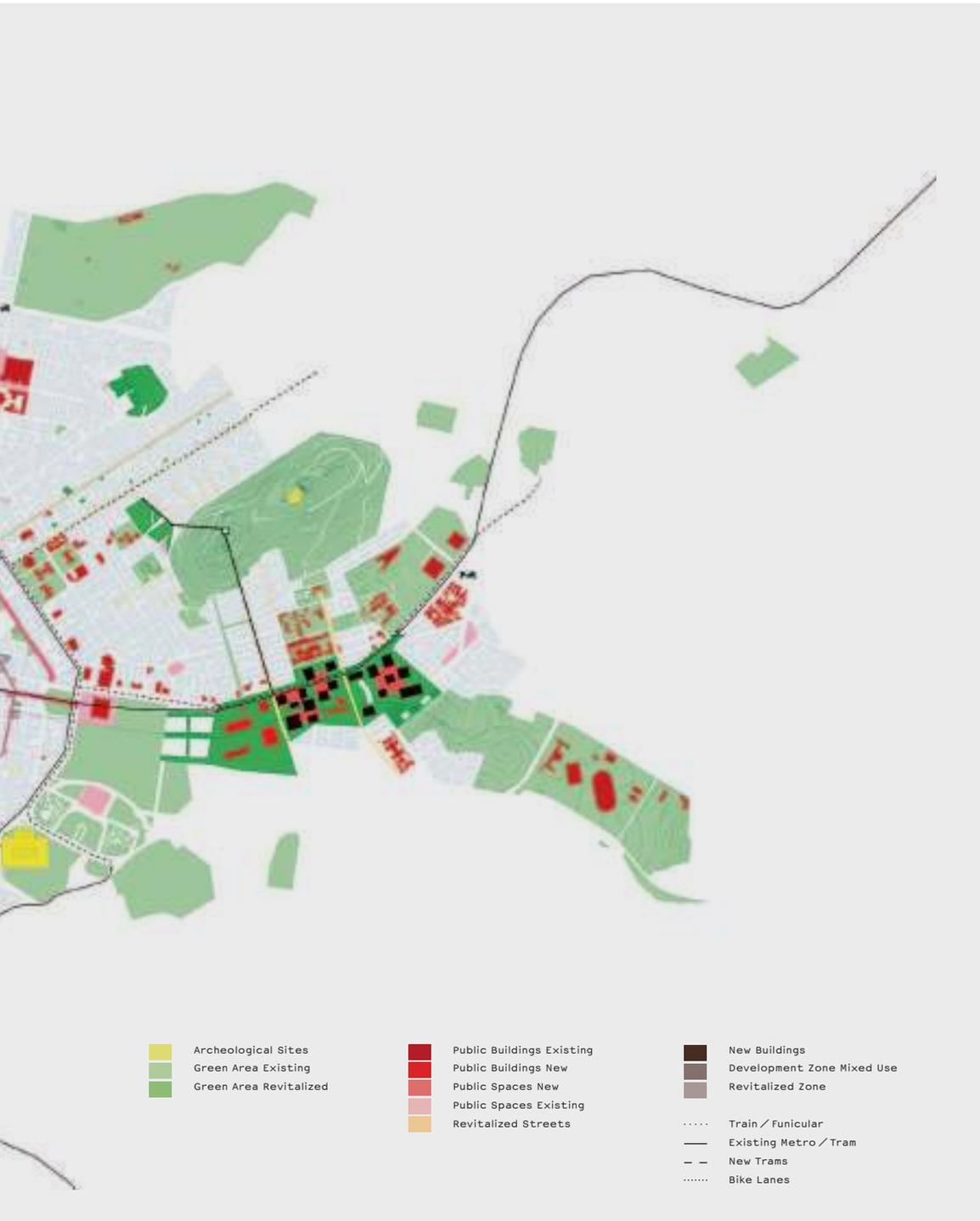
- Install new regulations to revitalize urban streetscapes. Act at a municipal scale, such as on Piraeus Street, but also on the neighbourhood scale by treating its local arteries. In the case of Exarchia, enforce the prevailing arcade typology on Trikoupi and Ippokratous streets, providing a continuous covered outdoor space. A building height of 7 floors shall be fulfilled in every new construction along Trikoupi and Ippokratous.
- Implement a policy of attending to abandoned buildings. The building department is to clarify the ownership, evaluate the state of dilapidation and estimate the heritage value. Incite owners to restore and maintain their buildings and put programmes in place that help owners to do so. If regarded worthy of being kept, but no owner can be located, a building will be auctioned. If it is not considered worthy of being maintained, the building is to be demolished. Free lots represent new construction potential for an appropriate programme or for a green space. This procedure is not only a responsible way of taking care of the urban substance, it also creates job opportunities in construction.
- Redefine the public-private boundaries in Eleonas through building regulations: municipal land is turned into community patios surrounded by private plots. Patios are accessible through imposed service access-ways and are leased to the surrounding owners for their use. The leaseholders are also responsible for the maintenance of the patios. These semi-public spaces are the nucleus of community life for each block.

Athens Lessons

PROPOSED STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR
THE CITY CENTRE OF ATHENS (DISTRICTS 1+3)

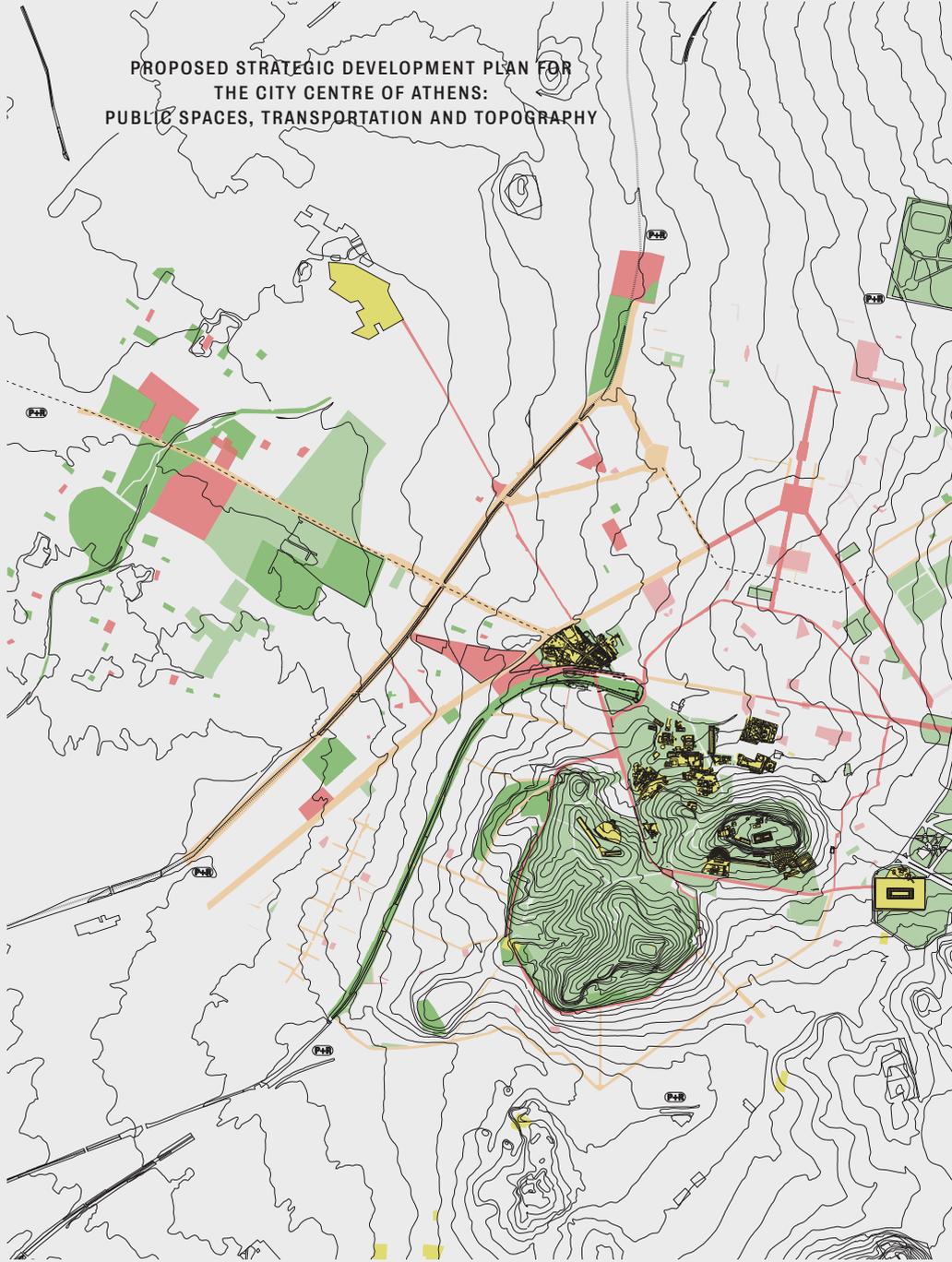


Urban Constitution

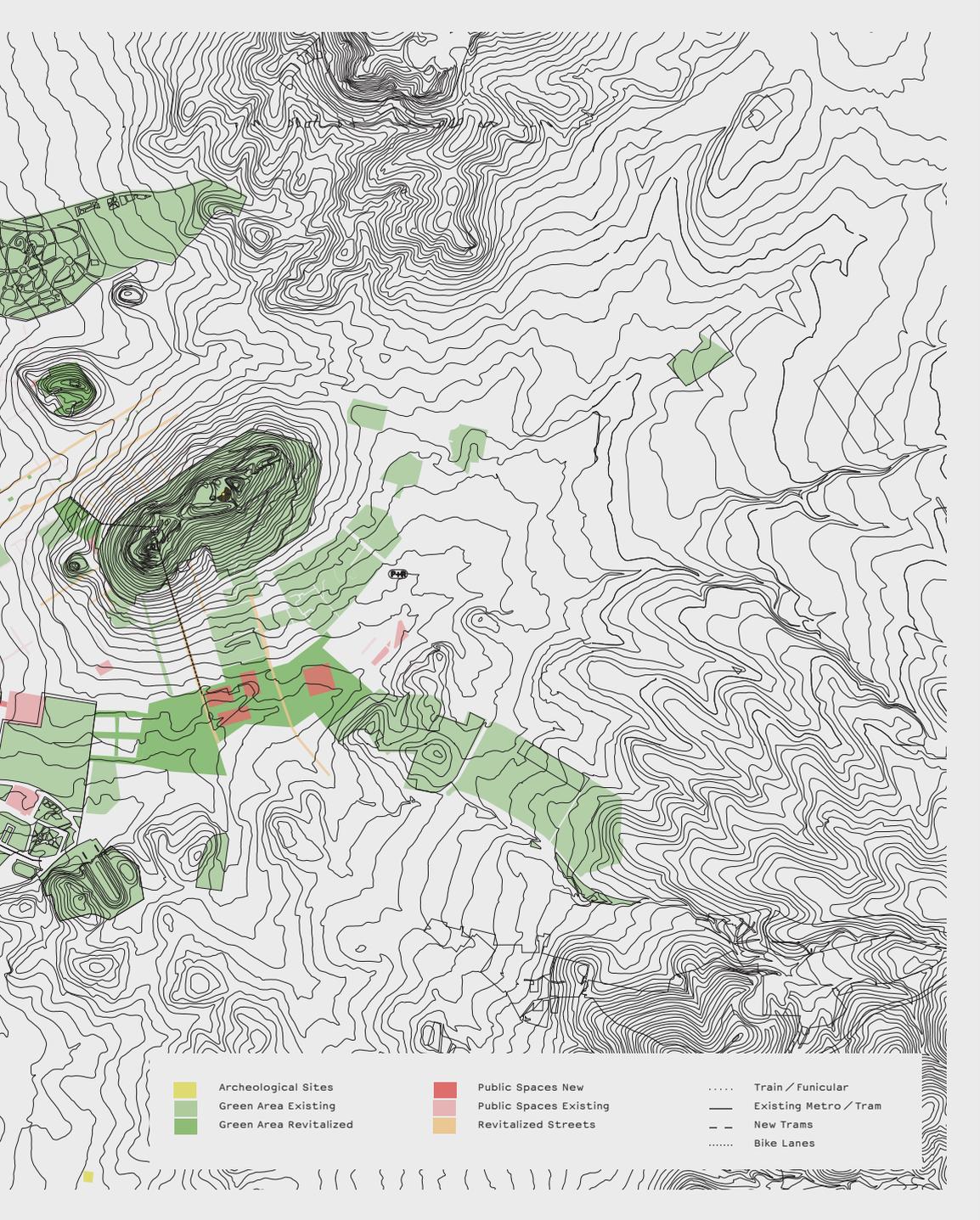


Athens Lessons

PROPOSED STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR THE CITY CENTRE OF ATHENS: PUBLIC SPACES, TRANSPORTATION AND TOPOGRAPHY



Urban Constitution



Athens Lessons

ATHENS 6 DISTRICTS



Urban Constitution



AREA A — VOTANIKOS

- Revitalize Iera Odos by making it the neighbourhood's main boulevard.
- Revitalize and reveal the "Profiti Daniil" stream: establish the bank promenade, a green space along the water through Eleonas.
- Revitalize the Botanical Garden subordinated by the Agricultural University: make it public again.
- Inject new programmes into the area: complete the stadium and add additional institutions at the intersection of Iera Odos and the bank promenade.
- Promote inner-city green housing to battle against the sprawl. New housing typologies for the city centre are an alternative to single family housing in the ever-expanding periphery. Turn the neighbourhood into a high-quality living environment making the best use of the existing identity.
- Redefine the public-private boundaries through building regulations: municipal land becomes community patios surrounded by private plots. Patios are accessible through imposed service access-ways and are leased to the surrounding owners for their use. The lease-holders are also responsible for the maintenance. These semi-public patios are the nucleus of the community life of each block.

Athens Lessons



AREA B —KERAMEIKOS, METAXOURGEIO, GAZI AND ROUF

- Reinforce the area's identity as a network of villages. Articulate the streets that function as boundaries between the villages by setting the building height at 6 stories. Constructions within the village boundaries remain heterogeneous, ranging from 1 to 6 stories.
- Encourage a diversity of mixed-use activity on the ground floor of the boundary streets, which will contribute to the establishment of these streets as main arteries of reference within the village network. The streets' high-quality urban design contributes to their function as a public space that is easy to use and encourages social exchange.
- Introduce attraction points within the individual villages. These attraction points range from buildings with unique programmes and attractive public spaces, to landmark installations of great identity for the neighbourhood.
- Promote city centre dwelling in the village network, by providing high-quality alternative housing typologies on vacant plots and in abandoned, transformed, but listed buildings. Target the appropriate group.
- Increase the density of attractive green spaces in the area by attending to vacant plots. Clarify their property status; define a lease agreement and maintenance.
- Encourage integration of immigrants through a strong social network of the Villages. Public spaces encourage social networking, facilitate labour exchange, give support and reinforce the sense of unity.
- Encourage integration by creating job opportunities beyond illicit employment. Encourage personal and economic growth by creating start-up opportunities for small and diverse enterprises, contributing to a healthy multicultural and ultimately metropolitan market.

Urban Constitution



AREA C — PETRALONA AND THISSIO

- Attribute to Piraeus Street the metropolitan character that it deserves. A continuous and closed street-front shall be established. All new constructions will be set on a new alignment, which is offset at 5 metres from the curb, allowing for a generous pavement.
- Promote inner-city housing as an alternative to moving to the suburbs, by creating attractive super-blocks with reduced car traffic. A strip of small Dark City blocks is turned into a series of super-blocks by turning every second street into a pedestrian street.
- Reinforce the green character of the street along the train-line by eliminating circulation and increasing the amount of vegetation. This green swathe contains a fast-track bicycle route that will take Athenians from a park and ride in the south of the area right into the city centre on rented bikes.
- Preserve the village character of High Petralona; no buildings higher than 3 stories are allowed.
- Re-establish the balance within the Schaubert and Kleonthis urban triangle of Omonia, Syntagma and Keramikos by resolving the public space at Keramikos. Schaubert and Kleonthis' urban plan tried to make a spatial gesture here, which has since lost its meaning.
- Reserve the road around Philopappou Hill for leisure. No cars are allowed here.

Athens Lessons



AREA D — PSIRI, MONASTIRAKI, PLAKA, MAKRYGIANNI, GARGARETTA AND KOUKAKI

- Establish a series of slow circuits within the area. These circuits follow existing paths, which are merely intensified. By passing through the different layers of the city the whole diversity of the area can be experienced just by slowly moving forwards.
- Create new access to neighbourhoods that tourism has forgotten by walking or cycling down a circuit. The circuits also function as urban catalysers; they promote new activities and re-activate the retail economy.
- Promote slowness in an active city. The idea of a circuit implies the principle of movement. The urban circuits are spaces that favour movement: slow and un-motorized movement. At the intersection of the circuits with other main traffic arteries you will find bike rental stations and metro stops. The combination of public transport with bicycles is a way of promoting sustainable transportation in Athens.
- Complete the Grand Promenade by including it in an Archaeological Circuit, which is closed in a circular fashion. Ancient monuments are not the only ones included in this unification project, remnants of the Byzantine past and the neo-classical era are also favoured.
- Circumscribe Philopappou Hill with a Green Circuit. No car traffic is allowed here; instead a necklace of institutions and leisure facilities lines this route.

Urban Constitution



AREA E — OMONIA, GERANI AND EXARCHIA

- Redefine Omonia. After decades of change and adjustments, the heart of Schaubert's and Kleanthis' plan still has not found its spatial character. Close all the gaps in the surrounding buildings up to an equal construction height of ten stories, except for the neoclassical buildings. Emphasize the square's symbolic orientation towards the Acropolis.
- Reclaim Gerani. Break up the ghetto by drilling through it: introduce a tram-line with a series of stops on Sofokleous Street, which runs east-west from Stadiou Street to Peiraos Street. This infrastructural measure will reinitiate civic life in an area that Athenians have come to avoid.
- Implement a set of criteria that determines the destruction of dilapidated buildings such as unclear ownership, unsafe structure and inappropriate use such as squatting, etc.
- Demolish selected buildings in the Gerani area which are detrimental to the urban condition and replace them with new constructions which are able to define urban spaces as well as to provide for their programme.
- Encourage a more cooperative relationship between the academic world and the private sector.
- Strengthen the railway station as a hub of public transportation at the scale of the greater region, if not the country. The city's public transport network needs to tie into this hub.

Athens Lessons



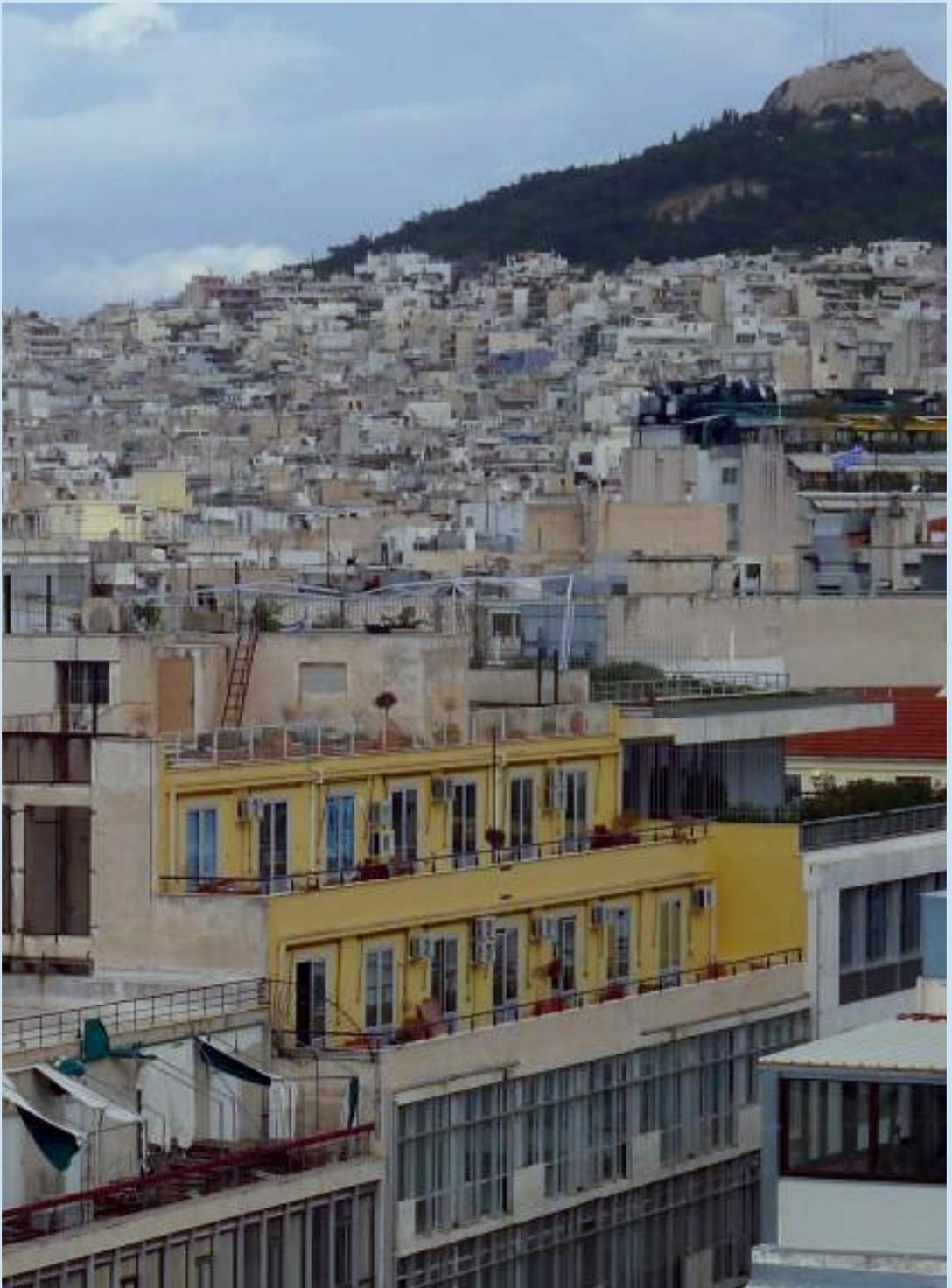
AREA F — EXARCHIA AND KOLONAKI

- The neighbourhoods have different social identities, programmes, building scales, and types of green spaces. Preserve these identities.
- Protect the hill. Due to the topography, green areas on the slopes of the hill have not been affected by construction. Protect these green spaces and create stronger pedestrian links between them and the city.
- Make use of the urban potential at the convergence of Leoforos Vassilis Sofias and Leoforos Vasileos Konstantinou Streets, by turning it into the new Evangelismos campus. Convert the traffic node into a green space which links Ilision Park with the existing green area of Evangelismos. Traffic will be transferred underground. Reinforce the status of a European capital by establishing a campus configuration of towers. Adding to the existing cultural, institutional and educational programmes and redefining public transport will affect not only the lifestyle but also the economy of the whole city; it is an opportunity to create new jobs and a representative space for the city.
- Sustain Exarchia's power of self-organization. Strengthen the local social activities by giving support to initiatives dealing with abandoned buildings. A certain number of restored buildings shall become housing for immigrants. Demolished constructions become potential sites for self-made parks.
- Revitalize Trikoupi and Ippokratous Street, the two most important streets of Exarchia. The prevailing arcade typology shall be enforced in both cases, providing a continuous covered outdoor space along the streets. A maximum building height of 7 floors shall be respected in every new construction along Trikoupi and Ippokratous.

Projects

Project Development

Architecture of Integration



Projects

The form of a prospective urban structure has been outlined by the Urban Constitution for the centre of Athens. But what is the structure made of? What is its materiality and what is its architecture? Architecture needs to be injected into the planning framework in order to create a powerful, convincing guideline and vision for the future of Athens. The architectural project itself, the choice of the site and functional content are tools for analysis, a “proof of concept” for the assumptions of the Urban Constitution.

In order to complement the first semester brief of “City of Immigrants”, the second semester sets out to establish an “Architecture of Integration”. The title affirms the position that architecture is of social relevance. Beyond providing pragmatic shelter for a certain function and its users, be it a school, a museum or housing, architecture should provide an environment that fosters interaction and communication, maintains respect and dignity and endorses integration. This requires on the one hand architecture of high quality, not in terms of cost but in conception of space and its relationships, and on the other a pertinent programme brief paired with a suitable site in order to reach out to the audience that is addressed. The first is up to the skills of the architect, the latter is primarily in the hands of the client. Often, specialists such as economists, sociologists and geographers advise the client and the architect whether it is feasible or not to build a certain programme on a certain site. In our case, the students had to rely on the knowledge they gained as specialists in the first semester as they returned once more to the individual Athens Study Areas. It was their task to propose first a site for the development of their project within this area they had previously investigated on an urban level, and secondly an appropriate programme which would provide an “Architecture of Integration”. The chosen sites are a cross-section through this diverse city: starting from Votanikos, a half-abandoned industrial site in the West, we find projects in the stable neighbourhood of Petralona, the village-like Kerameikos, the ghetto of Gerani, the ardent Exarchia, touristic Psiri and Monasteraki, and finally Evangelismos, an area defined by large institutional buildings in the Eastern part of the city centre.

In addition to conceiving their project on the topic of integration, the students were asked to be keenly aware of the wider Greek context they are operating in. They are working in an environment of scarcity. In this time of crisis, all project interventions were confronted with limited means. Grand architectural and especially structural gestures were thus questioned in the process of the studio regarding their appropriateness and, in

Based on the guidelines of the Urban Constitution a series of architectural projects are developed as a proof of concept, testing the viability of the objectives and measures defined by the constitution. The architectural project must respect, adapt and, at the same time, substantiate the regulatory and zoning guidelines imposed by the constitution.

The students work individually or in pairs and devise their own functional briefs as well as choose an appropriate site. The sheer number of interventions allows to extrapolate the final stage of the future shape of the urban area in question.

Design phases, derived from the planning of an ordinary architectural project, such as feasibility study, schematic design, detailed design, construction documents and presentation documents, structure the project development. This measure creates the didactic framework to develop the projects as far as reaching a physical expression. The preliminary phase of an architectural project is to acknowledge a brief and to conduct an analysis to determine the feasibility of a project. A feasibility study outlines the current physical, infrastructural and legal conditions, as well as restrictions of a site, and develops a diagrammatical approach to assessing the chosen site’s compatibility with the programme of the brief.

The schematic design transforms the diagrammatical descriptions of the feasibility study into a functional, logical, thematic and aesthetic overall design concept.

The contextual issues of the site, its access, dependencies and connections are addressed and solutions for basic issues of structure, materials, overall aesthetics and volumetric relationships are explored. Most importantly, the schematic design is the point at which an identifiable architectural expression—the overall character—of the project is formulated. Strategies for the primary issues of function, infrastructure, materiality and construction are devised.

Athens Lessons

By the conclusion of the schematic design phase, enough documentation and detail has been compiled so that the entire project can be explained both functionally and physically.

The design development is the refinement of the schematic design to improve functionality and to develop the details of the design. This process finalizes the design integration of the larger issues of structure, materiality, construction system and sub-systems.

The project idea is strengthened by completing and refining the design on all scales and by generating expressive or appropriate details that will guide the process of deciding on the techniques and technologies to be employed for fabrication and construction.

Construction documents are the primary product from an architect, both in terms of output and information. CAD drawings of plan, section, elevation or isometric drawings of the project are developed. The drawings reply to conventional standards, as required for tender to a primary building contractor or for submission of partial drawings by a component supplier. Construction documents in the future will take shapes other than the printed plan. Therefore the creation of a different set of construction documents using alternative digital CD concepts such as Computer Aided Manufacturing or Parametric Design is encouraged and supported.

The presentation documentation describes the entire project from feasibility study to the final design and construction process. The design, programme and implementation of the architectural project within the existing social context, in keeping within the overall goals of the Urban Constitution, are explained and the fabrication of mock-ups and construction samples is undertaken in order to get an accurate sense of how the building will be built and what its actual character will be at the 1:1 scale.



lapa students and staff on site visit

most cases, a more modest and less costly option was favoured. The projects also inscribe themselves in a local building industry. Athens is referred to as the “Cement City” for good reasons. Knowledge and skill are found in the local concrete construction industry, the ingredients for the material are readily available and a monolithic construction is sensible in the hot Mediterranean climate – lightweight constructions in wood, steel and glass are questionable under these circumstances. Finally, the architectural context has a specific local element: the work of the great Greek modernists, such as Konstantinides, Candilis, Despotopoulos, Zenetos and Pikionis, whose work oscillated between western and eastern influences, were as much a reference point for the students as Greek vernacular architecture and the both loved and hated Polykatoikia – the Athenian apartment houses developed by engineers and investors rather than architects.

With these premises set, the team developed 18 individual projects conceived as agents for changing the urban condition of Athens. The projects illustrate the Urban Constitution by placing their emphasis on different articles of constitution. The following categorisation of projects beyond the theme of integration has been undertaken after the completion of the feasibility study:

Projects

Civic Life

Cities are by nature founded on difference and a multiplicity of interests. They are not only composed of citizens by birth, but also by strangers who guarantee invigorating impulses to an otherwise closed-off and stale system. In an ideal case, both groups, the citizens and the newcomers, build up a strong identification with their immediate surroundings of the neighbourhood and the greater entity of the city. Their active engagement with their urban environment is what we shall call Civic Life. It is defined by care and interest for the city, by assuming responsibilities for this particular environment, by reaching out to other community members and understanding the city as a communal effort. The projects of this section, a community house, a multi-confessional site and a covered market all constitute architectures whose mission is to embrace social coexistence and foster integration.

The City Centre as Habitat

The rediscovery of the city centre as a habitat, as an area to live, work, raise children and spend your free time is a fairly recent phenomena in many European cities. This constitutes a counteracting the uncontrolled urbanization in form of sprawls. Like in the New York of Robert Moses, the sprawling dynamic of Athens is founded on motorized private transportation. The Athenians' affinity for the car enables lavish land-use in the outskirts, creating high-commuter traffic, resulting in air pollution and congestion. By offering attractive, green housing typologies in the city centre in neighbourhoods such as Eleonas, Kerameikos, Metaxourgio and Exarchia, the Municipality of Athens can provide alternatives to single-family housing in the ever-expanding periphery. It is only due to the given theme of the academic year at IAPA that the housing projects proposed in this section for the neighbourhoods of Exarchia, Votanikos and Psiri are conceived for immigrants. The city centre shall obviously offer a habitat to a great diversity of Athenians, by facilitating adequate housing supply and urban facilities for all citizens.

Adapting the Neoclassical

The city centre of Athens boasts an abundance of neoclassical buildings. Not every single edifice is of historical and architectural value, although a certain number of buildings are landmarked, but it is the strong presence of these build-

Athens Lessons

ings throughout the centre, which remind one repeatedly of the era when the Greek state was still young and the neoclassical style contributed to establishing an architectural identity that referred to the country's glory days in antiquity. The vast majority of these buildings, however, are subject to decay, a great number are even abandoned. The student projects of this category propose different strategies of adapting the neoclassical structures in order to ensure continuous usage and a presence of this architecture in the 21st century: renovation, transformation and incorporation in the form of spolia. For lack of valid information on the interior, all authors decided to redo the interiors. The stances on how to treat the remaining exterior, however, and how to possibly elaborate on the fact that adaptation varies greatly: the project for a Theatre School for Children renovates the façades of two neoclassical buildings, keeps their integrity and complements them with a new separate building; the project for the House of History contrasts the old substance of existing walls with distinctly new roofs, whereas the project for a Bangladeshi Social Club deliberately blurs the difference between old and new by applying a homogeneous render in order to achieve a whole which is greater than the sum of its parts.

Education in the City

One major component in the long process of integration is education. The Greek national identity is founded on the triad of language, culture and religion. All of these remain largely unattainable for an immigrant in Greece, apart from the language. By providing language courses to immigrants, the path to integration becomes less steep. Yet education is not only decisive for this particular group in Athens. Reinforcing education in Athens was also defined in the Urban Constitution as a sustainable means to strengthen the Greek economy: investing in research and innovation will reduce brain drain and secure high-end jobs in the country. Promoting apprenticeship programmes and secondary education supports local trades and small industries.

Infrastructures of the Metropolis

The train station, the airport, the hospital, the university, the concert hall... all these programmes are iconic infrastructures of an urban environment. Their scale and importance is usually related to the size of their urban context. The difference between a small town vaudeville theatre and the New York Metropolitan Opera is plausible to everyone at first sight. It is the discrepancy of scale and importance of the infrastructure

Projects

to its urban context which triggers surprise, but above all problems. A good example for this phenomenon is the central train station of Athens. Its current four-track configuration does not cater to the size of the metropolis of Athens. With such poor emphasis on public transportation, it comes as no surprise that Athens suffers from congestion and air pollution as a result of private motorized transportation.

The minor size of the station does, however, reflect the delayed and then extremely rapid growth of the fairly young capital in the late 19th and early 20th century. In contrast to other European capitals, Athens did not grow consistently through the ages, but boomed to a metropolis basically overnight when a great wave of internal immigration occurred from Asia Minor in the 1920s. The young metropolis by size did not install the infrastructures to complement its position and above all cater to its needs. Projects for a Preventive Care Centre, a Public Administration and a Transportation Hub try to address this demand.

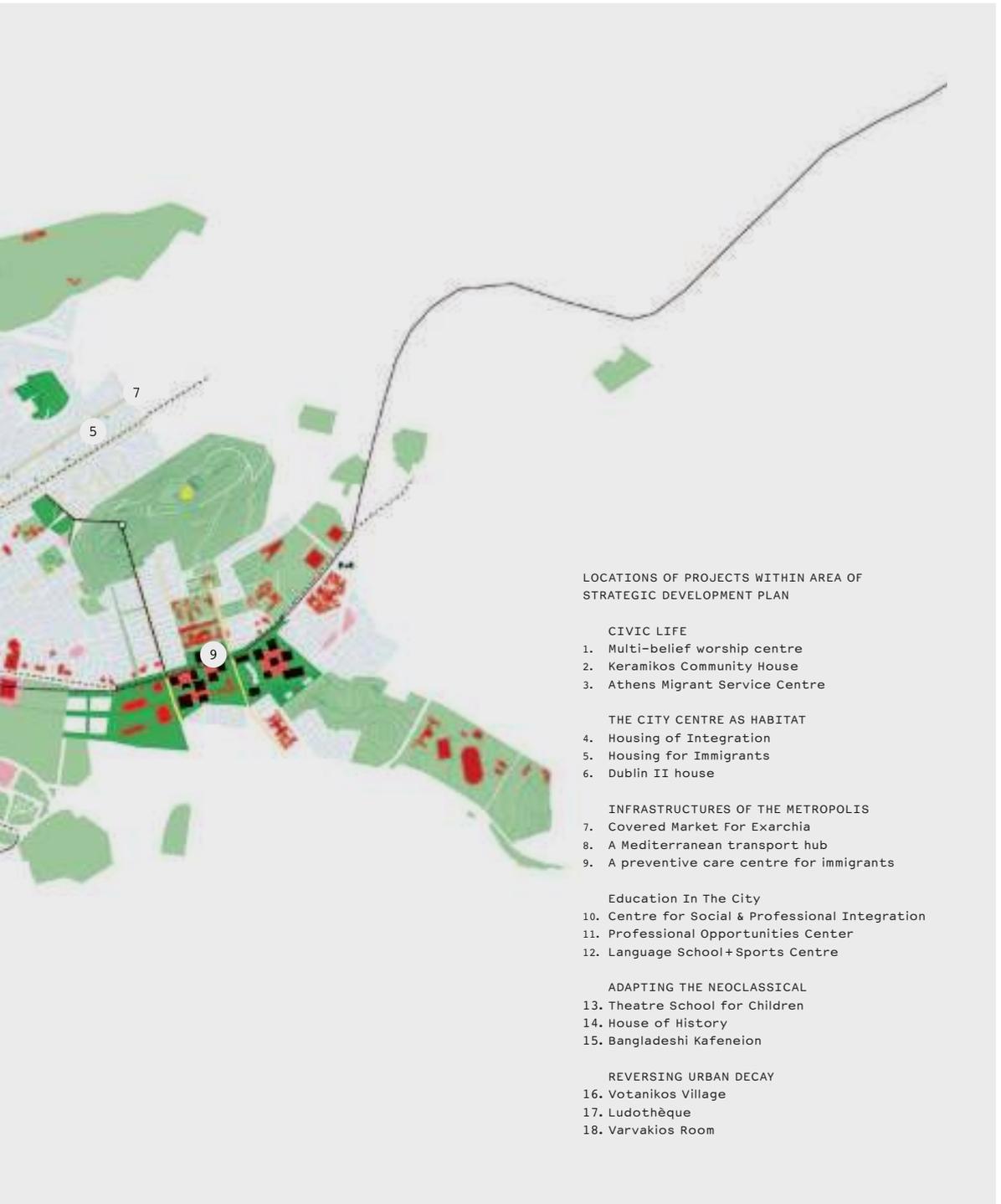
Reversing Urban Decay

Like any large city, Athens' neighbourhoods are subject to upgrading and downgrading dynamics. Gentrification of the former industrial area of Gazi has challenged the historic polarity between the poorer parts of Athens in the west and the more affluent neighbourhoods in the east. At the same time urban decay is noticeable throughout the city at different degrees of intensity. Urban decay has no single cause; it results from combinations of interrelated social and economic conditions, including the city's urban planning decisions, the poverty of the local population, the construction of infrastructure that bypasses the area, depopulation of the area through suburbanisation of the periphery and other factors. As a result, former inhabitants leave the area making room for a socially less-privileged group. The public hand invests less and less in the area, causing streets and buildings to dilapidate and crime rates to rise. The projects in this section try to reverse this process by employing different strategies: the Votanikos Village project injects housing as a new program in an unexploited industrial area, the Ludothèque in Kerameikos proposes to take over a whole block of abandoned neoclassical buildings for educational purposes and the Varvakios Room project in Gerani rids Athens of a centre of drug abuse by scraping the ground free of a former architectural mistake and installing a new affirmative structure that can hold all of the square's previous programme.

Athens Lessons



Projects



LOCATIONS OF PROJECTS WITHIN AREA OF STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

CIVIC LIFE

1. Multi-belief worship centre
2. Keramikos Community House
3. Athens Migrant Service Centre

THE CITY CENTRE AS HABITAT

4. Housing of Integration
5. Housing for Immigrants
6. Dublin II house

INFRASTRUCTURES OF THE METROPOLIS

7. Covered Market For Exarchia
8. A Mediterranean transport hub
9. A preventive care centre for immigrants

Education In The City

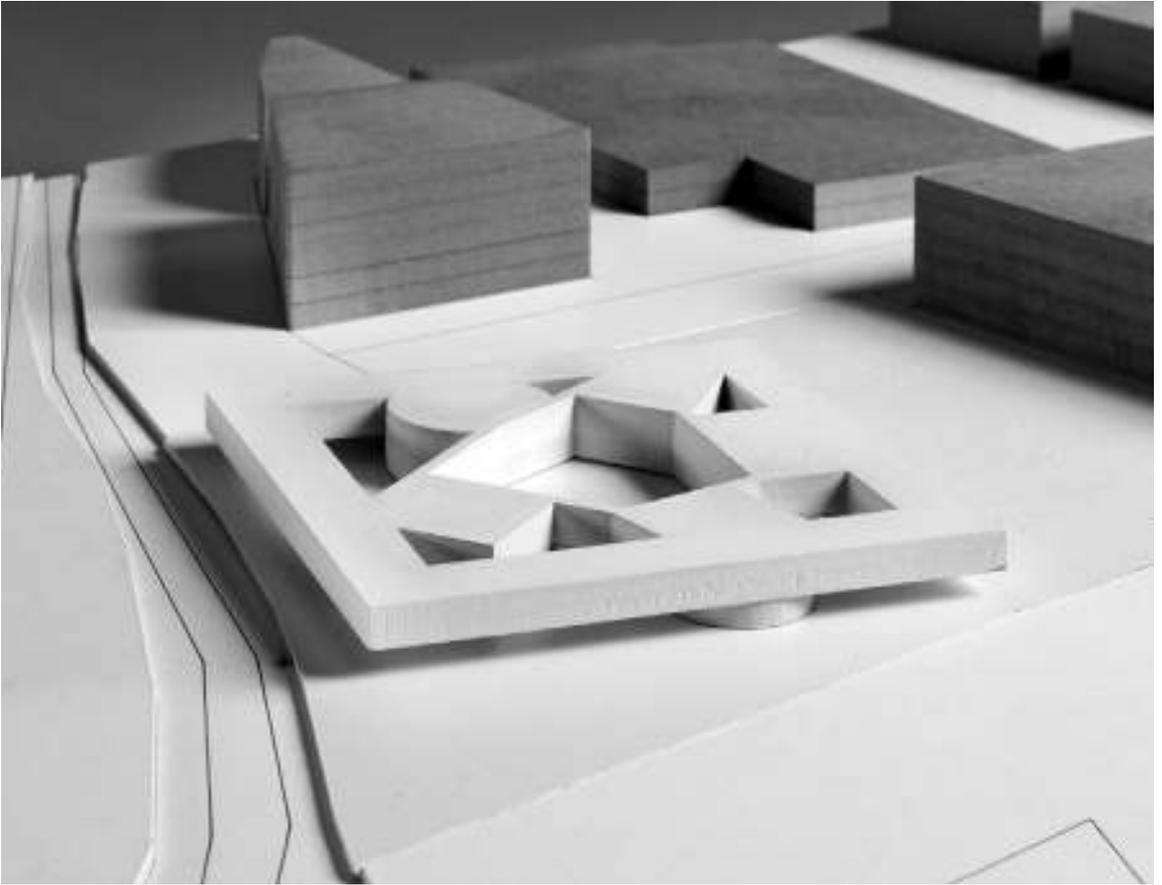
10. Centre for Social & Professional Integration
11. Professional Opportunities Center
12. Language School+Sports Centre

ADAPTING THE NEOCLASSICAL

13. Theatre School for Children
14. House of History
15. Bangladeshi Kafeneion

REVERSING URBAN DECAY

16. Votanikos Village
17. Ludothèque
18. Varvakios Room

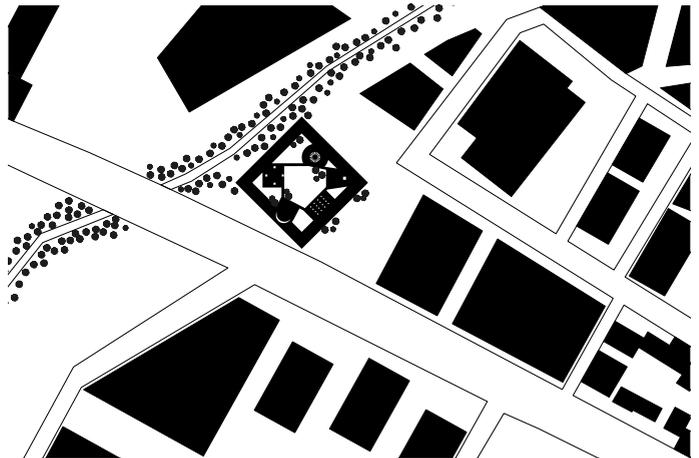


Students:
Pierre Le François des Courtis

Site:
Votanikos, at the intersection of
Prophet Daniel Stream and Iera Odos

Existing use:
One storey industrial sheds

Proposed programme:
Religious Centre



Project 1 Multi-belief Worship Centre Civic Life

Athens is facing a huge problem of integration due to unwillingness on both the Greeks' and migrants' part to meet, and due to the belief held by most Greeks that you cannot be Greek (and thus integrate in the Greek society) without being orthodox. Dealing with this religious issue could help bring together Greeks and foreigners – regardless of their religion. A multi-belief center would also help by providing spiritual support to the migrants. Just giving some food and a roof is not enough to foster their integration into Greek society.

This inter-beliefs worship center lies in Votanikos, at the junction between the Profitis Daniil stream and Iera Odos. Both elements are sacred, while not being from the same religion, thus making their intersection the ideal location for a multi-religious center.

With its simple shape, the building contrasts with the irregular urban fabric of Votanikos, hinting at the neighbourhood's future evolution. It also allows the building not to reveal itself too much.

A thick wall (containing the services and vertical circulations) separates the contemplation space from the city. This vegetalised space expands itself into five subspaces for Christians, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists and Hindus respectively. Each of these side chapels has their own shape (characterised by each religion's custom) and type of ceiling opening for natural light, thus creating a different feeling in each of those sub-spaces. The natural opening of each chapel reveals the main characteristic of the usual place of worship of each religion such as the columns we find in most mosques and the choir in the church. All around this wall, and drawing the outline of the building, are the secondary functions,

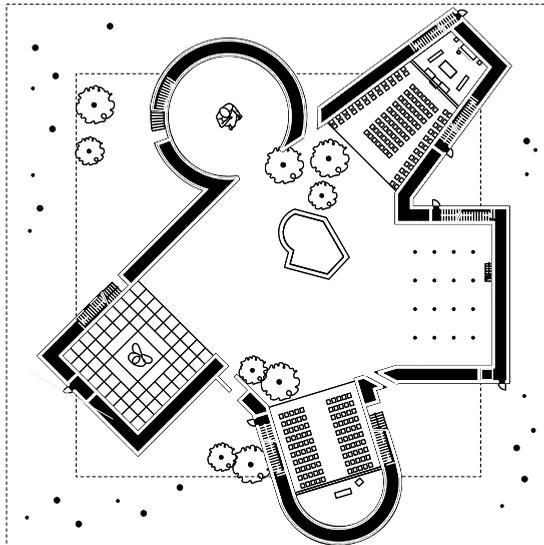
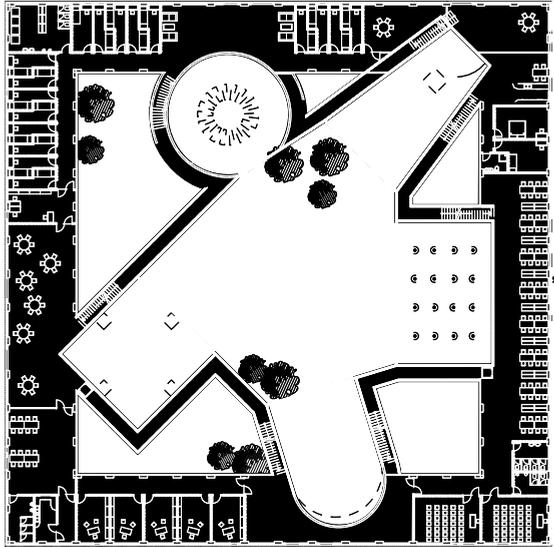
such as the library, the conference rooms and the day-care center. On the second floor, on top of arcades, each one of these programs has its common spaces looking towards the patios and/or the thick wall, introducing a feeling of interiority even though the bedrooms and other rooms are orientated towards the city.

In-between patios are created between the multi-belief space and the arcades. Those patios emphasize the wall and the entrances of the sacral space while different activities (such as a summer outside restaurant) may occur in them. Each one of these patios will develop its own characteristic since their size, illumination, landscape design and intensity of circulation (with or without entrance) may differ.

The arcades are reminiscent of the Greek culture of covered sidewalks and allows different levels of engagement from the users ranging from using the building as a shadow provider to praying in one of the lateral churches, or attending an event at one of the patios.

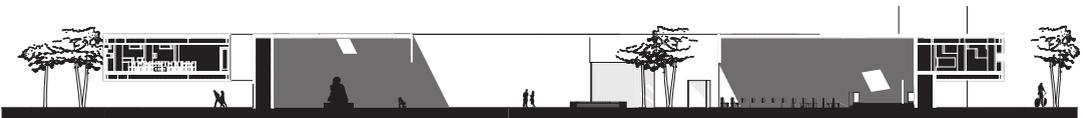
This worship space also reminds us of the typical semi-private patios and alleys found around Votanikos.

Athens Lessons



Top: first floor plan
Bottom: ground floor plan

Projects



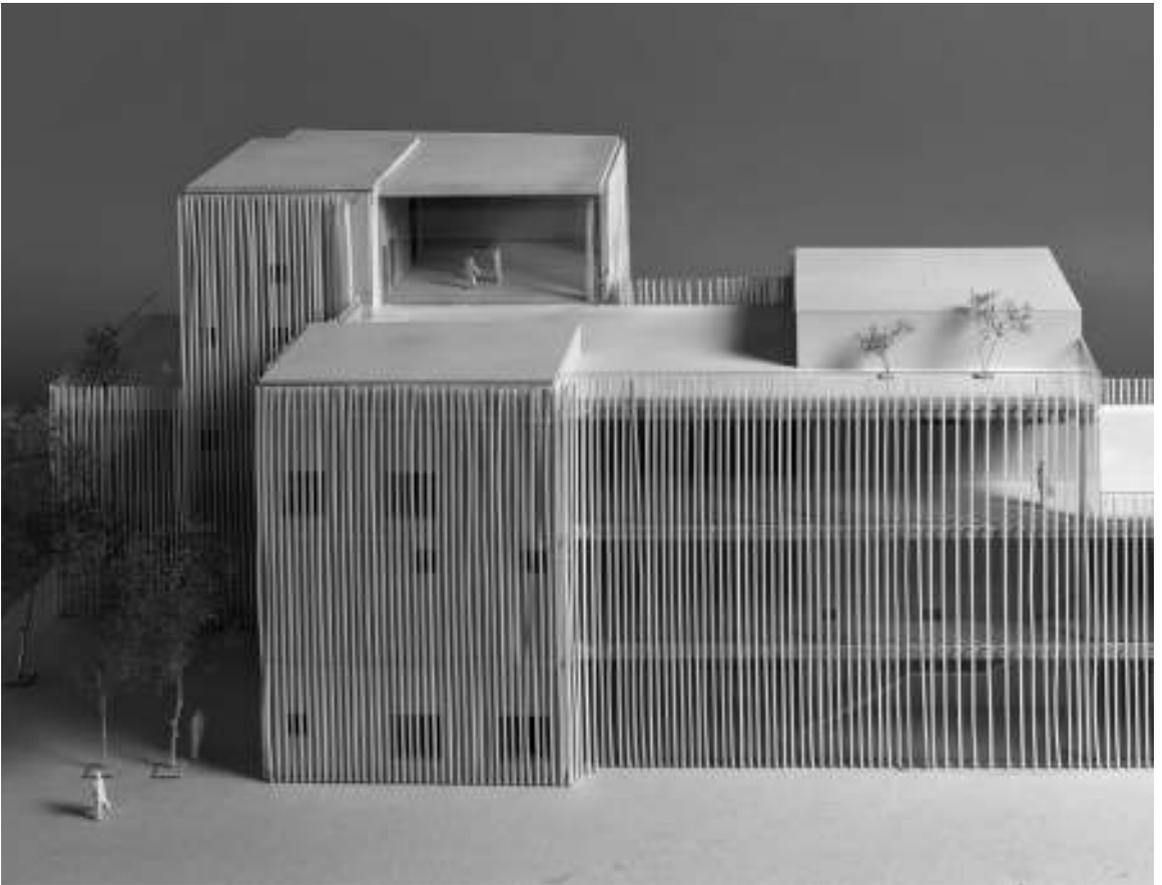
Top Left: model

Top Right: view of exterior from Prophet Daniel Stream

Middle Left: view from the Muslim prayer space into the central courtyard

Middle Right: view of an entrance courtyard

Bottom: section



Students:
Lea Serikoff
Martina Vesik

Site:
Keramikos, on the corner of
Leonidou and Plataion Streets

Existing use:
Vacant plot

Proposed programme:
Community House with child day
care, dance classes, recording
studio, auditorium, various activity
classes, basketball court, café



Project 2 Keramikos Community House Civic Life

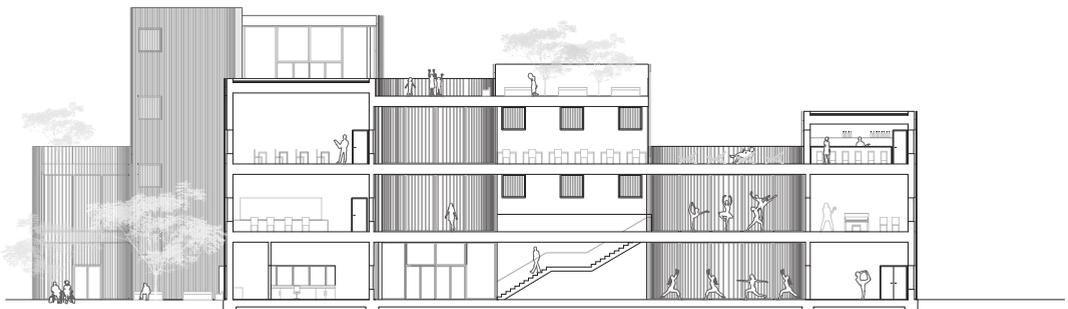
Situated along the important axis of Plato's way, in the middle of the neighbourhood of Keramikos, the project responds to the Urban Constitution by proposing an attraction point inspired by a village atmosphere. The Community House is a covered public space for locals, extending into an open plaza on the street. Inspired by the morphological characteristics of Keramikos – non-homogeneous building heights forming a terraced roof-scape – the building is a fragmented volume creating outdoor terraces and in dialogue with the surrounding scale.

The project itself is made of a series of structural cores in an open plan. These cores define indoor streets and squares in a large and generous multifunctional space. Each core can be seen as a house and contains a specific attribute, closed off for sound or privacy purposes. In opposition, the open area is used as a gathering space. The balance between defined and undefined spaces enables adaptation and flexibility.

Public structures such as the café, the exhibition space, the sport fields, and the inner basketball court, are located on the ground floor. The floors above host more private ones, such as performance-related activities and educational areas. The stairs increase the fluidity of the main open space, connecting the different levels of the building and creating a promenade leading to the terrace. The façade, composed of vertical ceramic rods, is a skin that reacts and stretches around the building, providing visual and solar protection. When passing the building, the porous wall allows the inner basketball court to be glimpsed.

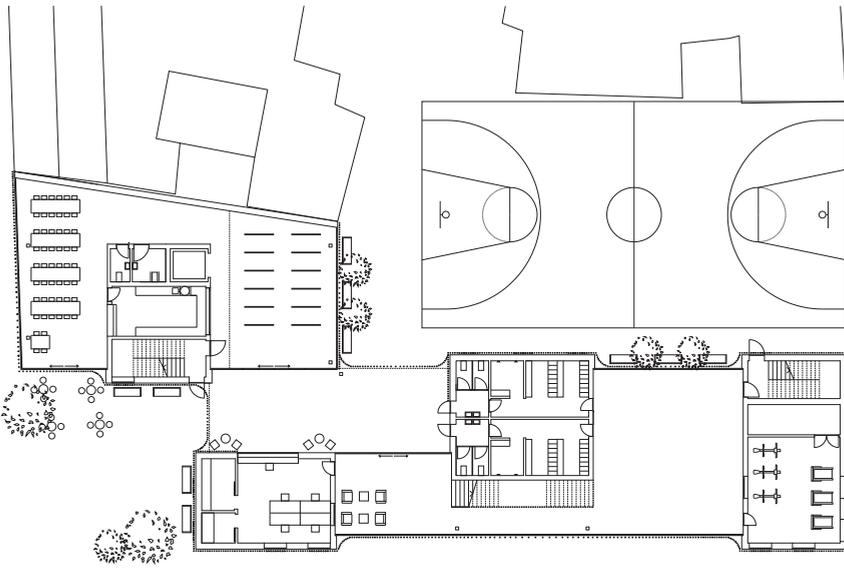
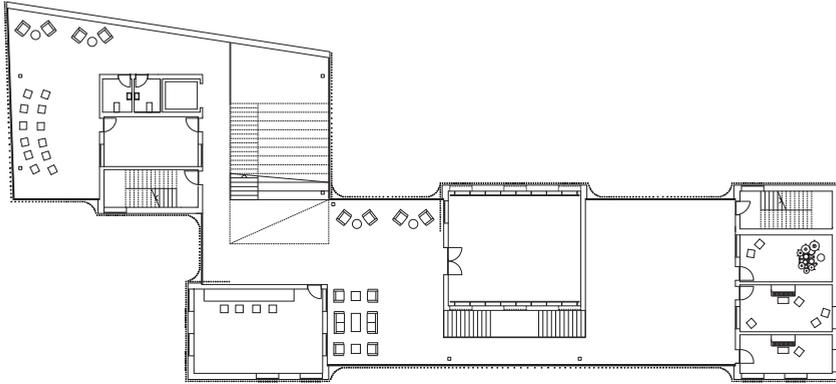
Considering the existing urban fabric and building scale, the project generates a new point of attraction in the neighbourhood, offering a multi-purpose social space and an extension of the street into a public interior.

Athens Lessons

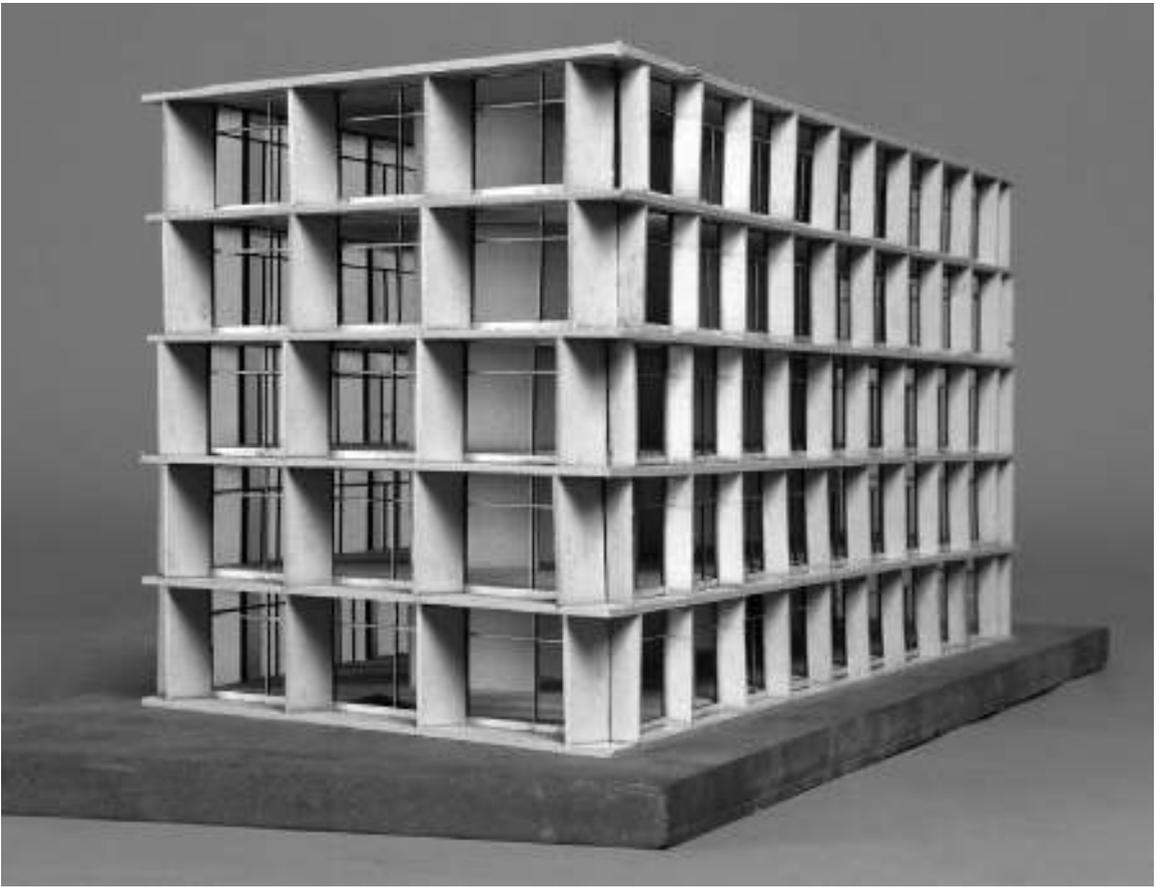


Top: corner of Leonidou and Plataion Streets
Bottom: longitudinal section

Projects



Top: first floor
Bottom: ground floor



Students:

Fatma Ban Amor
Jakob Looek

Site:

Piraeus Street,
between Aigiidon and
Daidalidon Streets

Existing use:

Vacant plot

Proposed programme:

Administrative building



Project 3 Athens Migrant Service Centre Civic Life

Immigrants in Athens are facing countless difficulties. Even though there are many governmental and non-governmental services that try to respond to their needs, the multiplicity and dispersion of the offices, institutions and organisations, makes it difficult if not impossible for immigrants to make good use of them. Other barriers, such as restricted opening hours, language problems and the lack of reliable information complicate the basic procedures linked to integration.

We are proposing a new institution, based on these considerations, which regroups under one roof a large number of support services destined for immigrants. Due to the progressive digitalisation of administrative procedures, it is possible to process a request independently of the place where it has been initially recorded. The proposed institution is in fact not an administration, but an interface between the immigrants and several administrations. So-called “socio-cultural mediators”, who have an immigrant background themselves, provide the immediate service. This kind of institution, called a one-stop-shop, has been very successfully introduced in Portugal, but does not yet seem to exist in Greece.

The project is situated on Piraeus Street, which is an important axis, linking Athens’ city centre to the port city of Piraeus. Despite its importance, Piraeus Street has never acquired a metropolitan character. Even though it is very close to the city centre, large-scale malls, wholesale markets and derelict industrial buildings border it. Placing public buildings along this axis will help Piraeus Street acquire the urban character it deserves.

On Piraeus Street, the project benefits from a very good connection to public transportation and an excellent visibility.

The site will be structured by the creation of a new street, which is actually the extension of an existing street coming from the Petralona neighbourhood. The new service building for immigrants will be accessed by the new street on its north side, while its south side is bordered by a public park.

The expression of the building should represent the profile of the new institution we are proposing: an uncomplicated, transparent and efficient service for the immigrants.

Therefore the façade is very straightforward. The slabs and the vertical structure are highlighted while this grid is more profound at the south façade to provide shadow.

The vertical circulation in the two atria contributes to a quick understanding of the interior organisation of the building. Each floor is devoted to a specific task:

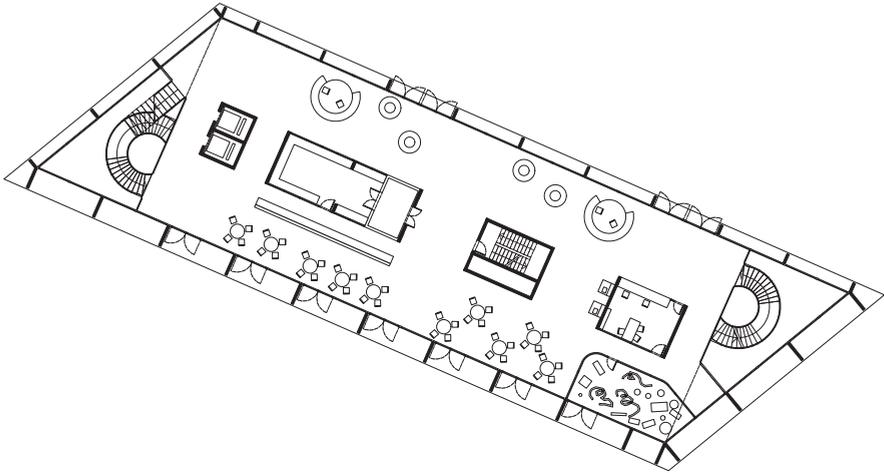
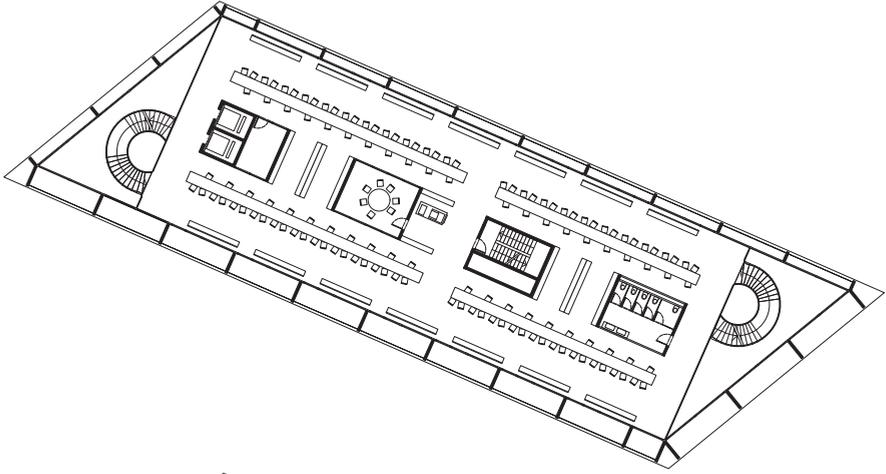
On the ground floor people encounter the general services that potentially address a larger public, such as a post office, a café, childcare centre, and an information desk.

On the first floor, immigrants find the “welcoming and sorting” desks from which they are redirected to the government or support services on the 2nd and 3rd floor.

The straightforwardness of the architecture is pursued also at the level of the interior design, where the main element is a long desk at which immigrants would discuss their case with the responsible person at eye level.

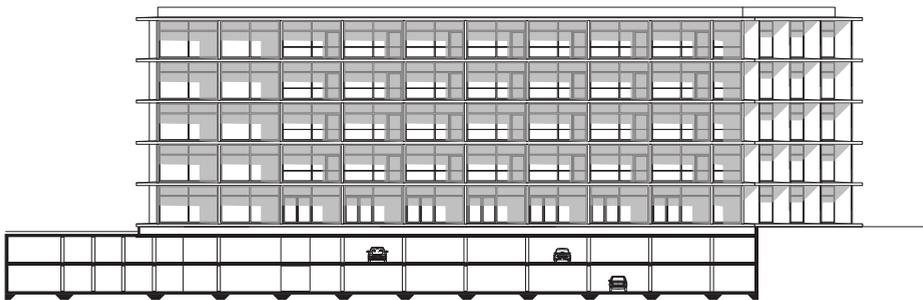
The top floor accommodates the administration of the institution.

Athens Lessons



Top: typical floor plan
Bottom: ground floor plan

Projects



Top: model
Bottom: south elevation and section



Students:
Marta Mato Sabat
Sizhou Yang

Site:
Votanikos, at the intersection
of Prophet Daniel Stream and
Agiou Polykarpou

Existing use:
Vacant industrial plot

Proposed programme:
Housing



Project 4

Housing of Integration

The City Centre as Habitat

Homelessness has only recently been understood as a social problem in Greece. In fact, Greece stands out for not engaging with ethnic inequalities and discrimination in housing at all. Our contribution to an architecture of integration combines this issue with the problem of immigration that faces Athens today. Housing of integration is a project where integration plays a major role right from the start, in the form of a participatory process between the immigrant and the host society.

The project provides the necessities for living in order to minimise investment on the immigrants' part. The project would be funded by a cooperative of future inhabitants and by the Municipality of Athens, which will provide the land. In the long term, immigrants can become owners of their apartment – a huge step in an integration process into society.

To achieve this aim, the project needs to be as cheap as possible, yet still offering the possibility to develop itself and expand. The project proposes a primary structure into which small furnished units are inserted. Future expansions are allowed for. The project enhances community life by providing common spaces for workshops and other activities.

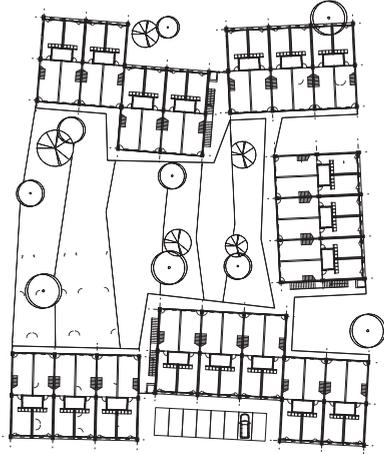
The site is located in the centre of Votanikos, a degraded and abandoned industrial area that is willing to become part of the city in the future. This housing project will help the development of the area and will be a first step in relieving congestion in the centre of Athens. The site is well-located at the crossing of a main street going through the whole neighbourhood and the Prophet Daniel's stream that will potentially become a linear park.

The principal structure of the buildings is inspired by the polykatoikias, the traditional housing typologies developed in the 1930s in order to resolve the lack of housing of the time. These structures used to be very basic concrete slabs and pilasters inserted in a very rigid grid. A similar grid of 7.20 × 7.20 metres is applied in a meandering fashion on the site, creating a courtyard which opens up to the stream.

Duplex apartments with a two sided orientation are inserted into the concrete structure. Each apartment is equipped with a prefabricated wooden unit of two floors, which takes up half of the apartment's surface. These units are insulated, whereas the remaining double height space is only tempered, allowing for any kind of appropriation. Along the brick walls in between the apartments, a console is provided to give the inhabitants the possibility to easily add a slab in this space. This kind of spatial offer, we believe, is a solution to the multiple demands and variations of the modern family.

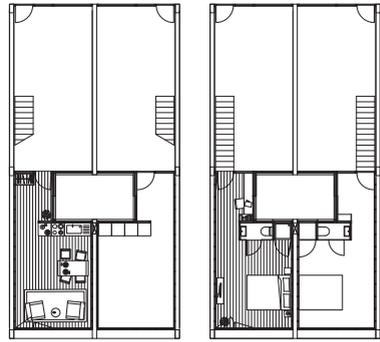
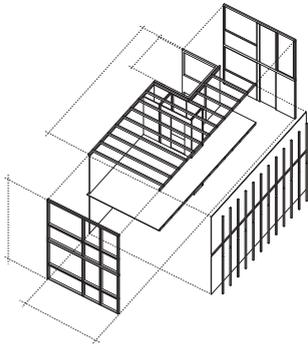
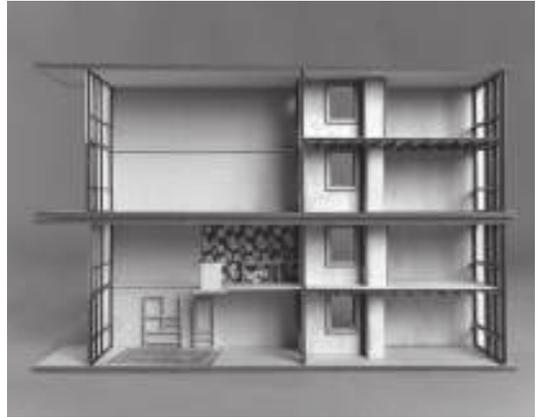
The communal character of the housing project expresses itself in the courtyard. Access to the individual apartments is provided by generous courtyards that also offer meeting and gathering spaces to the inhabitants. This multiplicity of circulation terraces and the activity in the courtyard will provide richness to the project.

Athens Lessons



Top: typical floor plan
Bottom: ground floor plan

Projects



- Top Left: model of housing complex
- Top Right: detail model of duplex apartments
- Middle Left: axonometric of duplex unit
- Middle Right: floor plan plans of duplex levels
- Bottom: elevation



Students:

Joanna Maria Lacerda

Site:

Exarchia, on the corner of Mavromichali
and Vasileiou Voulgaroktonou Streets

Existing use:

Existing low construction

Proposed programme:

Housing



Project 5

Housing for Immigrants

The City Centre as Habitat

Due to its location, Athens is seen as Europe's "gateway for immigration", receiving a large number of immigrants every year. This number is increasing on a daily basis, changing the face of the city very quickly.

The purpose of this project is to address this problem through integration, providing affordable housing for immigrants and some public areas; namely a community kitchen, a library and an auditorium.

This project is part of the urban constitution where the group concerned with area F proposed a set of small buildings for immigrants in Exarchia. This is an intervention at the neighbourhood scale. Exarchia is mainly a residential area dominated by square blocks with a courtyard, which is typical for Athens.

The project can be described as a simple volume, a parallelogram that lies upon another L-shaped volume defining the corner of the block. Not only does this configuration allow for a soft transition between the different heights of the neighboring buildings, it also opens the block to the street. The two volumes have two different identities and contrasting properties; the base volume is solid and the upper volume lighter.

The structure consists of pillars and beams. The external ground floor is made of concrete, while the materials used for the upper volume are as light as possible: wooden panels for the façade and plasterboard for the interior walls.

The ground floor houses the public spaces, where the double-height space brings the courtyard into the ground floor.

The first floor is more suitable for meetings, while the second floor, due to its configuration, is more appropriate for circulation and individual work.

The library gives people the opportunity to access the Internet. A small square is created at the entrance with the building next-door.

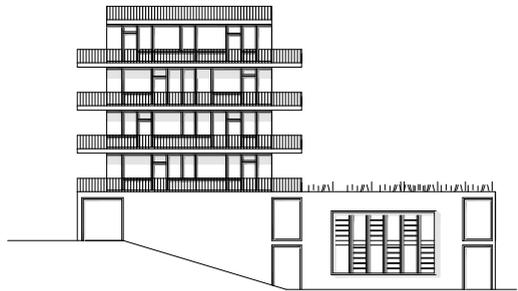
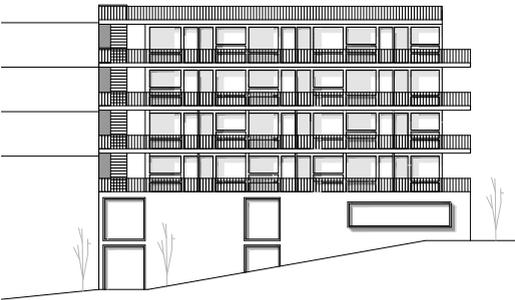
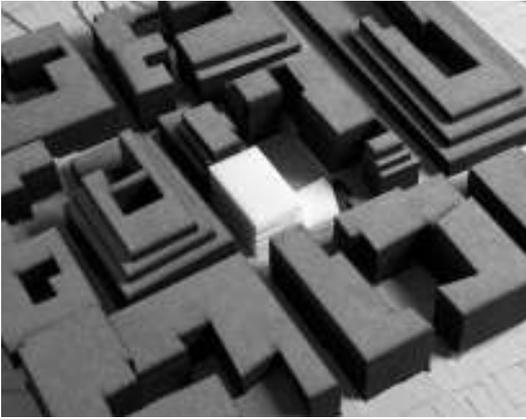
The auditorium – a place for small lectures and cultural events – is placed in the corner of the "L". When it is out of use, the rotating shelves can be opened and the auditorium becomes an extension of the library.

The kitchen is located on the opposite side of the "L". It offers cheap meals and is equipped to prepare meals. An esplanade links the building and the courtyard, providing more life to the interior of the block.

Housing occupies the second, lighter volume, accessed at the entrance shared with the auditorium's hall. Due to the solar orientation, the apartments are organised in such a way as to provide similar solar conditions for all and have their narrow front towards the street, allowing for a higher density.

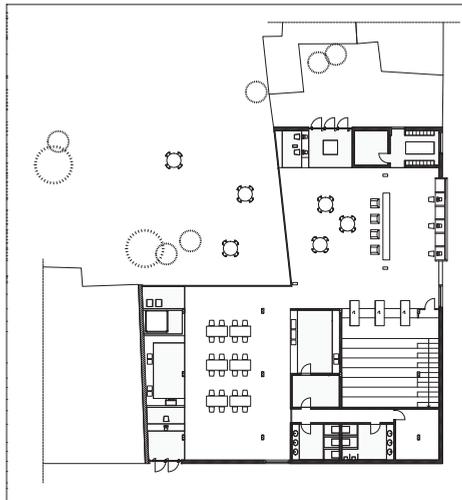
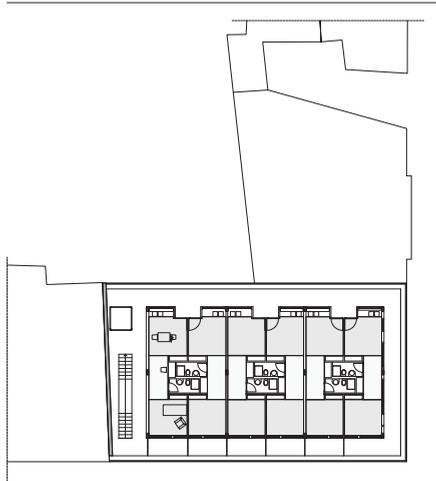
The horizontal circulation scheme is linear, placing the gallery on the northern façade. Each apartment represents a small living module, composed of a kitchen, a bathroom, a bedroom placed along the southern façade, and a balcony. Residents also have access to the terrace above the library.

Athens Lessons



Top Left: site model
Top Right: model view of the building's corner at street level
Bottom Left: south elevation
Bottom Right: east elevation

Projects



Top: typical floor plan
Bottom: ground floor plan



Students:
Gustav Vrang

Site:
Psiri, on the corner of Sarri
and Ogygou Streets

Existing use:
Vacant plot

Proposed programme:
Housing



Project 6 Dublin II House The City Centre as Habitat

The project is a response to three pertinent issues of Athens today : shelter for migrants, the many vacant plots, and a need for economic restraint. The core structure is cheap, quickly built and generic. It will be used to accommodate recently arrived "Dublin II-migrants" who needs a place to stay until they have clarified their situation.

The chosen site is an empty plot in the Psiri district. Today, many migrants live in this area where they squat offices or abandoned houses under desolate circumstances. The project initiative is to be financed by the EU who buys the plot and pays for construction and maintenance, a small compensation compared to the devastating Dublin II agreement.

The structure is based on a system developed by the GTZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit), an organization that develops construction solutions for third-world countries. The principle is to have a small amount of pre-cast part elements which can be handled and assembled on site without the help of machinery. Also, the workforce needs only a short training session and there is no need for professional craftsmen. Unemployed people or migrants can thus be employed, educated and given experience, at a very low cost.

The elements are: blocks, pillars, slabs and pre-cast beams. The materials are concrete, steel reinforcements and insulating concrete. The principle of the system does not allow any cantilevering, has a pillar-grid of 3 × 3 metres and a floor to ceiling height of 3.2 metres. The generous ceiling height provides flexibility in case the building changes tenants. The direction of beam and slab in each parcel of

9 square metres is rotated 90 degrees, giving the structure an aesthetic quality.

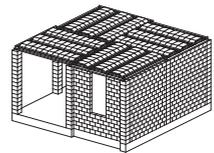
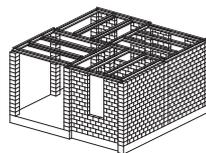
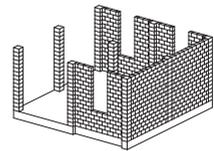
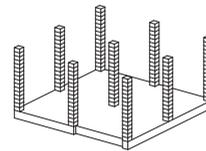
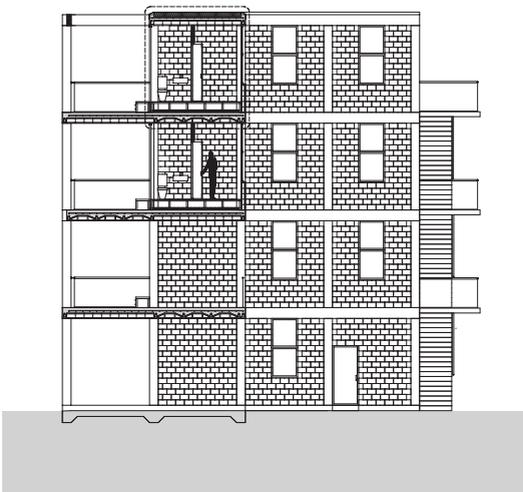
The southern façades are sheets of 70mm polycarbonate. The northern façades are made of insulated concrete blocks with an internal steel reinforcement to cope with seismic loads. Inside the rooms, the concrete slabs are covered by 100mm of insulation, and there is a 500mm space for storage. This results in a more residential floor-height. Partitioning walls are made of two gypsum boards with sound proofer in-between.

The ground floor is divided in two parts by a passage to the courtyard. The greater half is a cantina that opens up to the street and the smaller is an office for social support and management of the shelter. An external metal staircase leads from the courtyard to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd floor. Each floor has an exterior walkway that gives access to the rooms and creates a social area for relaxation and watching the street life. It also provides shading for the southern façades.

The two room types are dormitories for 4 single individuals (18 square metres) or family rooms (27 square metres) and each have a bathroom. A total of 44 people can inhabit the house on a plot that is 240 square metres large.

My conceptual idea was a house with an honest and pragmatic expression, influenced by today's need for objectivity and coping with scarcity. The rooms have a different identity with light and simple materials. It "inhabits" the concrete structure to give a notion of a temporary solution for a temporary situation.

Athens Lessons

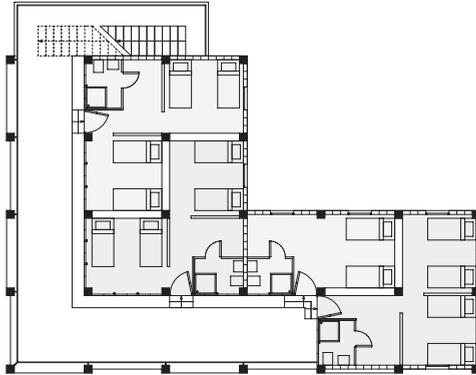


Top: rendering of Sarri Street façade

Bottom Left: section

Bottom Right: axonometric diagrams of system assembly

Projects



Top: typical floor plan
Bottom: ground floor plan



Students:
Marco Ferrari

Site:
Exarchia, along Digeni Akrita
Street, between Mavromichali
and Charilaou Trikoupi Streets

Existing use:
Car park

Proposed programme:
Market and soup kitchen



Project 7

Covered Market for Exarchia

Infrastructures of the Metropolis

A neighborhood market is a place of commerce but it is also a social meeting place; a place to exchange both goods and ideals.

This project proposes to create a new market facility in a flagging Athens neighbourhood. The project's goals therefore operate on two levels: first, the project is an "urban attractor" with the architectural goal of counteracting the trend of abandonment by residents and vendors. Secondly, the market is a place for integration, with a social goal of encouraging immigrants and citizens to meet and feel part of the same community.

The site is located on a sloping lot between Lycabettus and Strephe hills. The programme is adjacent to the sloped residential areas and cuts into the hill. It is set on two levels, allowing upper access and creating a flat lower area.

The market and supporting programmes are accommodated in three distinct volumes; a primary long rectangular bar extends perpendicular to the slope on the upper level, which is then supported by two angled blocks on the lower level. The larger of these lower blocks is set into the topography at one end of the bar, with the other block supporting the bar towards the cantilevered end. The positioning and orientation of these blocks is a direct reaction to the surrounding buildings and context, with the goal of creating an interstitial outdoor public space.

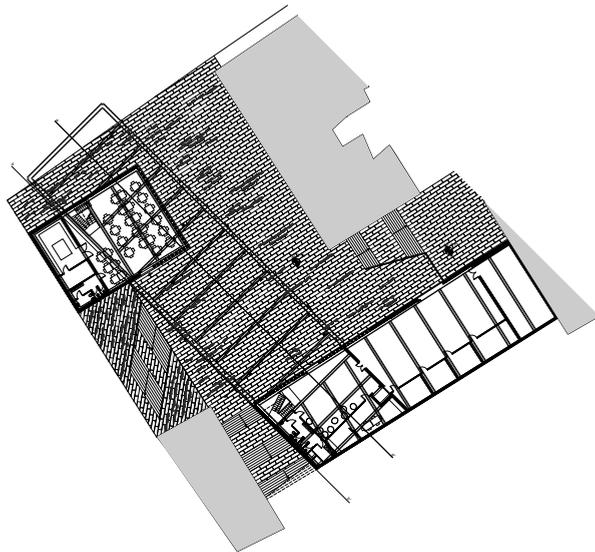
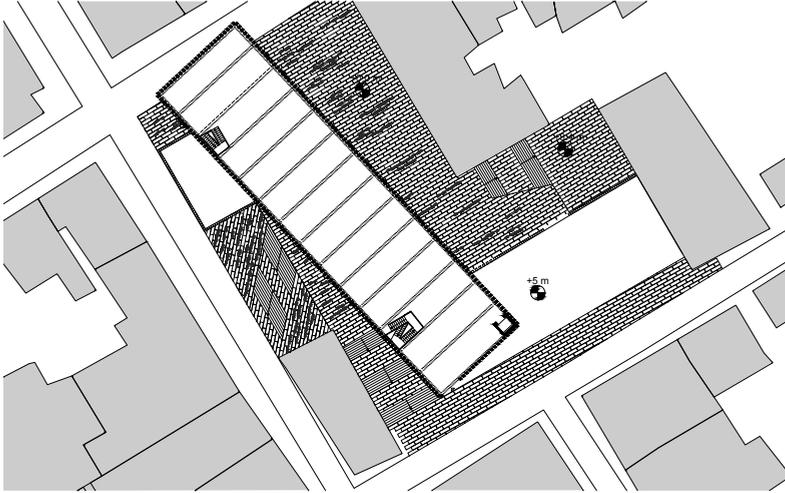
The programme for the market works at two levels. The enclosed upper level focuses on the more traditional market products and vendors (produce and market goods), while the free space on the open lower level can be used for neighbourhood market days and events (flea market, arts and crafts sales, and for community use). In addition to mar-

ket space, the two lower blocks accommodate services, administration and storage in one block, and a community kitchen in the second. The functions on the lower level are housed in the "permeable" lower blocks and are directly connected to the outdoor public space. They are flanked by wide stairs, connecting to the street above.

The structure of each block is a logical set of slab, precast white concrete structural units, spanning beams, and a roof. This structure allows for column free interior spaces and a freedom of internal layout. The upper "bar" is supported on the two lower blocks, as well as a series of strategically placed exterior columns. All of the blocks are clad with a permeable precast façade which acts more as a "fence" than a wall, allowing for maximum air and light penetration, while encouraging shade and passive cooling in the interior.

Because of the angled orientation of the two lower blocks, the areas of "overlap" produce an angular pattern of "collision" in the structure. Specific programmes such as vertical circulation (stairs and elevators), services, and the public kitchen are inserted and organized by this irregular ceiling grid. Structure defines both the indoor and outdoor spaces. The regularity of the façade, the spacing of the beams and columns, and the angular intersections of the blocks all enhance the rhythm of market activity, while the surrounding stairs and terraces allow people to sit, talk, learn, and watch the market, all framed by an architecture of integration.

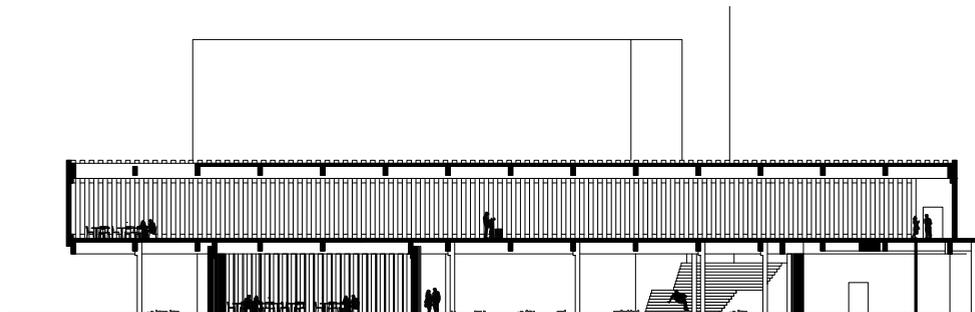
Athens Lessons



Top: top floor plan, market space

Bottom: ground floor plan, soup kitchen and covered informal market

Projects



Top: market space
Middle Left: view of model
Middle Right: view of site model
Bottom: longitudinal section



Students:

Loïc Jaco-Guillarmod
Sandro Tonietti

Site:

Larisis station, along
Theodorou Diligianni Street

Existing use:

Train station

Proposed programme:

Transportation hub for
trains and busses



Project 8

Mediterranean Transport Hub Infrastructures of the Metropolis

Athens' central station is far from what one would expect a capital's train station to be. It is surprisingly small, old and badly connected to the Greek national network. The reason for this backwardness may be due to the historical fact that Greece has always focused on sea travel, thus neglecting its railway development.

Central stations are usually the expression of a city's grandeur – a prestigious spot acting as a monumental door into the metropolis. The project intends to modernise the existing train station to create such an emblematic space in Athens. Unifying the two existing bus terminals and tying the new transport knot to the local transport network (metro, tram, and local buses), the project aims to build an efficient public transport system for the city.

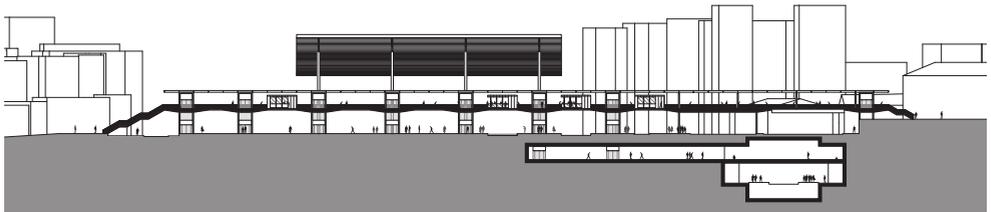
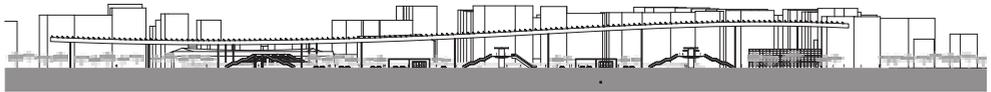
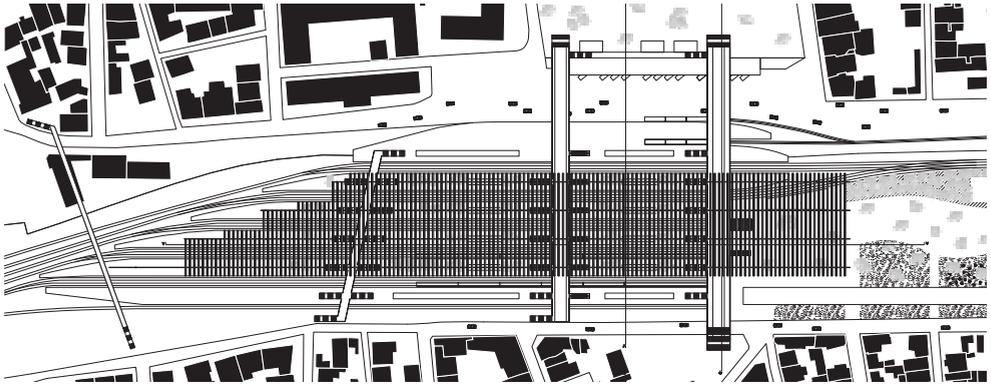
But what is the essence of a Mediterranean train station? Imagine the aestival scene of passengers stepping off a train at Athens Central Station: the overwhelming heat – the desire for shadow and cooling off. The Mediterranean area is a region that excites the senses – it is full of intense odours and colours. The project is about creating shadow, about the scent of the local vegetation.

The central and ample site of the ancient railway station is the perfect opportunity for an infrastructure inspired by such distinctiveness. Today's railway track field is wound into the urban fabric. The project revitalises the site, proposing not only a transport hub but

also a large urban park to restore the spatial continuity between the two neighbourhoods. A monumental pergola in line with the arriving trains produces a rhythmic shadow play. The smooth bend of the pergola opens progressively towards the park. This strong gesture brings the park right into the heart of the train station. The vegetation invades the space, taking the role of a second solar filter. The overlay of artificial and natural shadow, punctuated by water fountains, creates an exceptional spatial condition and a fresh climate.

A series of transversal aerial walkways distribute the passenger fluxes in an efficient way and offer generous urban connections between the two neighbourhoods. The facilities are condensed in programmatic boxes, placed at specific spots in the park as well as in the train station, allowing for maximum spatial flexibility. The large roof surface of the monumental pergola, ideally orientated, is made of solar panels, producing a large amount of green energy directly injected into the train lines – an asset considering Greece's delicate economic context.

Athens Lessons



Top: general plan
Middle: longitudinal section
Bottom: transverse section

Projects



Top Left: looking from one of the station's pedestrian walkways onto the park
Bottom Left: aerial view of model
Bottom Right: model view of the pedestrian bridge across Theodorou Diligianni



Students:
Thaddée Lucan
Simon Pillet

Site:
Evangelismos, Irinis Park

Existing use:
Public park

Proposed programme:
Medical facility



Project 9

Preventive Care Centre for Immigrants Infrastructures of the Metropolis

Today, Athens is the capital of a country in crisis. The city is facing numerous problems, mainly of an economic nature, but unresolved illegal immigration is increasingly becoming a major issue. Immigrants have very important needs in terms of housing, basic alimentation and medication. They receive treatment only in cases of extreme emergency and institutions devoted to preventive care are almost inexistent.

The project of a preventive care centre for immigrants (P.C.C.I.) reflects these needs and sets out to compensate this lack of medical supervision, which cannot be financed by the Greek government. The initiative shall be financed by the different partners of the EU-27 to the extent to which they are responsible for sending illegal immigrants back to Greece under the Dublin II convention.

The P.C.C.I. is based on a voluntary service and requires direct access to a general hospital for surgical interventions and serious pathologies that cannot be treated by a preventive care centre. The chosen site is Irinis Park, in the eastern part of Athens' centre, situated just below the Evangelismos Hospital, taking advantage of this proximity. The P.C.C.I. building establishes a strong connection to the park, becoming one in itself and creating a public permeability.

The building's volume is fairly low and divided in three layers, reflecting the different degrees of privacy of the programme.

The ground floor, the first and most public level, contains the two reception spaces (the main consultation area and the one for the maternity ward) and the soup kitchen. The second level hosts the main programme, the consultation space with waiting halls and

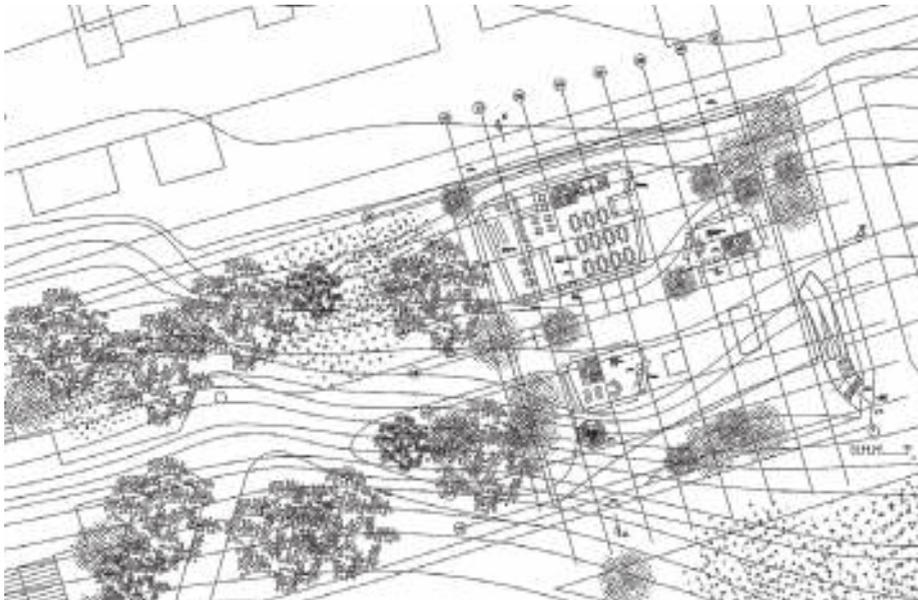
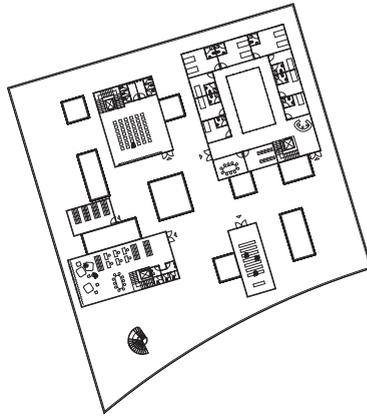
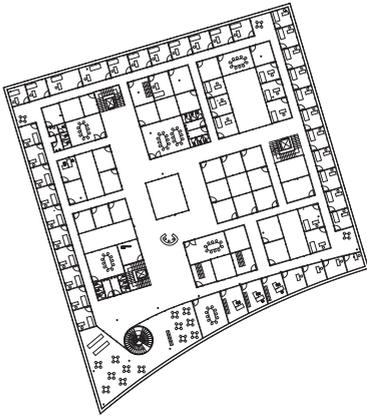
offices. Lastly, the third floor is composed of independent elements, the maternity hospitalisation bedrooms, the nursery, the auditorium and a little church.

The project expresses this threefold division via different treatments of space and material. The ground floor is in direct relation with the existing park and as a consequence thought to be permeable and transparent, conserving the existing topography as much as possible. Glass is chosen for the façades, allowing for transparency and a continuity of the park. Scattered pillars, which create a kind of "undergrowth" below the slab above, define this generous open space: public but protected.

The second level is defined by a big slab. This huge space hosts the consultation program and is characterised by a simple and less flexible geometry: bay units are organised around patios or along the façade. This slab is the most visible element and its general geometry is based on the "regulating parameters" of the urban fabric. The slab is made of concrete and the façades are assembled from prefabricated units composed of a reinterpretation of different patterns used in the architecture of Pikionis.

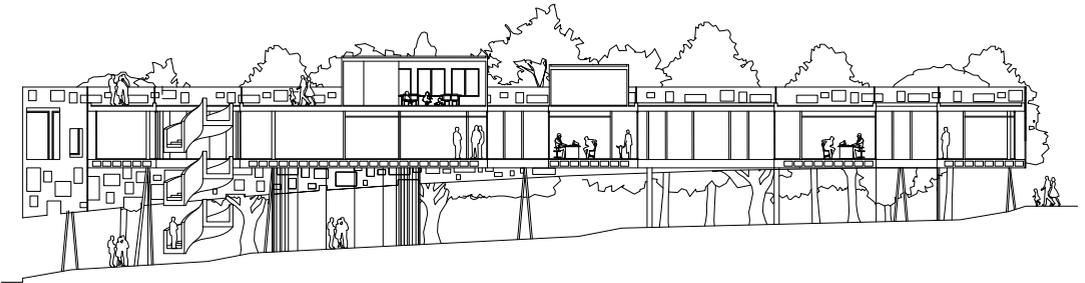
Finally, the upper floor is generated by the collection of heterogeneous elements that house heterogeneous programs, arranged as on a small agora, in a punctual way. The different aspects of these elements are generated through the programmes they cater for in a vernacular manner, our tribute to the Greek village.

Athens Lessons



Top Left: first floor plan
Top Right: second floor plan
Bottom: ground floor plan

Projects



Top: overall view of model

Bottom Left: the space underneath the slab is in connection with the park

Bottom Right: section



Students:

Isabel Stella Alvarez

Site:

Kerameikos, on the corner of
Kerameikou and Lasonos Street

Existing use:

Vacant plot

Proposed programme:

Educational facility



Project 10

Centre for Social and Professional Integration Education in the City

The project for a centre for social and professional integration addresses the current problems the city of Athens is facing with regards to its immigrant population. The centre provides professional training to immigrants in order to facilitate integration into the Greek society and the labour market. Various job-training activities are offered as well as language courses, especially Greek ones, culture courses and workshops. Tours of the city will be organised in order to familiarise people with life in Athens.

The implementation of this project relies on donations, subsidies and the support of public and private entities such as the Municipality of Athens, foundations, associations, NGOs, trade unions, and Greek companies. The latter would have the opportunity of carrying out training activities for their employees at the centre. The teaching staff is mostly composed of volunteers.

In order to reach out to a greater number of people, the school needs to be easily accessible. The chosen site is therefore located in downtown Athens, in the Kerameikos neighbourhood on the corner of Kerameikos and Lasonos Streets, on one of the many empty lots of the area. The site is surrounded by residential buildings, restaurants and retail; the metro station and bus stops are nearby.

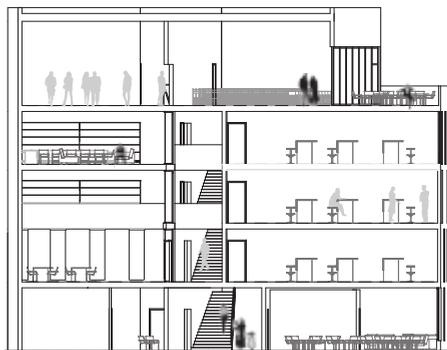
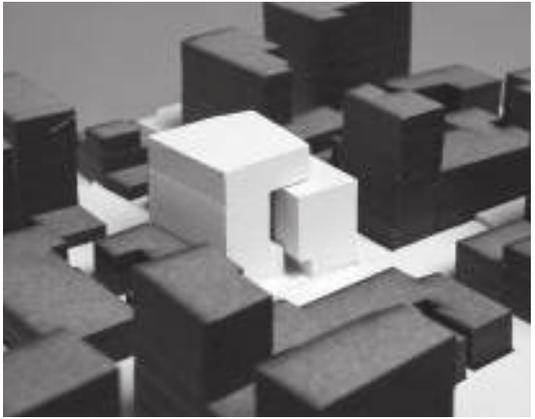
The size of the lot is 586 square metres. Building regulations limit the construction area to 469 square metres and require an outdoor space of 117 square metres. The project proposes two outdoor spaces: a private garden at the rear and a widening of the sidewalk at the front, establishing a public space in relation with the street.

The project's programme consists of classrooms, a library, a childcare centre, an auditorium and a cafeteria, as well as administrative spaces and a block of services. These spaces are distributed on 5 floors and divided into two volumes, organised as follows: (i) an administrative area where the library, the nursery and other services are located, and (ii) an area where the classrooms and common areas for recreation are located. The vertical circulation is located between the two volumes. The very top floor contains an auditorium which opens onto a terrace overlooking the city of Athens.

The circulation spaces play an important role in this project, as they become a social space: here students and staff encounter each other in a casual way. Places to facilitate socialisation are essential to a process of integration and reinforce the user's sense of belonging and identification. These spaces are of generous dimension and enjoy natural light and ventilation. A set of views between different levels is generated by the double height frontage. The other spaces are more enclosed by concrete walls and illuminated by openings, which are arranged as needed.

The structure is a traditional and simple concrete construction. The cladding consists of cast concrete elements. The architectural expression of the building reminds us of traditional houses of the Greek islands. A white finish reflects the sun.

Athens Lessons



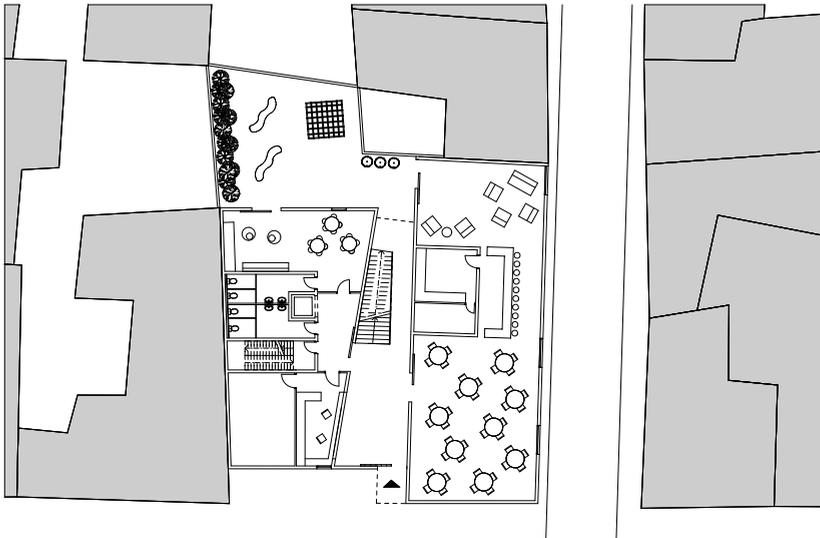
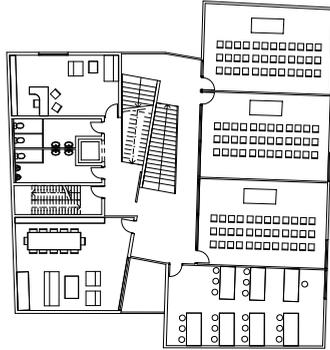
Top Left: model view of central circulation space

Top Right: site model

Middle: elevation on Kerameikou Street

Bottom: transverse section

Projects



Top: third floor plan
Bottom: ground floor plan



Students:

André E Silva de Olivera
Patrizia Gabrielli

Site:

Petalona, on the corner of
Piraeus and Alopis Street

Existing use:

Vacant plot

Proposed programme:

Educational facility



Project 11

Professional Opportunities Center

Education in the City

Athens is a city in crisis, with serious immigration issues. A “Professional Opportunities Center” is essential for the integration of marginalised groups into the labour market, and thus into Greek society.

Pireus street is changing from its current industrial urban character and is adopting more mixed-use functions including commercial, institutional and cultural uses. As such, this area presents good development potential for a school catering to these markets. This proposal would create a school to teach new skills to the unemployed or low-skilled population, generating a synergy between teaching and labour demands in this developing neighbourhood. Additionally, a second goal of placing the school in this neighbourhood, near the city centre, is that of reinforcing the social issues of integration and to remind the inhabitants of the immigrant labour force’s capabilities and value.

The chosen site for the project is a transition strip where the neighbourhood fabric changes from the residential scale of the Petralona neighbourhood in the east to the larger, commercial scale and high-density traffic of Pireus Street in the west. As a reaction to this context, the programme is divided into two groups: a larger body facing Pireus hosting the school and a smaller one containing a library intended to be used by both students and local inhabitants. Public space is created on a roof terrace between these two bodies.

An interior street connects the Pireus side to the neighbourhood, and acts as a unifying axis in the building. This “street” is a gathering space and works as a spine for the programme. A wall, folded to create different

public spaces and oriented views, defines the axis. It also contains all the building’s services. Vertical access is provided along these walls. The stairs rise between the spaces created by the shift of the service walls from one floor to the other.

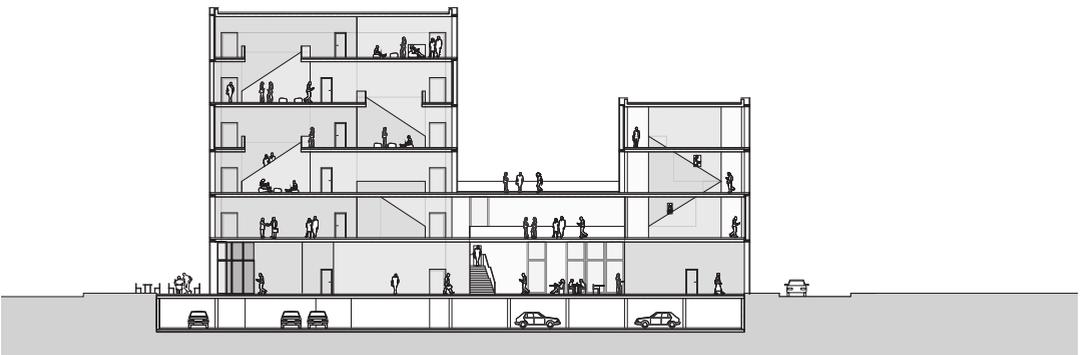
The structure of the project follows the simple slab/pillar concrete system often used in Athens. Following this regular system, the main programme is organized on both sides of the “street”.

The ground floor is public, its stores, services and restaurant being closely linked to the commercial character of Pireus street, and all offering products made within the classes and workshops. Increasing privacy is found the higher one goes from the street; thus the library, classrooms, and workshops are all located on the upper floors.

Reflecting the industrial character of Pireus street, a translucent polycarbonate façade unifies the façade of the building. It brings soft lighting into the teaching rooms and provides sound insulation from the noisy Pireus Street. Modules of polycarbonate become windows in strategic locations, allowing for outside view.

Finally, the “Professional Opportunities Center”, as a single building, connects two contexts. It is not just a link from Pireus to Petralona but it also provides the link between immigrants and Greek society.

Athens Lessons



Top Left: view of the project from Piraeus Street

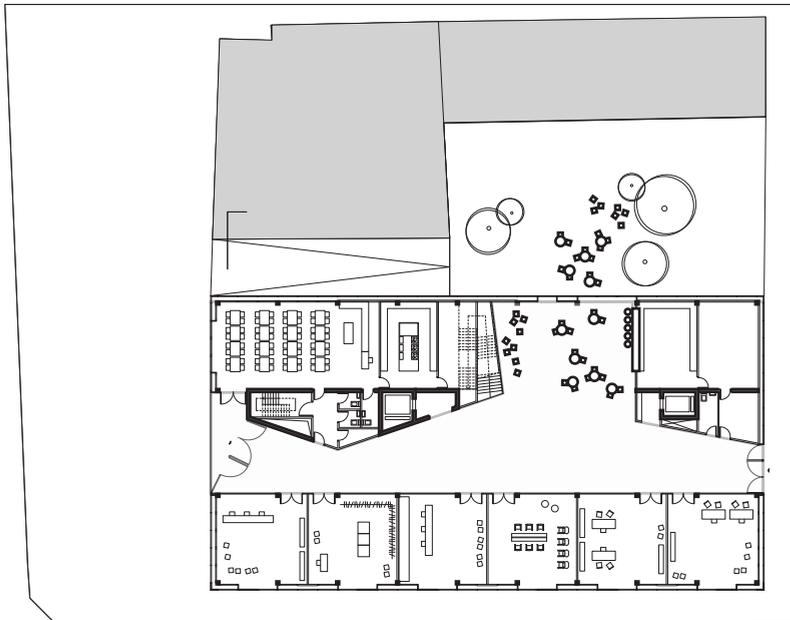
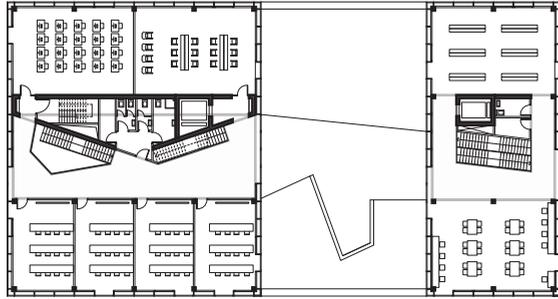
Top Right: site model

Middle Left: Alopis Street elevation

Middle Right: interior street

Bottom: transverse section

Projects



Top: typical floor plan
Bottom: ground floor plan

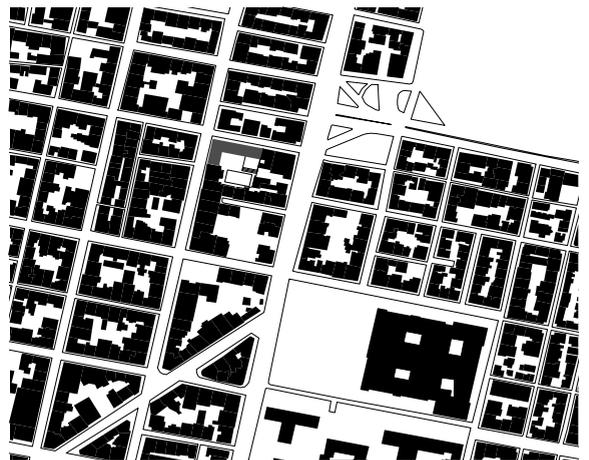


Students:
Steffan Heath
Philippe Eduard

Site:
Corner of Ioulianou and
Tritis Septemvriou Streets

Existing use:
Vacant plot used as car park

Proposed programme:
Educational facility and
sports centre



Project 12 Language School + Sports Centre Education in the City

In order to create an architecture of integration, the proposed project aims to provide not only the tools but also an environment where integration can start to happen. This is achieved by a combination of programmes.

The first programme consists of a Greek language school, which provides the immigrants with the essential tool to start exchanging with the locals and enabling them to pass the language test necessary to acquire a resident permit. The language school programme is combined with a sports facility programme that will provide an environment where people from all backgrounds, whether Greek or immigrant, can come and play. Sport, through its common culture and language, has the capacity to erase boundaries whether they are cultural, social or religious. For this reason, sport is used as a vector for integration, a device to get people from different backgrounds to meet and start socialising.

This is reflected in the way the programme of the building is organised. Indeed, the sports fields, where locals and immigrants can start to interact, cuts through the building and slides in between the language school and the rest of the sport facilities. The playing fields therefore act not only as a true interface between the two programmes, but also between the local population and the immigrants.

These open playing fields are located around a semi-public courtyard, which acts as a terrace for the various commercial programmes on the ground floor. However, the playing fields are on different levels and become an extension of the public space as they gradually step up from the court-

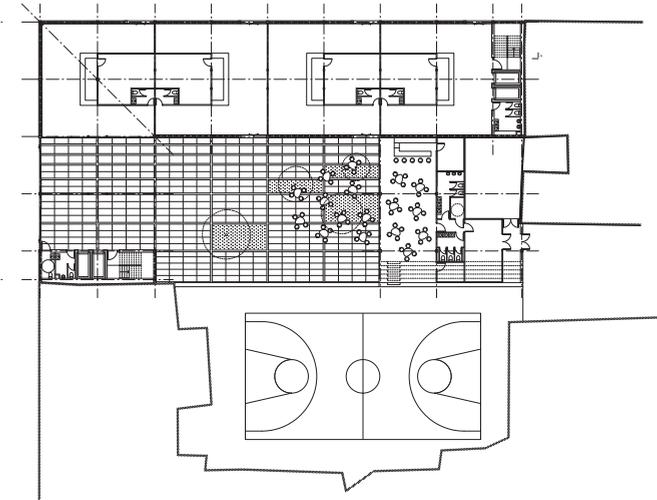
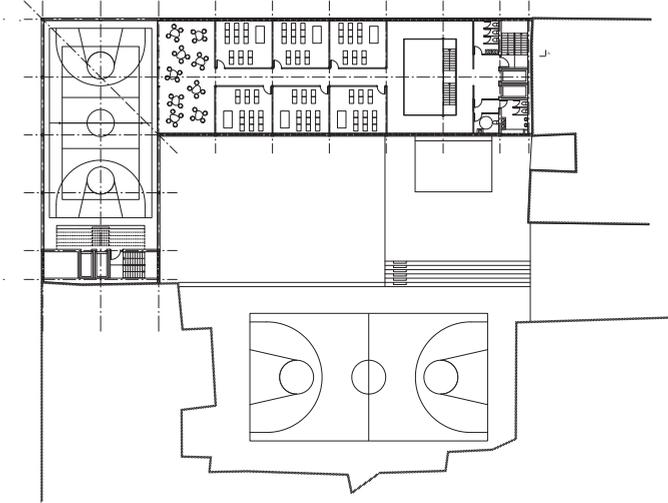
yard. The various sports fields are connected through bleachers, that also become the place where people can come together and socialize. One can therefore progressively go up from one sports field to another and watch the various games, before coming down again via an elevator that leads you back onto the street.

The site of the project is located north of Omonia. The chosen site is purposefully outside of the Gerani neighbourhood in order to depolarise the social programmes that are attracting all the immigrants in the area. The site chosen is also located near the National Technical University of Athens, which lacks a sports facility in its proximity. The site therefore responds to necessities of both programmes.

A concrete grid structure acts as an external skeleton that wraps the whole building. The structure works both in traction and compression since it suspends the language school over the sports fields, and supports the sports facilities under the playing fields. The grid structure therefore enables the large void to be generated between the two programmes within which the playing fields are placed. The spacing between the vertical members of the grid structure is regular and dictated by the dimensions of the sports fields. However, the spacing between the horizontal members of the grid structure varies progressively in order to accentuate the void in the middle of the building.

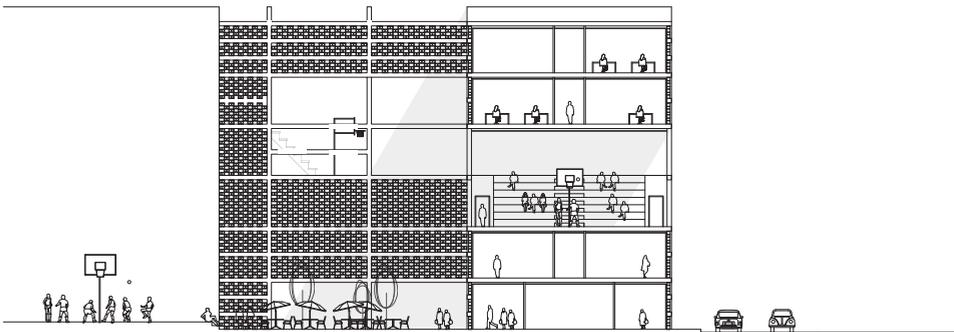
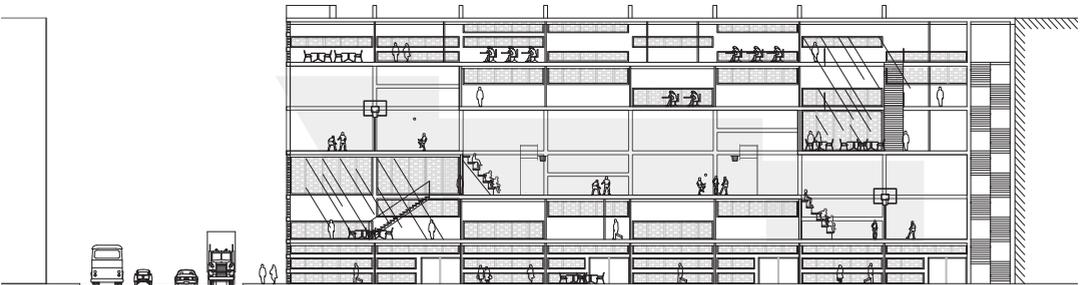
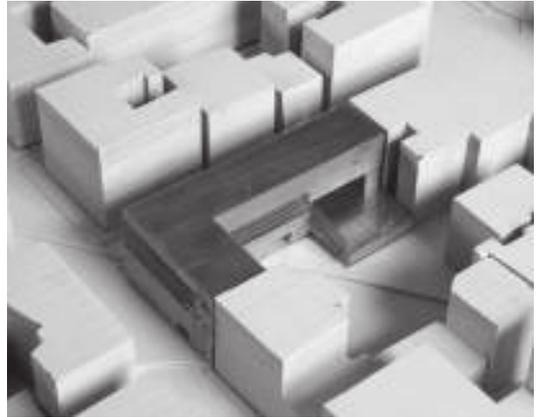
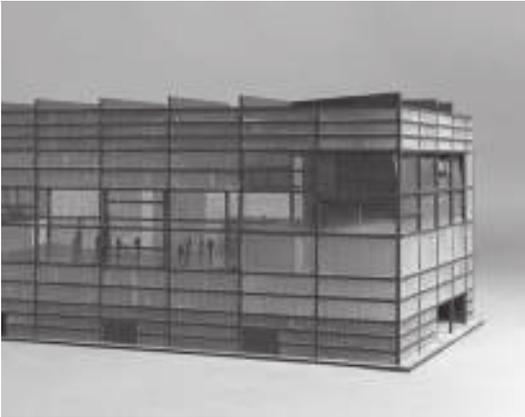
The cladding within the concrete grid is composed of concrete cinder blocks that are laid on their side and stacked. These allow light to enter the building whilst providing shade and reducing heat gain.

Athens Lessons



Top: upper floor plan
Bottom: ground floor plan

Projects



Top Left: model view
Top Right: site model
Middle: longitudinal section
Bottom: transverse section



Students:

Davide di Capua

Site:

Kerameikos, Intersection of
Piraeus Street and Iera Odos

Existing use:

Abandoned neo-classical
buildings and industrial use

Proposed programme:

Theatre and educational facility



Project 13

Theatre School for Children

Adapting the Neoclassical

Throughout history, drama has always been extremely important in Greece. The city of Athens created the theatre in the 5th century B.C. to promote its culture. This invention was not only cultural but also architectural, thus creating a new typology.

Recently, Greece, and Athens in particular, have been facing an economical crisis and problems linked to immigration. The neighbourhoods of Kerameikos and Metaxourgeio in the centre of Athens are ones of the most affected by the arrival of new immigrants. More than 50% of immigrants are illiterate or have only attended primary school.

A drama school would be appropriate because it is a good way to learn a language. The educational goal would be to make interaction and communication between children easier, essentially 'learning by doing'. The school would be run by both the National Theatre of Greece and the Ministry of Education and subsidized by private funds. Different teaching classes will take place during the day and the evening.

The site is at the crossroads of Iera Odos and Piraeus, where various cultural activities are located. The archaeological site of the cemetery of Kerameikos is just in front of it, allowing for a direct view of the Acropolis. Two abandoned neoclassical buildings are located on the site, which is a frequent occurrence in Kerameikos. The programme consists of classrooms, an administration area including the reception, and a main flexible theatre of 160 seats.

The two neoclassical buildings are restored and integrated into the project; the building facing Piraeus is used for administration and reception and the second building houses

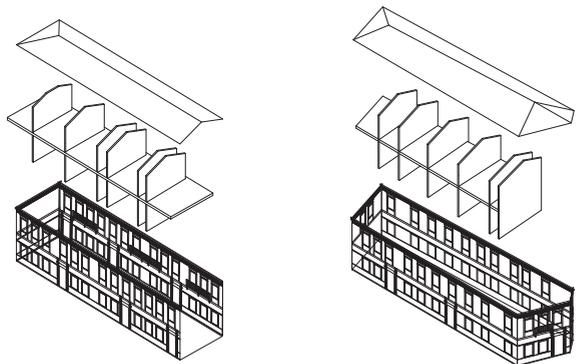
classrooms that can also be used as workshops. A third entity, the theatre, is added to the neoclassical building and clearly redefines the courtyard as a linking space. The courtyard is permeable on four sides and acts as a catalyst for the Piraeus and Kerameikos neighbourhood, according to the Urban Constitution.

For the two neoclassical buildings, the concept is to use transverse reinforced concrete load-bearing walls to divide the space. The functions are inserted between those walls. The structural system attempts to adhere to the existing structure of load-bearing walls and concrete beams that are sometimes exposed. The circulation is always along the courtyard's side. The materiality of the walls is expressed 'as found', with exposed, new, rough concrete.

The theatre is one large volume, designed to interact with the two others. A big window frames the view and evokes the importance of landscape in classical Greek theatre. Inspired by the industrial atmosphere of the surroundings, some wire mesh crosses the performance hall. The roof is for multiple uses, such as a café, outside receptions and events. The façade is made with poured concrete over a thin wood-plank framework. Openings in the façade are veiled by a concrete pattern (moucharaby), which filters the light and refers to a common motif found in Athens' centre.

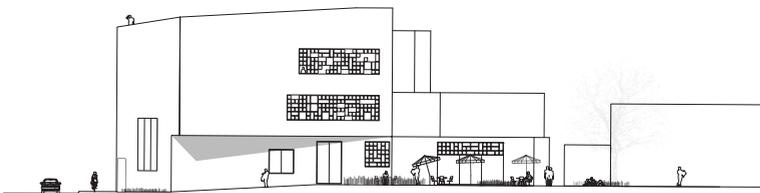
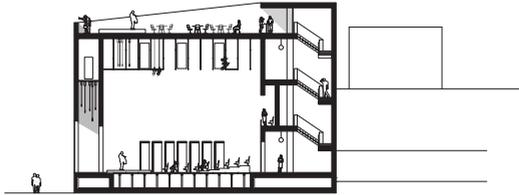
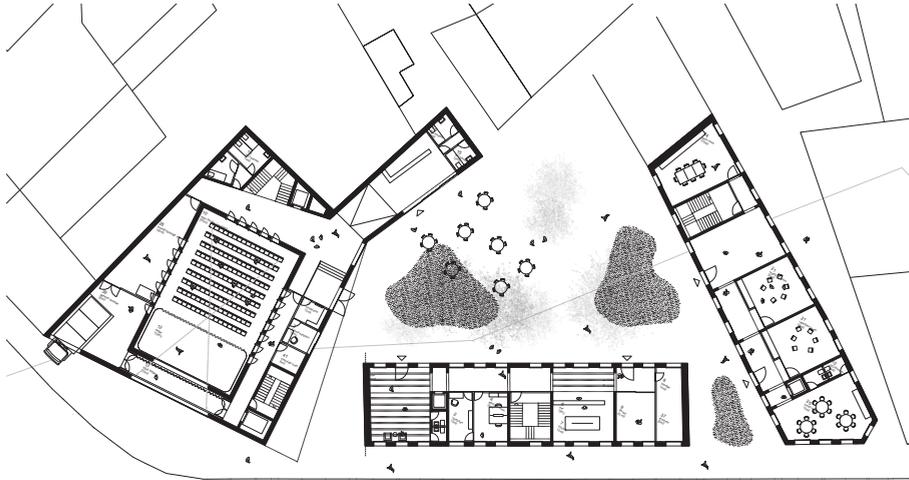
This drama school aims to become a place of social and educational exchange for Kerameikos and the city of Athens.

Athens Lessons

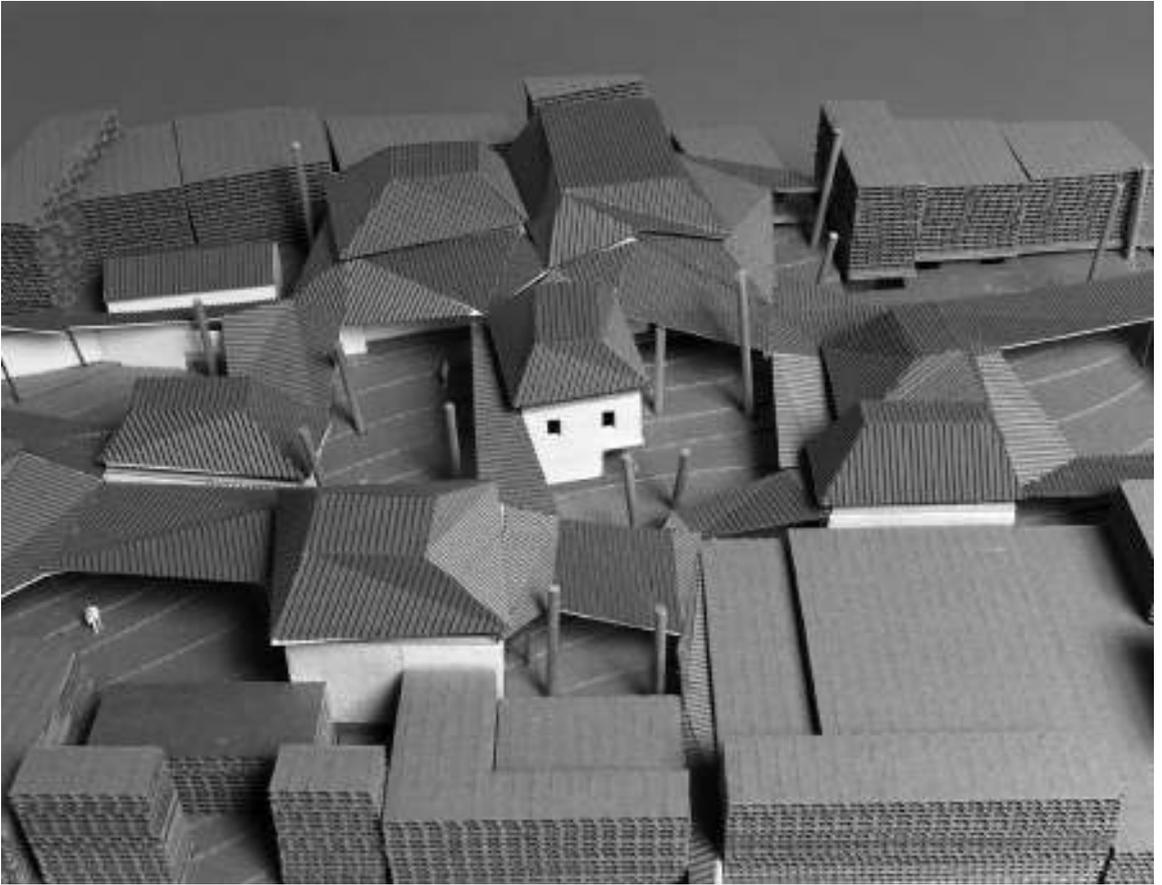


Top Left: model view of refurbished neoclassical buildings in the foreground and new theatre building in the background
Bottom Left: structural intervention of refurbishment
Bottom Right: structural intervention of refurbishment

Projects



Top: ground floor plan
Middle: section of new theatre building
Bottom: elevation of new theatre building

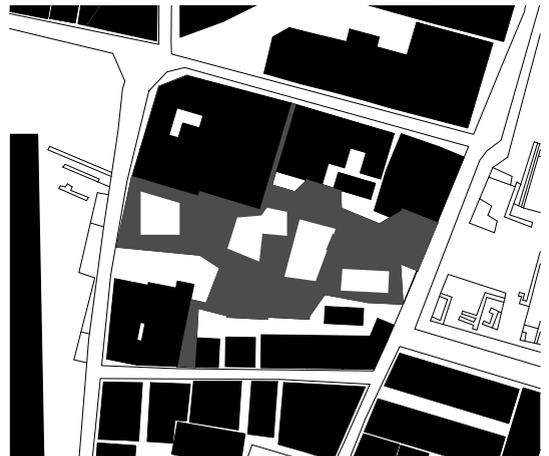


Students:
Shun Horiki

Site:
Monastiraki, plot between
Areos and Vrysakiou Streets

Existing use:
Abandoned plot with
neoclassical structures

Proposed programme:
Educational facility



Project 14

House of History

Adapting the Neoclassical

Athens' history is omnipresent in today's city. Yet, there are very visible 'gaps' – both physically in the urban fabric as well as socially – when it comes to how various groups interact with this history as well as with each other.

Physically, years of negligence and vandalism have led to the deterioration and abandonment of some urban blocks in the center of Athens and its surroundings, as well as archeological sites. Socially, various groups, which manifest an interest in Athens' history, do not communicate and thus fail to share their knowledge. These groups are: foreign archaeologists, tourists, and local Athenians who have an interest in history and an interest in working as tour guides. The House of History aims to tie together these physical and social loose ends.

The project is located along a link between the Acropolis and Monastiraki Square. Even though the site's surrounding neighbourhood is one of significance, the specific block is composed of a series of abandoned buildings and weed-ridden gardens inside the block.

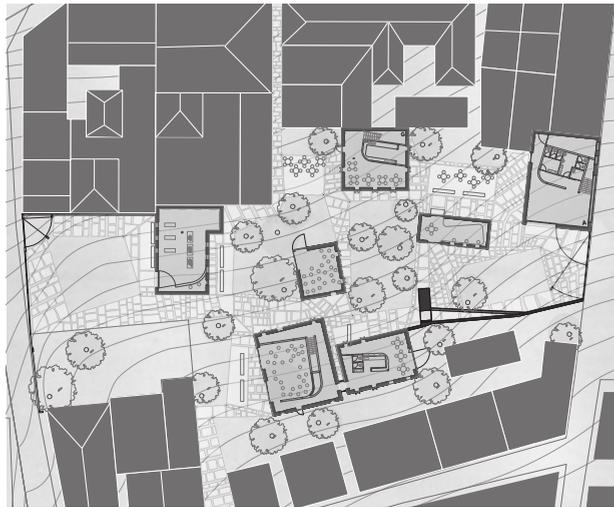
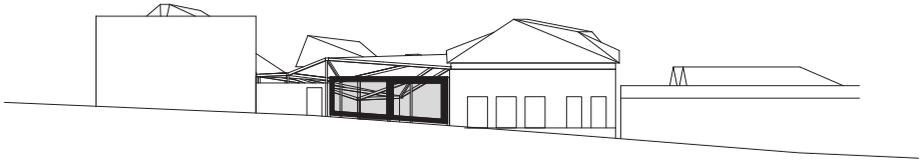
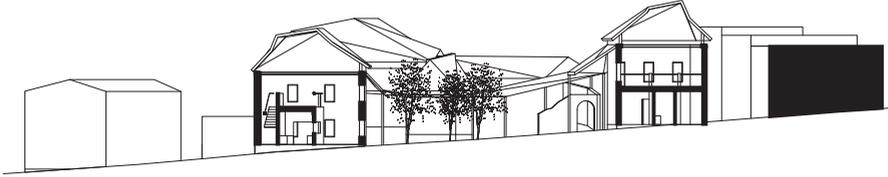
The house is composed of 3 types of different programmes, which are mutually dependent to make a new framework for history from a different point of view: firstly the tourist information office. Tourists can also contact guides in this center, who can show them round the archaeological sites of Athens. Secondly the International Archaeologists' Centre – foreign and national archaeologists play a leading role in teaching history to Athenian students as well as local residents who would like to work as guides. Thirdly exhibition spaces showcasing both past and current work by foreign archaeologists. Inside the block, there are seven existing build-

ings, nineteen existing trees», one abandoned excavation site, two historical monuments and a four metre difference in topography. The façades of the four surrounding streets are barricaded.

The project utilizes the existing framework of neglected object and place. The outdoor character of this project refers to this relationship with nature. The roof seems an appropriate tool for this project, integrating all the architectural elements, the complex programme as well as dealing with the climate.

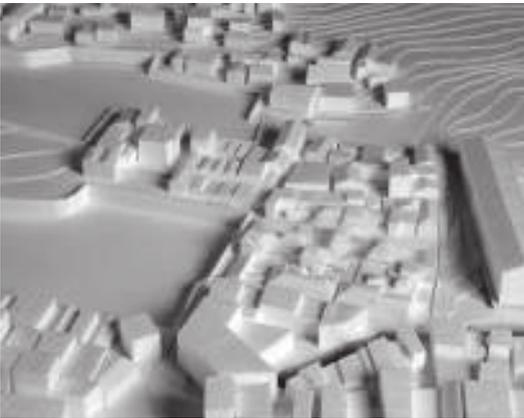
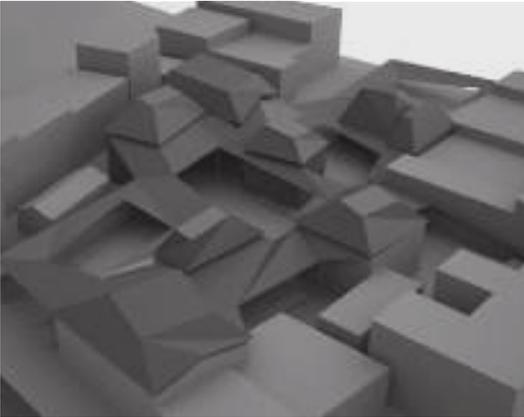
The main entrance faces Areos Street, which is the proposed link to the Acropolis. The tourist information office is situated round this entrance's courtyard. The other three surrounding streets also connect with each programme, in accordance to each street's character. The shape of the roof follows the height of the existing buildings, forming a topographical geometry. Existing trees cut through the roof, creating a courtyard inspired by public spaces in Athens. The space under the leaves create comfortable areas, keeping strong sunshine out while offering a continuous passage connecting all the buildings with stone pavement. Each programme is set in the inside wall of existing buildings. To fit with the created surroundings, the inside walls rotate slightly. The roof hovers lightly on the existing walls, creating a gap that enables natural ventilation and reveals the existing building in the continuous roof. The roof is mainly supported by a steel structure and existing walls. It is covered by curved roof tiles, which are characteristic of the Plaka roof-scape.

Athens Lessons

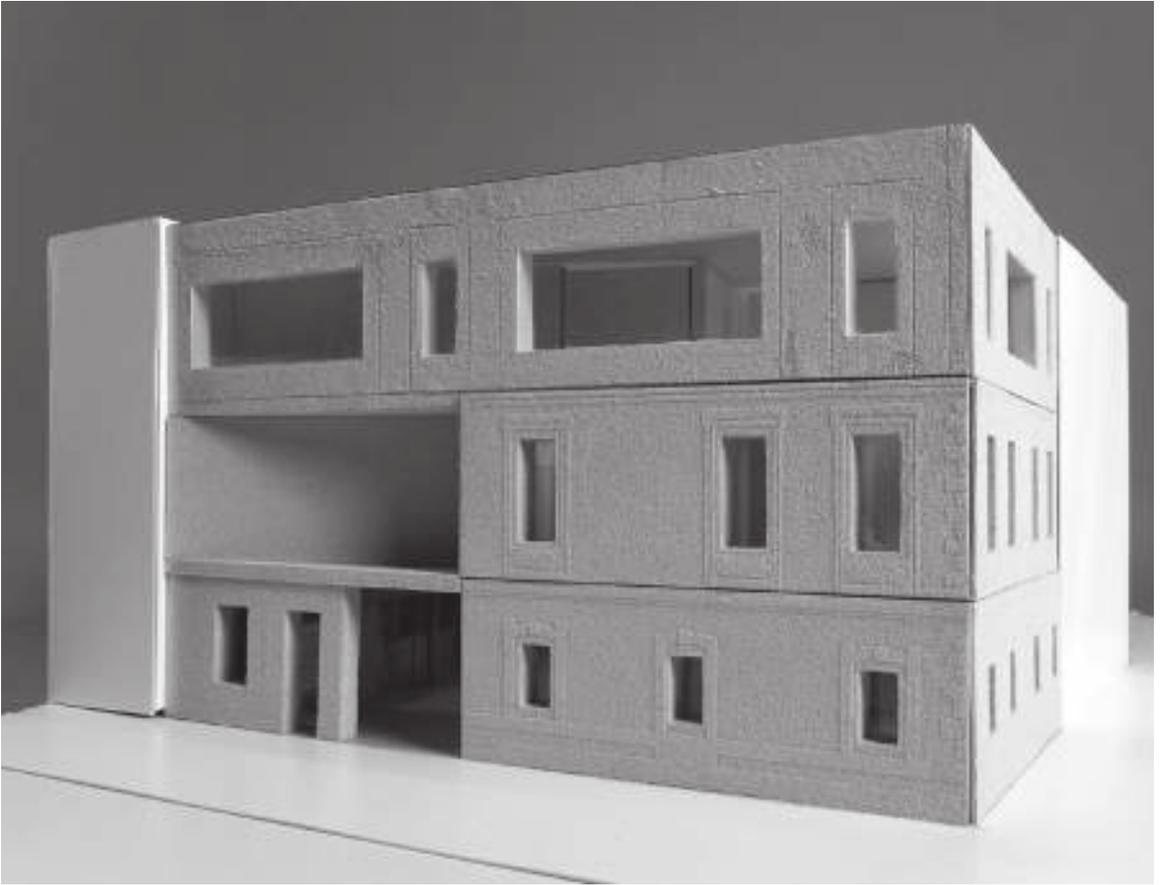


Top: longitudinal section
Middle: transverse section
Bottom: ground floor plan

Projects



Top Left: rendering of roofscape
Top Right: rendering of covered courtyards
Bottom Left: site model
Bottom Right: model view

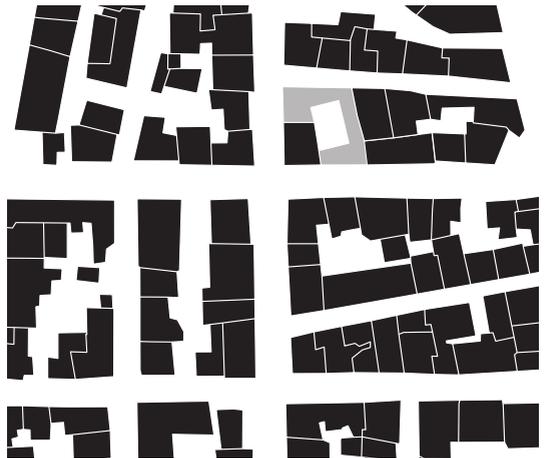


Students:
Malaïca Cimenti

Site:
Petralona, on the corner of Trion-
lerarchon and Padova Streets

Existing use:
Abandoned neoclassical buildings

Proposed programme:
Social club, laundry, housing



Project 15

Bangladeshi Kafeneion

Adapting the Neoclassical

Ano Petralona is a preserved and protected area in Athens with an enjoyable village atmosphere. The proximity of Filoppapou Hill offers a nice green and natural environment while Pireus Street creates protection from the industrial large-scale buildings. It is well connected by public transport and very close to the Acropolis, Kerameikos and Monastiraki Square. The small-scale building blocks that make up Petralona neighbourhood are mainly composed of housing. In the main streets of Ano (high) and Kato (low) Petralona, Trion Ierarchon and Keiriadon Street, we find a large choice of commercial services. The site appears to be an adequate location for interaction between local Athenians, foreign people and immigrants of different cultures.

The existing social clubs of the neighbourhood, fully part of the lifestyle of Petralona's inhabitants, have a great potential for integration. The project therefore brings together a Bangladeshi Kafeneion (social club), a laundry facility and a house for the owners managing this new local business. Using a vacant plot, the project also integrates one of the numerous dilapidated neoclassical houses of the area.

The Kafeneion programme integrates the old neoclassical building, whereas the apartment and the laundry are completely new structures. The three functions create an inner square allowing for the integration of all programmes and inviting the visitor to walk freely in the space. The heterogeneous building heights allow the laundry to benefit from a southern orientation, helping in the drying process. The two new additional constructions, the laundry facility and the private house, are linked by their rooftops.

The geometrical principles of neoclassical buildings define the proportions and the shapes of the new façades and a clear relationship between the old and the new is apparent in the drawings and the outer appearance of the building. The project reads as a whole where each part has its position; one building turning around its courtyard.

Athens Lessons

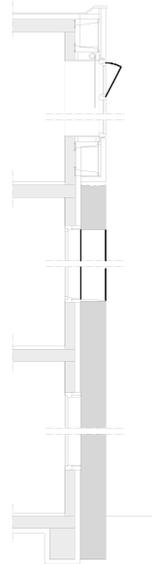
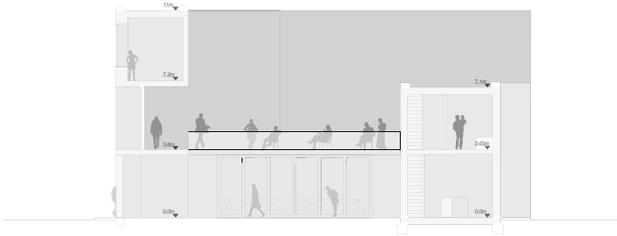
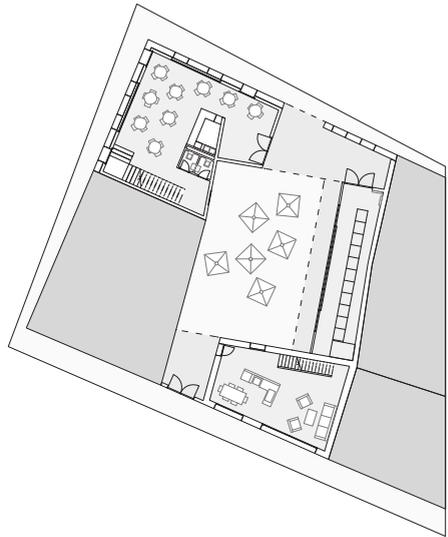
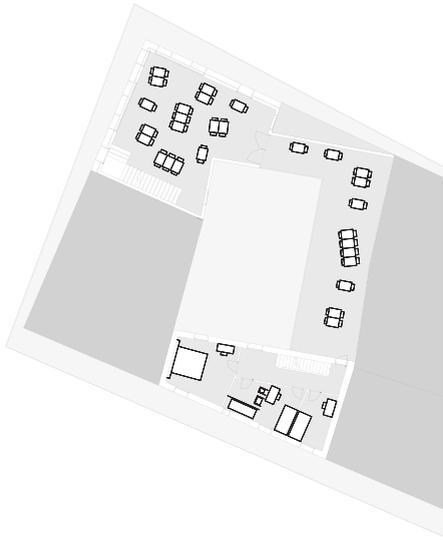


Top Left: rendering of exterior

Bottom Left: site model

Bottom Right: rendering of social club interior

Projects



Top Left: first floor

Top Right: ground floor

Bottom Left: section trough courtyard

Bottom Right: façade section of transformed neoclassical building



Students:

Eva Florinda

Maria Ines Rodriguez

Site:

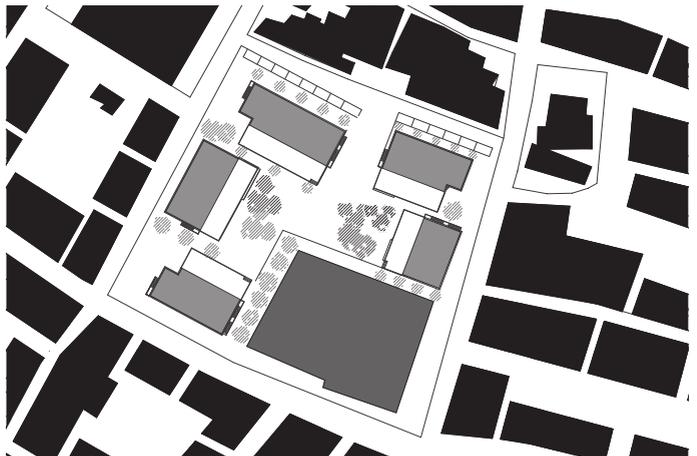
Votanikos

Existing use:

Vacant plot and industrial use

Proposed programme:

Housing



Project 16

Votanikos Village

Reversing Urban Decay

Votanikos is an area of Athens characterized by its difference to the rest of the city's urban fabric. The low densification, the lack of cohesion and infrastructure, together with its former rural history, its proximity to the city centre and its few plots used as islands for community life, makes it a place with urgent need for reorganization and a great potential for creating a new way of inhabiting the city center, providing quality spaces for urban sprawl.

Inserted in the heart of Votanikos, this project consists of the design of a plot, creating a housing area together with public functions. These are located on the ground floor, acting as a support for the reconstruction of the neighbourhood, mainly during the first stage of its development. This programme encompasses local commerce, a childcare and a workshop, that would encourage and educate people to start building their own houses.

The site is surrounded by existing buildings on the north side, and by an abandoned factory on the southeast side. The housing program aims to accommodate those who live in illegal conditions in Votanikos and to appeal to the immigrants to come to this area of the city.

Considering the masterplan that was proposed for Votanikos within the urban constitution, the first step towards defining the plot was made by applying its building regulations: municipal land becomes community patios surrounded by private plots, these patios, nucleus of each plot, are accessible through imposed service access ways and are leased for their owners for their use.

In this neighborhood, we observed two clear configuration types in the few exist-

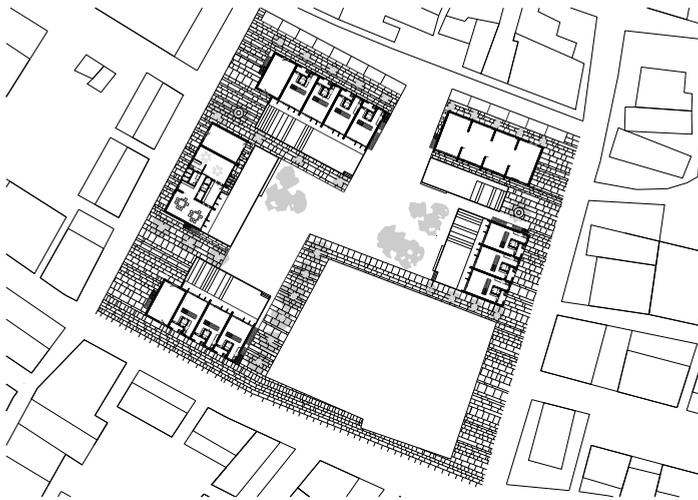
ing housing buildings: the "patio", where the inner space is commonly maintained, a place publicly accessible but that still feels private when passed through; and the alleyway, which works as a secondary narrow street where the façades are oriented one towards the other. Both situations were taken as points of reference, resulting in exterior spaces where access has a strong private character.

The plot is organized as a village made up of five buildings separated by the common patio or by small passages that connect it to the main streets. The buildings have a common U-shaped configuration, reinforcing the creation of a community that turns inside the plot.

All the houses have the same module that can be organized as a simplex or a duplex, and that always turns the common spaces towards the patio. Each house is connected to the ground directly or by a common gallery and contemplates an exterior green space, either on the ground floor where it can be used for agriculture, or on the terrace. The balconies, a typical Athenian element, together with the common galleries, are elements that can lead to community life, as can be observed in the few housing 'islands' that exist in the neighbourhood. Given the low financial costs, all the structure is made out of concrete and the façade is covered with plaster, which contrasts with the wood of the shutters.

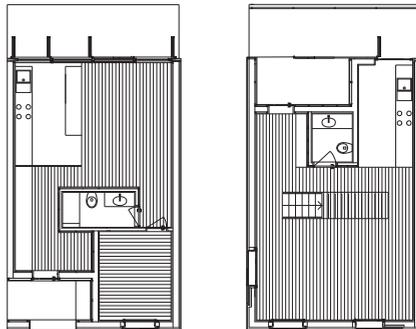
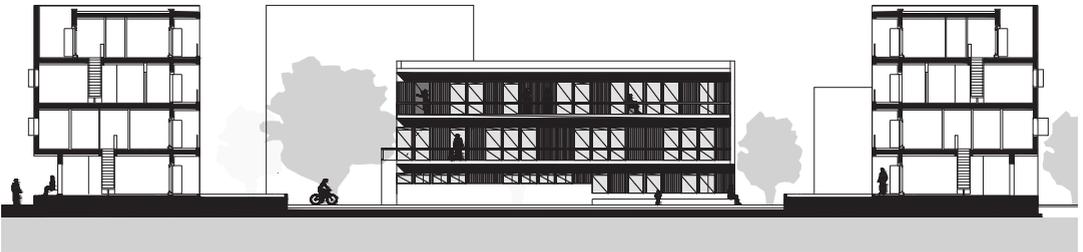
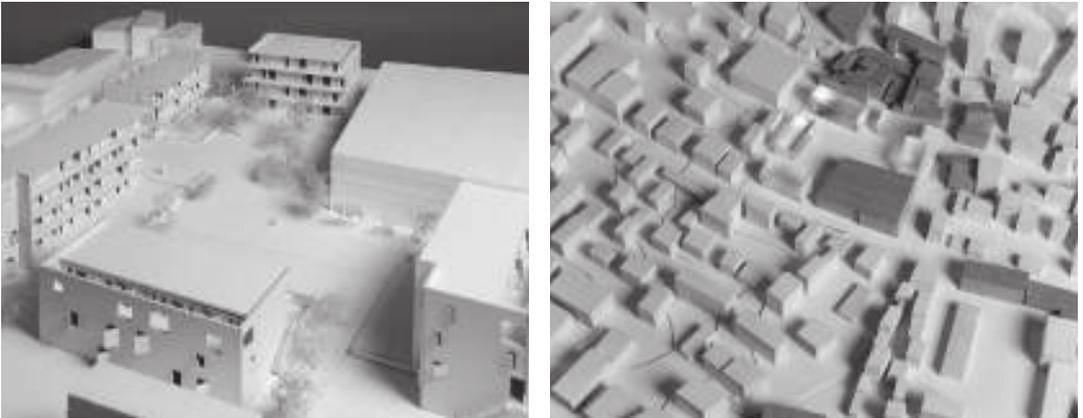
The scale of the different buildings relates with the scale of the neighbourhood and avoids the feeling of repetition. Since each building will have its own appropriation, they form complete units where people find freedom and can exercise common practices.

Athens Lessons



Top: typical floor plan
Bottom: ground floor plan

Projects



Top Left: model view of ensemble
Top Right: site model
Middle: section
Bottom: enlarged apartment plans

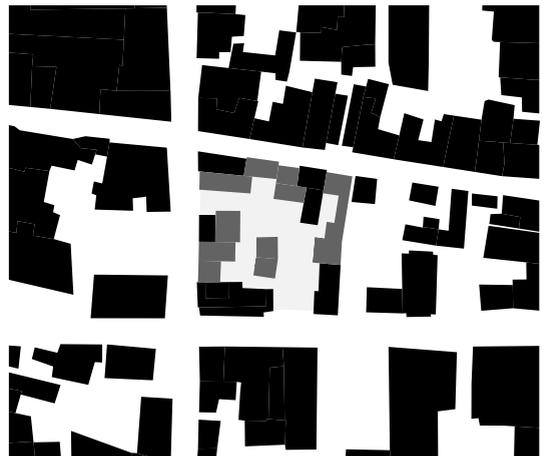


Students:
Elena Nunez Segura

Site:
Kerameikos, plot between Sfaktias,
Leonidou and Salaminos Streets

Existing use:
Vacant plots and abandoned
neoclassical buildings

Proposed programme:
Educational facility



Project 17

Ludothèque

Reversing Urban Decay

The *Ludothèque* project is held in the KM area, known for its heterogeneity, its high number of vacant/abandoned plots as well as a recent gentrification that needs to be continued. The area's main potential is families, one of the points of focus of the UC, and despite the lack of integration institutions in the area, there is a strong sense of community.

The plot is a remarkable piece of urban fabric reminiscent of a village. It is located between Sfaktias Street, Leonidou Street and Salaminos Street, and occupies a total surface of 1653 square metres, including some neoclassical houses, ruins and vacant space.

This self-sufficient *Ludothèque* is developed as an institution that brings new local commerce to the area, creating communal spirit within and between children and their families, and providing fertile ground for new values for future generations.

The project is sponsored by the private sector, the building government-owned, and all managed by a communal association in charge of maintenance. This is made possible through commercial activities and private donations.

The strategy is to reuse the pre-existing neoclassical buildings, adding new volume, closing off the perimeter, and creating a safe outdoor playground. As a result, the project has three different elements:

1. The *neoclassical buildings* that host the commercial and administrative activities. These include the administration building on Leonidou Street, where the *Ludothèque's* entrance is located; the bookstore on Salaminos Street; and the bar, take-away and toy store on Sfaktias Street.

2. The *new volume*, which hosts the children's ateliers, is intended to generate a stimulating experience for children. The *Ludothèque* includes four ateliers, the *Experiment Atelier* (by the contiguous plot), the *Artistic Atelier* (by Sfaktias street), the *Game Atelier* (by Salaminos Street), and the *Drama Atelier* (central position) – all according to privacy requirements. The ateliers are created by a sequence of unit-houses, each working as a room in itself.

The four sequences are treated with a different colour on the floor and with backing board on the walls of a lighter tone of the same colour to warm the interior atmosphere. The new volume considers the pre-existent neoclassical buildings' alienations, and despite keeping the local scale of the ensemble, it also tries to balance the existence of a high building in the contiguous plot.

The openings within the façade are intended to integrate it with the neoclassical buildings, also creating the most suitable lighting experience. The material used is blue-tinted concrete, which is cheap, traditional and reminds us of KM's graffiti culture on concrete walls, as well as being colourful and reflecting the predominance of the colour blue in Greek culture.

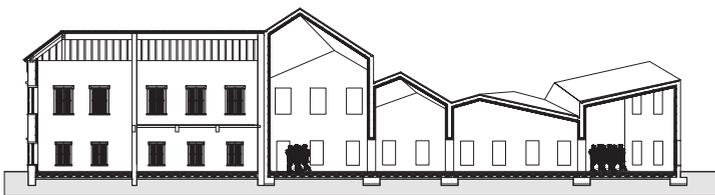
3. The *outdoor space* is a dynamic playground spread with different scenes, which works as the storyline linking the *Ludothèque's* ateliers.

Athens Lessons



Above: Ground floor plan

Projects



Top Left: rendering of the interior
Top Right: site model
Middle: elevation
Bottom: section



Students:

Alexander Hertel
Christopher Tan

Site:

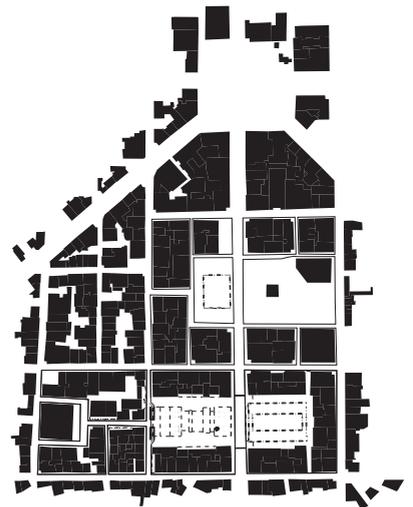
Gerani, Varvakios Square
on Athinas Street

Existing use:

Market, parking, open
drug consumption

Proposed programme:

Market, parking, sheltered
drug consumption



Project 18

Varvakios Room

Reversing Urban Decay

Varvakios Square is located at the foot of the largest market in Greece, within Gerani, or what is known as the 'evil triangle'. It is where the local fruit and vegetable market is situated. Today, the square houses an underground four-story garage that is topped by a 'drug user'-invaded plaza. It is far from what was once the Varvakios school of Athens. The *Varvakios Room* project proposes to give the square back to the people of Athens.

The first action taken is to 'de-layer' the square by removing the existing elevated slab. This is followed by the introduction of a roof, covering and revitalising the fruit and vegetable market. The roof also implements a community auditorium and houses the drug addicts in a consumption room, giving the drug users a safe place to take care of their needs. This allows the fruit and vegetable market, on the square's level, to be re-organised in stronger relation to the rest of the market to the North, East and South. In other words, all the programmes having a pre-existing condition on this site are treated in the project.

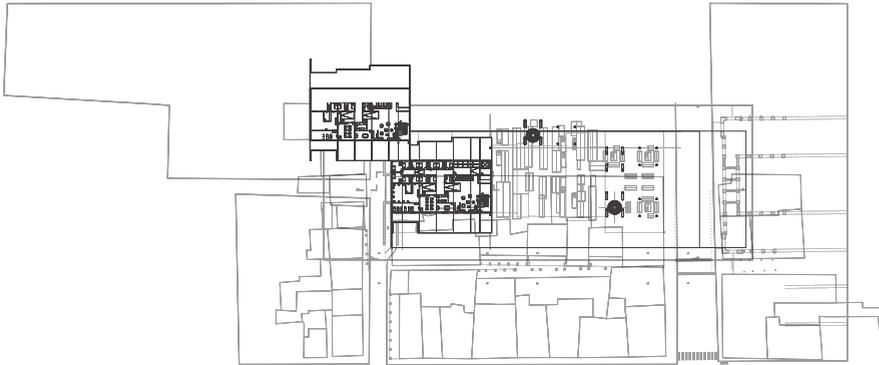
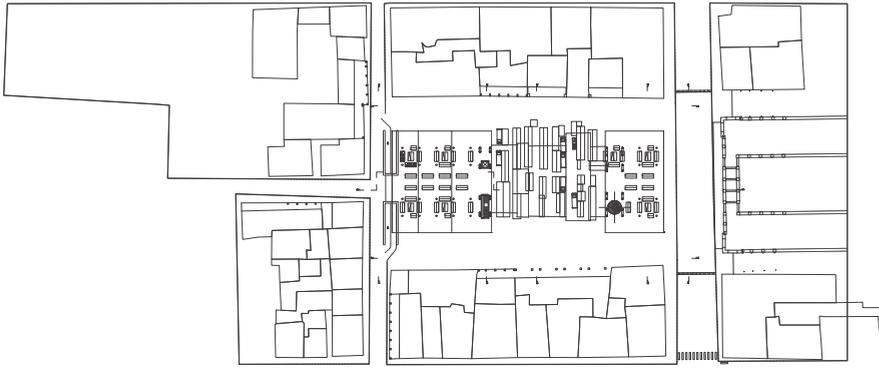
The second step provides us with form, via the introduction of the notion of 'hyper'. At this point, the context becomes a tool to *inform* the project. The project has thus become *hyper-contextual*. The knowledge of *hyper-context* allows the project to gain an eclectic character, in terms of materiality, spacial configuration, as well as its overall volumetric quality – while remaining the binding component. The result is simple: a form that folds faithfully around its context.

The overall shape of the roof was born in reaction to its context and to Athens' building regulations. The structure reinforces not only a certain eclectic mania, but also the relation between the central market and the project. This is insured by mimicking the ephemeral structure around the central market and allows a spatial continuity between the three entities. The space below the roof is split into three parts. The fixed market on the east and west wing are belly-shaped to maximize light and minimize sight obstructions from the surrounding buildings. The mobile market in the central space is left open, topped by a gridded frame for multipurpose use.

The chosen materiality reinforces the idea of eclectic layering without losing the overall perception of the project. Stretched metal is used to ensure a homogeneous rooftop, while the walls of the central space are clad with thin white marble plates that communicate with the existing north and south façades. They generate the conditions of a well-defined square and provide a cool environment during summer. The belly of the fixed market spaces is treated as a patchwork allowing varying opening to the interior spaces within.

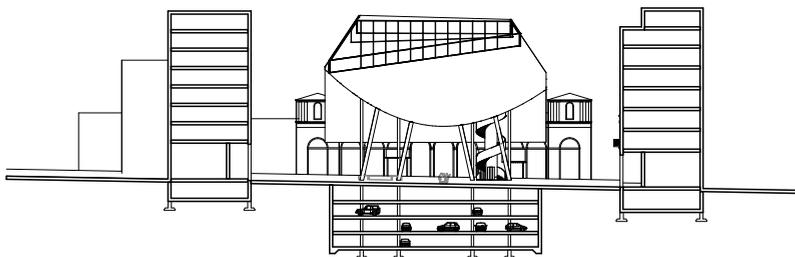
The Varvakios room re-defines the square, returning it to the people of Athens.

Athens Lessons



Top: typical floor plan
Bottom: ground floor plan

Projects



Top Left: site model
Top Right: view of model along Armodiou Street
Middle Left: south elevation of model
Middle Right: roofscape of model
Bottom: transverse section

Positions

- a. *On emptying space in Athens*
Aristide Antonas
- b. *Athens, ... this liquid mass*
Elias Constantopoulos
- c. *The Plan of Athens, 1833 – 1911. Politics and Society*
Andreas Giacoumakatos
- d. *The eternal presence of the past in Athens*
Dimitris Philippides
- e. *Athens: From Urban Planning to Urban Geopolitics*
Georgios-Stylianos Prevelakis
- f. *Athens*
Luca Turin
- g. *Symbolic centrality and stratification: a city in reverse*
Panagiotis Turnikiotis



Positions

This chapter gives space to independent statements of different stakeholders in the work process. The evaluation and discussion of the procedure and results of the urban project is a significant tool for the further development of our didactic approach.

Aristide Antonas is an architect and writer living in Athens and currently teaching at the Volos School of Architecture, University of Thessaly. His text 'on emptying space in Athens' addresses the question of Athens' various interconnected layers and complex history. Antonas questions the quick reading of Athens, by which it simply is a congested city that would benefit from some 'emptying of urban space'.

Elias Constantopoulos is an architect currently teaching in the Department of Architecture at the University of Patras. His text 'Athens, ... this liquid mass' presents contemporary Athens as this liquid mass of building, that needs to discover and construct spatially its changing public identity, in order to survive as a city.

Andreas Giacomakatos is a Professor of History and Theory of Architecture at the School of Architecture at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki as well as at the Faculty of Theory and History of Art at the Athens School of Fine Arts. His text 'The Plan of Athens, 1833 – 1911. Politics and Society' has as object an argued critical assessment of the history of urban planning of Athens, from the foundation of Modern Greek state until today.

Dimitris Philippides is an architect and writer as well as teacher living in Athens. His text 'The eternal presence of the past in Athens' looks at the crisis Athens in experiencing today, as simply the last in a series of crisis. Athens from its inception possessed no traceable economic base whatsoever, hence no detectably tangible future. Its existence is based on an ideological twist – the revival of ancient glory.

Georgios-Stylianos Prevelakis is Professor at the Geography and Planning Department of the Sorbonne, Paris 1. As a geographer, his text 'Athens: From Urban Planning to Urban Geopolitics' explains that the problems Athens is facing cannot be understood or addressed by looking at urban planning and the work of urban planners only. Deeper political, economic and cultural circumstances need to be analyzed and changed.

Luca Turin is a scientist and occasional free-lance writer who currently lives in Greece. In his text Athens, Luca Turin dwells on the how the problems of Athens are symbolic of the problems Greece is facing as a nation. A lack of concern for public matters and space has become an all encompassing issue.

Panagiotis Tournikiotis is an architect, and professor of theory of architecture at the NTUA School of Architecture. His text 'Symbolic centrality and stratification: a city in reverse' addresses the problem of Athens' center: 'The centre of Athens is not, nor can it become, uniform and homogeneous, but it can be the shared field of reference in which the collective consciousness of the community recognises its identity, on condition that this identity has within it features from the current complexity and the intercultural make-up of that community.'

Athens Lessons

a.

On emptying space in Athens

Some visitors claim that there is an evident need for emptying urban space in modern Athens. Most of the city's problematic conditions seem linked to the density of its fabric, which appears in some cases exaggerated; city planners should envisage possibilities of turning down entire blocks. This first reading of the "city text" as a field that deserves emptying has a local past: it is linked to the modern city of Athens' inauguration, when an idiosyncratic emptying was proposed together with its installation.

Athens is a cliché city; it arouses trivial observations from both visitors and its inhabitants. Single appreciations that reduce the city to quick representations are actually central to the grasp we have of the city, leading to it presenting a cliché both for its visitors and for its citizens. The construction of this field of clichés empties a space of its content, while also failing to acknowledge the complexity of the city. The history of modern Athens brings to light a strangely-built urban text. The text is first linked to the city's name: by definition, it refers to Athens' "golden past". Looking at the Athens Charter of the early 30s, Athens' name may appear at first glance symptomatic: as the fourth CIAM was to take place in the city, the city's name was also chosen as that of the Charter on Urbanism. It is also possible to speculate further on a possible connection between the modern city of Athens and the city of the Athens Charter seeing that the sole act of emptying is crucial to both instances. The modern city as described in the Athens Charter cannot nevertheless be Athens: the empty field that is presupposed so that architects may undertake urban plans does not provide a possible area for a new city. The ideology of an idiosyncratic emptying was nevertheless a prerequisite for the city's modern rebirth. Athens as a material construction and not as the name of a book could not be an example of its own Charter, still it remains a modern city described by a different modern vocabulary¹.

Le Corbusier uses the name of Athens for a set of principles of urbanism. The most probable reason why he uses the city's name may be as a way of invoking the validation that classical Athens

¹ Kenneth Frampton argues that Athens is a noteworthy modern city in his introduction, written in the eighties, for the Greek edition of his book *Modern architecture; a critical history*, Themelio, Athens.

Positions

could offer to modern aesthetics of the time². The Athens Charter creates a silent gesture towards the classic values that it negates in some of its sections, whilst also marking a resistance to any locality – it is proposing an end to “site specificity”. For some of the fourth CIAM’s participants, a *tabula rasa* was the prerequisite of modern urban planning – necessary for planning to be performed in a homogeneous way, wherever architects and planners could elaborate a zoning rationale. From this perspective, locality and history seem to be the obstacles to radical urban design. The difficulty of assimilating the historical element or the local character seems intrinsic to a text whose name refers to a historic city and to a meeting that occurred in a specific locus. A coincidence that will be part of our investigation: the Modern Greek capital is constructed as such as an empty reference. The name of the ancient city is linked to an emptying strategy both in the Athens Charter text and in the installation of the modern city.

An emptied surface or a simple extended ground void provides the field that can promise any new possible city – in the vein of the Athens Charter. The city of Athens is the concrete place of reference for a non-site urbanism that requires the empty field in order to be elaborated as a modern city. However, Athens cannot be an Athens Charter city by definition, it is impossible to empty completely. Nevertheless, there is a type of emptying that inaugurated the urban fabric of the Greek capital in the nineteenth century. The small Ottoman town chosen to be the capital of the Hellenic Kingdom in 1934 did not really provide an urban character – the first inhabited part of it only contained a small Turkish centre on the Acropolis hill and an extension of it to the north. Athens was then a town less important than Aegina (the first capital of modern Greece in 1926) or Nafplion, the second city that was pronounced a capital in 1929). Athens was chosen as the capital of the new state together with an emblematic urban plan by Kleantes and Schaubert, which envisaged the first organisation of a possible urban fabric via the tracing of a triangle. The triangle (later elaborated by Leo Von Klenze and reordered by Gaertner,

² We can conclude this by considering some facts that had to do with the architect’s stay in Athens during CIAM, or the famous page of his book *Vers une architecture* (1923) that juxtaposes the Parthenon with the Delage Grand Sport of 1921, the ruin and the last model of a sports car of the time. This page demands a respect of the modern values in terms of their relation to classical aesthetics.

Athens Lessons

who determined the Royal Palace's position on it³) introduces geometry to the new city. Its particularity can be attributed to the way that the modern Athenian triangle relates to the Acropolis. Its three angles and the narration about the altering positions of the King's palace are important, but the key part of its geometry resides in the triangle's sides and the perpendicular bisectors of this geometrical form that trace an immediate line between the newly-planned capital and the ancient Greek ruins. Looking towards the Acropolis reveals the plan's most remarkable aspect. Odos Athinas organises the chief perpendicular bisector, conceived in the first Kleanthis and Schaubert plan as a view of the ruins from the King's palace. The triangle defines the city as regulated by the Acropolis, the emblem of ancient Greece and the material manifestation of an origin. In this way, the symbolic source of European civilization would unify Modern Greek citizens with European kings. The Acropolis is defined as a paradigmatic ensemble of ruins through the installation of the capital. The new triangular city-field unifies all political interpretations of ancient Greece to a common view of a ruin, and requires clarification that could be achieved through a kind of focusing, through the emptying of the city. This emptying, in Athens' case, was not a procedure that led to a *tabula rasa*. On the contrary, an empty Athens would serve as a condensation of a meaning: the construction that took place on the Acropolis could not escape even an inattentive observer of the new city. The most remarkable "Modern Greek construction" is the construction of those ruins; Greeks were not the most important workers in the field. And far from being an alternative conscious answer to modernity or to history, this construction of ruins is not understood here as an open call for interpretations of a past: if we accept that this construction of ruins can be "modern Greece", we see that it was carried out in order to create a stable national reference. The ruins construction is the first act of a play that could then be repeated, in different parts of the city, as an emptying procedure: the construction of an idealised, forever ruined but present phantom city. An architectural cleaning operation is undertaken: the small houses and other elements that shaped the character of the Ottoman centre on the Athenian Acropolis are removed; a representation of the rock's condition

3 Maps are presented in <http://www.cic.gr/archaeologia/En/chapter-more-9.aspx>.

Positions

during Athens' golden age is constructed as a piece of scenery⁴. The most extraordinary part of this operation is found in the difference between the struggling powers that obstruct the Modern Greek identity being formed: a buried, hidden identity show the transcendental character of a missed self, and the repressed local character of everyday life. Many of the cultural phenomena of modern Greece cannot be understood without considering this violent self-construction.

Memory Implant

During the years that follow, the French, German, British and American archaeology schools excavating in Greece succeeded in producing an idiosyncratic void in the centre of the city, an absence, and in the same time a stable presence, in place of the small town's centre of 1834. Seventeen foreign archaeological schools have their offices in Greece today, most of them in Athens. [image from wikipedia]. Towards the north of the Acropolis, a field of seed (that we can observe in engravings) gives way to a field of extensive excavation, with a plethora of unidentified ruins. A ruin field takes the place of a cultivated field. The imaginary projection of the ancient Agora takes the place of a living neighbourhood. The Stoa of Attalos is built as a restoration with the help of John Travlos during the 50s, also in place of a neighbourhood. During the century that follows, the declaration of Athens as a capital leads to an interesting reversal: the core of the built Ottoman centre of the town is replaced by a void. This material void, a ruin-landscape, would be asked to interpret the nexus of the Modern Greek capital. This void will be filled with the meaning of the new state's relation to the past. It will also be the symptom of an origin. A relation to the ground, the hidden values that are buried in the earth and have to be restored so that a concept of an idealised past can find its symptomatic place in the city of Athens. The city centre's syntax serves as a function of memory; it is called to refer to a purified, glorious past, of a forgotten culture.

⁴ Tournikiotis, Panayotis, *The Parthenon*, Athens, Melissa Library of Art, Melissa, 1994.

Athens Lessons



Plan of Athens, designed by the French consul Louis François Sébastien Fauvel, before the inauguration of the city as a capital, late 18th century.



Plan of Athens, designed by John Travlos showing the places where the ottoman town's communities used to live, before the inauguration of the city as a capital, during the year of the Greek revolution in 1821.

The Modern Greek culture can be said to be founded on the proofs of its past, with the scientific help of Greece's allies. Greek archaeologists learnt through their French, German, British and American colleagues about the methodologies to use in order to unearth evidence of this buried culture, which they must inherit. Urban violence is required so that the evidence of this past may be put on centre stage. The capital's excavations are used to prove Greek superiority, without input from Modern Greek intellectual maturity. Greeks are depicted as the followers of an ancient, glorious past. They learn about it and honour it by announcing it as their own past. Modernity is introduced to Greece through the recycling of precious values buried deep in the ground⁵. The interpretation of this condition seems to follow a paradoxical operation of memory transplant, which rules the city fabric from its core.

In his interesting text "Hoelderlin and the Greeks", Lacoue-Labarthe⁶ claims that we may draw from Hoelderlin a description that relates Greece to otherness, making it a country of the

⁵ Yannis Tsiomis, "Athina Evropaiki Ypothesi", in: *I neoelliniki poli*, (in Greek), EMNE, Athens 1984, pp. 97–101.

⁶ Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *L'imitation des Modernes. Typographies II*, Galilee, Paris, 1986, pp. 71–84.

Positions

foreign element. Furthermore, Greece cannot be imitated because “it never occurred as such”. It would be defined in this description as the land of otherness par excellence; a land that is never itself, always described by what is missing from it, from the shape it takes while envisaging its exterior. Such a definition of Greece excludes it from any right of definition *per se*; the identity of Greece depends on otherness, it is therefore formed with a pre-existing identity problem. “There is no place for an ‘imitation of ancient Greece’”, as Lacoue-Labarthe puts it. In the constitution of modern Athens, this process of installation of ruins misses the neo-hellenic reading of this captivating, a-topical concept of Greece. It is the opposite of such a description of Greece that is proposed as a definition of the New Greek state. The genre of “installing the upcoming” that is crucial to every concept of modernity presents an intrinsic problem in its Greek version. In modern Greece, ancient culture serves as a point of reference for a stable, constructed “self”. We may attest a double move in this national construction of self, represented in modern Athens: the first move is the constitution of an estranged self that produces this reference to a stabilized past, and the second (that is already at stake whilst the first is being deployed) includes the work of identification to this emblematised, immobile figure of the ancient Greek subject. If the definition of Greece would be the one of Hölderlin via Lacoue Labarthe, openness could be guaranteed by definition. The glorification of ancient Greek culture through the construction of the ruin fields in Athens marks an impasse in the culture of otherness that is intrinsic to the modern character of European culture. The concept of the other that serves as a guiding leitmotif in modern European culture is missing in this regional construction of self. The abstract figure of the stranger as such, even while it remains important in European modernism, is the victim of Greek modernisation. For Europeans, Greece does not only embody a place of origin, it also presents a place of otherness. Greece is a source but not one where the self can install itself as a permanent resident; it shows a text written in foreign characters to be interpreted, translated and transformed. Modern Greece’s point of reference fails to undertake this renovating role: the ancient Greek paradigm as an estranged culture established solely via this symptom of identification prevents the establishment of the “self” as it cannot allow

Athens Lessons

the culture's remoteness to act as a provocation. The stabilised reference cannot provide an apparatus for seeing the ruin as a scandalous production of the other, but as a miracle of predecessors. Greece is then decidedly a land of the past. Imitating the past is the only possible form of action for the future that modern Greece has to undertake. Athens is its emblematic modern city. The construction of modern culture in Greece depends, from its inaugurating act, on a problematic reference to a constructed self; proposed as a reception of the other, modernity in Europe was usually linked to a strategy of the other's reception. Otherness becomes a systematically ignored blind spot in Modern Greek culture. The post Ottoman territory would be transformed through the modern inauguration of the city into a privileged landscape. In the past, I called this landscape an 'attic landscape'⁷ and I described it not only as a specific possibility for reading the Athenian fields but also as an intellectual possibility for prioritising the invisible in a view field. In Georg Simmel's "Philosophy of Landscape" published in 1913, the German philosopher claims that the landscape describes an intellectual move that succeeds to unify the multiple. In an attic landscape, a different intellectual move would be described: this of an immediate transformation of the view field due to the presence of a strong absence. The view does not support primarily "what is seen", it does not first need to explain the visible; it stands already as a ruin of the visible, a single privileged construction of the unseen. We may remember here Freud's reference to the different strata of Rome when he describes the psychic constitution as a multi layered construction⁸. Archaeology already creates an analogy to a psychic construction. In the city of Athens, we may read the archaeological works as forming symptoms and pathological conditions as a way of experiencing the city itself. The ancient ruins are constructed through the power of the materialisation of a dream; an impatient need for the viewer to follow the invisible strength of a promised land is recorded together with those works. They form an invisible preview of the locus itself. Invisibility is the priority of the city. A stable existence of a ghost civilization is established through the excavations in Athens; the inaugurating moment of the city marks a trace that is not read as

7 Published in Greek, *Architecture in Greece*, No 28, 2004.

8 Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, (1930).

the violent construction of an imaginative investment but as the proof of an inexistent continuation. In Athens, the dramatic distance to Ancient Greece is replaced by the elaboration of a symptom; the symptom is detected while the coincidence of the land takes command.

The Ruined Substitute

The future of the city, linked to the future of the new nation, is not a procedure open to the unknown but a series of excavations that claim to stabilise an empty reference that must be turned into an educational goal. Greeks have to learn a past they ignore because the idealised scheme of ancient Greece is so present in Europe. Europe glorifies a foreign civilisation and modern Greece has to accept it as its own. The emptiness of the reference is also evident in the touristic character that the ruins receive. The Parthenon alone is visited by approximately 2,000,000 visitors per year and very few of them are of Greek nationality. The monuments form enclosed areas, isolated from the city's life. They are tourism targets; consumable in short visits that prove the visitors' passage from this land and fulfil the obligations of a godless, contemporary pilgrimage.

It is important to understand the first dichotomy of the modern city; Athens stands at once as a glorification of the past and simultaneously ignores its materiality in terms of urbanism. The excavated parts of the city are either paralysed urban parts (no man's lands that nobody can penetrate), or official touristic spaces submerged by thousands of tourists visiting the archaeologists' constructions. In either case, the relation between the living city and the visited one is not simple.

The living city does not really ignore its ruin substitute. As has already been mentioned, the city was proposed as the material foundation of western civilisation; this Ersatz constitution of an "inexistent self" created a state that could be honoured without knowing exactly why, an inexplicable honour was set as a stable basis that could justify a respect even in the condition of doing nothing. Tourism became the evidence of this respect; it took financial basis and became "the heavy industry of Greece". Furthermore, the values of people touring, their habits and their food, their culture, distorted through the Modern Greek gaze,

Athens Lessons

which received them only during vacation-time, created a lifestyle and culture that relied upon the values of resting. Resting of course has its Mediterranean tradition, but this exaggerated mode of a perpetually 'rest-culture' could only now be proposed as a sustainable way of living.

On the one side, we may describe Athens as a unique place where the history of Ancient Greece finds its climax, a place that presents the ancient ruins in a symbolic way. On the other, a totally different scenario may be apprehended, where Athens is related to this homogeneous urban fabric that covers all the landscape, organised through a population of identical units – “polykatoikies” – via the construction system of “antiparochē” and extending over the attic landscape. The bifurcation of Athens concerns a gap between its uniqueness as an archaeological remain and its homogeneity that has characterised it as a living city until the 90's; a double system differentiates the visitor's city from the city of the inhabitants. The unique and the common, the visitor and the inhabitant, the touristic use of the ruins and the trivial use of the city marks a distance where a lot of misconceptions and blurring of the city's character and the state's character arise.

Ruin Gardens for the Global South

Today's Athenian urban bankruptcy concerns the end of its extendable model of homogeneous growth. Greece's financial bankruptcy is not a coincidence in this phase of the history of the city. The financial problem determines the city's changes and its evolution. A new era for the city has emerged over the last few years. Athens may dissolve into a poor city unable to elaborate upon the brutal difference between the global north and global south rationales that it co-hosts. The city cannot perform actions of reception, acceptance, and hospitality and neither can it protect its young bourgeoisie without creating borders of gated communities for it. Athens may also become an example of a first test of new thoughts on urbanism in a post-network condition. It may be an example of a new city where polity rationales would adjust some of its co-habitations, taking advantage of its European face to reorder its future.

Positions

The relation, between the new city and the old one, between the old inhabitants and the newcomers, between the underground ruins and the city above, seems to be, after all this narration, more complex than can be fathomed by just relying on this mere separation. I keep working in the city's built texts in order to reinvent limits and connections between the ruins and the living neighbourhoods. I claim – as has become obvious from my point of view – that various memory references of different qualities have organised modern Athens. The preponderant construction of ancient Greece as structuring the modern one cannot be deleted. An urbanism for tomorrow will have to take into account the coexistence of a plethora of ruins. The excavated part, the reconstructed ruins and the modern buildings form a field whose history encompasses the invention of an impossible continuation and many bankruptcies of its values; a consciousness of coexistence will be the material we will have to reconsider and shape for the existing city centre. Some street sections already manifest this coexistence, even when they are operating on the same city spot. Destroying parts of the centre in Athens may also serve as a construction of new ruin fields. Independent of the archaeological value of the ruins, we may say that this new ruin fields may force the city to announce its character and its idiosyncratic background. We do not need to know the values the past has given Modern Greek inhabitants anymore, but we must interpret the scenery of the ruins as a possible landscape that may enter more drastically into the modern city and that will transform modern Athens into the city as it was conceived: a hybrid perspective of the past that was envisaged as a means of installing a modern character. This double move cannot be hidden in Athens. In 1944, a manifesto was written and published by the Greek intellectual Giorgos Makris and some of his friends asking for the blowing up of the ancient monuments and the propaganda against them. The first destruction proposed in this text concerns the blowing up of the Parthenon, which “strangles us” as Makris claimed. The poet Nicolas Kallas also suggested the demolition of the Parthenon in his poem “Acropolis” some years earlier, prior to the war⁹. Today the question of the ancient past needs a new radicalisation; there is no need to demolish the Parthenon – it has ended up becoming an unimportant cliché of Greekness, masking

⁹ *Grapta Giorgou Makri*, ed. E. Ch. Gonatas, Hestia, Athens, 1986, p. 251, 420.

Athens Lessons

the violence of this supposedly national past. A new relationship to Athens' complex history must be developed. The old neoclassical urbanism can be restudied now, after the expansion of the city. The uncanny elements in its tissue highlight captivating features for the urban works to be undertaken. In this perspective, and after a reversal, we may claim, under a different light, that the Greek city can invent new way of unveiling its ruins, whether they are regarded as important or not, via excavations in its public spaces; its streets, its piazzas. This would provide groundwork for a rational establishment of its mixed character. The contemporary city has to correspond to a name that could never be contemporary. Some ruin gardens could become new and interesting urban accessories of the capital. We follow the critical reading of Modern Athens as a predetermined reference. Nevertheless, the urban tissue of Athens has this invisible characteristic that haunts its underground space. Not every city in the world is a palimpsest of many layers of ruins. The modern part of the city can also be understood today as another type of ruined matter. The interventions in the centre are deemed to be restorations or rehabilitations of existing matter. The politicians and the inhabitants ask for less traffic, for more pedestrian walkways in the centre of Athens, for the emptying of some urban spaces. Such matters could be regulated through a differently conceived excavation of the city's open air spaces; some new architecture of remains may structure another future for the city's public space, which has currently become inhospitable. In the same act for a wishful future, Athens will be asked to forget and to remember, to interpret and re-elaborate its modern narration: to reorder the value of its remains.

b.

Athens, ... this liquid mass

Elias Constantopoulos

The name of Athens stands for a substantial presence in time, signifying more than its mundane ‘reality’ at any moment. This is of course what we see from our own perspective today, because even in its glorious golden days, travellers would describe the city as a hotchpotch of dwellings surrounding the holy rock. A singular, perfect image of a city, that can represent it exactly and fully, is in any case impossible to construct. A city changes depending on our viewpoint and it also changes with time. As soon as we get close to its reality and think we can grasp it, to describe it and act upon it by planning and building, it is already transformed into something else by unforeseen events.

To write about a city that you have lived in means to write about it selectively. After all, that is what a city is, a possibility for individualities to exist within the same space at the same time. In this way the city nominally and collectively identifies you as one of many, e.g. as an Athenian, in a reciprocal relationship. In a city we expect the individual to embody the collective ‘spirit’ and vice versa, the collective forms to represent the individual sensibilities. Here, biography is connected to anthropology, transforming personal narratives into shared, collective histories. For instance, Orhan Pamuk, the Turkish Nobel prize winner, writes about why he did not become an architect¹, and this choice becomes the substance of his own personal story but also a story of Istanbul-Constantinople. Moreover, the Italian anthropologist Franco La Cecla, writes a book against architecture², starting with a reference to Pamuk’s aforementioned essay, in order to suggest that architect designed cities have severed ties with the ordinary, everyday lived-in reality of their citizens and hence are becoming less and less welcome and habitable.

As I have been asked to write this text about Athens, offering any insights that I may have into it, both as an architect and as a citizen, I will try to do that by necessarily bringing into this collective work my private view. I have been an Athenian by birth and have lived here most of my life. The square of Aghios Panteleimon near the centre, where we used to play carefree as children in the

Athens Lessons

sixties, is today run down and beset by problems of social insecurity. Nowadays, this is often blamed on the influx of many refugees that since the 1990s have inundated areas in the old centre of Athens, resulting in the ensuing sense of loss of safety.

Is it then really the arrival of immigrants that has altered the social synthesis of many districts in Athens and plagued the city centre with problems that gradually lead to its disintegration and dilapidation? Or are there also other reasons and larger patterns to be discerned in the longer run, which have beset the city centre and have devalued its potential as a habitable city area?

If the problem can be identified as having to do only, or mainly, with the refugees, then we should address that issue and work on improving it, not by creating ghettos, but by including rather than excluding them³. Athens, a city gone from the thousands to the millions over the last century, has in any case always been a city that was made up of indigenous immigrants and peasants, coming here either to look for work or to flee away from persecution. This process of often abrupt and unexpected growth, coming in sudden waves from the 1920's onwards, has continuously affected and characterised, not without obstacles, life and space in contemporary Athens. The prefix 'Nea' (meaning new) to so many municipalities, now subsumed in the city fabric illustrates well this process: Nea Smyrni, Nea Philadelphia, Nea Ionia, Neo Iraklio, Neos Kosmos, Nea Chalkidona, as well as the 'prosfygika', meaning the dwelling districts 'of the immigrants'.

However, the current problematic regarding the thinning out of the centre, not only from its residential⁴, but also from its commercial character has been for a long time coming, a predestined death following the expansion into suburbia, common to many post World War II western cities. So far Athens had foregone the problems that beset other metropolitan areas, by keeping the same urban structure of "old", displaying a vivid mix of functions and avoiding zoning. This fact however, simultaneously also amassed problems stemming from lack of overall planning and organization, not the least of which was the endless, uncontrollable sprawl of residential buildings, and of traffic congestion as the city grew.

Thus Athens grew in a uniform, undifferentiated way, the more "well off" moving outwards from the city to the suburbs, residences eating up land right up to the feet of the surrounding mountains.

Positions

In fact the centre and suburbs of Athens now comprise an unbroken continuum, a 'liquid' mass of apartment blocks and residences, differentiated mostly by height limitations. Suburbs do not really exist as alternative residential models, as once did the suburbs of Psychico and Filothei, but only through their distance relative to the centre. Their new identity being established through the creation of peripheral shopping centres built in the eighties and nineties, aims mainly at consumer self-sufficiency to those living outside the centre of Athens (initially Glyfada and Kifissia and then Ionia, Marousi, Egaleo, etc.).

This is already a precedent to today's crisis which has to do with the problem of size and the control of growth, accompanied by a chronic lack of rational and forward looking planning. This endless "carpet" continuously and uncontrollably spreading as far as it can physically go, filling in every unbuilt spot, though it seems homogeneous like a liquid, it really is not; inside this liquid mass there are class structuring and segregating spaces. As David Harvey has pointed out, "*Today cities spread out of their limits, even beyond the suburbs, making a chaotic, complex urban web*", while at the same time "*... they seem to resemble a chess set, with oases of affluence and patches of poverty. Walled enclosures, actual or implied ... Instead of living in one city we live in separated cities, cities for the rich, cities for the poor. This segmentation leads to lack of social cohesion and political tensions*"⁵.

How are we then to intervene into the existing fabric? In recent times, Athens acquired some much needed infrastructural works, mainly a ring road and highway and an underground metro system, due to the pressure of the 2004 Olympics Games. Otherwise, the fancy stadiums and ancillary buildings have failed to revitalize the city, standing uncertain of their future in post-Olympic Athens, despite the grandiose declarations of politicians. The enlightened approaches of John Nash's Regent London, Otto Wagner and Karl Ehn's Vienna, or Josef Plecnik's Ljubljana not being our case, one still cannot leave the centre as it is, for it already seems to be disintegrating. Strategies regarding the appropriate mix of functions and facilities must be developed in order to re-invigorate it spatially and socially. These cannot be implemented by architects and planners alone, if not substantially supported and made financially viable by those vested with the authority and power to do so, for the benefit of

Athens Lessons

the public at large. In order to solve what has now become a Gordian knot, we have to look for special circumstances that will aid us do it. Some recent residential projects⁶ for example, are also proposals for regenerating the city, by addressing themselves to the new social and family structures that seem to emerge. Similarly, encouraging the development of small crafts based industries (which are now hardly hit by the economic crisis) could be alternative ways of bringing real life into inner city areas, instead of grandiose, show-case projects.

Still, these are not enough. The public spaces of a city are those that endow it with its particular identity and character; without them we are only witnessing the 'fall of the public man', to borrow Richard Sennett's concept⁷. If the issue of residence was answered in Athens privately, through the quid-pro-quo building system, producing the building type known as the 'polykatoikia' (apartment block) without any state intervention, the issue of the public space has not even been dealt with. Even the more recent grand institutions have been created without any concern to public city space: the Megaron (Concert Hall) being a self-contained marble object, its extension almost erasing the only decent modern public space in Athens, and the celebrated New Acropolis Museum being barricaded behind its iron fencing. Despite an abundance of squares, the only real exceptions hark back to the 19th century neoclassical plan of Cleanthes and Schaubert, the Hansen Trilogy and the National Garden, only tomorrow awaiting for a public park in Renzo Piano's seaside complex for the National Library & Opera.

In fact, the one thing that has resurfaced symbolically as a public space in Athens today has been 'The Square'. The so-called 'Square', meaning chiefly the 'Syntagma' (Constitution) Square, has of recent been the meeting place of people protesting and demonstrating against the current socio-economic crisis. In the spirit of similar events in other European cities the 'aganaktismenoi' ('indignados') citizens as they are called, have temporarily appropriated the main public space of the city, re-investing its spatial form with a public character, even if uncertain of its political object; the Constitution Square being historically the one that constituted this city as a demos, thus carrying the symbolic meaning of the modern Greek democratic state, of the *res publica*. It is indeed a peculiar and ironic turn of words that the name of the city *per se*, the 'polis, which is

Positions

inextricably related to the idea of citizenship itself⁸, is today appropriated by chiefly as a city's law and order mechanism of *police*⁹, rather than that of participating in its common, public affairs.¹⁰

Today in Athens, although most planning proposals are canvassing for the 'compact' city within its existing bounds, we are paradoxically witnessing trends both for centralization and decentralization. Antinomies of this sort appear vis-a-vis the large open land areas of Athens such as the historic Eleonas and the former area of the now disused airport of Hellinikon. In relation to the latter there has been much contested debate regarding its future either of being developed entirely as an open park or as a partly built residential area with a mix of uses (Josep Acebillo, Barcelona Chief Architect, who was specially flown in, advocating at the same time both the need for a 'compact' city and the need to move various facilities and authorities out of the centre and into Hellinikon). A different approach, aiming at regenerating life in the heart of the city centre, is the one by the National Technical University of Athens. Though some may consider it more of a showcase project, by proposing large scale pedestrian interventions in the form of a 'linear park' connecting the main roads of the 19th c. neoclassical plan, it continues in a sense the partly completed unification of archaeological sites, essentially changing the form and structure of the centre.

Contemporary Athens needs to discover and construct spatially its changing public identity, if it is to survive as a metropolis. Work done in Barcelona, London, Berlin or even Bogotá, is of relative importance to us, for the substantial improvement they have achieved in revitalizing everyday life in inner city areas¹¹. Athens is an expanding, liquid mass, liquid in both physical and spatial terms, as well as in social and cultural terms. Liquid in terms of what is really public and not just commercial, as the recent phenomenon of large enclosed agglomerations of giga-malls indicates, where the 'flaneur' is lost, the citizen having been transformed into a 'policed' prospective buyer, driving from one gentrified area into the other. More than just ecological, which they certainly are, the environmental problems of Athens are issues of open 'public' space versus private 'enclosure'. If history can teach us anything, we can even look back at the decline of Athenian democracy, which was accompanied by the proliferation of built spaces at the expense of the open public spaces of the agora, the space of public debate being taken over by

Athens Lessons

more and more enclosed mostly religious, buildings. Building, then as now, appeared as the construction of controlled spatial functions, against open forms of spatial organization that foster free interaction and communication amongst its citizens.

A city is in a sense an interior space inhabited by its citizens, a public interior shared by us all. Before use and function, before symbol and profit, public space's prime virtue is its accessibility with minimum control, once we step outside of our front doors. The walls of a city are no longer its old fortifications, but those of our houses and businesses; it is their external elevations which comprise the 'interior' city walls, its varied urban tapestry. For the public space of the city is a network of streets and squares, all intertwined within its limits. In such a seemingly peculiar reversal, city life is affirmed as being primarily a public life and not a private one, making us aware of what could be common to us all. The apparently empty space, the urban voids waiting to be filled in by our presence, as it is actually happening outside the Beaubourg, or as it is envisioned in De Chirico's piazzas, by our evident absence. Being public in an archetypical manner, before taking the form of our collective memories¹², means to be truly connected together in space.

ENDNOTES

1. Orhan Pamuk, *Other Colours, Essays and a Story*, Faber & Faber, London 2007.
2. Franco La Cecla, *Contro l'architettura*, Bollati Boringhieri editore, Torino 2008.
3. For example by making good schools, etc. as MIT professor Julian Beinart proposes (reported by George Liakos in *Kathimerini* newspaper, Sunday 12 June 2011).
4. Ironically, though the number of homeless is increasing there also appears to be an increase in the number of uninhabited apartments in the centre of Athens. Cultural facilities on the other hand are still relatively close to the centre, with Pireos and Syngrou avenues acquiring various exhibition and conference venues.
5. David Harvey interviewed by Tasoula Karaiskaki (*Kathimerini* newspaper, Sunday 27 February 2005).
6. Designs for lofts and new types of residential complexes, promoted by recent competitions and exhibitions in Athens, are welcome though still scarce signs by a younger generation of architects.
7. Richard Sennett, *The fall of public man*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York 1977.
8. The 'polis' being the citizen in contradistinction to the 'idiotis', the private person (whence the 'idiot').
9. And similar variations in all European languages: *polizei, polis, polizia, policia, politi, politie, poliisi, policie, policija*, etc.
10. Only recently 'polis' has been re-introduced in the term 'megalopolis' in order to describe the future megacity. See '*Cities, Architecture and Society*', 10th International Architecture Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia, 2006.
11. See also the work done at the 'LSE Cities' research centre in London.
12. As investigated by Aldo Rossi in *L'architettura della città*, (Marsilio, Padova 1966).

c.

The Plan of Athens, 1833–2011. Politics and society

Andreas Giacomakatos

The evolution and “design” of Athens over the last two centuries is a perfect miniature of the organization and performance of the modern Greek state in all sectors: not only in terms of planning capacity, but also in relation to the perception of the idea of legality and the role of public administration and relations regarding the common good and private objectives. The history of Athens from 1830 onwards, that is to say after the long Turkish occupation, has been characterized by ambitious design often supported by a progressive legislation and, at the same time, by a practice of not implementing and of violating laws due to private pressures and interests – in addition to the parallel pursuit of political leadership jockeying to meet party interests. More than an “urban history” it is a social history and summarizes the institutional characteristics and rules of organization of the Greek state and Greek administration. The history of Athens is the history of extreme conflict between plans and reality, between theory and practice, or to put it differently, the history of striking inefficiencies in the transition from the analysis and the ascertainments in a methodical and realistic concretisation of objectives. The urban and more generally national space has been shaped independently of the intentions, the findings and the programmatic objectives of master plans. Indeed, as difficult as it becomes to resolve the problems, so much more ambitious are the inapplicable plans that are worked out. With the body of the city, those who have sinned over the years are individuals, groups, trade unions and political institutions – transforming Athens and more widely Greece into a country of private individuals. The downgrading of the concept of *public space* or *public institution* in Greece has historical roots, and this also has its consequences in architecture. The demand for collective values expressed through a wider conscious society, is another challenge for Greece.

The first plan for Athens by Stamatios Kleanthis and Eduard Schaubert was characterized by monumental design, characteristic of the neoclassical parts of the city, as well as by spacious axes including an extensive archaeological area around the Acropolis

Athens Lessons

that sought a dialogue with the glorious classical past of the city. This necessitated extensive expropriations in the broader historical centre of the city. It is true that the grandiose plan of Kleanthis and Schaubert was situated on the traces of the old, almost destroyed city, without taking into account the cost issues of land and related compensation. Consequently, protests against the new project by former residents, landowners and also foreign residents in Athens, who had bought land with little compensation on the reliance of the establishment of Athens as the new capital, were exceptionally strong. King Otto was forced in 1834 to invite Leo von Klenze from Munich for a revision of the plans, calling for more modest requirements in terms of, for example, street width. However, the German architect's plan was only implemented in part, as the protests continued also during that time and now including the municipal authority. Still, the triangular shape of the historical centre that originated in the first plans for Athens (Omonoia, Syntagma Square, Kerameikos) still characterises that area today.

The new city thus began to take shape over the footprints of the old, making the opening of new road axes or avenues exceptionally difficult, and was implemented through a continuous negotiation between owners and military engineers (this deal acquired a timeless character). From the 1840s onwards, arbitrary settlements were created in the city, even under the Acropolis (Anafiotika), and their demolition in order to restore the ancient promenade was never pursued, even following recent stirrings of the matter in the late 1970s. Another consequence of this “private” and little “planned” growth of the capital was the inadequate planning of land for public utility buildings (government buildings, schools, markets, theatre or music halls, etc.), resulting in the lack of public architecture that is still apparent today. National benefactors built several important public buildings in the second half of the nineteenth century, in post-dated “neoclassicism” or Neo-Renaissance style. In a city rapidly strengthening as an administrative and cultural centre for modern Greece, the building activity that was continuously developed was primarily restricted to the agricultural sector, in transit trade and shipping.

Following the expulsion of King Otto and the instoring of Danish King George I, a city plan elaborated by military engineers (1864–1865) was announced, where the suburban expansions of

Positions

the city outside of the historical center (Patisia) are forecasted for the first time. However, the effort put into implementing a plan found itself in continuous conflict with private or political interests, leading to continuous modifications over the next decades. In 1896, the population of Athens reached 123'000 but the city still had no complete plan. Athens continued to extend itself through additions, partially and without control (Kypseli, Ampelokipi, Petralona, Pangrati, Kallithea, Kolonos), all the way into the twentieth century. Extensions occurred in areas outside the plan, which were later legitimized through political pressure by the owners. Since 1878, the military engineers for urban planning were replaced by civil engineers, who unfortunately still suffered pressure not just from private individuals but also from politicians, due to the fact that engineers did not enjoy the service tenure of public officials and consequently risked their position in every election. Additionally, land was not public but still belonged to traditional private owners and to the church, and monasteries in particular. Significantly, from 1836 till 1920, 565 modified ordinances can be counted, which were generally issued on the eve of political elections to satisfy private demands.

In the field of economics and everyday life, the Athenian reality of the early twentieth century lagged considerably behind that of western world. Athens had no underground train, let alone cars and just a single paved street, whilst underground trains had been inaugurated in Budapest (1896), Glasgow (1897), Vienna (1898), Paris (1899), and Berlin (1900). The first factory for electric power production and telephone communication were opened between 1903 and 1908. Despite signs of modernization, Greek society's economic situation is still found to be a long way from that of western Europe but also from certain countries of eastern Europe. Moreover, the emergence of a bourgeoisie in Greece did not follow procedures similar to that of other European countries after the industrial revolution. A semblance of bourgeois society was created in the capital in the 1930s, which ended up being restrained by the military regime of 1936 and finally set aside in the chaotic period of postwar reconstruction. A second phase of strengthening of the bourgeoisie took place in the late 1950s and 1960s, only to be once more interrupted by the military regime in 1967.

Athens Lessons

At the start of the twentieth century, two foreign experts, the Berliner Ludwig Hoffmann (1908) and the English Thomas Mawson (1914), were invited to propose grandiose utopian arrangements for the monumental city centre, which naturally were not realised. Immediately after them two Greeks, the engineer Aristidis Balanos (1917) and the lawyer Stylianos Leloudas (1918), elaborated studies that extended to areas of Athens with strong industrial and especially residential dynamics, attempting to manage future growth as well as the economic repercussions of implementation. Neither of these studies proved to have better luck than previous ones. Urban interventions or studies between the nineteenth and early twentieth century were generally characterised by embellishment and decoration, while being distinguished by an idealistic rhetoric aimed at glorifying the ancient past and defined by a formalistic perception of European urban models. They were limited by their development of partial master plan drawings and lack of an overall design.

The latest drawing of this period, the ambitious plan of the Kalligas committee (1924), based on the 1918 law “On setting up a committee to draft a new plan for the city of Athens” forecast the opening of road arteries in the city centre, the height increase of the city in order to increase population density, and zoning of the city by setting some new centres of public activity, with a ‘morphoplastic’ architectural emphasis on treatment of specific solutions. It ignored the state of surrounding areas and any other settlement, including the refugee districts, which were found outside the city centre. Ignoring the economic impact of expropriations and the reaction of owners contributed to the suppression of this project in 1926 by the Pangalos dictatorship.

1922 is a key date for recent Greek history, as it was marked by the devastating defeat in Asia Minor, the exchange of populations and the arrival from Turkey of around 1’300’000 Greek refugees to a country of hardly 5’000’000 inhabitants. In the mid-1920s the population in the Athenian agglomeration was around 450’000, while building activity related to housing was growing very rapidly. This historical situation led to not just a revision of cultural references and models for the country and of their concept of national identity, but also to new tools for managing Athens’ problems, exacerbated by the arrival of refugees.

Positions

After the plan of 1864 – 65, another important event was the Decree of 1923 “On city plans, extensive villages and settlements of the state and their realisation”, which set comprehensive rules on urban planning and the action of individuals, separating the areas within the urban plan from those found outside town planning. This decree, however, allowed for the fragmentary preparation of a single urban plan, encouraging in this way the organized speculative action of private initiative. A second important law of the decade was that of 1929 “On the flat floors or apartments property” that contributed substantially to the birth of the urban block of flats called “polykatoikia”. This law led to the building of an important stock of urban blocks of flats in the 1930s, many of which were designed following the principles of the modern movement and thanks to which the city acquired a fairly recognizable aspect of a European capital. The polykatoikia would thus become the most important “public” building type in Athens, and even more so during the post-war period given the lack of appreciable public architecture. In 1929, the General Building Regulation was approved, which provided particularly high rates of exploitation of urban land. Currently, Athens spreads to an area ten times that of the already ambitious Kleanthis and Schaubert project.

To accommodate the refugees of 1922, the Commission for the Re-establishment of Refugees was created, which scattered settlements in various parts of the Athenian basin, carrying this out outside of the legal framework, without connection to the existing urban structure, and without building an infrastructure to go with it. Under the pretext of urgent housing, the committee carried out urban work with catalytic consequences for the future development of the capital. This was done by a public institution, with the tolerance of the state, but private companies developed similar activities for the creation of settlements that were addressed to more affluent refugees from Asia Minor who had exchanged their properties in Turkey through the National Bank of Greece, in accordance with the Treaty of Lausanne. In this way, new Athenian “garden cities” like Psychiko, Filothei, Ekali, Cholargos, Penteli and the most central Nea Smyrni were drawn up. Land transactions and building activity off plan continued throughout the 1920s and 30s, building on the strength of the phenomenon of arbitrary and unregulated construction arising throughout the

Athens Lessons

basin and especially in the fringes. Illegal construction closely followed by successive regularization in the majority of settlements outside of the Athens plan defined the late 1930s, within the framework of public timidity and the constant retreat of the administration – even in the face of laws which it itself had legislated.

The last comprehensive effort to manage the problems of Athens is recorded in 1936, in one of the first legislative actions of the Metaxas dictatorship in August 1936, with the establishment of the “Ministry of Administration of the Capital”. The pointing out of the problems of capital, not only from the experts but also the intellectuals of the time, as well as the impasse of management of the “monstrous plan of the city of Athens and its environs” (P. Karantinos, 1936) had already made the need of a realistic effort that would exceed the previous undertakings of urban design and planning perceptible. One of these was, in 1933, the “Committee of Control Aesthetics” at the Ministry of Transport, which included the participation of architects, writers and painters, that dealt with issues of urban aesthetics and building height control, in the same way as the German “Baupolizei”. The “polyarchia”, however, of the “competent institutions”, which is estimated as a key reason for the inability to manage the problems of the capital, and the need for radical measures to tackle the “Athenian drama”, led to the foundation of the Ministry of Administration of the Capital, with representation in all municipalities (9) and communities (38) of the basin.

The ministry initiated with the intention of an overall design and within a general climate in public opinion that only a “dictator of Athens” could cope with urban sprawl in the Greek capital, similar to the “dictator of Paris” Haussmann appointed in the mid 50s of the nineteenth century by Napoleon III. However, after five years of intensive work mapping, collection of statistical data and individual studies, the Ministry was suppressed in April 1941 during war, with its only asset being fragmentary interventions of embellishment and landscaping. The economic weakness of the state, the imperfect legislation, the problematic administrative organisation, the lack of an overarching strategic philosophy for the capital and also the selfish ambitions of public men, stronger than any institutional regulation, led to the resounding failure of the undertaking. Athens in 1940, with a total population

Positions

of 1'118'000, after the continuous extensions of the city plan over a century, presented a scattered, incoherent and chaotic form, capable to convert any design effort into collective psychodrama.

...

The devastation of the 1940s, due to the Second World War and the civil war that followed, pushed Greece into utter economic collapse, causing inter alia the destruction of 25% of the total building stock in the country, a 40% reduction of agricultural production, and the complete destruction of the industry infrastructures, as well as a reduction of 70% of the potential of Greek shipping in ships and crews. Greece's economic recovery was undertaken by the USA between 1947 and 1953 via the Marshall plan. In the frame of Greek reconstruction from 1945, a dominant personality with institutional duties is the city planner Konstantinos Doxiadis, who had already studied the Greek housing problem and had recorded the destructions of the building stock in various regions of Greece during the German occupation. In 1945, Kostas Biris published the proposal for the Reconstruction of the Capital with the proposal, for the first time, of moving the capital elsewhere – in this case to Megara in the Attica province, which had a population of 100'000 residents. The idea, which of course aimed to create an administrative decongestion of the centre of Athens, found other supporters, including Doxiadis himself, without, of course, ever materializing.

Meanwhile, the population of Athens began to burgeon: in 1951 it reached 1'380'000 inhabitants, and almost doubled in 20 years (in 1961 it was counted at 1'850'000 and at 2'550'000 in 1971, 30% of the total population). Urbanization increased concurrently: the population in cities went from 39% of the total population in 1951 to 44% in 1961 (with 22% in Athens) and to 53% in 1971 (with 28% in Athens). Meanwhile, the population of cities, apart from Athens and Thessaloniki, remained almost stable during the period of 1951 to 1971, which explains the gigantism of the capital in this period. In Athens and its wider periphery (i.e. average distance of 50 km from the city centre), a rapid concentration of economic activity of any kind developed, with a corresponding weakening of regional economy and a move to the capital of the masses of unemployed ex-farmers, who chose not to migrate out of the country, which culminated in the 1960s.

Athens Lessons

The continuously increasing housing needs are even today almost exclusively satisfied by private initiative, to which is substantially assigned the responsibility of post-war reconstruction. The highly lucrative industry of residence is therefore the main driver of growth, through the mechanism of “compensation” (“antiparochi”), whereby small areas of private urban land is granted to an investor and/or constructor, with return to the land owner of part of the apartments built on it, while the rest is sold by the investor for a significant profit. In this way, not just Athens but all Greek cities were re-built after World War II. The different protagonists of the business, small landowners, constructors and contractors collaborated in the implementation of impersonal buildings without architectural or urban quality and with the unique purpose of maximising economic profit. The number of blocks of flats built in Athens grew exponentially: from 68 units with 1'442 apartments in 1950, to 520 units and 12'800 apartments in 1960. In the same year, Kostas Biris, architect-in-chief of the municipality, admitted that every opportunity for the reformation of Athens was then definitively lost. More generally, we could say that the Athenian urban planning developed in absentia of city planners and experts and was shaped in the context of a selfish political game.

In 1955, the new General Building Regulation (after that of 1929) is approved, which further increased the manufacturability indexes and the allowed heights of buildings in the capital. The exploitation of land within the plan is becoming more intense, while the number of successive integrations in the city plan of districts with arbitrary constructions is increased. The state's participation in the implementation of economic housing, enacted in 1954 with the Autonomous Organism of Workers' Housing, was however minimal. Athens began to acquire an everlasting form, anti-functional, uncontrolled and in conflict with the natural landscape, as several architects and intellectuals of the period have the opportunity to comment: “Which improbable concoction ! Most beautiful and ugly, megalopolis and village, reinforced concrete and bituminous paper, limousines and donkeys, movement of capital and appearance of province, great European hotels and peasant inns, a Balkan salad in which we threw a bit of everything, a few of America, some Europe, a lot of East and a dose of Romeiko” (Kostas Kitsikis, 1954). Athens, however, held a particular charm in this period for its foreign visitors,

Positions

due to its exotic, picturesque, pure, innocent and archaic feel, an Eden out of geography and time so close to Europe but still a place of revelation of authentic things, “a magic city”.

In the field of infrastructures and effort for the opening up of highways in the Athenian plain was initiated in the 1960s, on the occasion of the traffic study by Wilbur Smith in 1962. The accent of the American traffic expert in the use of private means of transport, combined with the progressive suppression of means of fixed track transportation on rails that was already completed in Athens at the end of the 1950s, moved contrary to trends in Europe and was the reason for the incomplete development of public means of transport in Greece (such as a rail network), something still apparent today. The vital problems of capital and, more generally, of the country in the field of regional planning emerged in the well-known national architectural conferences held in various Greek cities between 1961 and 1966. They, however, did not benefit from the possibility of intervention outside of simple theoretical analysis. Furthermore, in 1965, the Ministry of Public Works organized a special department of studies for the Master Plan of Athens, to document an already shaped situation, while the Ministry of Coordination is equally responsible for regional planning in Greece. The “polyarchia” of competences, an old sin in the planning of Athens, continued after the war. A lot of ascertainments with no action meant that the effort of planning could hardly overcome the stage of experimentation and good intentions in this period.

During the military dictatorship (1967–1974), construction activity is supported without limit for political and economic reasons, along with tourism, leading to even greater increases in rates of construction (more than 40% of current rates) and a general intensification of exploitation. Entire refugee or working-class neighborhoods in Athens and Piraeus are transformed into apartment buildings' districts. The new norms lead to excessive building activity not just in the area around the capital but also in most historical or traditional cities across the country, turning them into similar “little Athens”, full of anonymous buildings devoid of character and historical identity (in 1973, building activity in the country absorbs 33% of total gross investment, public and private). Following the General Building Regulation of 1973, the construction of tall buildings is tolerated, thus creating the first “towers” in Athens for offices, hotels,

Athens Lessons

or apartments. The handing out of legalisation for illegal houses continues during that time, thus pushing more and more people into the practice, eventually becoming viewed as a “regular” practice in the processes of space “management”. It has been estimated that the population that built illegally in the Athens area between 1945 and 1968 exceeded 560,000 inhabitants, that is to say 40% of new residents of the city in the period between 1940 and 1971! The commercialization of house production, within or outside of the plan, followed in any case the same general principle of small plots and many roads, creating many corner buildings. This pulverization of the urban fabric is responsible for the small dimensions of building blocks which constitute the current image of a typical Greek city. It should however be noted that the building practices mentioned above has not led to residential areas which are district dormitories for the working masses characterized by social marginalization and criminality, a phenomenon produced in similar cases by massive housing complexes in Europe.

Programming efforts at a national level continued with the ambitious but theoretical 15-year National Development Model issued in 1972. In the same year, the Ministry of Coordination assigned to the Doxiadis Office the preparation of a “Spatial plan and capital area program”. The study, published in 1976, after the fall of the dictatorship, of course had no chance of implementation, and would also come into conflict with the Master Plan of Athens drawn up by the Housing Service from 1965, as mentioned previously. Athens was henceforth characterized by unplanned and chaotic growth, with large gaps off-plan in all directions of the whole area, based as it was on a development through the adoption of singular street-plan projects.

With the Constitution of 1975 and a series of laws in the second half of 1970, particularly during Stefanos Manos’ secretaryship, an attempt to change at least one of the institutional frame on planning and urbanism was carried out. At the same time, in 1979, embellishment works were initiated, such as the first pedestrian street in Athens, the main Voukourestiou street. In 1983, during the socialist government with Antonis Tritsis as minister, an attempt is made to develop common tools for planning and programming for all urban centers of the country with the Operation for Planning Reconstruction. Also, the new Master Plan for Athens, with predictions of economic processes of its application, was

Positions

converted into a law in 1985. Following this positive but brief period, legislation is overturned by the following governments in the next decades, with new decrees and extensions of the city plan of Athens which covered 45% more than the city's area in 1983 ! The needs of the economy after mid-1980s exceeded any intention to establish rules and a rational management of urban space, since growth was identified once again with construction activity.

After amending, in 1992, the Master Plan of 1985, with measures that finally were not applied, the Olympic projects for the 2004 Games now completely overturned the planning legislation that had marked the past 20 years. The projects are realised in Athens out of master plans or other kinds of planning, in a "flexible" framework of objectives and options, without provisions for the future (such as post-Olympic use), with the obvious aim of making the capital attractive. The Olympic projects strengthened a practice now widespread also abroad (e.g. Japan), such as the privatization of public space in the city and the passage from a general urban design concept with universal programming perception to selective interventions based on business initiatives and private interests.

At the time of writing, the new Master Plan of Athens has gone to press.

...

When attempting to interpret the deadlocks of the Greek metropolis, we are often puzzled by the comparison of Athens to other European cities. Typically, the latter are mediaeval towns with a historic core of at least eight centuries, which has been lived-in and has evolved in a frame of continuity until the present day. Moreover, European cities were re-designed in the mid-nineteenth and during the twentieth century through "public planning" and public policies with precise application. Athens, by contrast, became a new "synchronical city", where the pressures of private interests predominated ever since the first urban drawings by Kleanthis and Schaubert. The physical structure and the "image" European cities have is due to their coherent social structures and authoritative institutions. The fluidity of social structures and institutions is represented live in the fluidity of the Greek urban environment and spatial organization. Athens is currently

Athens Lessons



in an intermediate phase of Balkan modernization, and this does not only concern urban morphology but also scale and density. Away from major projects, most districts exhibit plain indicators of degradation that surpass those for an acceptable quality of life.

For more than a century, people have attributed the causes of Athens' urban misfortune to the lack of a united policy. In the past, there have been some similar efforts with the establishment; first by the Ministry of Administration of the Capital in 1936. The issue is that the basin was then host to less than 50 municipalities, while today that number has tripled. This is a management problem with regard to a splitting of competences. However, the nature of "locality" of urban design must govern even a comprehensive and integrated strategic concept of "reorganization". The "interactive" conception of the local into the total should today be a development of the planning programme's philosophy, which requires high organizational skills, greater understanding, wider perception of consent and an insightful political personnel that would give experts the possibility of implementing a comprehensive intervention plan, as a synthesis of partial interventions. This occurred at least in Barcelona, a city often adopted as model. Today, a more advanced form of cooperation between public and private is realised in Copenhagen, with the making of the Örestad area and other zones closer to the city harbour.

Another phenomenon that characterizes the development of Athens is the expansion of the urban fabric in all directions, in new areas of growth and principally for private residences. The uncontrolled growth of the city, the unverifiable occupation of space and countryside is absolutely reprehensible. It is devastating to the

Positions

environment, harmful for the economy (expensive new infrastructure, energy waste and pollution) and prevents the cohesion of the existing urban web. On the contrary, the “compact city” (like the brilliant example of Barcelona) favoured the coexistence of different social classes, reinforced and enriched the role of “(historical) centre” and avoided the creation of suburbs that became areas of illegality. A healthy urban organism needs specific limits and a continual improvement of quality of life in its interior. The extensions constitute another expression of political irresponsibility and reward of a “private”, that is to say antisocial and entirely detrimental, conception for the city. To address the epidemic of scattered built-up growth, a whole country like Ireland has prepared a national plan that extends to 2030!

In the frame of the normal political debate on the Greek city, the concept of “embellishment” is the worst thing one can formulate, another political alibi. Regarding Athens, it first needs to become conscious and practice the model of a “compact city”, a city with limits. High priority must be given to the concept of public space as a public good and as a leader of planning. The demolition of building units must become normal practice and the height of buildings bravely increased (to 80–120 m or more) in certain areas. A strict system discouraging private car use must be implemented, along with the exemplary and perfectly sufficient growth of public means of transport. This means that the underground must cover every single area of the “Greater Capital”, provided of course that the boundaries of this region have been accurately determined and are considered roughly inviolable. Public planning and public policies must be applied indiscriminately. However, the worst enemy of any improvement is our “private” mentality: who can restructure this?

The centre of Athens, without a strong urban core with a representative character and a network of interrelated activities with cultural and social content, is today spatially undefined and desolate, inhospitable and unattractive, leading to people refraining from frequenting it in outside of work hours. Social life is defensive and introverted, while public safety is a very important question. The failure also of managing the problem of illegal migrants is one cause of this situation. These occur in a city with ideal weather conditions, where traditional lifestyles are extroverted and outdoors oriented. The stifling conditions of a repulsive everyday life, the sense of the hermetically-sealed urban container (especially in many degraded

Athens Lessons

neighbourhoods), the lack of aesthetics and care of the built environment and the overall low quality of life, produce tensions and dangerous social dynamics that often dress a political mantle. This is a representative example of how quality of space affects the quality of human relationships and the very sociability of citizens. Athens, except the distant Parthenon, does not propose benchmarks, doesn't host powerful "social condensers" or other urban landmarks even locally. It doesn't shape, through order in space, models of social structure. Indicative are the systematic search for safety nets, urban-point flight activities for the establishment of social and cultural content, which rotate according to fashion and lifestyle of the time (around Psiri, Gazi, Metaxourgeio, the axes of Piraeus Street and Syngrou, etc.) However in the few years following the Olympics, despite the difficulties and the economic crisis (or perhaps because of it), Greek society –or scattered groups within it– seem to be entering a phase of maturity and acquiring a different sense of responsibility for collective issues, always through contradictions and the unspoken hope that things could one day "return" to the once ideal era of innocence.

A typical example of public practice of planning is now the central district of the Elliniko, the old airport of Athens. The investment is huge, and the economic interests equally large. A game of conflict of competences is played within the socialist government, with the Prime Minister who has his own vision for the region and his own perception of its implementation, and current ministers and state agencies who methodize other options. There arises a greater chance of failure in taking strategic decisions and erroneous choices are likely to cancel out the effort invested. However, such an undertaking would be a very important kind of injection, similar to that of the Olympic Games, not only for the Greek economy but also for the morale of Greek population.

Athens is not a "lost cause". Still, if abandoned in the hands of individuals without public control, or a correct cooperation between public and private, the future seems quite bleak. It is a chaotic city that should conquer a new rhythm, a new order. The work of architects and planners has always been that, characterised by the determination of creating a kind of order in space, i.e. the conversion of shapeless into viable. Realistic planning without obsessions, with a stable vision and timeless culture of preparedness and flexible

Positions

adaptation to new needs and circumstances, is the most difficult part yet the most important. Sadly, our political realism does not allow for such optimism. The ethical dimension in the design of the city has to do with linking the public to the private, and here is where one can precisely measure the effectiveness of a policy. The rest is rhetoric evasion, or calculation of the so-called “political cost”, the most immoral – the political statement. Our mythical “Ottoman” background and beliefs could quickly change if citizens recover the confidence and trust in the transaction with a fair and incorruptible public administration, compelled and educated in different collective mentalities. But who can “train” today? Perhaps this is the most illusory modern utopia?

Selected bibliography on Greece

Articles:

- A. Giacumacatos, “European rationalism and Greece between the Wars”, *Architecture in Greece*, 16/1982, pp. 75–92.
- A. Giacumacatos, “Nikos Mitsakis and the renewal of Greek architecture”, *Architectural Design*, 1986 n. 12, pp. 41–45.
- A. Giacumacatos, “La cultura architettonica in Grecia”, *L'Arca*, 1988 n. 21, pp. 6–7.
- A. Giacumacatos, “Architettura greca 1974–1990: profilo dei mutamenti”, O. Doumanis, *Architettura greca contemporanea. Guida 1945–1988*, Firenze 1990, pp. 21–34.
- A. Giacumacatos, “The new school buildings in Greece, 1930–1938”, 1st Docomomo International Congress, Eindhoven 1990, pp. 101–105.
- A. Giacumacatos, “From conservatism to populism, pausing at modernism. The architecture of the inter-war period”, S. Condaratos and W. Wang (ed.), *Greece*, catalogue of the exhibition, (DAM Frankfurt), Prestel Verlag, Munich 1999, pp. 26–39.
- A. Giacumacatos, “Il IV CIAM e l'opzione di Atene”, *L'architettura-cronache e storia*, 2003 n. 576, pp. 782–785.
- A. Giacumacatos, “Le renouvellement de l'architecture scolaire grecque dans les années 1930”, A.M. Châtelet and M. Le Cœur (ed.), *L'architecture scolaire. Essai d'historiographie internationale*, ed. spec. *Histoire de l'éducation*, 2004 n. 102, Institut national de recherche pédagogique, Paris 2004, pp. 181–199.
- A. Giacumacatos, “Panos Koulermos. L'avventura greca e l'idea di architettura”, K. Frampton (ed.), *Panos Koulermos. Opera completa*, Mendrisio 2004, pp. 41–52.
- A. Giacumacatos, “Athens. The compact city and the private city”, *Vima Ideon*, 2008 n. 13, p. 14.

Books and catalogues:

- A. Giacumacatos and E. Godoli, *L'architettura delle scuole e il razionalismo in Grecia*, Firenze 1985.
- A. Giacumacatos, *Greece*, catalogue of the Hellenic participation at the VI International Venice Biennale of Architecture, Athens 1996.
- A. Giacumacatos, *Architecture and Criticism*, Athens 2001–22009.
- A. Giacumacatos, *History of Greek Architecture. XX Century*, Athens 2003–32009.
- A. Giacumacatos, “Itinerario contemporaneo. Atene-Grecia”, *Area*, 2004 n. 75, pp. 186–193.
- A. Giacumacatos, “New Acropolis Museum. A critical appraisal”, *Architecture in Greece*, 44/2010, pp. 115–139.

Athens Lessons

d.

The eternal presence of the past in Athens Dimitris Philippides

From its inception, modern Athens has been a historical paradox. Its existence based on an ideological twist – the revival of ancient glory –, it possessed no traceable economic base whatsoever, hence no detectably tangible future. This was easy to tell, judging from the swarms of future civil servants who flooded the city’s cafes, eager to get a parasitic governmental job from the politicians, whom they pestered daily. These crowds of useless, untrained urbanites co-existed in the city with a cosmopolitan elite of would-be economic saviors who had built their fortunes elsewhere and descended upon Athens ready to invest and conquer.

The new city mysteriously retained the glorified ancient name as a cover because without it, it would be incongruously naked. Like the as yet tiny extent of the country, it possessed no infrastructure, no industry or connection to international commerce networks. Greece was at the time so economically backward that it showed up in big international fairs with just a few agricultural specimens: currants and figs. Surprising enough, this early picture did not substantially change in the years to come. Despite its growth, despite the changing conditions in the rest of the world, Athens remained an urban center in the Balkans, always of lesser importance if compared to Istanbul, or even Smyrna and Alexandria.

The nameless and shapeless ‘new neighborhoods’ spreading into the Attic plain housed the petty-bourgeois strata, whereas financiers and middlemen occupied the ‘aristocratic’ quarters of the city, around the Palace. It is a well-known fact that Greek society never possessed an adequate middle class spine and the same is true of the capital city: it never acquired a strong bourgeois flavor. Athens has always been either provincially rural (at first) or unbearably congested (later on, around the turn of the nineteenth century) while it strove to imitate the grand European capitals, heads of colonial power. London and Paris were reference points for fashion in dresses and in houses for the privileged few, the rest of the society were fed with dreams of re-instating the Byzantine Empire.

One aspect of the absence of a feasible middle class was the extensive use of unorthodox means of urban development,

Positions

by encroachment on public land and uncontrollable land speculation. The foundation of all later procedures was laid right from the start, with the failure to organize the city according to its initial inspired “Plan of Athens” (1833). Instead this quickly deteriorated to a patchwork of partial “local plans” set to accommodate specific demands by powerful interest groups. Land was the real commodity that helped the Greek society move on, and not the hapless “drachmae” – again, a historic name for a perennially shaky currency.

The boundless growth of Athens was inevitably based on the concentration of political power, in other words, on the development of a phenomenal bureaucracy that permeated all aspects of life. In terms of physical planning, Athens oscillated between acquired procedures from the enlightened West and derived traditions from the “dark” East. On one hand, Athens learned the theoretical merits of planned growth and on the other hand, it tested its systematic undermining by constant transgression of the rules. Regularization was countered by innumerable acts of de-regulation that systematically dislocated the official logic and replaced it with a flexible accommodation of small incremental interventions. The city was “alive” with such signs of unplanned development that, however, established an untypical, surrealistic down-to-earth realism. Official planning was produced with meticulous care inside governmental offices while practical planning was implemented outside in the streets. The two sides obviously rarely collided as every party learned the merits of co-existence.

Aside from the above general pattern, the urban history of Athens is invariably marked by consecutive relapses and rejuvenations caused by local disasters (war, refugee deportations), and by internationally-inspired infusions of order (city plans, grand projects). The disasters brought misery to the city: beggars prowled on the main streets, people in rags built makeshift shelters for temporary use everywhere and then refused to budge, the crime rate rose sharply. Lawful citizens withdrew into their private lives – public space was threatened by illegitimate invasion and official neglect by the municipal authorities. As a remedy, foreign experts were invited to produce plans for an imaginary city of Athens, doomed to remain on paper. Yet the dream-plans were possibly more real than the actual city because at least they were able to capture the

Athens Lessons

ideal city set on the familiar geographical site. Athens once more seen in full regalia, as the magical center of the world. Crisis bred metaphysics, and metaphysics fueled yet another circle of soul-searching. The last such incidence was in 2004, as a response to the demands of the Olympic Games held in Athens. That super-human effort created yet another image of the desired city, fake as it soon proved to be, since it deteriorated in front of the eyes of its residents.

The “lesson” thus taught by the past is the triumph of transient and ephemeral decisions, either hastily taken or continuously postponed – both coming to the same end. This has formed a dynamic pattern of temporary balances in the city, copiously constructed and then quickly dismantled, to allow for new alternative paths, equally futile and transient. The meticulously paved sidewalks of one city mayor are relentlessly dismantled by the next in line one who adds new sewage pipes or lighting fixtures. Streets don’t flood any more but, by the time the works are finished, the citizens have forgotten the merits of using public space. Only when Athenians deal with the relics of their fictive ancestry, as in the projects connected to the archeological sites around the Acropolis, are they able to break the curse and accomplish something of apparently permanent status.

In this perspective, today’s “general crisis” is unexceptional: it will eventually lead to a “new” Athens in line with all its previous historical phases, i.e. the eternal Athens dreamed up by its nineteenth century founders – obviously, a freshly concocted paradox. And one eagerly waits to see it take place, for as long as it lasts.

e.

Athens: From Urban Planning to Urban Geopolitics
Georgios-Stylianos Prevelakis

Although Athens is one of the cities with the greatest world prestige, its present situation is very disappointing. During the 1950s and the 1960s, Constantine Doxiadis, the famous urban planner, had already foreseen problems and made crucial suggestions, unfortunately totally ignored. It is not therefore for want of ideas and expertise that the Greek capital is an urban planning failure.

Urban geographers and planners have tried to understand the causes of this failure, singling out the patronage system of Greek politics or aggressive land speculation. All these, though true, do not explain sufficiently the incapacity of Greek society to control the destinies of its capital. At best, this analysis leads to further questions: why did those characteristics of Mediterranean politics get out of hand, especially in a city with such important economic and cultural assets?

The roots of the crisis are to be sought in the period that followed the Civil War, which ended in 1949 with the Communists' defeat. This defeat was largely due to massive US aid and support towards the loyalist camp. After the war, the Axis occupation, and the civil war, Greece emerged devastated. Only the region around and including Athens had preserved some infrastructure; at first, investment could only take place in the Greek capital. In addition, as the government's seat, the city managed the flow of capital coming from the USA, its economy benefiting directly from it. Athens thus became the main focus of Greek reconstruction and economic growth. As a consequence, its population grew rapidly.

The massive influx of rural populations transformed the social structure of the Greek capital radically. The political establishment, still frightened and insecure after the challenges of the previous decade, devised original means to integrate and control the new immigrants. Unfettered development of the construction industry, without respect for fundamental environmental standards, was encouraged in order to create growth and jobs. Illegal housing covered, at a low cost, the needs of incoming poor populations. This status of tolerated illegality created a relationship of political dependency, which facilitated the political control of potentially dangerous social groups.

Athens Lessons

The legal, social and political framework set around the construction and housing sectors during the 1950s and 1960s had practically nothing to do with urban planning as developed in Western Europe and the USA during this period. Similarities should rather be sought with countries like Turkey. Trained in the UK, the USA and France, Greek urban planners tried to implement western ideas and know-how, at least as they had learnt during their studies. These methods, corresponding to entirely different economic, institutional, technological and political conditions, remained on the level of unimplemented master plans, discourses and declarations, without much effect on urban realities. The official urban planning of state and municipal agencies functioned more or less in a vacuum. The real city grew in a chaotic way, driven by market forces and the need to stabilise the political system, through police threats of demolition and large scale popular participation in land speculation; through carrot and stick.

The preservation of this anomalous situation, a mystery for technocrats, has a clear explanation for political and social scientists. Geopolitics took precedence over urban planning. Avoiding a new Civil War seemed, and probably was, more important than city aesthetics. As the country was at a major geopolitical crossroads during the Cold War, the city space had been instrumentalised, even sacrificed, in order to overcome dangerous social and political tensions. Greek society lacked the necessary economic and political means and instruments to pursue policies inspired by London or Parisian planning practices. Western-trained planners served as a façade of Modernity, without any real power on the city.

During the first post-Civil War decades, the Greek political system translated its political and social problems of the present into urban problems for the future. Around the end of the military dictatorship (1967–1974), serious functional and environmental problems became apparent in Athens: traffic congestion, air pollution, lack of social infrastructure, of public and green spaces. After 1974, the restored political stability and a lesser tension between the two blocks seemed to create at last the conditions for a more rational urban policy. Urban Planners started to hope that they would at last have some grasp on reality.

Positions

However, these hopes were soon to be frustrated soon. The new Master Plan of Athens and a series of other measures developed between 1977 and 1980 under the leadership of Stephanos Manos, the minister of the newly-founded Ministry of Physical Planning and Environment, met bitter resistance from threatened vested interests, grown like cancer over the previous decades. During the 1980s, efforts to reform urban policy were abandoned.

With few exceptions, from 1981 till 2008, Athens still evolved in a more or less chaotic and destructive way, in spite of the intensive infrastructure construction for the 2004 Olympic Games. The rapid growth in private car use led to an unplanned decentralisation of economic activities, to the growth of wealthy suburbs separated from the rest of the city, to the development of roughly-organised new commercial centres. Traffic congestion covered even wider areas, while public transportation collapsed as a whole. Athenians learnt to spend long hours trapped in their cars, struggling to move ahead.

Up to this point, the Athenian case appears to be a story of urban dysfunction, due to the weakness of the political and administrative system. The dissociation between official urban planning theory and real practices seems to be the major problem. However, after the first difficult post-civil war decades, a better coordination between theory and practice might have led if not to an ideal, at least to a tolerable situation. Why did such a common-sense approach not prevail? Why were the urban planners left unchallenged in their comfortable idealist position, without an obvious obligation for more pragmatism? Why the everlasting hypocrisy, in spite of a deteriorating situation?

Certain market and other forces were understandingly satisfied with the lack of effective controls. More or less illegal activities related to land and construction, but also normal businesses used to function without the burdens of environmental controls constituted a powerful alliance that resisted efforts to rationalise city life.

What about other forces of society: inhabitants, owners of commercial spaces or real estate in the city centre, Athenian citizens – all those who suffered from deteriorating conditions, loss of income or profits, deprivation of the “right to the city”? The

Athens Lessons

population's attitudes towards the city, characterised at best by indifference, at worse by hostility, explains this inertia, the complete absence of resistance.

Indifference can be attributed to the lack of territorial attachment. Because of the rapid post-war rural immigration, the majority of Athenian inhabitants are emotionally related to their village or small city of origin. Whenever they get a chance, they escape Athens to spend time where they feel they really belong. Many of them still vote in the electoral district of their family's origin, more proof of disconnected territoriality. Local politics, in which a large part of Athenians are interested, lie outside of Athens' region.

Hostility is another issue. Athens has been the instrument and the symbol of Modern Greek national identity, where the western-imported neoclassical element is predominant. This form of identity had limited legitimacy in comparison to religion, family or clan for the rural populations. Its often violent introduction by state authorities has created subconscious negative feelings. However, resentment towards forced westernisation did not always find a rational expression, since the westernised intellectuals of Athens were in control of the political discourse. An irrational hostility towards Athens, and especially towards its neoclassical symbols, such as nineteenth century architecture, became one of the major channels through which alienation was expressed, with respect to the deep-rooted traditional strata of identification.

If the majority of the Athenian population is either indifferent or hostile to the Greek capital, how could city patriotism emerge? However, without this patriotism, it was not possible to defend the city against market and other forces.

After more than half a century of chaotic growth and erosion of its fundamental urban structures, Athens entered a new, more dangerous, period. 2008 marked a decisive turn with the December riots, when the city centre suffered extensive and deliberate destruction. From that point on, urban problems in Athens appear to have had more to do with violence than with economics.

During the first decade of the 21st century, the growing problems of Athens were covered up by an influx of easy money, poured into Greece via massive borrowing. The 2004 Olympics constituted a great opportunity for profits and employment. The feeling of prosperity, created by an explosive growth in consumerism, led

Positions

Athenians, rich and poor, to disregard the lack of public control on the city's destinies. Driving a luxury car seemed to compensate for long hours in traffic jams.

However, fear of impending disaster was never far from the Athenians' unconscious. The success of the Olympic Games built an enthusiastic reaction, as if the restored image of the city could exorcise the anxiety of punishment for the participation of a former 'under-developed' society with Europe. These Olympics highs were followed by the post-Olympics blues. The anticipated positive results of international attention on Athens did not come.

In December 2008, the more or less accidental killing of a pupil by the police provoked violent demonstrations, followed by the systematic destruction of property in the Athenian historical centre. The till then latent and hidden hostility towards the capital and its symbols came to the fore. Athenians could not pretend to ignore the hidden destructive forces of an unfettered consumption-driven society anymore. Since the major turning point of 2008, Athens' main problem is not functional anymore, it is geopolitical.

The geopolitical dimension, as previously seen, has always existed within Athens. Previously invisible, masked by the urban planning discourse for many decades, the lack of linkage between the real problems of Athens and the projects of the State and municipal Urban Planning authorities is nowadays more than obvious. After 2008, Urban Planners became completely irrelevant to the city. A drastic paradigm shift is indispensable.

Greece has always been an international crossroads, a country open to the world. Athens owes its cosmopolitan atmosphere to this geographical reality. However, especially during an era of globalisation, openness also means exposure to destabilising influences. Foreign immigration from the post-communist countries, but also from Asia and Africa, took unprecedented dimensions in Greece. Organised crime, largely imported from Greece's geopolitical hinterland, and indigenous corruption found a fertile ground to prosper through the exploitation of the incoming misery. Whole neighbourhoods of the historical part of Athens have been profoundly transformed by the influx of immigrants. They are turned little by little into territories that avoid Greek authorities' control, excluded from the rule of law.

Athens Lessons

The economic crisis engendered an enormous stress within the new immigrant population of Athens, as well as between newcomers and poor Greeks. The most hit areas are situated near Athens' historical centre, which is thus threatened by abandonment from more well-to-do inhabitants – an evolution that reminds of New York in the 1960s.

The Athenian centre is also menaced by another geopolitical challenge. Although the 2008 riots did not lead to the overthrow of the Greek government, they weakened it considerably, leading to the 2009 political change. In 2011, the massive demonstrations against the austerity measures, combined with some destruction of property, again influenced political evolution. Analogies with the recent Arab spring cannot be avoided, as the city, and especially the centre, is becoming a major political instrument. The combination of politics, organised crime and tensions between immigrants and authorities creates an explosive mix which handicaps efforts to protect and rehabilitate the centre of the city.

The centre's decline breaks up the social and functional unity of the urban conglomeration. The inhabitants of Athens are gradually losing their shared focal place for meeting and coming together. They are becoming progressively like foreigners.

The social and cultural break-down of the unity of the city is illustrated and reinforced by the policy of relocation of ministries. Increasingly, they are displaced outside the historical centre, either because of the existence of available unoccupied public buildings, like those created for the 2004 Olympics, or, worse, in order to avoid exposure to demonstrations and riots. By retreating from the symbolic space of national unity, the state contributes to the erosion of social and political cohesion at both the national and the urban scale. Through its geographical behaviour, the Greek state unconsciously justifies the expressions of resentment towards national identity.

Are there any actors capable of resisting? Some inhabitants' associations do fight against interest groups, who profit from the city centre's decline. On the other hand, the big business investing in commercial complexes far from the centre and other interest groups obviously push economic activity and wealthy inhabitants to escape the centre. Big projects also seem to lead in this direction. What will be the influence of the planned development of the Ellinikon area, liberated by the departure of the Athens Airport?

Positions

For the time being, the balance of power does not appear encouraging. The decline of the city centre, the growing segregation, the importance of private car transportation, combined with economic decline and pressures from foreign immigration fosters a chaotic environment which no public authority seems able to control.

The situation will therefore continue to deteriorate until the fundamentals of city politics change. Indifference and hostility should turn into city patriotism, a new vision for Athens should emerge, freed from the old urban planning and urban design stereotypes – conditions that are completely utopian for the time being.

However, history is full of surprises. The Greek political and cultural scene is in rapid transition, one of its aspects being Athens crisis. Any anticipation of the city's evolution which does not consider this wider issue will be deeply flawed.



Athens Lessons

f.

Athens

Luca Turin

From a height, and there are plenty to choose from, Athens looks like those composite photographs large corporations are fond of using in TV ads, in which each pixel is itself a picture. The Athens pixel is a repellently mediocre five-story building containing fifteen or so apartments, designed by what the Italians call a *geometra*, i.e. someone who knows how to build things that don't fall down and knows very little else. After a while you come to regard the *geometra's* competence as a calamity. Only a Great Flood could wash away this architectural guano, and you wouldn't want that even if you could get everybody out in time to remove their valuables, watch from afar and collect insurance. The reason is it might hurt the Parthenon, its pale columns shining above the city like fingers of a handsome hand held up high, trying not to touch the muck below.

Every construction is built with complete disregard for its surroundings. In keeping with this screw-you-all idea, Swiss-born architect Bernard Tschumi, now surely the envy of all *geometri*, has built an absurd museum that looks like a very large Toyota dealership and perhaps will be one if Greece continues on its present course. Athens, once a monument to collective human wisdom, is now a monument to lack of it. The much-vaunted Mediterranean family values, i.e. attention to the private domain, indifference to the public one, have run wild. They have destroyed the place that invented citizenship. It is not that the Greeks, are any more selfish than anyone else, far from it: to foreigners they are probably the kindest, most welcoming, most helpful Europeans of all. But combination of greed, lack of town planning regulations and complete lack of visual taste has fucked Athens up beyond repair.

All around Athens, windswept, arid, fiercely sunny Attica is dotted with ancient sacred places, now unhappily fenced off as if to keep the satyrs from escaping and getting run over on the nearby highway. Ancient beauty usually sprung from underground magic. The temple of Artemis in Vravra, forsaken by all but the gods, sits on a spring that will still be there when the memory of cars and beach holidays is long gone. It stands amid

Positions

a sporadic scattering of marble-cutting firms and yacht parking lots, both looking grim in these austere times. Nearby is the huge amphitheater at Lavrio, near the silver mines that made Athenian greatness happen in the 6th century BC: democracy was, and still is, a luxury. Some distance away, the “lake” at Vouliagmeni, a strange, sunken freshwater pond right by the trashy beach and surrounded by high limestone walls, shuts out the salty outside world and has earned a telluric bath house straight out of Vichy or Baden Baden. These are the eternal pulse points of the earth, and you feel its dragon blood coursing under your wheels as you drive by.

Athens Lessons

g.

Symbolic centrality and stratification: a city in reverse

Panagiotis Turnikiotis

Athens, as it is very broadly conceived in the Greek and international consciousness, is described by a common geometrical locus, the Acropolis, which is the city's symbolic epicentre. Its presence, whether named or latent, symbolises 'Athens' equally in the mind of the Athenians, the tourists, and the immigrants. To this symbolic centrality have been added the archaeological sites, which have taken shape in its concentric surroundings and form the recognisable ground of the historical identity, from the ancient Agora to the Temple of Olympian Zeus and from the Theseum to the Plaka district, thus combining the ancient, the Byzantine, and the modern city. It is on precisely this circumference that the great touristic activity of Athens converges.

It was to the north of the Acropolis, in the densely-filled intervening space from Omonia Square to Monastiraki Square, which extends from Peiraos Street to Stadiou Street, and on its borders as far as Panepistimiou, that the commercial activity of Athens in the nineteenth and twentieth century developed. This centre includes differing qualities of commerce, very distant from one another, and is still 'alive', though it is steadily declining and altering internally, mainly for structural reasons, intensified by the recent social and economic crisis. It is still the 'centre' but, in the way that the economic geography of Athens is changing, it is expected to shift gradually in another direction, combining old and new uses, such as residence and culture.

In contrast with the old commercial centre, the most active forces of the contemporary city are concentrated in a tri-lobed dynamic pattern extending from Vasilissis Sophias and Amalias Avenues to Syntagma Square, and turning, on the axis of Panepistimiou into Patisision St, as far as the Polytechnic and the Archaeological Museum. It is on the interior of this dynamic centre that the political, economic, and intellectual powers converge, together with strong commercial and cultural activities, large offices and expensive housing, with traffic hubs that serve public transport well and attract the majority of political demonstrations. The Presidential Residence, the Prime Minister's office,

Positions

Parliament, many ministries and other important state mechanisms, such as the Council of State and the General Accounting Office, the Bank of Greece, and the headquarters of most banks, the large museums, the Polytechnic and the University, the National Library, the Academy, the French, British, and American embassies, large hotels, the Athens Concert Hall, cinemas, theatres, central bookshops, department stores, cultural foundations, large emblematic hospitals, monumental streets and squares which host parades and major demonstrations – all these together mark the power of contemporary Athens, the field in which the decisions are judged and the situations formed which involve the whole city and the whole country.

In contradistinction to this dynamic centre, which extends from the north to the east and south, on the western side of the plan of the new Athens, which develops to the west of Tritis Septemvriou Street, a linear density of a centre has taken shape; in this, housing, commerce, manufacturing, culture, and recreation co-exist. The activities are relatively dense and a large part of them is addressed to groups defined by culture or ethnicity, with the percentage of housing occupied by non-Greeks being relatively high. This western arc is a very lively and strongly central zone which gives shape to the social and cultural Other of the dynamic centre, and gives expression, in the Piraeus direction, to the reconstitution of the building stock for industry and workers' accommodation which has been evolving since the 1990s.

The multidimensional complex of centrality is in the embrace of districts which differ from one another perceptibly as to the social, economic, and cultural composition of their residents, but are equally central on the scale of the Attica basin, such as Exarcheia, Thiseio, and Kolonaki, the edges of Pankrati and Kypseli, the area around Viktorias Square, and Metaxourgheio. These districts supply large parts of the centre with day-to-day vitality.

The different centralities that render the concentration of the centre of Athens express differing accounts of the relations co-existing and overlapping in the same geographical whole. In what seems to be one unified centre below the Acropolis, there are, in the end, many, and they are, moreover, distinct. In Athens, there is a multi-centred unity, and this is probably natural and to be

Athens Lessons

expected, that is, it is inherent in the functions of centrality recognizable in most European cities. This dynamic situation is typical of the field of 'encounter' of the opposing forces making up a megalopolis socially, economically, and culturally. The vivacity and charm of the centre can be recognised in the multidimensional succession of its constituents and in the composite character of its differences. The centre is not, nor can it become, uniform and homogeneous, but it can be the shared field of reference in which the collective consciousness of the community recognises its identity, on condition that this identity has within it features from the current complexity and the intercultural make-up of that community.

The centre's problem, insofar as there is a common problem, is not the result of its invasion or occupation by 'alien' forces, as is often said in the ideologically-charged discussions among citizens and in the mass media. It is the result of its gradual abandonment and conscious mutation on the initiative and according to the wishes of its residents themselves, who have sought a better tomorrow elsewhere, and the statutory support or even instigation of the state. It is also the result of the geographically and structurally broader changes in the whole range of the economy. The departure of the residents and the dwindling of commerce, which has been accompanied by the gradual withdrawal of public and private interest services, has left an ever-increasing gap that cannot be 'filled' with history and recreation only. What seemed to be the nucleus of the strong commercial centre 30 years ago – the commercial triangle between the Syntagma, Omonia, and Monastiraki squares – is now in steady decline, having lost its cohesive function in the city. Furthermore, the residual gap of the centre inevitably attracts all those activities that can develop more easily in it, thus shaping a city in reverse. The social and cultural re-articulation of the real population of the capital, in which very different communities are now resident, has undoubtedly contributed to this situation.

The convergent view is that we need a centre to which we collectively ascribe the identity of our city. The return to the centre will of necessity refer to this centre, and will be based on the conservation, highlighting, and reinforcement of those constituent features that today make up the stratification of the centrality. The

Positions

crisis of the centre can be reversed by a series of combined actions which will strengthen residence in the commercial triangle, thus creating a new central district, retaining the old occupational activities in decline and bringing in new ones to boost its dynamic. The conservation of multidimensional functionality is the strategic aim. It is not, therefore, a question of a revival of the past. The desideratum is the creation of favourable conditions for a variety of uses that will render the economy denser, as well as commerce, and recreation, artistic and manufacturing production and their worlds, residence and the related services, within the logic of social stratification. At the same time, attention will be drawn to the building, environmental, and cultural ecosystem of the centre as a single whole.

The urban nature and the identity of the centre have to be recognised by broader social strata so that an economic, aesthetic, and educational function can exist. Within this perspective, we must give the centre of the city the quality of a multcentred unity that will transcend the functional or geographical divisions of the 'commercial triangle' or the 'historic centre', and will be able to extend on the new metropolitan scale of the capital, disturbing the concentric circles around the Acropolis. The condensation of this centre will be diffused to fields, axes, and epicentres that will redefine its geography and will re-compose the centrality in its contemporary metropolitan dimension. This more general framework includes the enhancement of the public space, the functional re-linking of the archaeological sites with the contemporary city, the protection, restoration, and highlighting of the architecture of buildings and complexes belonging to the modern architectural heritage, the strengthening of urban plantation, environmental design, and proposals for the multicultural re-composition of the centre.¹

¹ This contribution reflects research work that was directed by the author and presented in 2011 under the title 'Changing characters and politics in the center of Athens and Piraeus'.

Athens Lessons

Sources :

In this publication, many printed and web-based sources were used to gather information about Athens and Greece. The sources are indicated below each graph / map. One book though was of particular importance as it contained a wealth of data specific to Athens: 'Atlas de la Grece', Editions Reclus 2003, Michel Sivignon, Franck Auriac, Olivier Deslondes, Thomas Maloutas. This Atlas contains a large number of GIS data about Greece and specifically Athens, Thessaloniki and Heraklion. Much information in the analysis part of the 'Athens Lessons' originates from the 'Atlas de la Grece'.

Acknowledgements :

Large cities are complex structures to understand and Athens is no exception as we explained. For all the advantages such as a distant perspective, that an 'outsider view' can provide, the disadvantages of not having lived there, not being immersed in the culture and everyday life, not having observed and experienced social and political circumstances, seem to make it difficult to get an in depth understanding of the urban area. To know a city one often needs to have observed it for a long time, over years and decades.

For this reason, we were very fortunate to be able to work with architects, urban planners and other experts who have lived and worked in Athens. These include Prof. Kourkoulas, Ariadni Vozani and Eirini Androutsopoulou at the architecture department of the NTUA, and several architects who went on personalized trajectories through Athens with our studio: Katerina Xrysanthopoulou, Konstantinos Pantazis, Marianna Rentzou, Alexandros Vaitos, Thomas Doxiadis, Joseph Efremidis, Aristide Antonas.

We would also like to thank speakers at our symposium: Afrodite Al Saleh, Eleni Tzirtzilaki, Maria Theodorou, Panagiotis Tournikiotis, Zisis Kotionis, Maria Kaltsa, Dora Galani, Dimitrios Andriopoulos, Konstantinos Serraios, Nikolaos Ktenas, and Georgios Tzirtzilakis as well as the city of Athens for their interest in our project.

We furthermore express our sincere gratitude to the authors of the position papers. This section has added an indispensable broad perspective from experts in the field of architecture and urbanism in Greece: Aristide Antonas, Elias Constantopoulos, Andreas Giacomakatos, Dimitris Philippides, Georgios-Stylianos Prevelakis, Luca Turin, and Panagiotis Turnikiotis.

We also thank Olga Moatsou for her continuous help during the semester and for proofreading some of the content of this book as well as our student assistants Jakob Look, Malaïca Cimenti, Steffan Heath, Pierre Le François des Courtis, and Isabel Stella Alvarez for their extensive work on the Analysis, Urban Constitution and Student Project sections of this book.

We would like to thank Iasson Tsakonas for his continuous and enthusiastic help in organizing the Athens trip as well as his support in many other areas.

We would like to thank our sponsors without whom neither our study trip nor this publication would have been possible: the Holcim Foundation, the John S. Latsis Public Benefit Foundation, and Oliaros.

This publication will also be available as an ebook on the Latsis Public Benefit Foundation webpage: <http://www.latsis-foundation.org/en/1/homepage.html>

Editing :

Harry Gugger
Gwendolyn Kerschbaumer
Götz Menzel

Graphic Design :

Nicole Udry, Jonathan Hares

Architectural model photography :

Eik Frenzel

Printing :

Druckerei Odermatt AG

English corrections :

Josephine Macintosh

Translation forward :

Richard Squire

Copyright :

2011 Laboratoire de la production
d'architecture (lapa)
Institut d'architecture, Faculté ENAC
École Polytechnique Fédérale
de Lausanne

EPFL ENAC IA laba
Ackermannshof
St. Johanns-Vorstadt 19 – 21
4056 Basel
<http://laba.epfl.ch/>

OLIAROS



Teaching and Research in Architecture

Today the question of teaching architecture and of research in architecture is pertinent. The role of the architect in the building trade is changing rapidly and the profession needs to define and defend its realm of influence. The formation of professionals will have an impact on the direction of the profession in the future. This publication presents the teaching methodology of the Laboratory for the production of architecture (lapa) at the EPFL, Switzerland. The approach to teaching in architecture at lapa is informed by the procedures and project experience of international practice and the desire to establish a comprehensible and trans-disciplinary culture of analysis and design in architecture.

The application of the teaching method is exemplified by the study of Athens, Greece.

Laboratoire de la production d'architecture (lapa)
Institut d'architecture, Faculté ENAC
École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne