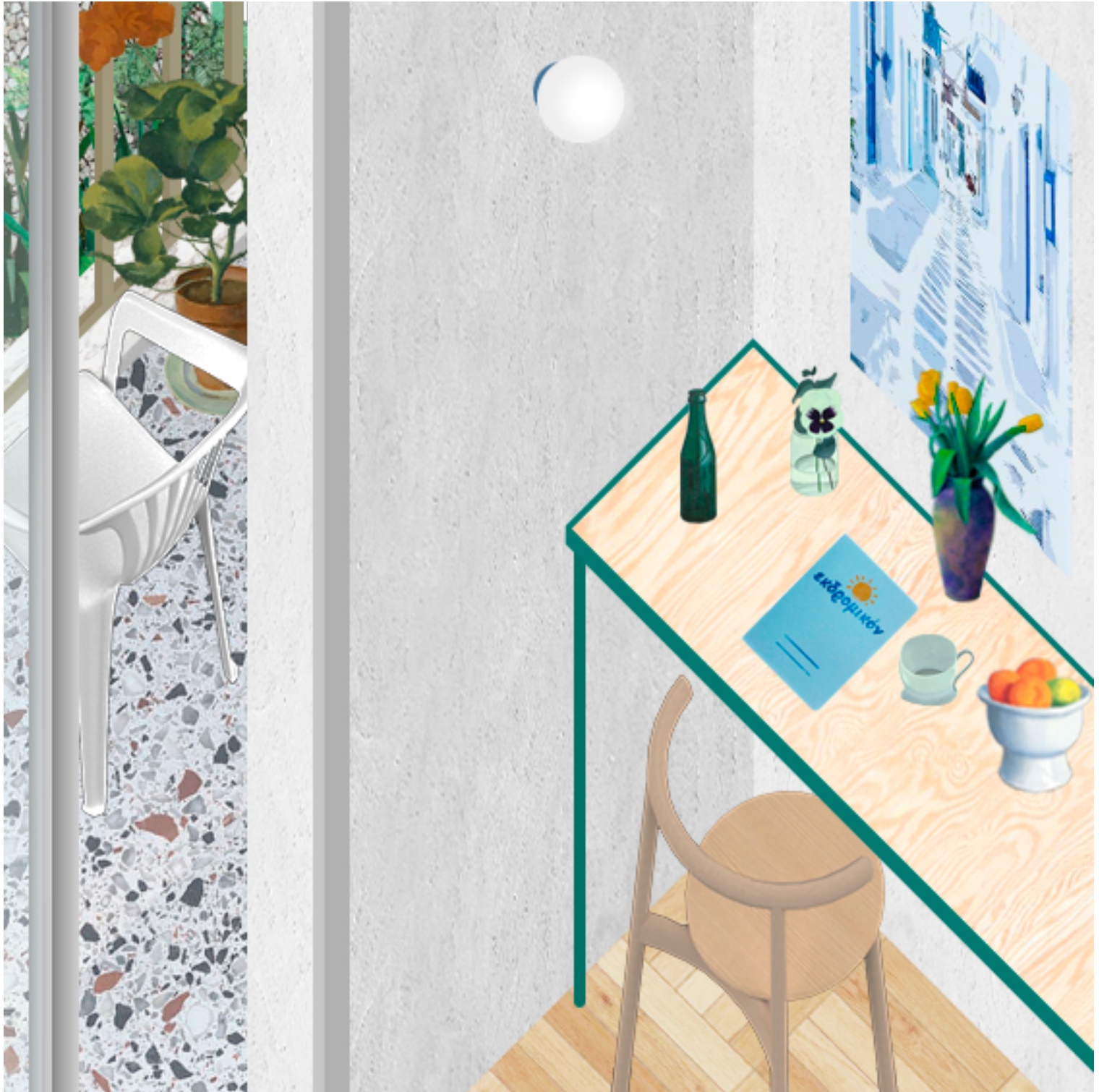# RESEARCH PAPER

Custom-made Polykatoikia tapestry of shared ownership.

The reinterpretation of the Athenian Polykatoikia in the area of Exarchia

Papaoikonomou Zoe

Collage of the Exarcheia neighborhood in the site block of the project, illustration by the author

PROLOGUE

This project was inspired by my experiences living in European cities, which brought to my attention the unique characteristics of Greek cities and their Polykatoikia buildings. My first impression of Nicosia made me wonder, "Where are all your Polykatoikia buildings?"

During the interwar period, urbanization drove people to Athens for better job opportunities and economic recovery. They brought a countryside mentality, fostering neighborhood and small community life within Polykatoikias.

The term Poly-Katoikia, literally "multiresidence" is a composite word, from poly, translated as multi, and the noun katoikia, dwelling. The construction is built with reinforced concrete. It originates from modernism, retains traditional and neoclassical elements, treated like custom-made furniture by its users and architects. Athens, unlike European cities, has diverse architectural facades and adaptable designs. Athens, contrasting with European standards, defies uniform architectural facades. Its architectural tapestry, marked by flexibility and adaptability, accommodates remarkable diversity within a singular archetype.

The purpose is to expand the potential for communal living in the "Athens of property." Redefining Polykatoikia expands communal living in Athens. Understanding various scales—neighborhood, urban, and building—I address new design challenges, including minimal living spaces.

 A new design of Polykatoikia will be proposed by exploring key interior spaces (Terrace, Balconies, Foyer, etc.) to establish collective character and activity among tenants, fostering interdependence and interaction. By researching social identities from the street to the rooftop, I plan to bridge these areas with intermediate social spaces. The goal is to create a new dwelling type that retains the spatial and social essence of the archetypal Polykatoikia for innovative living.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

This paper delves into the complex nuances of Polykatoikia, positioning it as both a contemporary housing paradigm and a timeless architectural instrument shaping the trajectory of the modern urban landscape. Embarking from the Athenian city as the epicenter of this research, one is compelled to characterize it as a kaleidoscopic metropolis, teeming with vibrant contrasts that blur the lines between tradition and modernity, rural quaintness and urban dynamism, affluence and deprivation, as well as the temporal realms of the past and the future.

Athens, in stark contrast to European standards, defies the conventions of a uniform architectural facade. Its architectural tapestry, marked by flexibility and adaptability in its primary habitation type, remarkably accommodates diversity within the confines of a singular architectural typology. This urban landscape, often subjected to architectural critique, has, despite nearly a century of reconstruction and development, emerged as a functional testament to urban efficacy.

Consider, for instance, the iconic Acropolis, an enduring symbol where history coalesces with the contemporary and the quotidian. This immortal edifice engages in a dialogue with the modern city, traversing the layers of architectural epochs that surround it. An itinerant observer descending from the Parthenon towards Syntagma Square and the Hellenic Parliament embarks upon a journey through distinct architectural phases: commencing with the ancient grandeur of Periclean Athens, transitioning through the neoclassical allure of Plaka reminiscent of the vibrant setlements of the islands aesthetics, and culminating in the modernist zenith represented by the Polykatoikia structure.

Concurrently, disparate epochs of daily existence coalesce seamlessly. Vertically evolving mixed-use configurations, with commercial enterprises occupying ground-level premises and residences gracing upper floors, epitomize this nuanced interplay. This intricate relationship extends to the balconies, forging an indirect interface with the cityscape and, in a broader sense, establishing a unique communion between the upper floors and the venerable Acropolis.

CHALLENGES FACING THE ATHENIAN POLYKATOIKIA

The Athenian Polykatoikia, the apartment building that has been emblematic of the skyline of the city from the 1950s to this day, is yet again facing challenges. Some challenges have to be understood in all their social detail, thoughtfully overcome, and met in combination to revitalize and reconfigure the Athenian Polykatoikia to meet the needs of our time. The severe economic crises and austerity measures that have affected Greece have essentially limited the ability of local governments and residents to invest in urban improvements and infrastructure. Financial limitations hinder efforts to maintain and enhance Polykatoikia buildings, resulting in their gradual decline.

The severe economic crises and austerity measures that have affected Greece have significantly limited the ability of local governments and residents to invest in urban improvements and infrastructure. Financial limitations hinder efforts to maintain and enhance Polykatoikia buildings, leading to their gradual decline. The combination of these factors creates a complex and often adverse environment for the preservation and revitalization of the Polykatoikia, highlighting the need for integrated and holistic approaches to urban planning and community engagement. The control and development of Athens are not fully in the hands of its residents.

The increase in Airbnb leasing has affected Polykatoikias and made housing unaffordable for Athenians while it has also altered the composition of neighborhoods. It is now harder for long-term residents to rent an affordable house as more landlords are turning their properties to short-term rentals. Most importantly, the disruption changes the very nature of Polykatoikia from homes to lodging used in emergency circumstances. constant arrivals of tourists can bring about disruptions, insecurity, and a loss of community character in the spaces so important for any structure of Polykatoikias. On the other hand, the prices of properties are raised because of the higher demand for short-term leases, and it becomes difficult for citizens to acquire their own

houses. In this case, Airbnb does not only limit the availability of affordable housing, but It also undermines cultural identity in areas that have long been communities where different industries coexist creating conflicts between inhabitants and tourism.

Usually, urban development and planning decisions made on the highest government levels do not take into consideration the opinions and needs of those residing there. This withdrawal of power from policymakers reduces linkages between decision makers and those whom such decisions directly affect resulting in developments that may be inappropriate as per residents' In fact, due to these multiple owners, buildings suffer neglect, as owners find it difficult to agree. Additionally, Polykatoikia buildings do not have common areas to foster community engagement and workspaces that encourage community interaction. The architectural design fosters an ethos of extreme individualism, as people feel isolated from their neighbors in densely populated buildings. Polykatoikia buildings lack community areas such as gardens, shared terraces, or multi-purpose spaces. Public spaces are lacking in the city and Polykatoikia buildings, and thus are not controlled by its residents. As each Polykatoikia building lacks communal areas that would facilitate the construction of a sense of community, as well as the encouragement of a social relationship, the argument is reinforced. Within the city, the establishment of a sense of community and an experience of collective choice-making within a Polykatoikia building is unlikely. Consequently, it leaves them no incentive to care about Polykatoikia as a whole and as a space that belongs to everyone and everyone should care about it.

The physical and social isolation in Polykatoikia buildings is exacerbated by their design and the urban environment. A lot of residents do not connect with their neighbors at all, or with the larger community. Here, disengagement refers to more than just the spatial proximity people have with one another; it is also due to the lack of social indices in these buildings.

Moreover, gentrification is very intense in Athens, mainly in areas where there is a great presence of Polykatoikia. In this case, the permanent residents have a high chance of experiencing out-migration whenever the market value and rents increase. Gentrification may change social life in neighborhoods reflecting lower long-term permanent residents and substituting permanent ones. The problem lies in finding ways to regenerate these areas without removing the historical and cultural identity.

To summarize, the Athenian Polykatoikia has had an important historical role as a solution for the city's housing needs and encouraged social cohesion, yet there are now various issues that Polykatoikia faces, from aging infrastructure to the need to be modernized and energy-efficient. From aging infrastructure to the need for modernization and sustainability, addressing these issues is imperative for the preservation and continued relevance of this iconic architectural form in Athens.

At the same time, it would be important to raise questions that arise in modern urban life. I intend to create a scheme that will coexist with all these elements that have contributed to Greek urbanity and shaped the city as it is today.

THE ARCHITECTURAL EVOLUTION OF THE ATHENIAN POLYKATOIKIA

In Greek architecture, there is a strong preference for the new over the old. Old buildings, even if not historically significant, certainly possess some virtues but are often neglected and not maintained. The prevailing mentality dictates that the only solution is to build something new, with the phrase "It's nice because it's new" echoing from my childhood.

Despite the existence of a significant contemporary architectural history and urban culture, Greece experienced a period from the late '90s until the economic crisis where the architectural approach was quite superficial. After the Olympic Games, many projects were abandoned and not maintained, a situation worsened by the economic crisis. Even on a smaller scale, the same attitude is observed. Great Polykatoikias, carefully designed and constructed, are now dismissed and considered to have lost their charm.

Growing up in a landscape dominated by modernism and Polykatoikias, the historical and aesthetic importance has been ignored, even though the way of life within have been accepted and

subconsciously people enjoy the benefits of urban living. Now, the importance of this architecture is clear and this paper will study this typology. The Polykatoikia, as an architectural and now Greek typology of the city, has an aesthetic and social significance that must be acknowledged and maintained.

The introduction of the Polykatoikia (apartment building) in the 1930s marked a significant shift in Athens' urban landscape, driven by housing demands and legal changes regarding floor ownership. Early polykatoikias, like the famous Blue Apartment Building in Exarchia, showed combinations of modern architectural forms with utility. After the World War II, they developed more into international architectural trends with the use of material innovations, and the Antiparochi system which provides room for development of the urban land that is highly considered where an individual is allowed to exchange their land for apartments.

In the 1970s and 1980s, discussions developed over the architectural identity of the buildings and their impact on the environment. Athens' Polykatoikias today are evolving to include contemporary trends as well as green initiatives in a dynamic interaction between historical legacy and modernity.During 1821, after the revolution and liberation from the Ottoman Empire, there was a sense among Greeks of wanting to erase the past and un-pleasant features of their history. In this regard, one can almost literally see the impulse of the new beginning reflected onto the physical and cultural landscape. The aspects of the Ottoman influence were oftentimes destroyed or simply allowed to crumble beneath the new, more "European" tastes. These decades also saw the eradication of the conventional forms of cultural articulation such as Karagiozis, a superior form or shadow puppet theater during the rule of the Ottomans. Let me now elaborate this definition, pointing out that, due to its mocking of social and political problems, Karagiozis for many Greeks turned out to be a chain with the past, the one they identified as hindering their well-being in the future. The very fact that Karagiozis was and remained such an integral signifier of Greek cultural identity shows how there is always tension between the need for progress and recognition within the modern Western world and the preservation of those elements considered remarkable to the national heritage. This dichotomy between erasing the past and maintaining cultural continuity has continued to influence Greek society and its approach to both history and modernization. *(Figure 02)*

Architectural evolution over the centuries in Greece has been predominantly destructive rather than organic. This persistent opposition to Eastern influences and elements reminiscent of disobligingly historical periods is starkly evident in the architecture of the modern Greek city. The mentality that the grass is always greener elsewhere has become deeply ingrained in society. For over two hundred years, the city has been repeatedly demolished and rebuilt, each time under new terms and conditions. There is a reluctance to embrace the layers of history that have shaped Greek culture, opting instead to remember selectively what we feel proud of. This tendency often follows external trends and movements without charting an independent course. Consequently, the architectural landscape of the Greek city evolves almost automatically, lacking a coherent and self-determined direction that acknowledges and integrates its rich historical legacy.

 In the example of Athens, its peculiarity sets it apart from other European cities. The model of Polykatoikia buildings initialy may have invaded the Greek city again as an import, but life in Greece and its needs shaped and absorbed it into the local urban life. Even neoclassicism, which the Greeks embraced and assimilated fully as a purely Greek element, was uprooted after the arrival of the new Western modernism. *(Figure 03)* Today, the trend for high-rise buildings, which is prohibited by law in the city center due to the importance of the Acropolis Hill, has appeared in the suburbs, so that Greek reality aligns with international architectural trends. Polykatoikias have been criticized by the same residents who will always oppose their own and praise the Europeans. Models discovered and applied in other cities with different needs and histories will always seem better and ideal. The evolution of Polykatoikia as a residential model and as a multi-layered architectural typology continues to progress and adapt to the needs of the time.

The Polykatoikia building is introduced in the 1930s, when the first models of vertical development appear, coinciding with the passage of the 1929 law regarding floor ownership. *(Figure 04)* During the 1930s, Polykatoikia emerges as a response to the need for housing in the expanding Athenian city center. However, it does not yet constitute a prevalent model for many. During this

period, Polykatoikias showed significant audacity, according to Maro Kardamitsi-Adami, Associate Professor of Architecture at NTUA, in an interview titled "Blue Apartment Buildings." She states, "Adaptation to the environment and integration, characteristic of Polykatoikia, is not yet a priority. It excels only in the integration of architectural volume." In 1933, the Blue Apartment Building is constructed in the Exarchia area, becoming an emblematic, large-scale structure on Exarchia Square. It defines the surrounding space, giving significance to the area. During this period, the first example of combining modern architecture with simplicity of lines and functionality became evident. *(Figure 05)*

In the post-war period, Polykatoikia further evolves, reflecting international trends in architecture. The influence of modern architecture is evident in the design and the use of innovative materials. Until 1950, Polykatoikia evolves as a symbol of the urban landscape, combining modern needs and aesthetics. In the same period, from 1950 to 1960, the system of "Antiparochi" becomes widely known. *(Figure 06)* With this system, an agreement would be made between the owner of a plot and the contractor the owners would exchange for plot with a percentage free land to the contractor, who promised to deliver a specific number of apartments in exchange for completing Polykatoikia. This system has, however, been criticized from many corners, regarding the quality of construction, delays, and conflicts between the contractors and property holders. High numbers of these Polykatoikia have fragmented ownerships, which make it difficult to manage and make collective decisions effectively. As a form of real estate co-owned by many, often presents a problem of lack of consensus over what kind of maintenance, renovation, or community improvement should take place. This disjointed ownership leads to neglect and deterioration, as the coordination required for such endeavors becomes increasingly complex and cumbersome.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Polykatoikia became the subject of debates about its architectural identity and its relationship with the environment. Some structures try to combine modernism with traditional elements. Today, Polykatoikia in Athens continues to evolve, incorporating contemporary architectural trends and green initiatives, representing the dynamic interplay between the past and the future. *(Figure 07)*

This migration phenomenon had a big role in the development of the Athenian Polykatoikia. With waves of migrants flocking to the city from the countryside in search of better economic opportunities, the desire for cheap and effective housing went up and kept on going up toward a record high. A Polykatoikia, with an adaptable design to maximize urban space, would provide a practical solution for accommodating the growing population. This fact led to the establishment of multiple uses and integrated different communities into this architectural form, which resulted in the dynamic social fabric.

In other words, the history of migration in Greece is similar to a complex tapestry that weaves different threads into the historical, economic, and social fabric. Migration is part of Greek history since for thousands of years it has been geographically situated at the crossroads between Europe, Asia, and Africa. More recently in history, Greece has experienced waves of migration during periods of political turmoil and war. Emigration of great numbers, to the United States, Canada, and Australia in the first half of the 20th century, occurred due to economic distress and political turmoil. Following World War II and the Civil War that ensued in Greece, several displacements occurred within the country as inhabitants fled to other areas to seek refuge from the war. Greece went from being an emigration to an immigration country after the middle of the 20th century. Rapid industrialization in combination with economic development and labor shortages subjected people from the neighboring states, like Albania and Bulgaria, and later Middle East, Asia, and Africa to migrant labor.

In recent decades, there have been more challenges and opportunities of migration that are constantly raising their head to the Greek government. The breakup of Yugoslavia and the conflicts in the Balkan region caused major refugee inflows in the 1990s, while the breakup of the Soviet Union and economic turbulence in Eastern Europe have led to further migrant pressure. Moreover, Greece joined the European Union in 1981 and the Schengen Agreement in 2000, respectively, which eased mobility within the EU, and thus higher migration inflows originated from other European countries. Migration now is a process that would go on to beset Greece, given

global geopolitical forces, economic imbalances, and humanitarian crises. It is Europe's gateway for migrants and refugees fleeing from the Middle East, Africa, and Asia in the hope of getting respite and a modern life from a culture of insecurity, persecution, and poverty. Meanwhile, this permanent migration is a challenge and an opportunity for Greece to that extent, as it reshapes the society, its economy, and the political reality and simultaneously enriches it in terms of cultural variety and worldwide connections.

The impact of external migration on the use of Polykatoikia buildings and the community of Athens has been massive. Continuous waves of immigrants seeking economic betterment or refuge have inflated the demand for housing, especially in large urban centers such as Athens. Under these circumstances, the Polykatoikias with their dense and multi-story buildings constitute an ideal first resort for migrant people due to the fact that they are usually cheaper and more readily available than houses of other types. The growing number of newcomers, however, placed pressure on resources and infrastructure, and thus overcrowding and competition for housing began. For instance, Polykatoikias have been further subdivided or transformed to house more than one family or transient populations, impacting the social structure of these buildings and, of course, their neighborhoods. The process of integrating migrants with the communities in Athens is also problematic, as the differences in culture and existing socio-economic differences can rise to tensions and friction. However, its presence has given a new, colorful meaning to the cultural mosaic of Athens in shaping diversity and dynamism within the urban texture of the city. In this respect, the potential of Polykatoikias to be made to adapt to migrant populations reflects not only the flexibility of these buildings but also the adaptability of the Athenian communities in facing demographic changes and other societal changes.

THE ROLE OF POLYKATOIKIA IN THE URBAN TAPESTRY

The "Dom-ino" was one of the most famous and revolutionary architectural devised by Swiss-French architect Le Corbusier ever published. It was presented in 1914.*(Figure 08)* The term "Dom-ino" is a brilliant combination of the words "domus," which translates to house from Latin, and "innovation." This project concluded a brand new technique towards modern architecture and residential building.

The Athenian Polykatoikias mastered the doctrine of the open floor plan, thus leaving ample freedom in the interior layout of dwellings. With cleverly placed reinforced concrete columns and beams, it was possible to easily meet the need for spacious, flexible interiors customized for the needs of the residents. Releasing the exterior masonry wall from bearing the imposed loads permitted the introduction of a maximum number of openings for windows and balconies, the hallmark of the Athenian apartment building. *(Figure 09)*

It also invigorated the creation of useful spaces under the building, more so for parking or common areas, through which the added value of such residential complexes could be raised still more. A rich typology is identifiable; particularly, the presence of plenty of glass in the façades, continuous balconies, and the combination of materials like concrete and marble. The apartments inside are very well thought out with regard to flexibility yet exude various layouts and dimensions to cater to different needs. The elevated ground floor area (pilotis), designated for parking or communal use, is a distinctive and functional attribute.

However, although the Dom-ino model is characterized by standardization, the Athenian apartment building transcends this template. In "Typology: Paris, Delhi, São Paulo, Athens. Review No. III: 3" by Christ Emanuel, one can find numerous examples of apartment buildings with layouts that deviate from the archetype. *(Figure 10)* Such deviation occurs because the Athenian apartment building is prone to responding masterfully to the environment in which it comes to dwell, to the characteristics of the city's urban blocks. Such flexibility allows for a peaceful insertion into the urban fabric, and it leads to a substantial divergence from the initial generic Dom-ino scheme.

While the Dom-ino system underlines modularity and regularity, the Athenian apartment building emphasizes responsiveness to the peculiar demands of its site in a more dynamic way. This is evident in the manner that these structures fit into irregular shapes of plots, varying topogra-

phies, and architectural vocabularies found across their neighborhoods. They manage to acquire a unique architectural identity that is respectful and enhancing to the character of the setting. The flexibility in design extends to the same limits for the interior layouts: the same principles of an open-floor plan and modular construction are used in innovative ways to maximize space utility and aesthetic appeal. All these are but an expressive tapestry of architectural eminence that owes so much to the modernist trends of Dom-ino but evolves to keep pace with the needs of diversity, present in the urban landscape of Athens.

The Athenian Polykatoikia stands as a fine example of a refined development of the Dom-ino principles with a unique synthesis of standardization and customization, responding to the complexities of urban living, thus this new sensitivity retained the functional benefits of the Dom-ino system but also imparted a unique sense of local specificity to the structures, which are practical and deeply in rapport with their environment. *(Figure 11)*

The primary aim of this research is to document the complete collection of constructed Polykatoikia buildings in Athens from the 1930s to the present times, the research shall be based on selectively selected written resources, among them are "Athens' Polykatoikias 1930-1975," "The public-private- modern Athens and its Polykatoikia building." *(Figure 12)*

Jacobs' advocacy for vibrant, diverse, and pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods resonates with the spatial organization and social dynamics of Athenian Polykatoikia. This theoretical perspective emphasizes the importance of human-scale urban environments that foster community interactions and socio-spatial inclusivity. As Jane Jacobs famously stated, "Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody." This insight underscores the importance of inclusive and community-driven urban development.

Embarking upon a comparative discourse that juxtaposes Rem Koolhaas' "Delirious New York" with Athens as a small-scale metropolis, the objective will be to underline the many subtleties and oddities that Athens's architecture contains. Koolhaas heralds the ultra-high density of Manhattan, depicting it as a pulsing, churning anarchy that informs the place. The importance of solid skyscrapers and choked streets is that they create a feeling of tension and energy. *(Figure 13)* Athens, too, is beset with a high degree of urban density; it is just evolved differently. The city combines historical structures with modern developments, creating pockets of density around ancient landmarks. The juxtaposition of ancient ruins and contemporary buildings adds a layer of complexity to Athens' urban fabric. *(Figure 14)*

The book explores the impact of urban planning on Manhattan's character, emphasizing the grid system and the development of iconic skyscrapers. Koolhaas discusses the deliberate planning decisions that contributed to the city's unique identity. *(Figure 15)* Urban planning in Athens is influenced by millennia of history, resulting in a cityscape that integrates classical and modern elements. The challenge lies in balancing contemporary needs with the preservation of historical sites, leading to a more layered and complex approach to urban planning. *(Figure 16)*

Preservation in Manhattan often involves adapting and repurposing existing structures to accommodate the city's evolving needs. Koolhaas explores how historical buildings contribute to the character of the city while being integrated into new architectural developments. Architectural preservation in Athens is deeply rooted in safeguarding ancient monuments and archaeological sites. When historical buildings are kept and preserved, that creates a particularity of the urban environment. *(Figure 17)*

Ultimately, the analysis proceeds through the lens of comparative assessment, engaging in the comparison of "Learning from Las Vegas" and "Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture" by Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown with "The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture" by Pier Vittorio Aureli. This analytical effort tries to bring into light how dense historicity manifests in Athens—the city—by means of the layers of its architectural heritage.*(Figure 18)*

The architectural precepts of "Contradiction and Variety," as professed by Robert Venturi in his seminal book, "Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture," can be felt within the empiricist context of Athens. Venturi's insistence on the integration of conflicting and sometimes contradictory elements to create designs of increased complexity and aesthetic appeal is not farfetched. Furthermore, the juxtaposition of the "Ordinary and Extraordinary" permeates both the quotidian activities and inhabitants of the city, as well as the extraordinary moments that transmute a

space into an indelible repository of significance and meaning.

Athens, a city steeped in centuries of history, strongly incorporates elements of modernism. Polykatoikia began as a child of modernism and continues to adapt to the contemporary city. Although modernism's aesthetics involve simple lines, geometric shapes, and clean lines, Polykatoikia still carries elements of tradition and neoclassicism. It is perceived as a family residence that vertically develops. Users and architects of the time treated it as a custom-made piece of furniture. Thus, with unique designs and various materials, they emphasized decoration. Polykatoikia is for everyone. Depending on the user, you can find both a user like Pier Vittorio Aureli and a user like Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown.

INTERIOR NEIGHBORHOOD

This paper discusses Polykatoikia in terms of the social nature they adopt through the design of architecture in apartment buildings and common spaces. The free space around the inner courtyard is perceived as the center of social life: everyone gathers in those areas to enjoy the serenity of noon or for a chatty afternoon, such as the case of housewives chatting and gossiping over news while doing domestic chores like laundry.

The generosity of balconies to building facades allows for a highly versatile space-from the afternoon coffee setup with two plastic chairs and a small table to larger setups suitable for communal meals-this is a distinctly Greek apt use of outdoor areas as supplements to living spaces. It is actually features of Polykatoikia, such as staircases and elevators, that help generate a sense of community. People run into each other in these common areas and discuss their daily lives, or building-related issues.

All these communal elements come together on the rooftop that is available for all residents, which also is the place where social events of all tenants take place, often based on food, highlighting the social life in full action within the Polykatoikia space.

The work focuses on Polykatoikia analysis in three scales: the urban scale and its relationship with the city, the neighborhood scale and its relation with its environment and threshold, and lastly, the scale of the Polykatoikia building that concerns the dwelling and, by extension, the relationship of the residence with its inhabitant within the dwelling. *(Figure 19)*

Gentrification, as a phenomenon generated by the pressure of outside economical factors and real estate developments, touches Polykatoikia in a very critical way. Long-term residents are usually displaced due to rising property values and rents, and with them, the social fabric of the neighbourhoods changes. In this context, displacement is not just violent for the already uprooted communities but also for the attacks on a cultural and historical specificity that defines unique characteristics upon these areas.

It is only a partial number of the citizenry of Athens that holds control and development of the place. To a large percentage, the conditions of the urban environment are formed by other determining factors, whether these are political decisions, economic ones, or developers, who often take precedence, at the cost of local communities and their needs. Urban development and planning decisions, frequently made at higher administrative levels, usually need to pay more attention to the voices and needs of local residents. This top-down approach to planning exacerbates the disconnect between policymakers and the communities they serve, resulting in developments that may not align with the interests or desires of the inhabitants. Consequently, the absence of inclusive and participatory planning processes undermines the potential for sustainable and community-oriented urban development.

Economic constraints further exacerbate such issues. The drastic economic crises and the following austerity measures that hit Greece have fundamentally incapacitated any substantial capacity of local authorities and people to invest in rejuvenation and upgrading urban amenities and facilities. Financial resources do limit maintenance and upgrading of Polykatoikia buildings to be undertaken. Such a mix of factors weaves a complex and often inhospitable landscape for the preservation and rejuvenation of Polykatoikia, just as justification for integrative and holistic considerations in the urban planning and engagement with communities.

Athens, as a city with a long history and very different architectural heritage, opposes contemporary architectural design with particular difficulty. Polykatoikia, as a dominant form of housing, is a characteristic element in the urban landscape of the city, combining tradition with modernity. In this direction, the area of Exarchia is a vital example of this dynamic, where the architecture of the apartment building meets the cultural and social diversity of the neighborhood.

The Exarchia neighborhood stands out as something more than one of the oldest, aesthetically rich middle-class areas of Athens with particular cultural and political significance. Besides the architectural wealth of the area, Exarchia is characterized as something more than an authentic, vibrant, and rebellious probabilistically but also injustly enough as "unreachable" and a "Gallic village". It's a crossroads of different streams of ideas, open to all political stances, radical and liberal, yet with a strongly developing sense of collectivity and solidarity. Cultural and educational characteristics make up major features of Exarchia: the Archaeological Museum, the Law School, and Polytechnic School, for example. But full of contradictions, Molotov cocktails in the trash bins remind the visitor how near the flashpoints are. Furthermore, Exarchia has been used as a channel for various elements of other Athens areas, thus placing a heavy burden upon its residents.

CONCLUSION

In a way, the story of Athens' Polykatoikias constitutes a very dynamic play of architectural advancement, socio-economic intricacies, and cultural identity. From the moment they were initiated as an answer to the increase of housing demands through the gradual adaptations to modern challenges, polykatoikias embody resilience and flexibility as an integral part of Athenian urban living. In any case, challenges such as neglect, economic constraints, and the impact of gentrification will compromise their survival and cultural value.

Cooperative ownership structures or condominium associations may be established to smoothen the decision-making process and help implement effective maintenance and renovation initiatives to retain the charm of these historical structures in overcoming these adversities. Due to either design or redesign, communal spaces in the building layout bring the dwellers of a common building closer to each other and build a strong social relation, leading to reductions in common social isolation these buildings face.

These are problems with multiple dimensions that need a comprehensive approach, not only in physical aspects but also through community involvement, architectural heritage preservation, and sustainable urban development. Yet their contribution to the making of the urban mosaic of Athens and the creation of vibrant communities is evidenced by the lasting heritage of the polykatoikias.

Perhaps now may be an opportune moment for the Polykatoikia with its stoic concrete facades to into vibrant canvases, where the inhabitants get to paint their spaces with personalized hues and textures, in so doing resuscitating both their physical form and collective spirit.

The purpose of this work is the redefinition and reinterpretation of the Athenian apartment building on an empty plot, through the architectural design, dividing all its elements that enrich the architectural palette of the city. Spaces such as the large entrances, the foyer, the concierges, the uncovered inner courtyards and the skylights in the offering, be present in the design of this model that aims to utilize timeless fragments of the Apartment building by strengthening the relations of the residents by restoring the collective consciousness. These areas will be able to be a larger part of the Apartment building, strengthening the collectives and the feeling of the neighborhood. Perhaps if more space is provided that encourages collective activity while respecting the properties and particularities of the residents as units, a more collective consciousness towards the building itself and by extension the city of Athens will be achieved.

Figure 01. Karagiozis performance with the urban landscape in
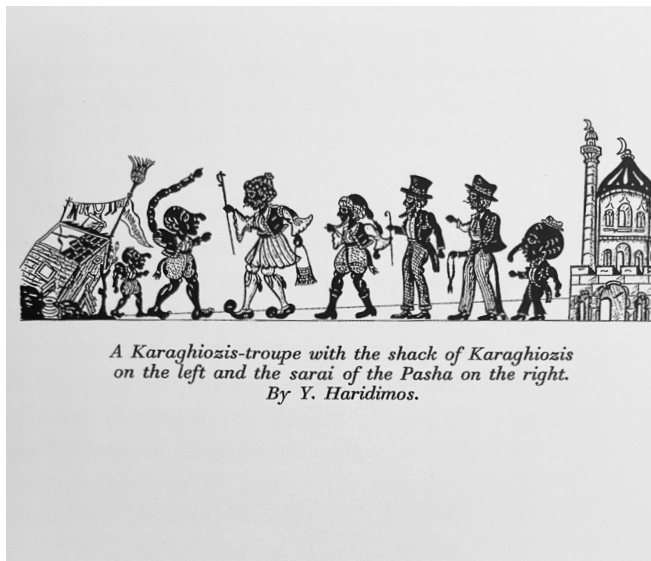the background, painting by Fotis Rammos

A Karaghiozis-troupe with the shack of Karaghiozis
on the left and the sarai of the Pasha on the right.
By Y. Haridimos.

Figure 02. The main characters of the Shadow Theatre, with Kara-
giozis himself and his son on the left, near their shack. In
the opening scene of each performance, the hero's hut on the
left and the Ottoman Pasha's saree on the right can be seen. The
protagonist moves, literally and figuratively, between the two
buildings, which represent the two opposite worlds, as is also
evident from the image. The figures are designed by the famous
cartoonist Giorgos Charidimos.
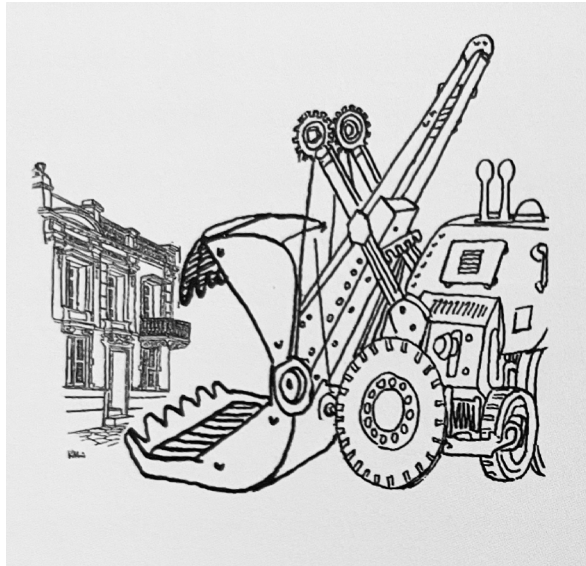
Figure 03. A theoretical bulldozer inexorably devours the neo-classical houses of Athens to make room for apartment build-ings, 1973
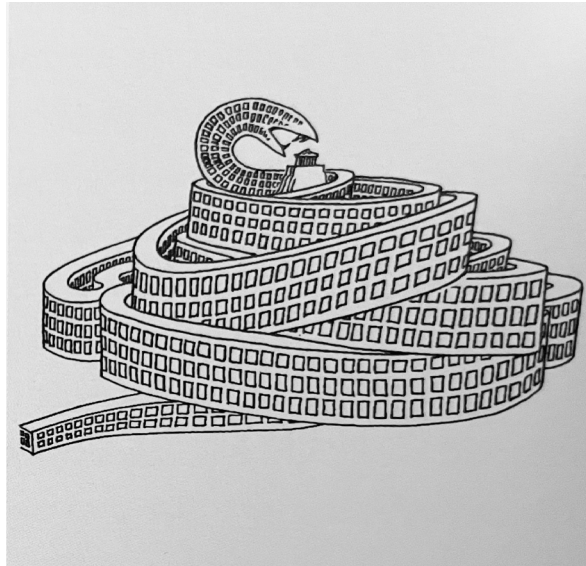
Figure 04. The cartoon by Kostas Mitropoulos, 1973. An imag-
inary snake of infinite length, with a body made of apartment
buildings, prepares to make its fatal bite on the Parthenon.

Figure 05. Athens, Exarcheion Square and the Blue Apartment
Building in the mid-1930s/ Archive Benaki Museum - Photo:
Facebook One picture, a thousand words

ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ

ΕΦΗΜΕΡΙΣ ΤΗΣ ΚΥΒΕΡΝΗΣΕΩΣ

Ἐν Ἀθήναις τῇ 9 Ἰανουαρίου 1929 ‖ ΤΕΥΧΟΣ ΠΡΩΤΟΝ ‖ Ἀριθμὸς φύλλου 4

ΠΕΡΙΕΧΟΜΕΝΑ

Νόμοι

ΝΟΜΟΙ

(1)

Περὶ κυρώσεως τοῦ ἀπὸ 21 Σεπτεμβρίου 1926 Ν. Δ. ἐπερὶ ἀνακλήσεως Διαταγμάτων μειαθέσεως ἀξιωματικῶν εἰς διαθεσιμότητα».

Νόμος 3735

ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ

Ἔχοντες ὑπ' ὄψει τὸ ἄρθρον 75 τοῦ Συντάγματος, ἐκδίδοτὸν ἑπόμενον νόμον, ψηφισθέντα ὑπὸ τῆς Βουλῆς.

Ἄρθρον μόνον.

Κυροῦται τὸ ἀπὸ 21 Σεπτεμβρίου 1926 Ν. Δ. ἐπερὶ ἀνακλήσεως Διαταγμάτων μεταθέσεως Ἀξιωματικῶν εἰς διαθεσιμότητα δημοσιευθὲν εἰς τὸ ὑπ' ἀριθ. 326 τοῦ 1926 φύλλον

Ἄρθρον μόνον.

Ἐπιτρέπεται εἰς τὸν Ὑπουργὸν τῶν Στρατιωτικῶν νὰ ἀνακαλέσῃ δι' ἐφ' ἅπαξ ἐκδοθησομένου Διατάγματος Διάταγμα μεταθέσεως ἀξιωματικῶν εἰς διαθεσιμότητα, ἐκδοθὲν κατ' Ἀπρίλιον τοῦ 1923».

«Ὡς ἐπίσης νὰ προβιτάσῃ δι' ἑτέρου Διατάγματος, ἀφ' ἧς προήχθησαν νεώτεροί του, Ἀξιωματικὸν δικαιούμενον τῆς τοιαύτης προαγωγῆς καὶ θανόντα πρὸ τῆς κατὰ Νοέμβριον 1920 γενομένης ἀποκαταστάσεως τῶν ἐκτὸς τοῦ Στρατεύματος Ἀξιωματικῶν, ἐφ' ὅσον ἐθεωρήθη ὡς μηδέποτε μέχρι τοῦ θανάτου του ἀπομακρυνθεὶς καὶ οἱ νεώτεροί του προήχθησαν κατὰ τὸν χρόνον τῆς ὑπηρεσίας του, οὕτος δὲ παρελείφθη ὡς τυγχάνων ἐκ τῶν αἰχμαλώτων τῆς Ἀνατολικῆς Μακεδονίας τοῦ 1916 καὶ μετὰ τὴν ἐπάνοδόν του τεθεὶς τὸν Σεπτέμβριον τοῦ 1919 εἰς ἀπόταξιν συνεπείᾳ τῆς αἰχμαλωσίας του.

Εἰς τὸν Ἡμέτερον ἐπὶ τῶν Στρατιωτικῶν Ὑπουργὸν ἀνατίθεμεν τὴν δημοσίευσιν καὶ ἐκτέλεσιν τοῦ παρόντος Νομοθετικοῦ Διατάγματος, ὑποβληθησομένου εἰς τὴν Βουλὴν πρὸς κύρωσιν ἅμα ὡς αὕτη ἀνέλθῃ.

Ἀθῆναι τῇ 21 Σεπτεμβρίου 1926.

Ὁ Πρόεδρος τῆς Δημοκρατίας
Π. ΚΟΥΝΤΟΥΡΙΩΤΗΣ

Τὸ Ὑπουργικὸν Συμβούλιον

Ὁ Πρόεδρος
Γ. ΚΟΝΔΥΛΗΣ

Τὰ Μέλη
Θ. Πετιμεζᾶς, Ι. Δροσόπουλος, Γ. Διβάχος, Α. Πρέκας, Δ. Νάκος.

Ὁ παρὼν νόμος, ψηφισθεὶς ὑπὸ τῆς Βουλῆς καὶ παρ' Ἡμῶν σήμερον ἐκδοθείς, δημοσιευθήτω διὰ τῆς Ἐφημερίδος τῆς Κυβερνήσεως καὶ ἐκτελεσθήτω ὡς νόμος τοῦ Κράτους.

Ἐν Ἀθήναις τῇ 4 Ἰανουαρίου 1929.

Ὁ Πρόεδρος τῆς Δημοκρατίας
ΠΑΥΛΟΣ ΚΟΥΝΤΟΥΡΙΩΤΗΣ

Ὁ ἐπὶ τῶν Στρατιωτικῶν Ὑπουργὸς
Θ. Σοφούλης

Ἐθεωρήθη καὶ ἐτέθη ἡ μεγάλη τοῦ Κράτους σφραγίς.

Ἐν Ἀθήναις τῇ 4 Ἰανουαρίου 1929.

Figure 06. Perspective view of the Dom-ino system, 1914. Image from Le Corbusier & Pierre Jeanneret, OEuvre Complète Volume 1, 1910-1929, Les Editions d'Architecture Artemis, Zürich, 1964

1910-1920

These are the first restrictions on the maximum height of buildings in Athens (1919), street width, floor height and the introduction of the concept of the penthouse as a recess of the top floor.
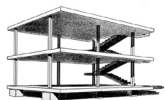
1919
22m Total height

1920

Quantities are introduced concerning the minimum distances from the boundaries of neighboring plots, the depth of plot and building, the maximum heights for each floor, the width and length of balconies and bay windows. (1929)

1922
26m Total height

1929
23m Total height

1930

In the period from 1932 to 1941, modern type buildings appear, with a central staircase and elevator, as its use becomes general. Among them begins the grouping into functional zones within the apartment. The entry space continues to shrink.
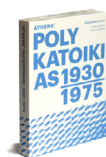
1934
18m Total height

1940

Between 1942 and 1954, the floors have a central staircase and apartments on either side. Compared to previous periods, the floor plans are relatively simplified.
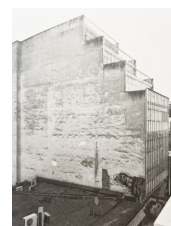
1950

During the period from 1955 to 1975, the intense construction of the counter-provision,the unification of the functional zones and the central placement of the staircase and the placement of the balcony along the facades remain as features.

1955
31m Total height

1960

Later, the apartments of these apartment buildings are often divided into smaller ones for rent. Later and with the economic prosperity of the 80s and 90s, the construction of apartment buildings continues to evolve with minor variations.

1970

Initially, a release from the limitations of the conventional static frame was attempted, while the entire structure consists of walls and slabs without beams or parapets and without columns, with large cantilevers on the balconies.
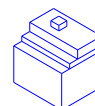
1973
31m Total height

1980

The basic rectangular volume of the building is a complex cubist composition of partly full and empty spaces. The building consists of the ground floor (pilotis) and five floors, which include six one-story and nine two-story apartments.
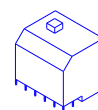
1985
27m Total height

Figure 07. Architectural regulations that have changed per decade for Polykatoikia typology and tools that feed the research
Illustration by the author
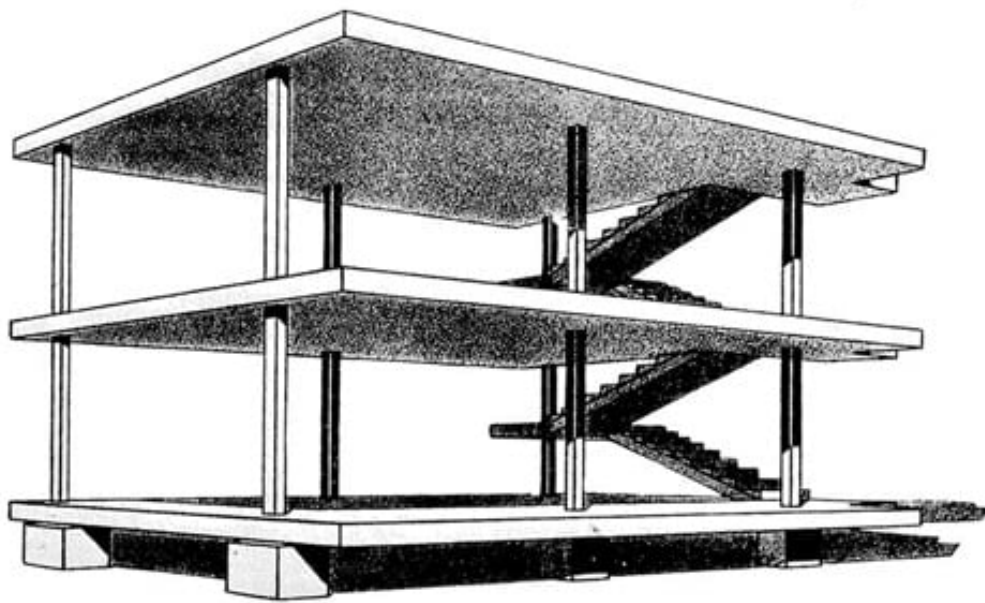
Figure 08. Perspective view of the Dom-ino system, 1914. Image from Le Corbusier & Pierre Jeanneret, OEuvre Complète Volume 1, 1910-1929, Les Editions d'Architecture Artemis, Zürich, 1964

Figure 09. Manolis Baboussis, Kalithea, 1986 silver print, 26 cm x 40 cm, Courtesy of the artist, and Ileana Tounta, Contemporary Art Center, Athens
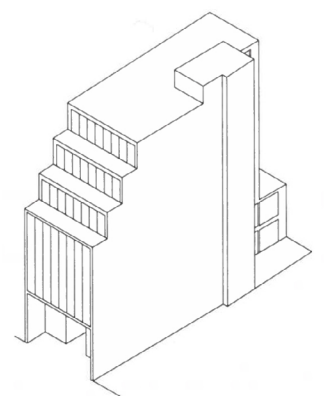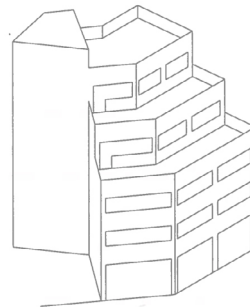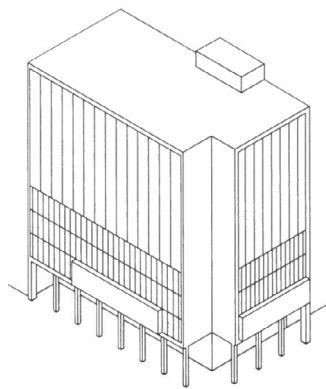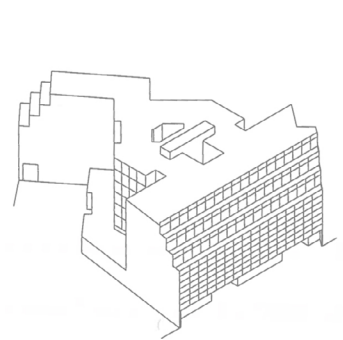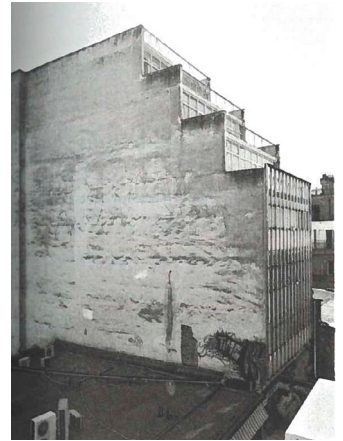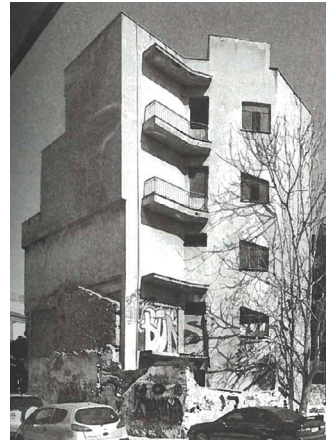
Konstantakopoulos
Building
Lekka Street, Peri-
cleous Street, Emman-
uel Vourekas, 1964, 7
Floors, 1600 m2

Athinas Street,
Kratinas Street,
Athinas Street, Ger-
asimos Klaoudatos
SA, 1961, 9 Floors,
373 m2

Lepeniotou, Ogygou,
Street, Psirri,
Eleutherios Makris,
1972, 5 Floors, 101
m2

Avramiotou Street 4,
Panagiotis Maglaras,
1977, 7 Floors,230
m2

Figure 10. Emanuel Christ, Victoria Easton, Christoph, Typol-
ogy Paris Delhi sao paulo athens: Review NO III. Zürich: Park
Books, 2015.

Figure 11. Illustration of high-rise buildings in Athens. Because in many cases of multi-storey buildings the address listed in the Registration Books of the Attikovoiotia Town Planning Office was incomplete, their location was approximated. Source: The author's research in data from the Registration Books of the Urban Planning Office of Atticoviotia (1925-1941) and in bibliographical sources. Map origin: Town planning map of Athens Diamantopoulos.
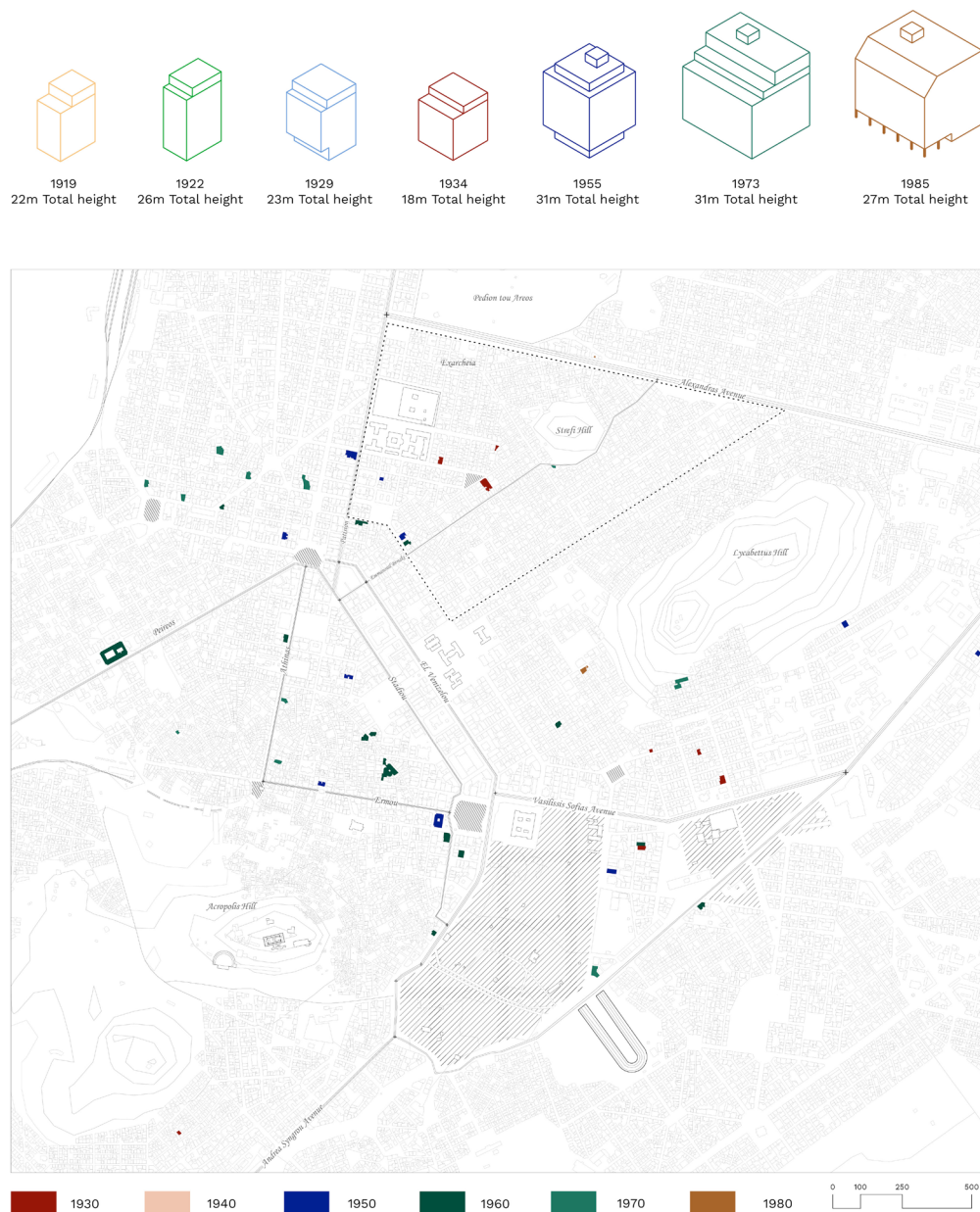
Figure 12. This map gathers important buildings that were built from the 1930s to the 1980s and on top are indicative of the Town Planning regulations diagrammatically by decade.
Made by the Author

Figure 13. Delirious New York, Rem Kool-
haas, 1978

Figure 14. The experience of the city
expands beyond the center and the all
too famous ancient remains, towards the
periphery with exciting, new flexible
monuments for the future, Point Supreme,
2010

Figure 15. Delirious New
York, Rem Koolhaas, 1978
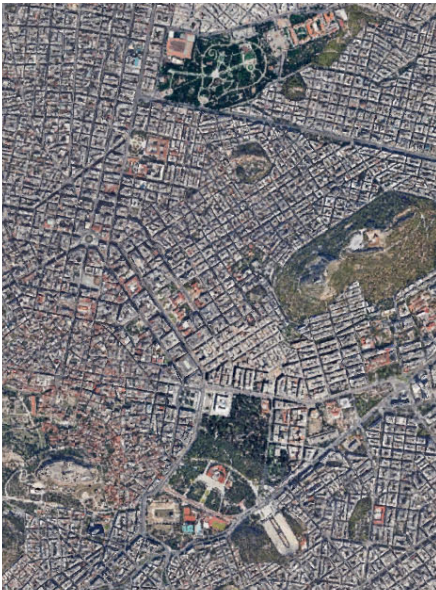
Figure 16. Aerial photo-
graph from the center of
Athens.
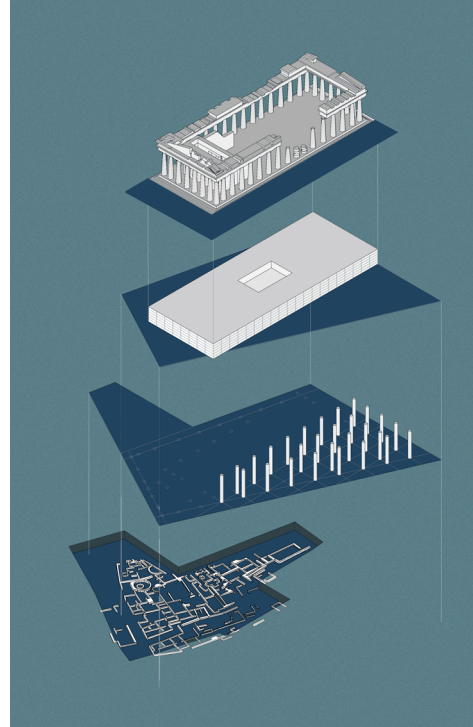
Figure 17. Bernard Tschumi's
approach to the design of
the Acropolis Museum aimed
at creating a space that not
only houses the archaeolog-
ical treasures but also en-
gages with the historical and
cultural context.
Zoe Papaoikonomou, 2017

Figure 18. Visualization entitled "Learning from Athens", Authored by Point Supreme, Photo Source: pointsupreme.com

Internal Migration

Civil War of 1946-1949

The 1950s marked the massive internal migration to Athens, affecting the life of the city and creating a need for housing.

Antiparochi

Passed into law in 1929 (on "horizontal ownership")

Antiparochi: The landowner gave his land to the contractor for free, who promised to give him in return a certain number of apartments after their completion"

Social Coexistence

The Polykatoikia buildings created new social dynamics, with different social strata coexisting, balancing the classes and creating a more democratic environment.

It may be that in the flats on the **upper floors** we could find the most **prosperous citizens of Athens** and on the **lower floors** or in the basements, the **less privileged**, but **everyone, rich and poor, lived in the same building.**

1950   1960

1950   1960

Functionality of Buildings

Despite the lack of architectural elegance, the apartment buildings offered functional and comfortable apartments, with important infrastructure such as **elevators** and innovative **heating systems.**

As O'Sullivan writes, the presence of large, **wide balconies** around each apartment contributes significantly to the creation of a **friendly residence for the tenants.** "Many times these balconies are so spacious that they can fit a large table with chairs and lots of plants."

By law, the construction of a complete apartment above the 6th floor resulting in the creation of the now characteristic phenomenon with the wide, **Athenian terrace.**

Multicultural Presence

The Polykatoikia buildings contributed to the mixing of classes and the democratization of the city, while **the shops on the ground floor** (cafes, restaurants, etc.) offered **variety to Athenian life.**

Multiprism Approach

The "Polykatoikia" exhibition presents a **multi-prismatic approach**, incorporating both **architectural and social elements**, enhancing **the public debate on the apartment building.**

1970

Ownership in Greece

Aiolou Street 1989

Ownership in Greece today reaches the (unthinkable for other European capitals) rate of 74.6%, due to the apartment building.

1980

1980

Figure 19. List of the social and political elements that influenced the rise of Polykatoikia in Greece and that enrich the research

Illustration by the author

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