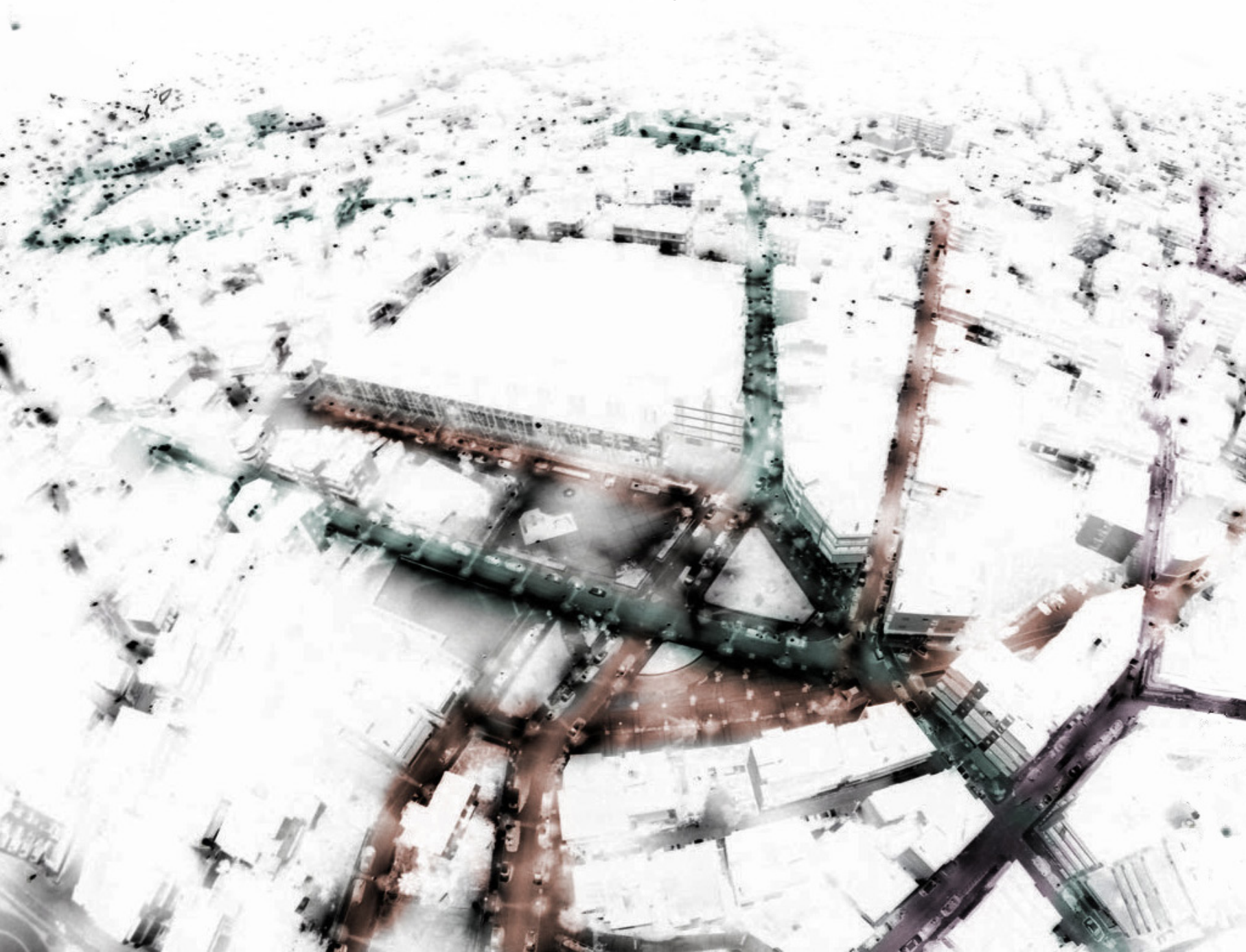


Re - Creating Spatial Narratives:
The case of Agrinio city



Panagiota Mylona

Re - constructing Spatial Narratives The case of Agrinio

Msc Thesis
1016 | 2017

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booklet layout, editing and cover photo by author

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” **Heureux qui, comme Ulysse, a fait un beau voyage ...**

english translation: “Happy he, who like Ulysses, has made a beautiful journey...” (poem by Joachim du Bellay)

This project is the result of a nine - month research and hard work at TU Delft, as part of my graduation in the Master of Science in Urbanism. It has been a long journey, characterised both by joys and sorrows. However, it was, is and will always be one of my most life - changing adventures, having equipped me with multi - faceted knowledge and experience.

Thus, I would like to thank my two mentors, Luisa and Francisco, and express them my gratitude for their valuable insights and guidance, but most of all for their belief in my work and capabilities. Their diverse comments helped me to deepen my understanding of the processes affecting the urban fabric and change my perspective when it comes to the merge of urban disciplines and design. Undoubtedly, they have constituted a great source of inspiration and admiration, not only as mentors, but also as individuals.

A big hug and a wide smile are what I owe to my friends, all these persons of different backgrounds and nationalities that came into my life the past few years, but fiercely influenced it. Their inputs, opinions and constant motivation have always given me strength and will to carry on, no matter what. Gratefully thankful to my two Libras, Marcello and Chih Chu, for their infinite support, incentive and feedback.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my family for always believing in me and providing me with every possible means to pursue my dreams. Without them, this journey would not have been launched and I will never stop appreciating their love, trust and effort.

Premise

This project derives as a product from the thesis conducted for the Urbanism master. The thesis consists of three phases.

The first phase is based on research. During this phase, the general problem field is explained, as an attempt to define and diagnose the issue. After mentioning the motivation for the decision taken upon the selected location, the specific issues of the case are demonstrated resulting in the problem statement.

The second phase is about the design research. Both the objectives and the methodical line of approaching the issue are explained. For the problem statement to be tackled, a research question is formulated along with several sub-questions. A hypothesis follows which, together with the theoretical framework set, is indicating the process of the sites' selection while answering the research question.

After highlighting the importance of a multi-scalar approach, a strategic agenda is developed, the visions for the related scales are scale and the design principles for the sites of intervention are set.

Last but not least, the phase of design emerges. In this, the design principles are implemented on the selected sites, tested and evaluated. This process helps to define the design and provide the final products.

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image 1
source: www.thebest.gr



A **crisis** (from the Greek “κρίσις” - krisis [plural: crises] is any event that is, or is expected to lead to, an unstable and dangerous situation affecting an individual, group, community, or whole society. Crises are deemed to be negative changes in the security, economic, political, societal, or environmental affairs, especially when they occur abruptly, with little or no warning. More loosely, it is a term meaning “a testing time” or an “emergency event” (<https://en.wikipedia.org/>).

The **economic crisis**, specifically, is a serious threat to the existing structure of the fundamental principles and rules of the social system which calls for critical decisions within limited time and under uncertainty (Rosenthal, Charles, Hart, 1989).

The first deep economic crisis has its roots back in 2007, beginning from US and resulting in a international recession that is now threatening many countries of the European Union (Reinhart, 2008). The European Central Bank's policy to abruptly suspend lending to weak states in such a critical moment for the global economy gradually affected all the South European countries (Cabral, 2010). At the forefront of this are the so-called 'Pigs' (P.I.G.S.). Various imaginative columnists use this acronym to refer to the countries Portugal, Ireland, Greece, and Spain, which derives from their initials (Guillén, 2000).

For Greece, the economic crisis started in 2007 and, as it becomes clear, it is not only a characteristic of this country. Instead, it has appeared in many countries ruining their socio-economic structures and fiercely influencing their urban environment (Seretidou, 2012).

Experiencing the economic crisis along with its severe impacts, an urgent need for acting emerges. Apparently, the pre-existing Greek development model was characterised by structural disadvantages that the country has to face in order to recover its economy. From now on, necessary measures should be taken, such as adopting new actions and policies that will bring the country out from recession and austerity, towards a sustainable economic development. After all, Greece has a great culture and wealth to offer and should be given the opportunity to improve.

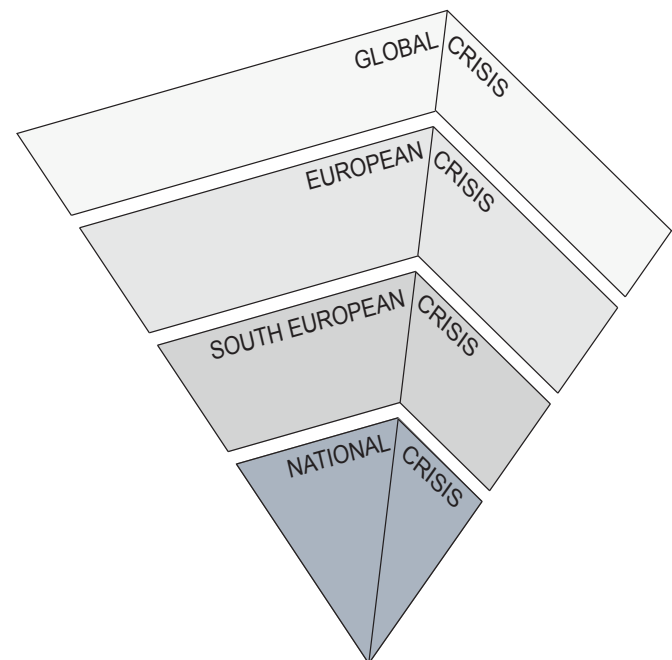


figure 1: crisis' levels
source: by author

PHASE I: RESEARCH

PROBLEM FIELD

For the first time, Greece is in the midst of an international economic crisis. Trapped in this prolonged phase of economic decline, a number of serious impacts are observed in multiple sectors, eventually creating a vicious circle of harsh phenomena in economic, political, social, spatial, environmental, aesthetic and cultural / identity level.



figure 3: headlines of Greek newspapers regarding the crisis
source: by author

Current issues and trends

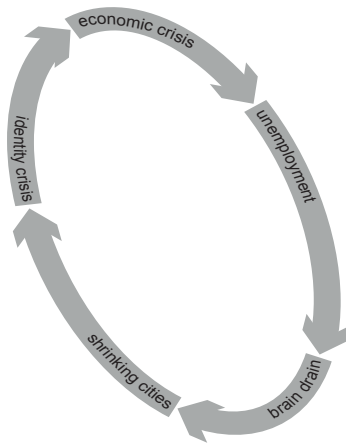


figure 2: the vicious circle of problematic issues
source: by author

Greece resembles a devastated country with the recession continuing and, over the last years, this phenomenon has radically changed the everyday life of Greeks, causing a rapid degradation of living. Investors are abandoning the country, the “padlocks” of businesses are proliferating and their employees are found “on the road”. It could be argued that the biggest repercussion of this crisis lays in the employment sector. The increase of the unemployment rates are, in their turn, leading to a dramatic increase in the population migrations, especially to those of the young population that are leaving the country in search for a better life and opportunities somewhere else. The result of this abandonment is the shrinkage of cities, with their population only growing older and older and their identity being shaken. An abandoned city has few to offer to its society and vice versa.

An unmotivated society has few to offer to its city. Therefore, space and society are both imprisoned in a vicious circle of problematic issues (fig.2) that do not allow them to recover and strengthen their character.



image 2
source: www.ihavenet.com

Economic crisis

An economy goes through mainly two phases over a financial cycle: the phase of growth or flowering and the phase of decline or recession. The economic crisis is one of these two phases of the economic variations and specific the phase of the decline, that is when the financial activity is a continuous contraction (European Commission, 2009).

The characteristics associated to the phase of decline is stagnation or reduction of investments, reduction of consumption, reduction of income and employment. The phases vary both in their duration and to the extent that the phenomenon is observed. Therefore, some times the phase of the decline ends quickly, and as a result the economy recovers relatively painless, while some other times it leads to a prolonged recession with all the aforementioned symptoms (Livadaros, Gargalianos, 2014).

Greece is today facing the greatest economic crisis since the post-war period and is expected to have greater depth and duration than in other EU countries. The structure and the problems are not only different, but also maintained, daily become larger and sharper instead of narrowing down under the conditions of the global crisis (Busch, 1985). This crisis is causing a dramatic impact on social life, since the reduction or the absence of income causes losses in prosperity and pushes large sections of the population into unemployment and poverty (Marmot, Bell, 2009).

Among others, the economic crisis also has a strong influence in the field of urban design, planning and development (Macdonald, Larice, 2013). Urban forms and processes exist to satisfy basic human needs, such as a healthy environment, a nice integration between built and natural areas, an adequate urban infrastructure enabling accessibility to health and education, mobility and connectivity, safety, psychological peace of mind and sociability, all anchored in public spaces throughout the urban areas (Castells, Burkharter, 2009). Within the prolonged phase of the decline, cities fail to respond to such demands. The complexity of the situation reveals many of the economic and social aspects of the crisis, such as businesses' closing down or bankruptcy, unemployment, foreclosures and poverty. These factors generate severe problems of shrinkage, deterioration and degradation of large zones in the cities.

For instance, the mass closure of commercial enterprises and the increase of vacant stores in key shopping streets of Greek cities lead to the depreciation of the building stock,



image 3

source: www.hellasforce.com

the depopulation of entire areas and the degradation of the urban environment. This applies especially to cities that depend upon local consumption, government subsidies and public employment, thus being even more vulnerable to financial crisis. The impact of the crisis upon cities is further intensified by the organizational and financial deficits of the local governments and hence, their inability to respond effectively to the growing economic, social and environmental needs of citizens (Kafkalas, 2014).

Unemployment rates

But as Greece is undergoing the phenomenon of the economic crisis, the labour market has undergone major changes due to the austerity measures taken in order to help the country to come out of the crisis. Thus, during this period, some completely new and different facts were generated on the labour market resulting in the creation of galloping unemployment. This shift of facts of the labour market is reflected in the statistics of companies undertaking studies on employment rates, supply and demand rates, and unemployment, such as ELSTAT company.

According to ELSTAT, during the first quarter of 2016, the unemployment rate in Greece was increased, reaching at 24.9% versus 24.4% during the fourth quarter of 2015.



image 4
source: www.protothema.gr

Employment decreased by 1% as the number of employed increased to 3,606,344 persons, while at the same time, the number of unemployed increased by 1.7% and stood at 1,195,084 persons. Compared to the first quarter of 2015, when unemployment was at 26.6%, employment rose by 2.9% while the number of unemployed decreased by 6.1%. The unemployment rate for women (29.5%) is significantly higher than the number for men (21.2%), while regarding different age groups, unemployment among young people of 15 to 24 years rose to 50.9% and among young women to 55.1%. Geographically speaking, the highest unemployment rate is observed in Western Macedonia with 33.3% and in Western Greece with 30.0%. In contrast, the lowest unemployment rate is found in the islands of the North Aegean Sea with 18.5% and the Ionian Islands with 19.6%.

A significant change has also been observed to the existing labour contracts, from full-time and stable employment to other new forms of jobs. Job rotation, uninsured work and part-time employment are some of these new forms that appeared during the last years of recession. (INE GSEE, 2015). Nowadays, among those searching to get employed, 12% is looking only for a full-time job, while 83.3% is looking for full-time but if it is needed it would compromise by working part-time. Finally, 4.7% is either seeking for a part-time job or does not care what kind of job it will find.



image 5
source: www.protothema.gr

As for the distribution of unemployment, taking into account the level of education, it was observed that the highest unemployment rate is among those who have completed several primary school classes (46.2%), while the lowest rates are observed among those with a doctorate or a master's degree (11, 3%), as well as graduates of higher education (18.4%). Of course, large is the percentage of those who quit their jobs with their own initiative, in search for better opportunities and living conditions.

Brain drain

As a result, at the same time that Greece is struggling to recover from its economic crisis and its unemployment rates, it is also facing the depletion of its most important asset: the human capital. A devastating human capital flight is luring away the best and brightest of Greece's workforce, activating an ongoing wave of emigration, also known as "brain drain". Although the term originally referred to technology workers leaving a nation, the meaning has broadened into "the departure of educated or professional people from one country, economic, or field for another, usually for better pay or living conditions"(Free Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2010).

As with any other human migration, the social environment is

often considered to be a key reason for the population shift. In source countries, like Greece, the lack of opportunities, political instability or oppression, economic depression, health risks and more contribute to this human capital flight. The causes of the migration for Greece are the high rates of unemployment, the lack of resources, infrastructure and collective social vision for the promotion of excellence, as well as the extensive prevalence of the moderates in Greek life (figure 8). More general causes are the labour relations, the taxes and other policies (Wildasin, 2014). Greece presents about 3% of the premium range of scientists worldwide, although the population of the country internationally represents only 0.15% or 0.20% from the 6.92 billion inhabitants of the planet (Kathimerini journal). Yet, despite the significant production of Greek scientists, 85% of those with a strong influence is not located in Greece.

The rate of the Greek migration is translated into 10% of the country's total university-educated workforce (Lambrianidis, 2011) and on a macro level, this movement is a clear brain drain (Alexiou, 2013). As Greece's unemployment rate reached 25.7% in January 2017 - more than double the 9.7% average for the European Union - the number of educated

young Greeks who have left the country since the beginning of the crisis rose to 180,000 (Lambrianidis, 2011). Overall, the survey of Endeavor, an international non profit supporting entrepreneurship, refers to more than 200,000 Greeks, most of them under the age of 35, who have left the country since then and are currently working abroad (figure 6). Those who leave often hold multiple degrees, masters or PHDs and manage to find jobs on the objective of their studies: 73% hold a master's degree, 51% hold a PHD and 41% hold at least a diploma from one of the 100 best universities of the world. In other words, Greece is losing its “youngest, best and brightest”, as a European University Institute study noted, also known as Generation G: young, talented, Greek. According to the EUI report, 79% of those who left Greece during the crisis were actually employed but felt that there was “no future” in the country (50%) or no professional opportunities (25%).

This brain drain has serious implications for the Greek economy, at a time when the country has lost 25% of its gross domestic product (GDP) since the crisis began — equally to the GDP lost by Western Europe and the U.S. (figure 9) during World War II, and has fiscal implications, affecting



image 6
source: www.brainrainpr.com

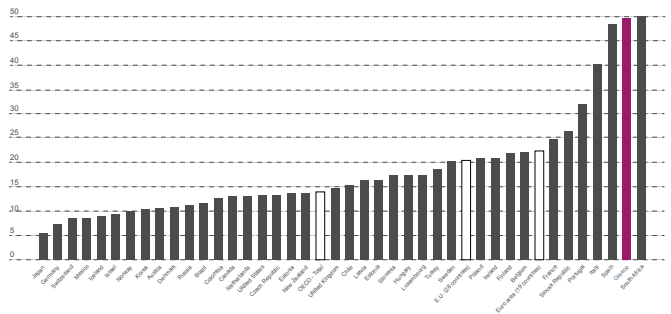


figure 4: unemployment rate for 2015, Q3.
the data for OECD countries refer to harmonised unemployment rates
source: www.oecd.org

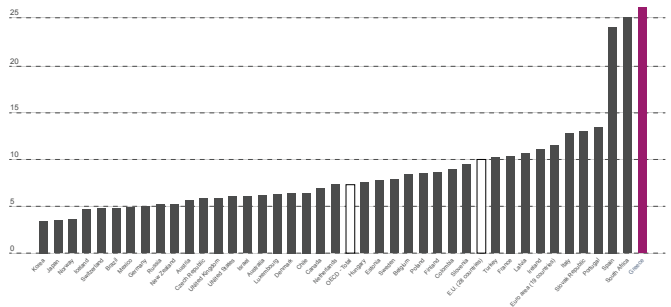


figure 5: youth unemployment rate for 2015, Q3.
the data for OECD countries refer to harmonised unemployment rates
source: www.oecd.org

income and consumption taxes, among others. But the brain drain also deprives the country of the capacity to generate higher-value production, said Joan Vidra, a former Moody's analyst who now heads the sovereign-ratings department at ARC Ratings. Even in tourism, despite the increase in the number of international visitors, total income decreased by 36%, according to a study by Endeavor.

Things could get even worse, as around 35,000 young Greeks are currently studying abroad and could decide to seek employment outside the country, the report noted. Not to mention the number of Greeks living in the country who are in the process of relocating. In January 2014, Greek newspaper "To Vima" published a study by a Greek market research firm Kapa Research, which showed that 70% of Greek recent graduates wish to work abroad and 10% are already actively looking for a job in a different country. The result of this brain drain is devastating. The investments of the country on the education of highly skilled workers end up worthless since these young creative forces after they graduate, they choose to depart for other countries, thus inevitably contribute to the productivity of other economies. What is left behind is a country growing old and hopeless.

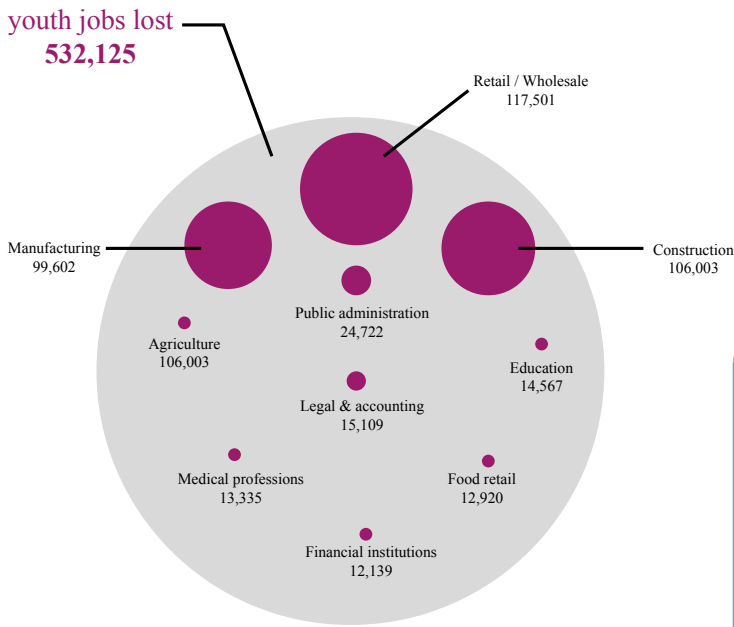


figure 7: reduction of Generation G
source: www.endeavor.org

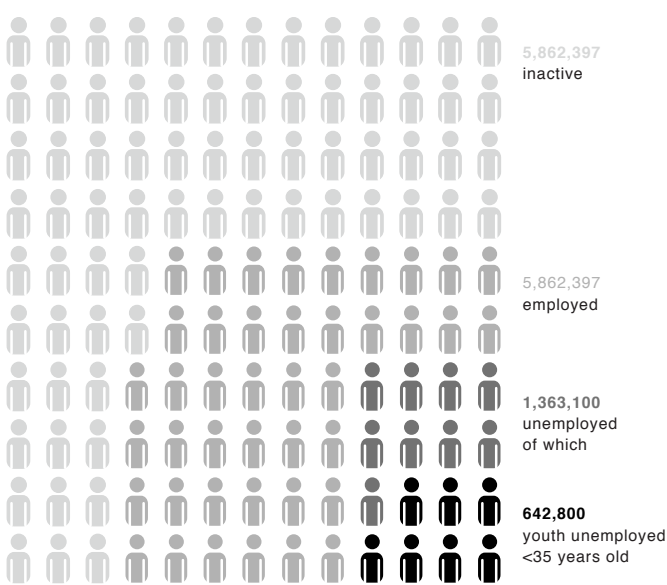


figure 6: Greece's workforce
source: Hellenic Statistical Authority

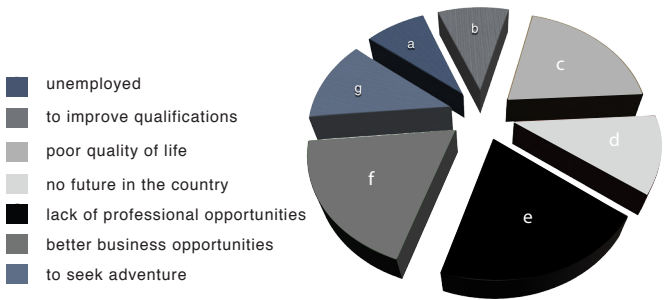


figure 8: top reasons for leaving Greece
79% were actually employed but felt that there was "no future" in the country (50%) or no professional opportunities (25%)
source: European University institute

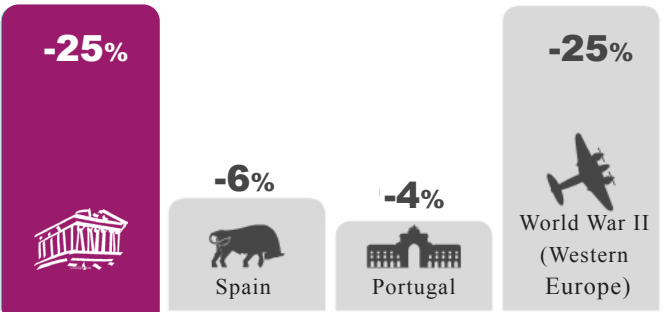


figure 9: unprecedented GDP reduction
Greece has lost 25% of its GDP since the crisis began
source: www.endeavor.org

Shrinking cities

It goes without saying that the economic crisis and its symptoms are clearly one of the causes of the multidimensional phenomenon of urban shrinkage. Urban shrinkage may relate to regions, metropolises, cities or parts of cities which have a significant reduction of the economic, social and demographic base, for more than two years (Pallagst, 2008).

In the context of new global economic conditions, such as the globalization and the European integration, unified city networks are created as well as expanded features of capital movement and relocation in cities and regions with more attractive salary and tax costs. This leads to a strong competition between cities in order to attract capital and businesses to maintain and enhance their potential growth. Urban shrinkage is the result of the inability of some groups of cities to cope with this competition (Hatziprokopiou, 2006). At the same time, and similarly, international crises such as the public debt crisis in the Eurozone, can create economic downturn leading to urban shrinkage: closing down of businesses, high rates of unemployment, middle classes' bankruptcy, population migration, appearance of abandoned buildings and neighbourhoods.

The impact of the international debt crisis in Greek cities since 2007 until today is an example of this kind of urban shrinkage. Under the new conditions of the evolving economic crisis, the Greek cities demonstrate strong shrinking features at

economic, spatial, demographic and social level (Gospodini, 2012). The consequences of this shrinkage transform whole urban regions (Pallagst, 2007). For instance, they can lead to a significant number of abandoned and vacant buildings due to changes in the dipole of supply and demand (Schwarz, 2012). In 2010, 56,000 medium-size businesses closed down nationwide, and in 2011 the number reached 60,000 (ESEE, National Confederation of Greek Commerce, <http://www.esee.gr>).

Identity / Societal crisis

Greece though is not going only through an economic crisis. Some also call it identity crisis. Ancient Greece was once a magnet for the world's intellectual elite. Scholarly work out of Athens contributed to everything from logic and philosophy to the politics that formed the basis of modern civilization. However, the country has lost its former glory. It is undeniable that Greeks experience a collective depression to a certain extent that they feel like having reached an impasse. Their self esteem is expressed through reminiscences of the past glories and a rage towards any evil, which deprived them from happiness, underestimated and punished them. This evil, fairly or unfairly, is the current political leadership, the system, the foreigner, the European, the Brussels bureaucracy (Gaveas, 2016).

In this sense of depreciation, schizophrenic feelings are born. Who are they; Where do they belong? Greeks can not



image 7
source: Michael Dalder/Reuters, Photographer



image 8
source: www.nationalpride.files.wordpress.com

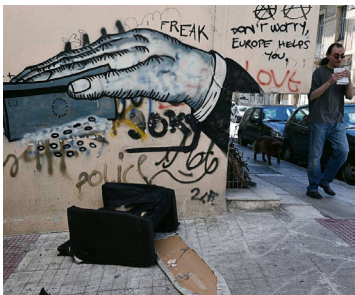
understand the depth and weight of their culture. That which they sense, they have forgotten how to embrace it in order to feel that it can configure them, and low self confidence make them feel inferior to their European partners. For a moment, they brag for being Europeans, and immediately the next minute, they denounce Europe.

The lack of their historical memory is also the root of such problems, while even more impressive is the denial of their tradition, identity, diversity and strong spirituality that they carry, and which could have boosted Greece's future and participation in the historical process. Over the years and despite the many of Greece's mainstream issues such as austerity, economic downturn, refugees, and corruption within the establishment, this identity crisis many Greeks carry is arguably the most poisonous of any issue, and is in fact the root cause of many problems in the country. Greece has reached at the most crucial crossroads in its history. Greeks, as a nation, as a collective subject, will either extinguish or will manage to integrate its historical tradition in order to exist (Karampelias, 2016).

Of course, this crisis concerns everyone, but it is especially reserved for the youth. Ultimately, it will soon become their burden to bring Greece back into the light. They hold the keys to the future and it is important to listen to what they have to say and what their vision for the future is.



image 9
source: www.popaganda.gr



images 10 - 14:
graffiti expressions
of the Greek youth
regarding the crisis
source: www.bloomberg.com
www.ethnos.gr



image 9
source: www.commonswikimedia.org

MOTIVATION

It became obvious that over the recent ten years, from 2007 to 2016, the multifaceted national crisis of Greece led to an increase in the dimensions of intense spatial and social problems, not only in the big urban centres but also in smaller regional cities (Karidas, 2013). However, despite the existing framework of urban planning policies and the multiple interventions of the European Programs and Community Initiatives concerning the growth of small and medium-sized cities of the country, the spatial and social problems are not being tackled but, on contrary, they are being continuously intensified.

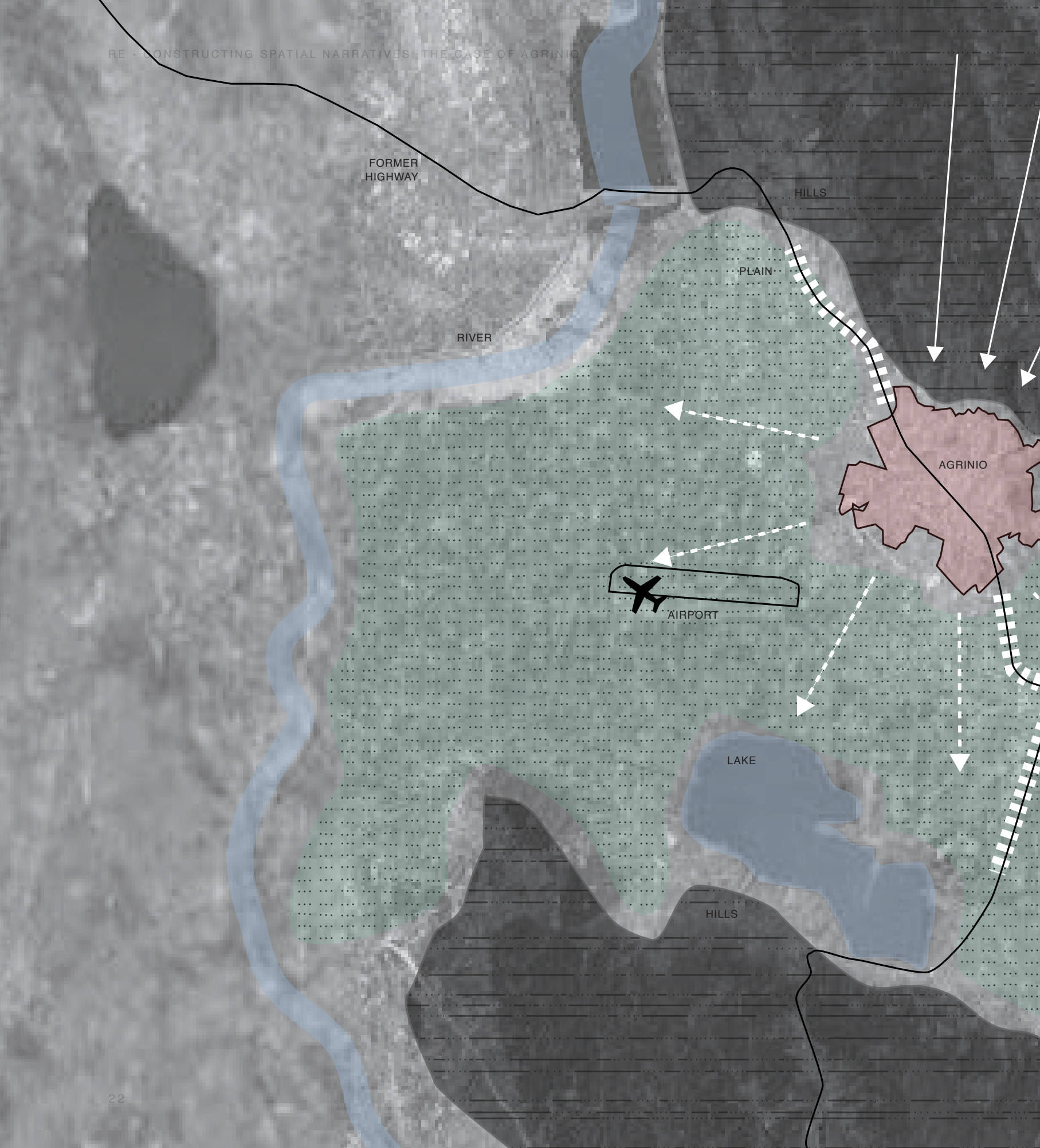
I was born in Athens but raised in Agrinio city. After leaving the city for my bachelor studies, my visits to my hometown were restricted to a week during Christmas, only to be close to family and friends. Six years later, after coming back, a wave of questions and concerns captured my thought in the view of the current situation of the city. Agrinio is a medium-size city in Greece that is also suffering from the current crisis and the prolonged phase of decline that is infesting the country. It is projecting all the trends mentioned before related to the crisis, and even more.

Economic crisis, high rates of unemployment, poverty, crime and illiteracy, reduction of the total population at the same time that the older one is growing larger, closing down of businesses, degradation of neighbourhoods, traffic problems, lack of infrastructure and open spaces, lack of spatial and social cohesion, lack of tourism and cultural identity are to name a few of the issues that are afflicting the city. As a result, its most vital component changed dramatically and in a catalyst way. Its youth, the lost Generation G that can be the driving force for regeneration and change. I also became part of this generation, the time I decided to do a master program in the Netherlands that could ensure me an occupation based on my objective abroad, after graduating.

Some years ago, while this generation was abandoning their homes, they looked into the future with optimism and hope. They believed that the admission to a higher education institution in the country constitutes the first step towards social recognition and self-realization. Now, a few years later, wandering in the streets of Agrinio, disappointment is the only thing you encounter when you come across young people. Most of them are graduates with qualifications and credentials, with years of hard work, thousands of hours in the classroom and even more studying in front books. I am one of them, with wings cut, dreams crashed and dignity

wounded. I share the same thoughts and fears. I eavesdrop their anger and their anxieties. The future lurks unknown, the opportunities are limited and in general, the city fails to provide them with a decent way of living.

However, in my opinion, the lack of opportunities is not the only factor that creates for Agrinio this sense of urgency. Today, as an architect and a future urbanist, I am able to relate this phenomenon to the structural forces of the urban fabric of the city itself, especially when the city is deprived from its past and history, without a distinguishable identity, thus without the sense of belonging and place attachment. As a result, people and especially the youngsters find it hard to create strong bonds with the place and feel related to it.



INTRODUCING AGRINIO



figure 10:
geographic position of Agrinio
& current expansion of the city
source: by author

Agrinio In The Regional Context

Agrinio city is the core of the Municipality of Agrinio which holds a central position in the Regional Unit of Aetolia - Acarnania, the fourth region of Greece in terms of population. The municipality is located in the Western Region of the country (figure 12), 277 km away from Athens, the capital city, occupying an area of 1,246.65 square kilometres and a population of 92,608 inhabitants according to the population census of 2011. It borders with the Municipalities of Thermo, Nafpaktos, Messolongi, Xiromero, Amfilochia (figure 14), as well as with the Regional Unit of Evritania of the Central Region of Greece. The capital of the Aetolia-Acarnania Regional Unit is the town of Messolonghi due to historical reasons, but Agrinio, being located almost in the centre of the county, is the city that gathers the advantages of the capital city, a fact that is supported by the amazing progress that Agrinio presents compared to Messolongi.

The municipality of Agrinio consists of 10 Municipal units, the ones of Agrinio, Agelokastro, Arakinthos, Thestieon, Makrinias, Neapoli, Panetoliko, Paravola, Parakabilion and Stratos (figure 17). The 30,42% of the municipal land consists of lowland while the 40.67% is hilly and the 28,90% is mountainous. Agrinio city itself is the largest city of middle-West Greece and constitutes the economic centre of both the county and the region. It has a population of over 80,000 inhabitants and along with Patras and Ioannina are the three biggest cities in the western part of the country.

Its position is strategic. From a morphological point of view, Agrinio is mainly a lowland, a bit hilly in the East part. It is surrounded by the biggest natural lake of the country, Trichonida, at its South-East and a smaller one, Lisimachia, at its South-West. Acheloos, the largest river of the country also runs through its West lowlands before emptying into the Ionian Sea (figure 10). Regarding the water element, there used to be quite a few streams as well crossing the city itself.

The settlement dates back to the ancient times, being situated just 3 kilometres North-East of the present city. It experienced a strong population boom during the last decades by attracting people from Epirus, Evritania, Trichonia and Acarnania, as well in the 1920s when it integrated refugees from Asia Minor, a fact that significantly influenced the city's life and structure. This local population movement towards the city turned Agrinio into the commercial and financial centre of the region. Tobacco and olives were the dominant productive features that made it agriculturally well known, formed its social grid, and determined the development of

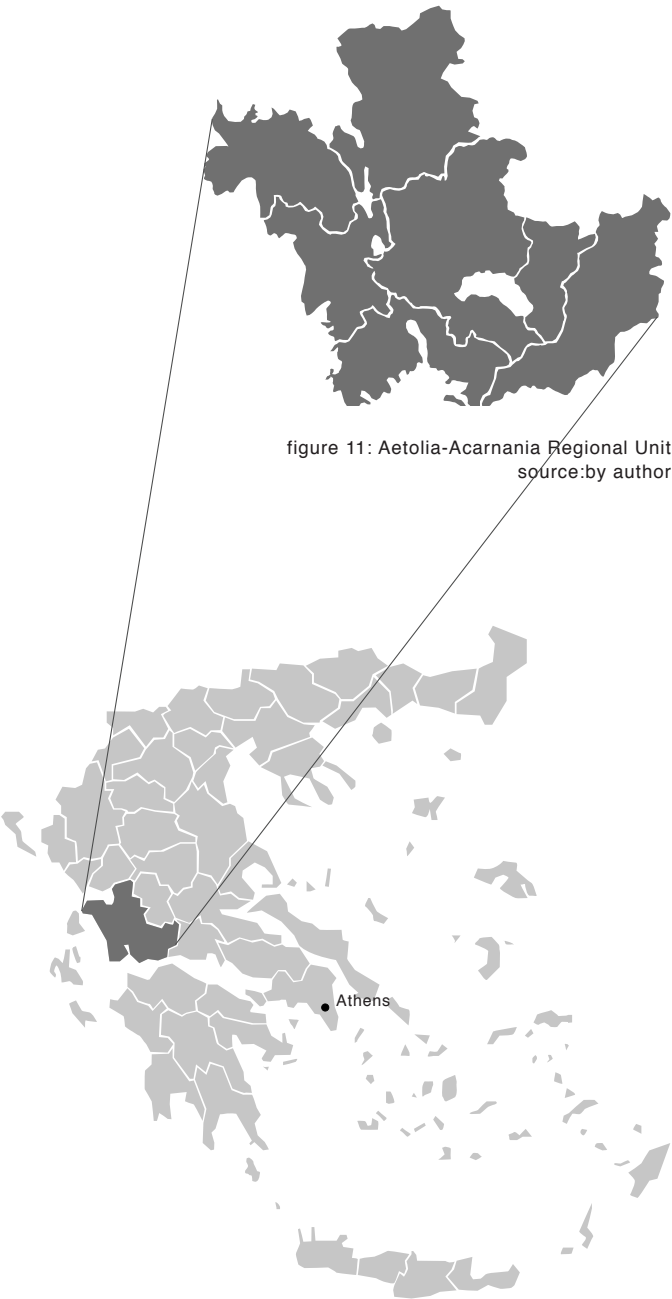


figure 11: Aetolia-Acarnania Regional Unit
source:by author

figure 12: Aetolia-Acarnania in the context of Greece
source: by author

the modern city.

Over the years, Agrinio lost its productive character and its former glory when the industries closed down and the economic crisis hit the country. The citizens turned to other sources of economy, thus the proportion of employed people in the primary sector is very low and only the tertiary one has been steadily rising (figure 13).

Besides being a production center, thanks to its fertile plain, Agrinio is also a transportation node. Since 2004, the area is connected with Peloponnese through the Rio-Antirio bridge. In terms of road infrastructure, the national highway of Western Greece (Ionian road) connecting Patras - Antirrio - Agrinio- Amfilochia - Arta - Ioannina is passing just a few kilometres away from it - although in the past it used to cross the city - (figure 19). However, the construction of the Ionian road did not take Agrinio into consideration and currently the city remains disconnected from it. The Municipality is already examining the possibility of providing a straight connection to the highway by widening existing provincial roads and making use of existing nodes (figure 20). It has to be mentioned though that the national highway (Ionian road) is still under construction at some parts along its length, especially at hilly areas (between Agrinio and Patras) or dominated by dangerous turns (between Amfilochia and Arta), causing inconvenience to drivers passing by the region. The rest of the Central Region of Greece is linked to Agrinio through the axes Lamia - Karpenissi - Agrinio and Levia - Nafaktos - Messolongi. It is obvious, therefore, that the city holds the most important location of the middle-Western Region of Greece and is also close to all main transport networks that cross it (figure 14).

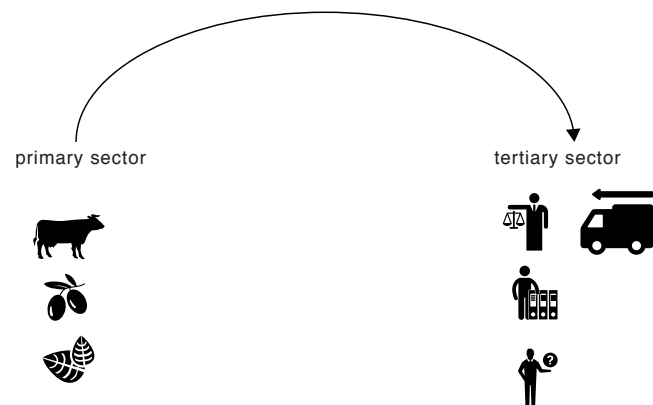


figure 13: the transition between sectors
source: by author



image: Aetolia - Acarnania map by F. Pouqueville
source: www.eng.travelogues.gr



figure 14: important connections with other big cities
source: by author



figure 15: Municipality of Agrinio in the context of Aetolia-Acarnania
source: by author



figure 16: Municipality of Agrinio and its natural surroundings
source: by author

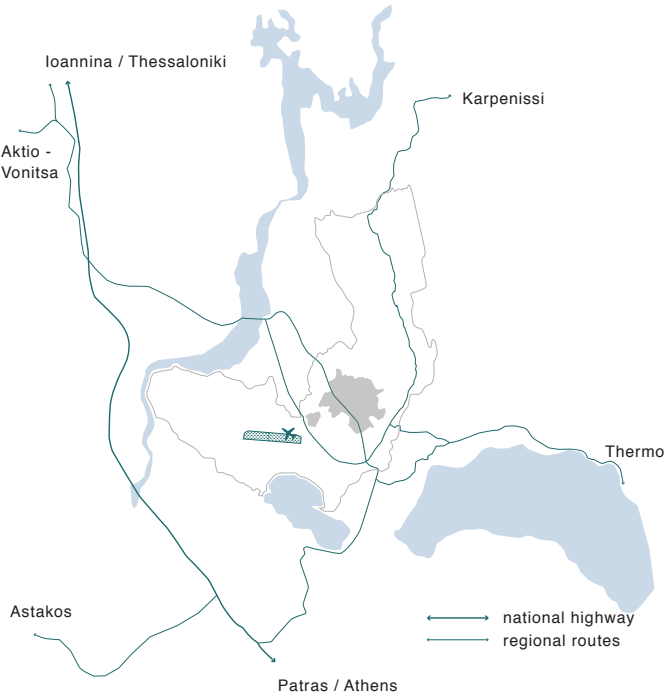


figure 19: regional network
source: by author

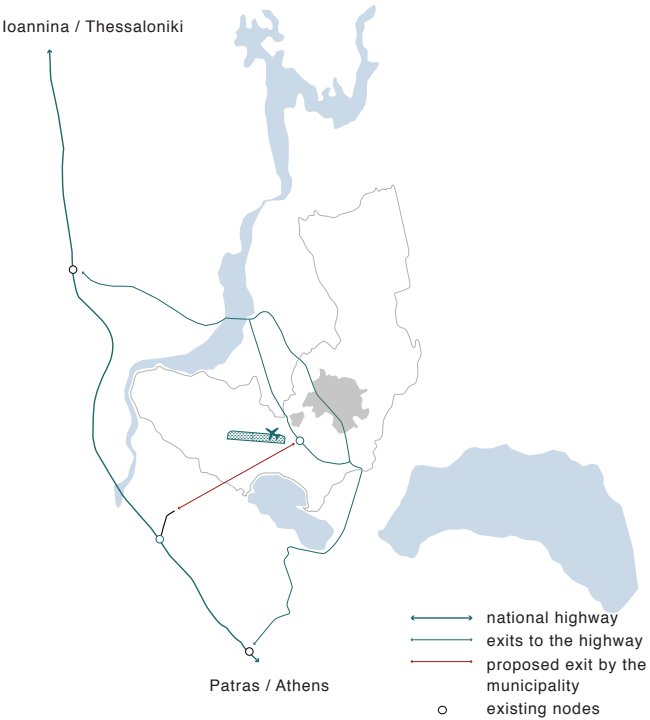


figure 20: connections of the city to the national highway (Ionian road)
source: by author



figure 17: Municipal Units of the Municipality of Agrinio
source: by author



figure 18: Agrinio city and surrounding villages
source:by author

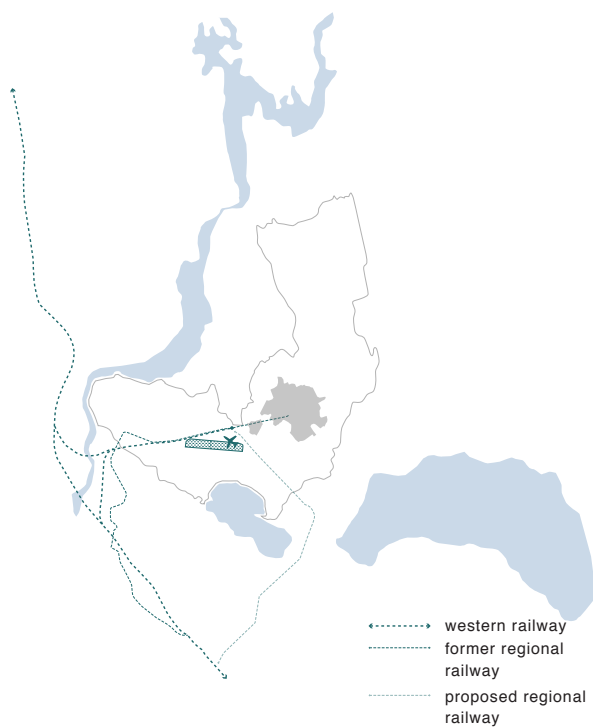


figure 21: railway connection to the western railway of Greece
source: by author



figure 22: provincial network
source: by author



image 11
source: www.foni.org.gr



image 12
source: www.agriniopress.gr



image 13
source: www.agriniopress.gr



image 14
source: www.discovergreece.com



image 15
source: www.theatrecomments.weebly.com



image 16
source: www.agriniopress.gr

Unfortunately, there is no railway connection to the rest of the country, although in the past Agrinio city was accessible via train for the transportation of goods. In 1990, the construction study of the Western railway was initiated and later on it was approved by the European Union as an important part for the Trans-European Transport Networks program. In 2011, the planning process was terminated as another side-effect of the crisis (figure 21). As far as air connections are concerned, the city possesses an airport. It is one of the oldest civil airports of the country and it first functioned in 1931, acting as a transition points for flights from Athens to Ioannina and vice versa. Its operation was suspended in 1977 after the World War II and remains abandoned. Since 1980, its premises are exclusively used by the the Air club of Agrinio (figure 22).

The region itself offers a lot of attractions and recreational activities (figure 23), yet unknown not only to Greeks but also to its inhabitants. At the airport, lessons of parachuting, paragliding and navigating of small aircrafts are given (image 11). At Lisimachia lake, people can enjoy swimming in thermal baths or birdwatching as it is breeding area for several rare species (image 16). At Lisimachia lake, birdwatching is also possible together with fishing, canoeing, wake boarding and hiking at the waterfront (image 12). For water sports fans, there is also the possibility of wind surfing at Acheloos river and rafting at Evinos river (images 14 &16). For the mountains lovers, climbing at Panetoliko hills is offered with camping at one of the biggest winter shelters of Greece, situated at the heart of the hills (image 13). Last but not least, for those with less wild but refreshing hobbies, hiking at Klessoura canyon is very popular as well as visiting and exploring several archaeological spots scattered at the whole area.

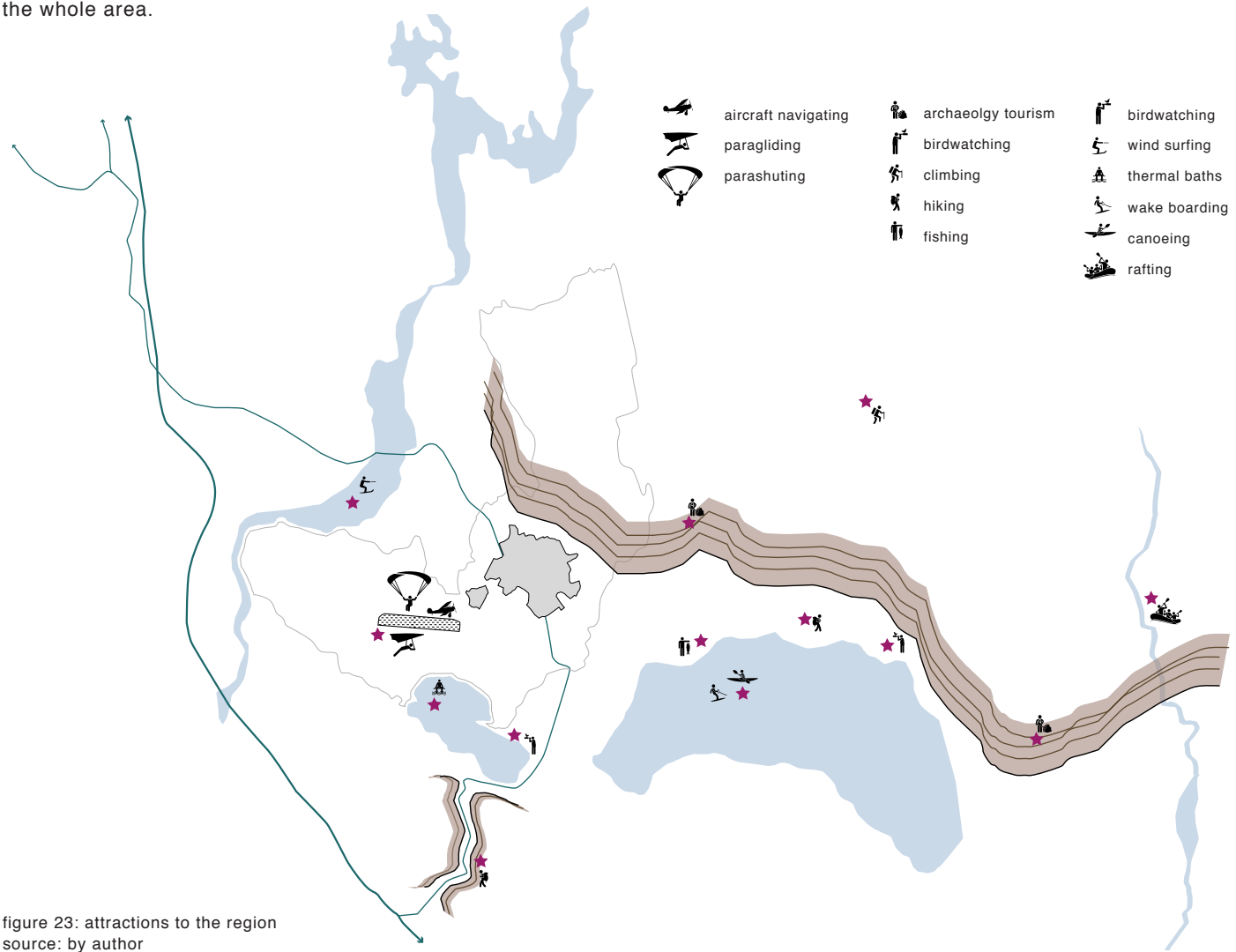


figure 23: attractions to the region
source: by author



PROBLEM ANALYSIS



CRISIS - RELATED ISSUES

Agrinio city, as all Greek cities, and especially those that are found in the periphery of big and well - known ones, did not manage to skip the phenomena related to the crisis and its devastating repercussions. Thus, by analysing numbers and data, and by listening to locals and their depositions, all these issues are being identified.

Population change

According to the last population census conducted in 2011, the municipality of Agrinio is the largest one in the whole Regional Unit, with a population of 92,608 inhabitants and the second most populated municipality of the Western Region of Greece. It is estimated that the 43.87% of the prefecture's inhabitants are living in the municipality of Agrinio, a percentage which is translated into the 13.57% of the inhabitants of the Western Region of Greece.

The population change recorded in the municipality of Agrinio during the decade 2001 - 2011 noted a decrease of 3.85%, a decrease of 5.95% in the context of the Regional Unit of Aetolia-Acarnania, a decrease of 7.825 in the context of Western Region of the country and a decrease of 0.21% in the country level (figure 23). However, it is surprising that although all the municipal units were characterised by this decrease, the municipal unit of Agrinio was the only one that increase its population by 7.09%. Today, the population of the municipal unit of Agrinio is the biggest one with 58,097 persons (figure 24). Regarding the immigrants' number in the municipality of Agrinio in 2011, it is estimated to be 2,530 persons, showing a relatively small increase since 2001 that was 2,301 persons.

Ageing population

The population of the Municipality of Agrinio decreased over the last 20-year period (1991-2011) by 4.15% when at the same period the population of the whole country increased by 5.8% (figure 25). The percentage reduction of the Municipality of Agrinio, is twice the percentage reduction of the Western Region of Greece (-2.14%).

This depopulation, especially in the mountainous municipal units (M.U. of Panetolikos and of Parakabilion) has had a great impact on the local economy as the demographic data of these units have demonstrated a declining path . Even though these units take up the 54.41% of the total area of the municipality, they are inhabited only by the 1.23% of its

	2001	2011	CHANGE (%)
Greece	10,964,020	10,940,777	-0.21
Western Region of Greece	740,506	682,604	-7.82
Regional Unit of Aetolia-Acarnania	224,429	211,080	-5.95
Municipality of Agrinio	96,321	92,608	-3.85
M.U. of Agrinio	54,253	58,097	+7.09
M.U. of Agelokastro	2,761	2,000	-27.56
M.U. of Arakinthos	6,397	4,974	-22.24
M.U. of Thestieon	7,087	6,483	-8.52
M.U. of Makrinia	5,241	3,744	-28.56
M.U. of Neapoli	5,052	4,853	-3.94
M.U. of Panetoliko	1,853	1,366	-26.28
M.U. of Paravola	4,482	3,778	-15.71
M.U. of Parakabilion	2,757	1,979	-28.22
M.U. of Stratos	6,438	5,334	-17.15

figure 23: population
source: www.statistics.gr
illustration by author

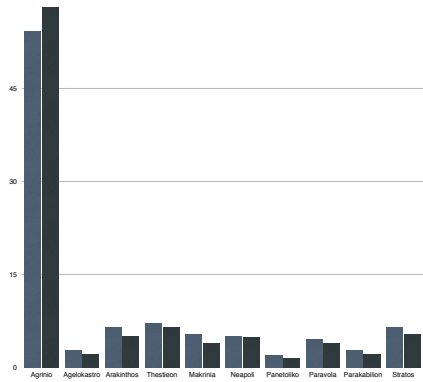


figure 24: population
source: www.statistics.gr
illustration by author

	0-19	20-34	35-39	40+
Municipality of Agrinio	21,550	16,956	6,611	49,064
M.U. of Agrinio	14,617	11,146	4,373	29,193
M.U. of Agelokastro	346	325	121	1,235
M.U. of Arakinthos	963	759	309	2,946
M.U. of Thestieon	1,392	1,181	400	3,593
M.U. of Makrinia	653	481	194	2,353
M.U. of Neapoli	1,203	926	386	3,327
M.U. of Panetoliko	273	241	96	776
M.U. of Paravola	671	623	249	2,230
M.U. of Parakabilion	290	299	97	1,257
M.U. of Stratos	1,142	975	386	2,926

figure 25: population per age
source: www.statistics.gr
illustration by author

population. However, the demographic reduction is not limited to the mountainous units, it is now extended to the lowland municipal units (M.U. of Makrinia, Paravola, Agelokastro), where the aging indicators reach at 269.41%, 224.94% and 221.74% respectively.

Education level

The municipality of Agrinio is also facing severe issues with its educated population. Just 0.08% of it hold a Ph.D., 0.40% hold a Master, the 7.49% are university graduates, and the 3.31% graduates of technical universities. The 2.52% of the population has obtained only post-secondary education, the 16.26% only secondary education, the 11.05% has attended only the high school and the 29.56% only the elementary. A large percentage of illiterate people is also observed, 5.06%, which quit primary school while almost 4.46% cannot read or write.

These numbers are not surprising though if taking into consideration the reasons that prevent children to attend school. This year, during the first three days of the academic school year, about 300 people ran to the church in order to request school supplies for their children. Until last year it was the Cultural Centre of Agrinio that was distributing for free all of the school equipment needed to families that could not afford it. Last year, the number of these families was estimated around 300, while this year it was said to be way more. However, this year, the church could not respond to such demands as it was not able to raise the required amount of money (Kantanis, rector of the church). Equally interesting is the fact that a total of 53 families living in villages just outside Agrinio that cannot cover the costs of private lessons for their children and wish to send them to the supporting classes of the church find it impossible to pay for the bus tickets. As a result, they call for help to cover the costs for their children's transport to and from the supporting classes (Chondros, 2016).



image 18
source: www.left.gr

	LABOR FORCE	EMPLOYED	UNEMPLOYED	UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (%)
Greece	4,586,636	3,727,633	859,003	18.73
Western Region of Greece	184,804	146,605	38,199	20.67
Regional Unit of Aetolia-Acarnania	40,832	32,566	8,266	20.24
Municipality of Agrinio	35,539	27,172	8,367	23.54
M.U. of Agrinio	23,646	18,211	5,435	29.03
M.U. of Agelokastro	647	512	135	28.57
M.U. of Arakinthos	1,581	1,189	392	28.27
M.U. of Thestieon	2,381	1,708	673	27.50
M.U. of Makrinia	1,107	88	219	24.92
M.U. of Neapoli	1,795	1,274	521	24.79
M.U. of Panetoliko	509	369	140	22.98
M.U. of Paravola	1,332	1,000	332	20.87
M.U. of Parakabilion	644	460	184	19.78
M.U. of Stratos	1,897	1,561	336	17.71

figure 26: population per age
source: www.statistics.gr
illustration by author

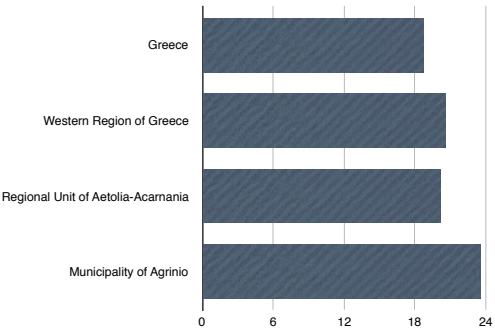


figure 26b: unemployment rates (%)
source: www.statistics.gr
illustration by author

- M.U. of Agrinio
- M.U. of Thestieon
- M.U. of Panetoliko
- M.U. of Stratos
- M.U. of Agelokastro
- M.U. of Makrinia
- M.U. of Paravola
- M.U. of Arakinthos
- M.U. of Neapoli
- M.U. of Parakabilion

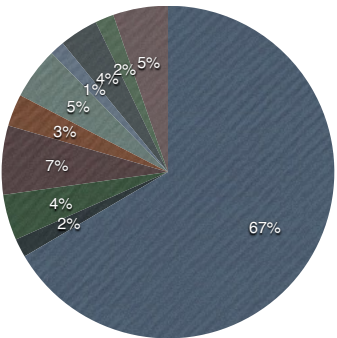


figure 27: unemployment (%) in the Municipality of Agrinio
source: www.statistics.gr
illustration by author

Unemployment rate

For the Regional Unit of Aetolia-Acarnania, according again to the census of 2011, the economically active population reached to 40,832 persons which is the 35.02% of the total population of its municipalities and for the municipality of Agrinio specifically, it reached to 35,539 persons, being translated into the 37.73% of the total population of the municipality (figure 26). From these, 27,172 are employed, constituting a percentage of 46.34 while 8,367 are without job, a rate of 23.54%. At a regional level, the situation is better, with 79.76% (32,566 persons) working and 20.24% (8,266 persons) not. Moreover, in the municipality of Agrinio, the 17,64% are employed in the primary sector, the 15.92% in the secondary sector and the 66.44% in the tertiary sector. It is also fascinating the fact that the municipal unit of Agrinio alone concentrates the largest percentage of people involved in the tertiary sector. However, during the period of crisis and recession a significant increase in the first sector's employment is observed, a fact that clearly shows that agriculture and herding can offer solutions to the existing economic uncertainty (figure 28).

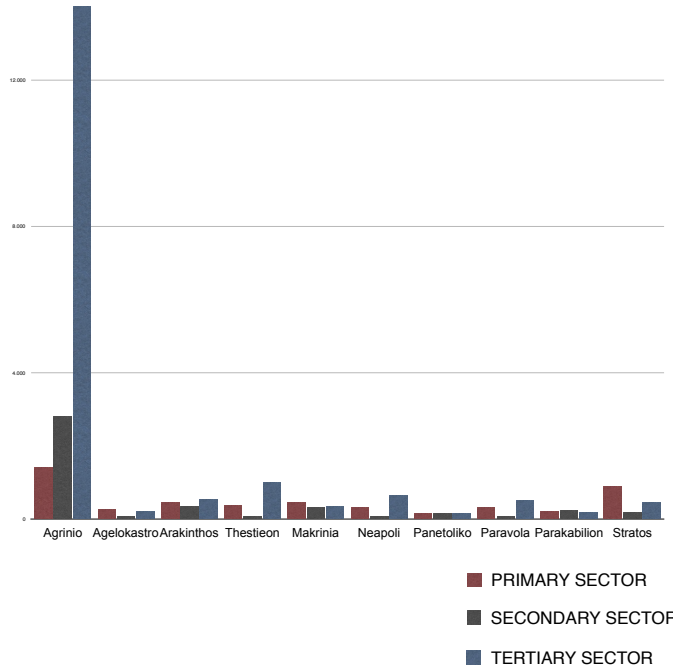


figure 28: employment per sector
source: www.statistics.gr
illustration by author

Businesses closing down

The owners of businesses are also victims of the economic crisis hitting the city of Agrinio, as their businesses are daily “sinking”. The harsh measures taken by the government have forced people to stay at home in an attempt to meet the new distressing conditions. The outcome is the dramatic reduction of customers in cafeterias, bars, restaurants, night clubs, and catering stores. Throughout the whole year, a decline of 50% to 60% was noted than it was in the previous years, according to Kallergis I., the President of the Union of Catering and Recreation Professionals of Agrinio, even though the prices remained stable, at the same time that the taxes were increased up to three times. On top of that, buildings’ rents also remain steady without their owners lowering the prices, resulting in more padlocks in several shops of the city.

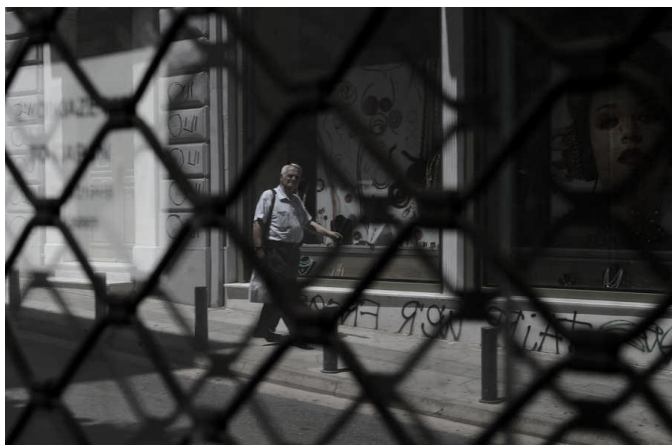


image 19: padlocks to businesses
source: www.sinidisi.gr

Increased poverty

The facts translated into numbers regarding the harsh economic situation in Agrinio are shocking. The numbers depict the tragic situation that has pushed society to its limits. The church itself is raising the alarm, since over the last few months a significant number of people has turned to it for assistance. Since August 2016, only the church of St. Demetrios had to confront 387 families asking help for several reasons -50 of them asked to help them pay the electricity bills for their houses while at least 30 of them sought help to pay the water bills-.



image 20: soup kitchens
source: www.sinidisi.gr

CRISIS - RELATED ISSUES

On top of all the crisis-related problems, Agrinio is also demonstrating several spatial issues. Most of them derive from the spatial development of the city throughout history and the urban planning policies of Greece in different periods. For this purpose, in order to better understand the current form of the city, an analytical research is required through its historical evolution.

The periods that influenced the most its shape and formation are:

- the pro - revolutionary period
- the first post - revolutionary period
- the Ottonian period
- the inter - war period and
- the post - war period

SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT

Pro - revolutionary period

Vrachori - the name given to Agrinio during the Ottoman period - hold a central position in the fertile plain of the region, thus depending on the primary sector because of its agricultural activity. At that time, the streets starting from the city's centre - the current Stratou square - were crossing the residential areas and were extended further to places of rural occupation and other centres of the region (figure 32). The whole structure constituted the radial tissue of the city's planning, having key features such as specific points and landmarks, scattered fountains, and the religious centres of the adjacent neighbourhoods. The main settlement occupied the triangle formed by two big streams used by the watermills (figure 31). The central market was at the same position as that of the post-revolutionary city, between the square and the current Staikou, Kyprou and Papastratou and Tsaldari streets (figure 33).



image 22: view from the city
source: Xythali's archive



figure 30: map of 1838
source: municipality of Agrinio

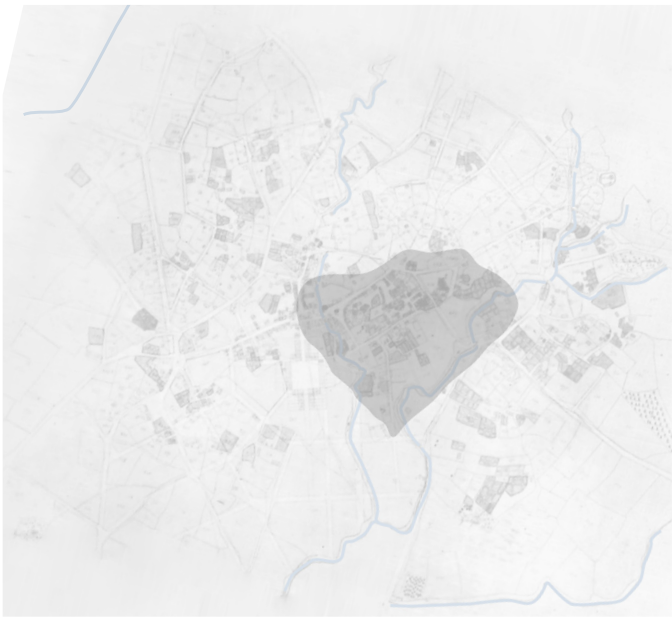


figure 31: the formation of the city
source: by author



image 23: view from the city
source: Xythali's archive



figure 32: the radial network system
source: by author

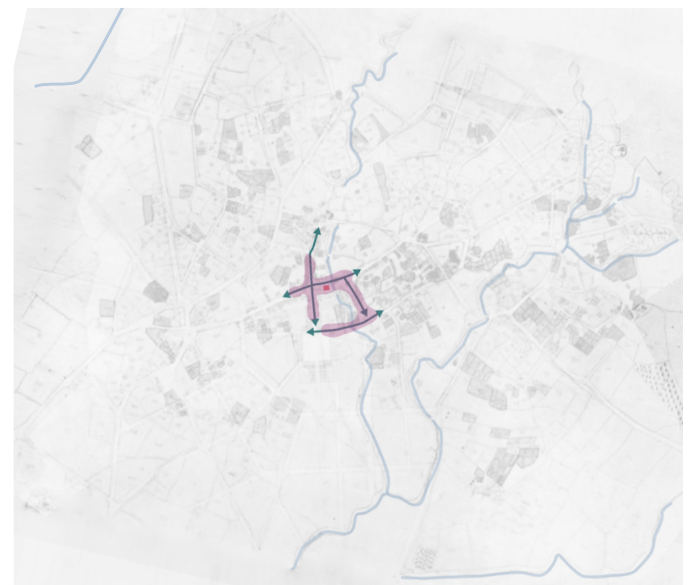


figure 33: the central market
source: by author

First post-revolutionary period

The city received its current name in 1836, soon after the Liberation, and at that time it was a complete ruin. The first colonists attempted to convert the ruined city into a residential town. An approach towards the understanding of the settlement's structure is possible through the map of 1843 (figure 34), designed by K. Zagka, capturing the city in detail. The analysis gives the exact picture of the city in the first decades after the Liberation, with the remnants of the pre-revolutionary era still quite obvious.

The street network commencing from the centre (primarily the commercial one, the Stratou square), had an irregular shape with variable, usually small width, still crossing the neighbourhoods and reaching the rural hinterland. Stratou square and Chatzopoulou square were the oldest elements of the city. The map also presents the small buildings of the market around the Stratou square, that constituted the centre of the city (figure 37). The centre was extended along the East-West axis from the Karapaneika square up to the Chatzopoulou square and along the North-South axis, from the present Dimotseliou road till the present Staikou road (figure 36). The rest of the city around the centre remained sparsely built or unbuilt. Another characteristic feature of the city was the location of its three churches (figure 38), those of Saint Christofer, of Saint Dimitrios and of Saint Triada, in

radial distance from the centre, while the centre itself did not hold a church until later on, when the central church of Zoodochou Pigi was constructed.



image 24
source: Xythali's archive

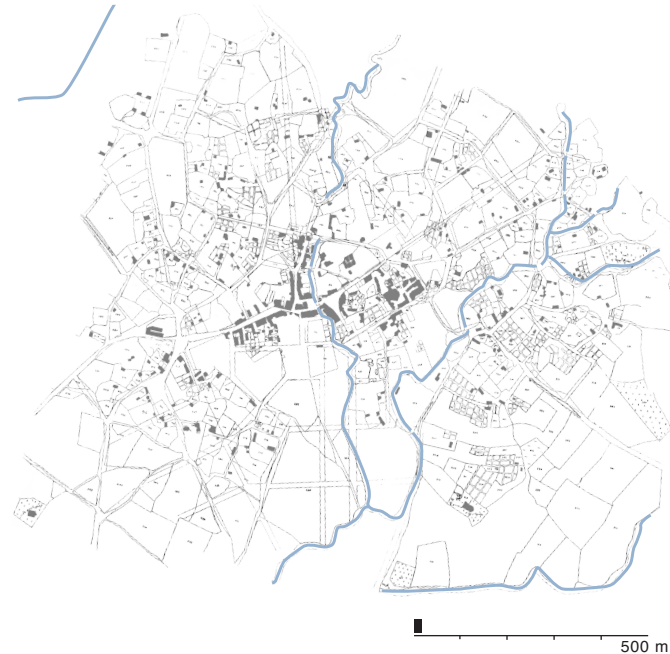


figure 35: map of 1843
source: Municipality's archive

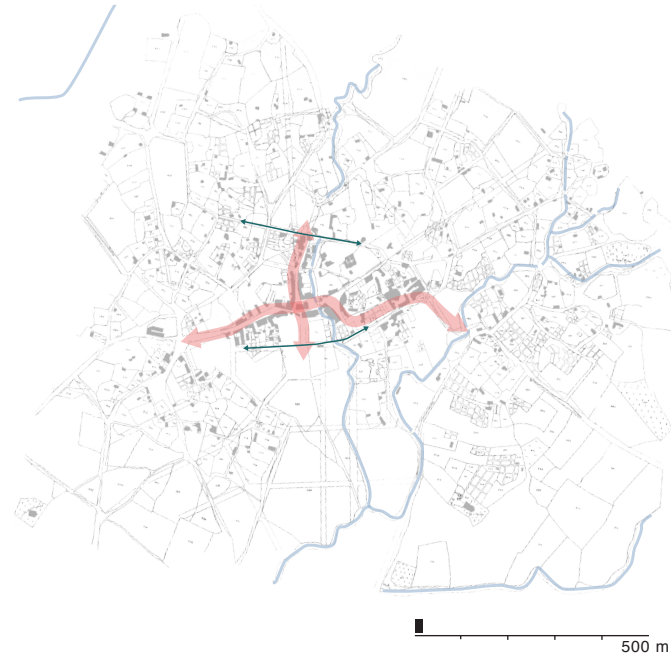


figure 36: city centre's expansion
source: by author



image 25
source: Xythali's archive



image 26
source: Xythali's archive

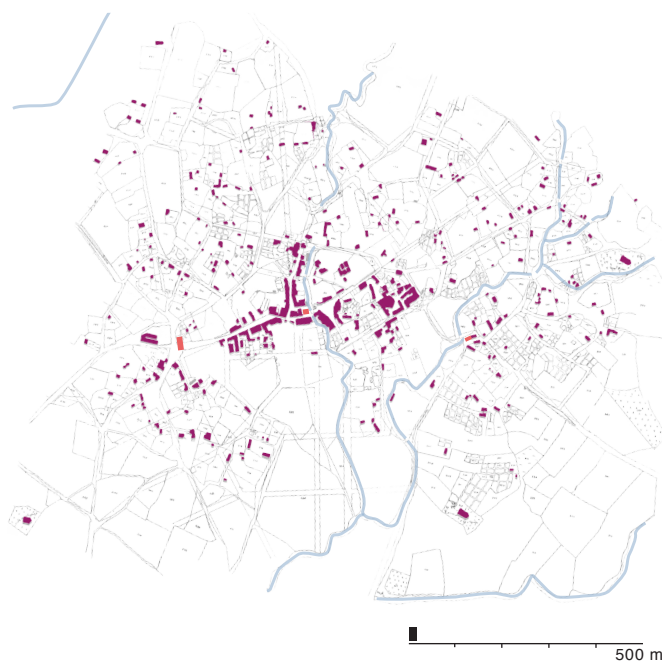


figure 37: built environment
source: by author

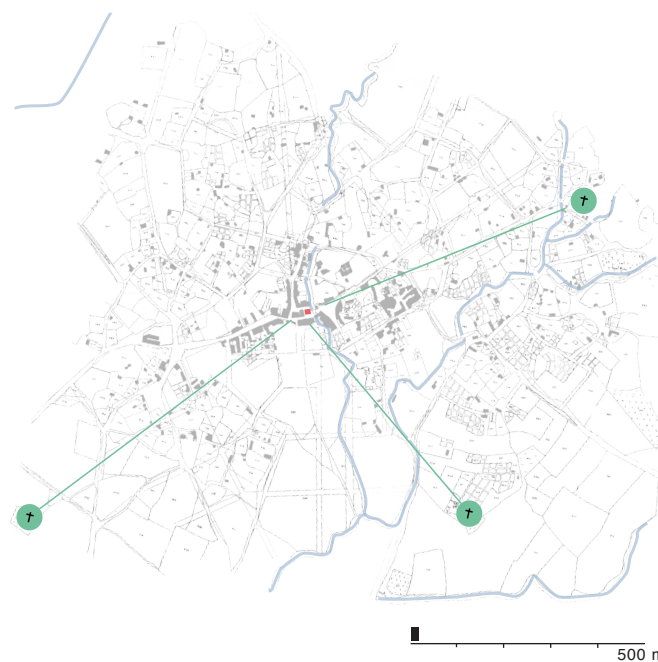


figure 38: primary churches
source: by author

Ottoman period

Agrinio was included in the 23 cities that were erected during the Ottoman period. The geometrical form of planning selected for the city promoted the sense of order and differentiated the modern Greek city from the one of the Ottoman domination. Its design aimed to play a catalyst role towards urbanization and progress. The redesign of the urban fabric was done on the map of 1843 and was the basis for the plan that was established after one decade of delay (figure 39).

The new plan constituted an interference in the pre-existing planning of the shell of the city targeting the internal re-arrangement of Agrinio: the city was ruined but alive, a place where re-construction was an imperative need and the design had to take into account the boundaries of former properties. The existing roads remained in the new city but with different geometric features. In the design evolved during the Ottoman years, the centre of the city moved South-West of the old

centre, the Stratou square, to the spacious Bellou square (nowadays known as Dimokratia square) with a rectangular shape (figure 41). Around the square, the space was split evenly in narrow plots, as imposed by the rule of urbanization at that time.

The new design of Agrinio was driven by ideas of order and organization. It aimed to improve the street by aligning the existing roads (figure 42) and opening new ones (figure 43), without changing the already formed urban fabric of the traditional town. Straight streets of fixed width replaced, at the same site, the narrow streets of the Ottoman domination. A great intervention was recognized in the centre of the market, within the limits of the Stratou square (nowadays known as Eirinis), by the expropriation of a whole building block.

The urban plan of Agrinio city was characterized by simplicity and pursuit of practicality rather than an attractive geometric image. It was clearly oriented towards the already formed urban shape, following both the historic and economic data of that period. The old urban fabric of the city was present and served as the starting point of the formation of the new plan. This plan, that was established in 1852/1853, acted as the basis for all the subsequent developments of the city and the benchmark of the many changes that came in the following decades.



image 27
source: Xythali's archive

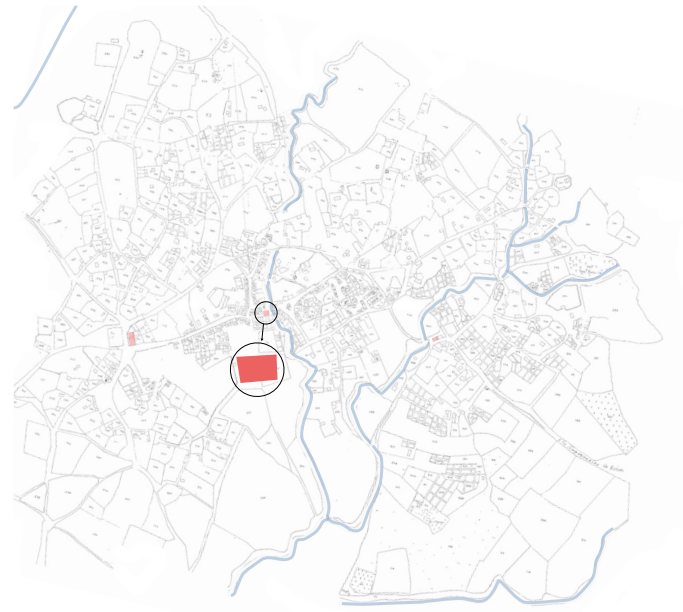


image 27
source: www.agriniomemories.gr



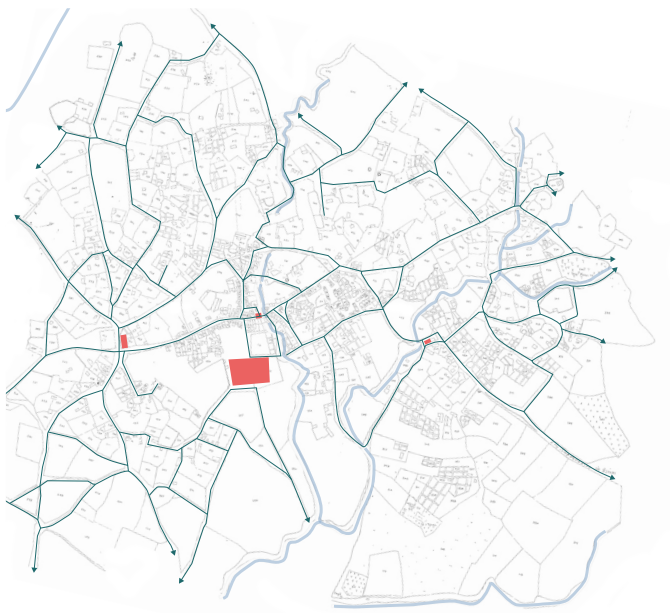
500 m

figure 40: map of 1852 / 1853
source: Municipality's archive



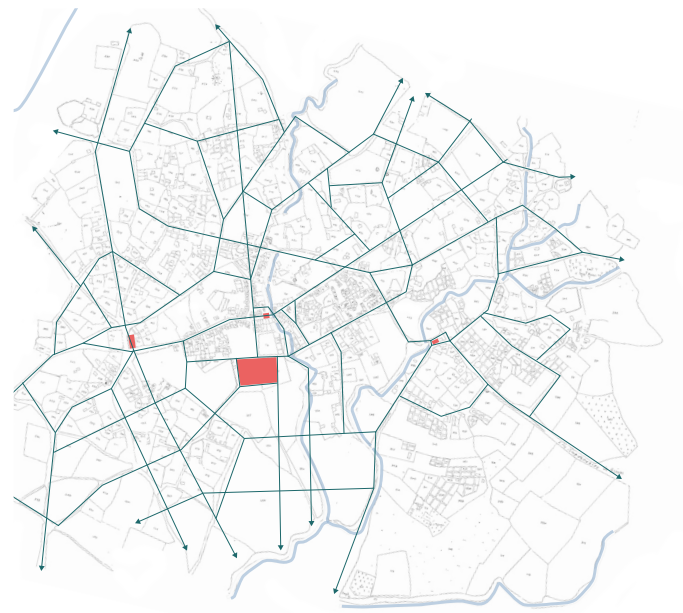
500 m

figure 41: the creation of the new central square
source: by author



500 m

figure 42: the existing road network
source: by author



500 m

figure 43: the proposed linear road network
source: by author

Inter - war period

The urban evolution of Agrinio went through a sudden change during the inter-war period. During its course, a large population increase was noted, the design of the city evolved, and a multi-approached effort to modernize the local situation occurred. The two main features of the time was the economic prosperity based on the local tobacco production - creating conditions for the growth of the secondary sector - and the population renewal coming from the settlement of refugees from Asia Minor and Pontus, the years that followed the Asia Minor Catastrophe. The city planning was now closely related to the tobacco industry (image 28) and aimed to regulate the evolution of the city during the years of its economic peak. This attempt was funded generously by the Papastratou brothers and gave the city considerable projects of common use, such as the park area of about 54 acres and the airport.

New types of buildings and typo-morphologies appeared in the city, while distinguished architects were involved. The new types of buildings concerned mainly the big tobacco warehouses. In terms of the new morphologies, two kinds coexisted, the buildings of eclecticism with references to the classical period and those influenced by the modern movement. The architectural diversity was the result of the various choices made by the bourgeoisie of the time. The tobacco warehouses of Papastratou (image 31), Papapetrou (image 29 & 30), Iliou, Panagopoulou (image 31), Andrikopoulou and other smaller ones became the daily main attraction for workers. The employment rate of workers in the secondary sector was particularly high, 51.25%, the highest percentage after the one of tobacco-cities like Kavala and Xanthi, while the main workforce came from the refugee population.

The tobacco warehouses were scattered in central points but not to the north of the city as it was already built. Most of them were sited south of the central square (Dimokratia square) following the Bavaria plans but also in order to provide the best possible access to the railway station of the city (figure 44). Thus, the development of the city was extended towards the South, to areas that according to the map of 1852/1853 were completely unbuilt.

The strongest axis of the city, even today at the current state of the city, was constructed at that period, consisting of the Papastratou and Trikoupi streets. By the construction of the Papastratou street, the market core developed on its axis and since then, it is the city's main busy axis concentrating

commercial and recreational functions. However, the Tsaldari street never lost its commercial character, resulting in the formation of a cross-shaped form where the land uses remain unchanged.

In 1929, the first refugee settlements were created at the West of the city (Agios Konstantinos, Erithrea, Kapelia), being divided by Rebelias stream. The settlements were located out of the borders of the revised plan without any provision for their connection with the urban fabric .



image 29
source: www.agriniomemories.gr



image 28
source: www.enet.gr



image 30: Panagopoulou tobacco industries
source: www.agriniomemories.gr

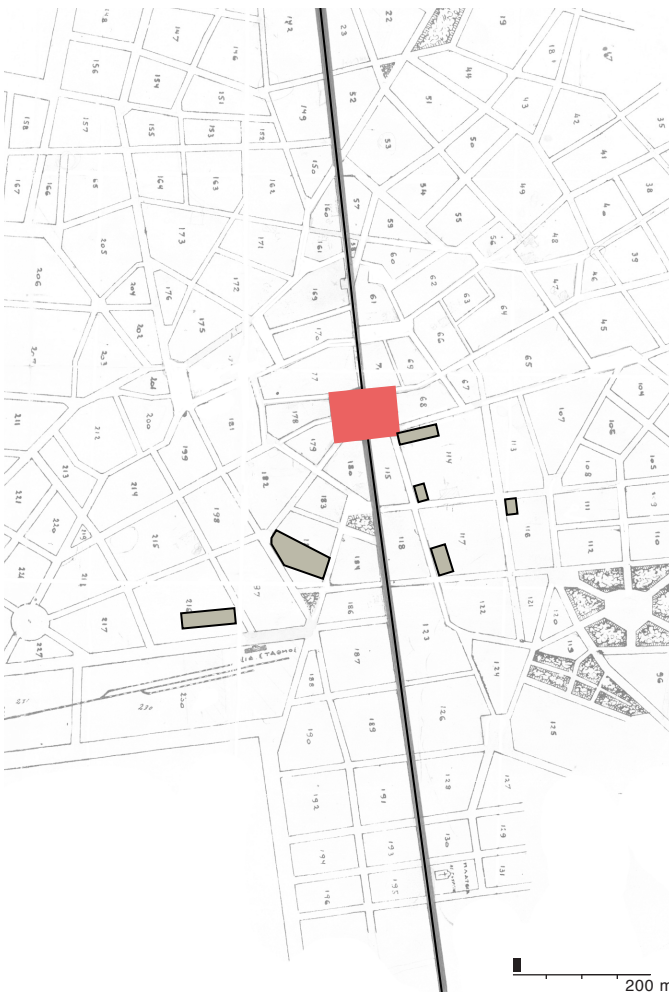


figure 44: the tobacco industries along the main axis (1929 - 1940)
source: by author



image 31: Papastratou tobacco industries
source: www.agriniomemories.gr



image 32: Papapetrou tobacco industries
source: www.agriniomemories.gr

Post - war period

During the German occupation, the tobacco warehouses were requisitioned by the Germans and changed use. They were converted into hospitals, prisons or concentration camps. Thus, they were no longer recalled in the memory of the citizens as workplaces but as symbols of national struggle and oppression. In the early postwar years, a significant number of them were abandoned, primarily because of the economic difficulties affecting Agrinio and Greece in general.

At the beginning of the 1960s, the tobacco production deteriorated since the damage done to the industries during the war seemed insurmountable. The gradual collapse of the tobacco economy restricted the ability to overcome the crisis and the city lost its productive character and former glory. In addition, the old prevalent rich class was weakening while the poorer one was constantly gaining ground. This could be interpreted in the strong tendency of Agrinio citizens in the 1970s to delete anything reminiscent of the richness of the past. Any decision of demolishing the rich residential buildings or the tobacco warehouses was accompanied by a feeling of joy and satisfaction with the belief that this was a presage for the coming of a new era for the city.

The city's plan (figure 44) indicated the attempt towards its modernization as the urban blocks were now visible along with the axis Papastratou - Trikoupi that maintained its central character (figure 45). The highway was constructed and the expansion continued to the North and South, without though the simultaneous creation of new squares - centres, but only being dependent on the four squares of the 1924 period (figure 46). The refugee settlements were also incorporated in the city's fabric and new ones were added at the West in close distance from the centre (figure 48).

From the urban plan of 1966, it becomes evident that the only notable change was the construction of the municipal park, the archaeological museum and the municipal library (figure 47). However, Agrinio was still lacking public spaces. Its rapid expansion was carried out without taking into consideration the former tobacco warehouses that till that time constituted the main core along with central market and square. Instead, they were treated as urban gaps that the residents chose to ignore, despite their position at central points.

The city eventually turned to other resources devaluing the tobacco production, abandoning its buildings - landmarks, leaving them obsolete and unused or even demolishing several of them later.



figure: important components of the city after the war
source: by author



image 33
source: www.gigenisagriniotis.blogspot.gr



figure 44: map of 1966
source: Municipality's archive

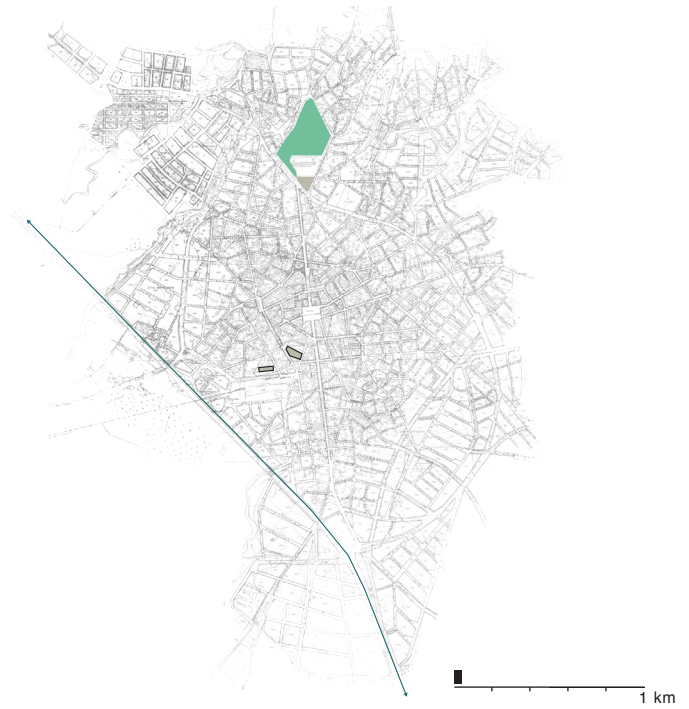


figure 47: the highway, the municipal park & library
and the tobacco warehouses
source: by author



figure 48: former and new refugee's neighbourhoods
source: by author



figure 46: main squares and city's expansion
source: by author

21st Century

As it becomes evident from the analysis of the spatial development of the city through different and crucial periods in the history of Greece, economy, politics and urban planning policies of each period have fiercely influenced the current structure of its urban fabric.

“Each residential complex is an expression of the historical structures created, an archive of historical information for each period of history. The urban development of Agrinio has long been one of the most complete testimonies of its society and civilization. (Dora Monioudi - Gavala)

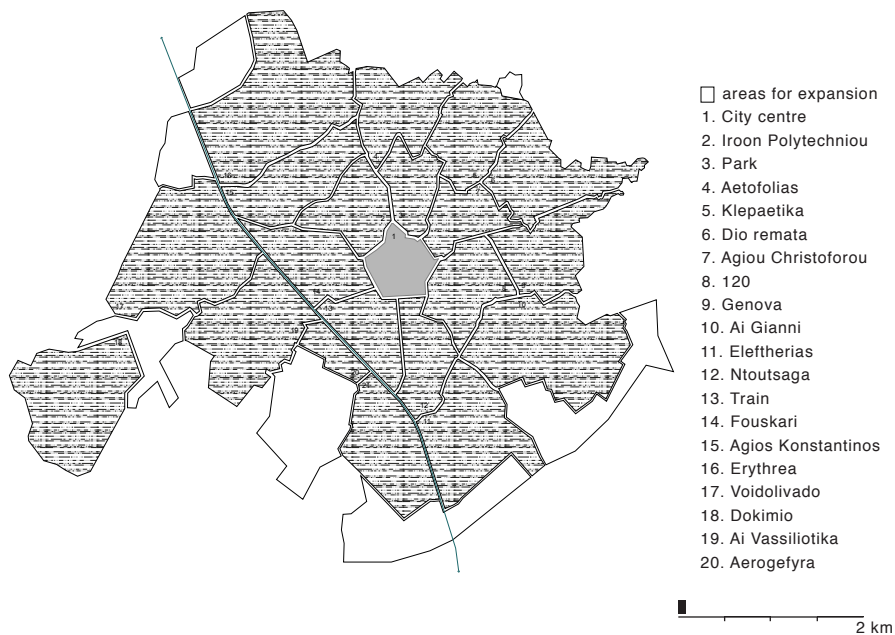


figure 52: neighbourhood division
source: by author

In 2003, the Municipality of Agrinio launched the study of Agrinio’s General Urban Plan. In 2004, the first phase of the study was conducted, including the analysis of the city, the diagnosis of its issues, weaknesses and threats, its strengths and opportunities, as well as a preliminary proposal. In 2005, after the approval of the Region of Western Greece, the proposal was finalized and was put into function. However, with the economic crisis, most of the projects were ceased, leaving Agrinio incapable to recover and flourish.



figure 49: current urban planning
source: by author



figure 50: Municipality's future urban planning
source: Municipality's archive



- central commercial activities
- existing administrative offices
- future administrative offices & logistics
- cultural centres
- existing education
- future education
- sports fields
- health centres
- green areas
- public squares

1 km

figure 51: current and future land uses
source: by author

Centre’s malfunction



image 34
source: by author



image 35
source: by author

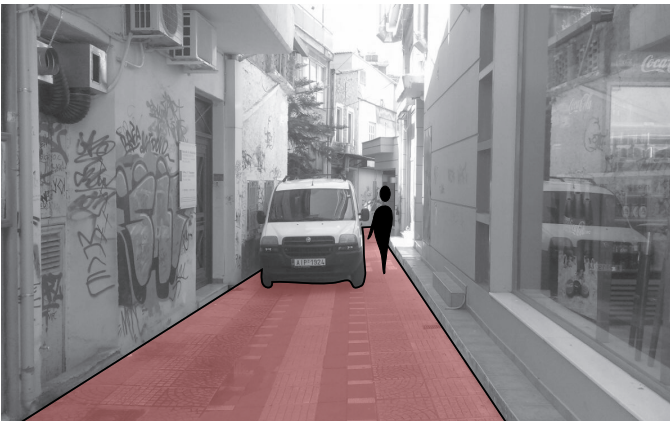


image 36
source: by author

Going deeper in the city structure, in the city centre, the radial shape of the road network fully relying on it, combined with an over-concentration of important functions of the region (image 34), turns out to be inefficient and malfunctional. The economic character of Agrinio centre led through time to the over-concentration, the confrontation and the competition of central functions and finally to their compression in an area that does not offer the required space (figure 53). Moreover, the conversion of the axis of the old traffic network into commercial routes led to the dominance of the car (image 35) that is now dominating over premises designed for pedestrian use (image 36). The lack of commercial centres in the neighbourhoods around the city centre, also adds to this problematic situation, since the residents are obliged to make everyday use of their cars towards their jobs that are mainly concentrated in the centre that lacks an adequate road infrastructure.

The development of the city as an economic and administrative centre resulted in the environmental degradation of the central area. Only a proportion of 7-9% of the total population of the city corresponds to residents in it (image 37). This rate follows a downward path, which means that the residents of the centre are leaving in search of housing in areas that can offer better quality of life. This effect is reinforced by the fact that the centre’s buildings offer the ideal space for the installation and operation of offices and business premises leading to an increase of the commercial values of the properties, the increase of the environmental issues in the surrounding area and thus, the inadequacy of these buildings to be used for housing.

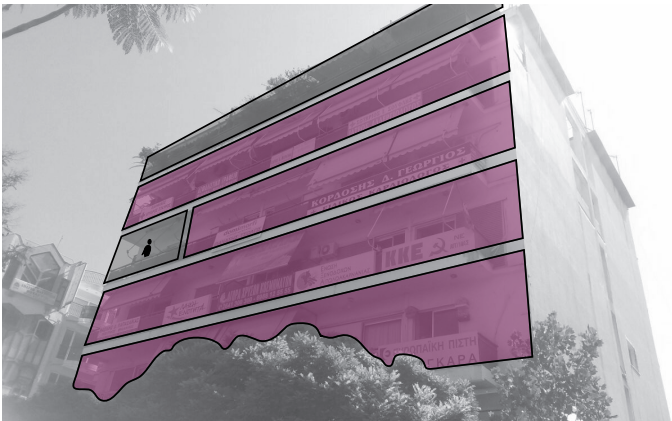
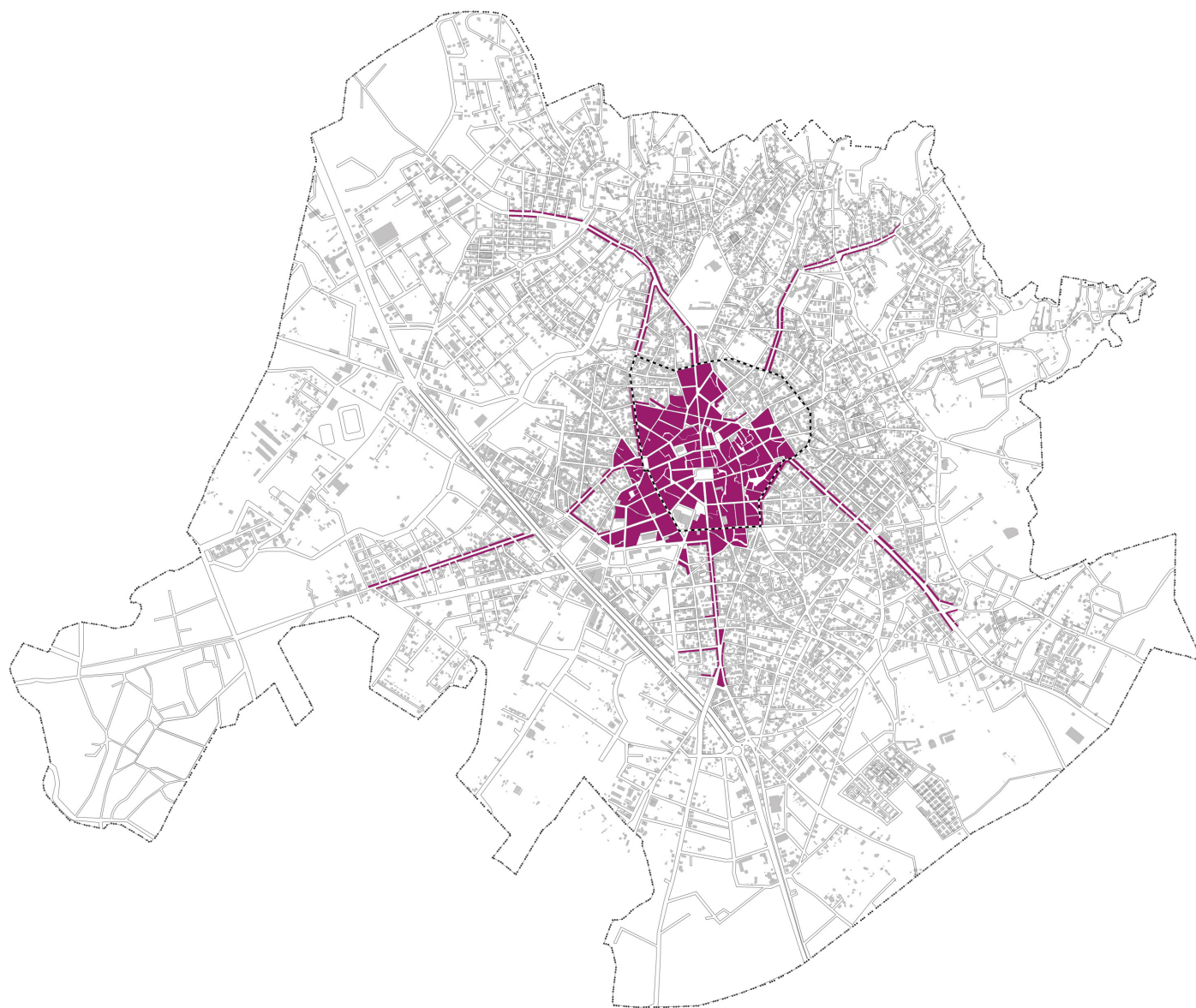


image 37
source: by author



central commercial functions
radial commercial routes

1 km

figure 53: concentration of functions & radial road network
source: by author

Lack of public space

image 38
source: by author



image 39
source: by author



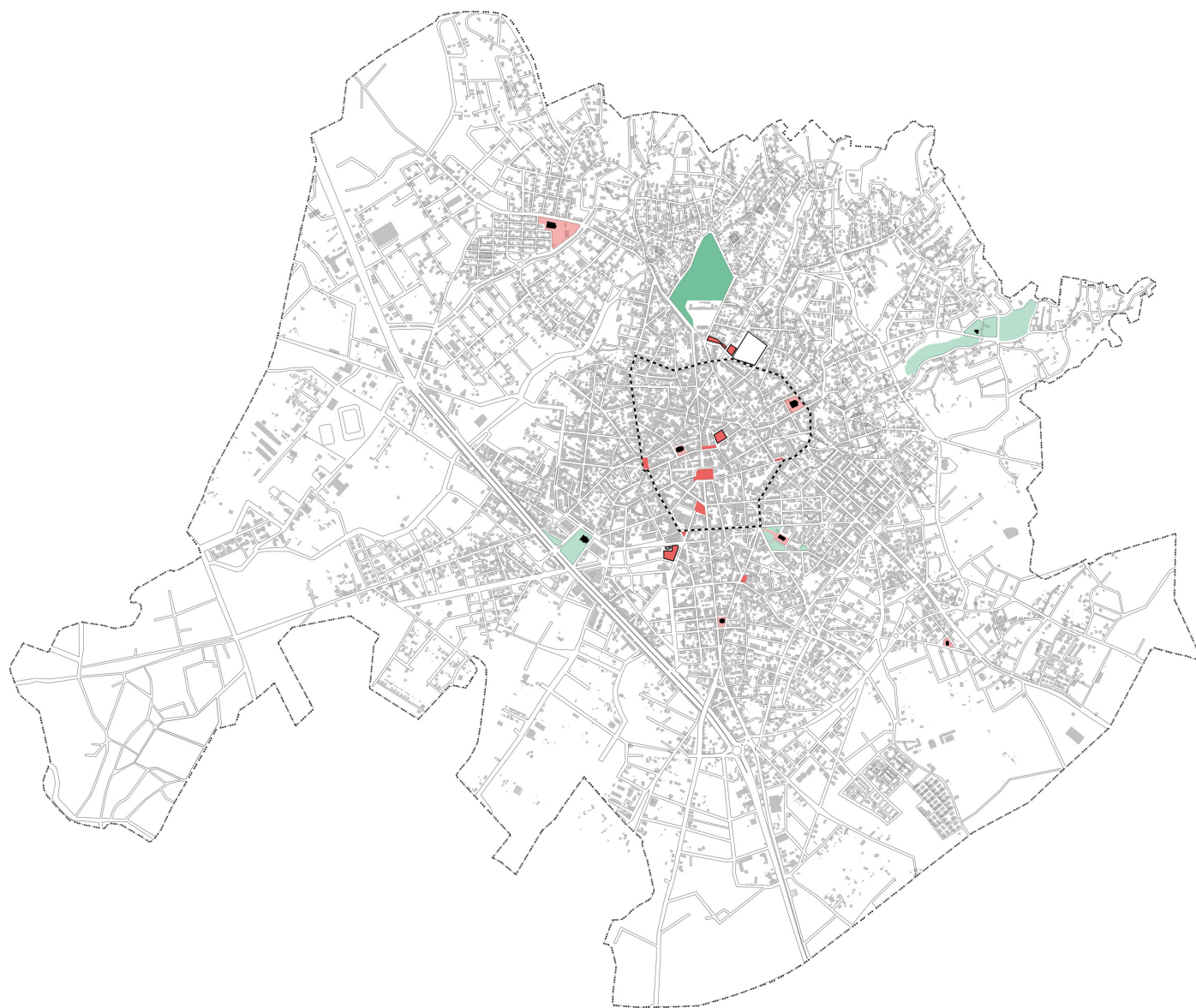
image 40
source: [www. enterioni.blogspot.gr](http://www.enterioni.blogspot.gr) (illustration by author)

The buildings were constructed in such a way that they comprise a continuous structure with small discontinuities, while the interior of some of the building blocks are courtyards and public open spaces. In many blocks, especially in the central district, these spaces were created due to the streams' covering that used to cross the city, thus forming a strong limit towards the street side with limited and narrow passages to the open space inside the blocks (image 38). The result is a blurred line between the boundaries of private and public space (image 39). The abandoned passages in the internal part of the blocks and their widespread occurrence in the urban tissue undermine the quality of the urban environment.

The continuous system of the building structure combined with the narrowness of the streets especially in the central neighbourhoods, the large height and density of the buildings are causing even more problems. The most important ones that can be noted in the urban environment concern the lack of green areas and open spaces, the poor air quality, the degradation of the existing green and human environment, as well as the environmental degradation of the streams which are crossing the city.

More specifically, the only squares in the city are merely concentrated in the city centre (figure 55) and are the same with those that were constructed in 1924 without any new additions since the expansion of the city started taking place in 1966 (see "spatial development of the city"). It was only in the recent years that a new square was given to the citizens, Dimadi square, in the space in front of the Old Central Market, along with the construction of an underground parking space beneath it, the only one in the city, a square surrounding the Old Railway Station at the south part of the city and another one in front of the newly constructed football field.

As for the green spaces, the Municipal Park constructed in 1966 at the north part of the city remains the only green lung of Agrinio, yet undergoing a huge degradation and neglect both by the municipality and the citizens (image 40). Few smaller green areas are scattered in the city, but mainly surrounding the existing churches.



- churches
- public squares
- open space surrounding church
- park
- green space surrounding church

1 km

figure 55: public spaces
source: by author



figure 41: Dlmokratias square (central)
source: www.agriniobestof.gr
illustration by author



figure 42: Sintrivani square
source: www.airphotos.gr
illustration by author



figure 43: Dimadi square
source: www.airphotos.gr
illustration by author



figure 44: Chatzopoulou square
source: www.airphotos.gr
illustration by author



figure 45: Municipal park
source: www.airphotos.gr
illustration by author



figure 46: Agios Dimitrios green space
source: www.airphotos.gr
illustration by author

Inadequate road infrastructure and services

The city initially was formed at the east side of the former highway. Soon after the construction of the new highway (lonian road) and the conversion of the old one into a provincial road, yet of wide depth, as well as the attachment of the residential areas (small villages) west of it to the city, Agrinio continued growing bigger with this “strip” separating its two parts. The connectivity between them is very weak, with only five links (A, B, C, D, E, F), and with three of them (A, C, F) serving as the main entrances to the two parts (figure 57 & 59). Due to the altitudinal difference, small though, of the ground at some the other three (B, D, E) are crossing beneath or above the highway in the form of tunnels (A, D) and bridges (E).

Besides the lack of connections, accessibility to the city centre gets complicated and confusing (figure 58), especially for strangers that they enter the city from its main entrances. On top of that, the lack of signs and directions make the circulation even more difficult.

Moreover, public transport is insufficient. Only two lines are available, M1 and M2, which although they are running the city vertically and horizontally respectively, from the North to the South and from the West to the East, their timetable is limited to the first evening hours and only every one hour (figure 56). It becomes evident that while the city centre is crying out for help and immediate alleviation from the exceeded use of car, public transportation can barely tackle the problem, unless it increases its daily timetables and, probably, enriches its routes. As for the parking lots, as it was mentioned before, there are only two organised parking spaces in the whole city, one in the city centre and one between the centre and the old highway, closer to the latter one, but both of them via payment.

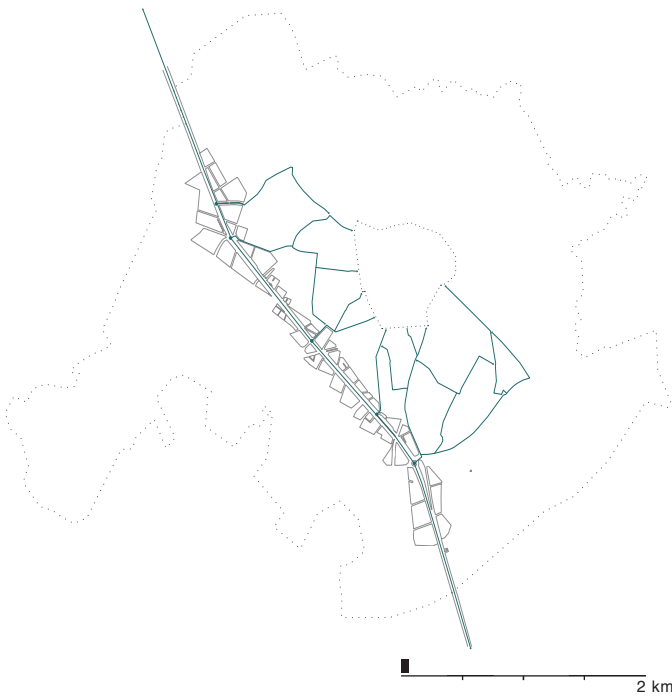




figure 59: connectivity between the two parts / entrances to the city
source: by author

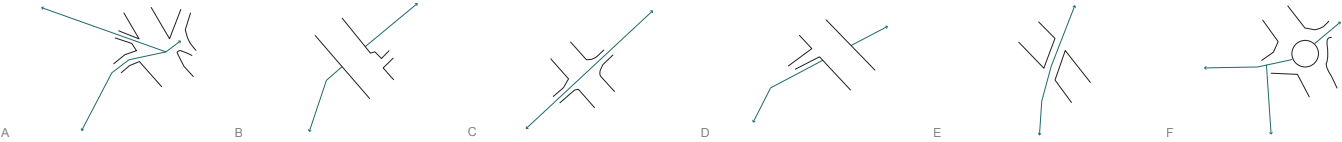




figure 47: connection A / north entrance
source: www.airphotos.gr
illustration by author

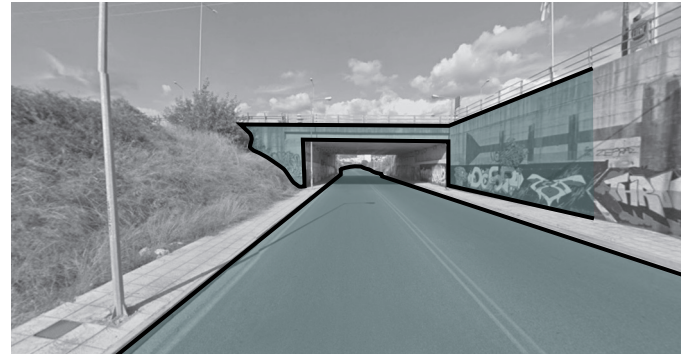


figure 48: connection B / tunnel
source: by author
illustration by author

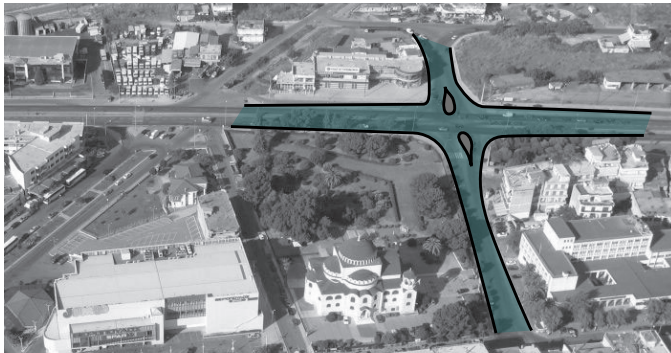


figure 49: connection C / entrance
source: www.airphotos.gr
illustration by author

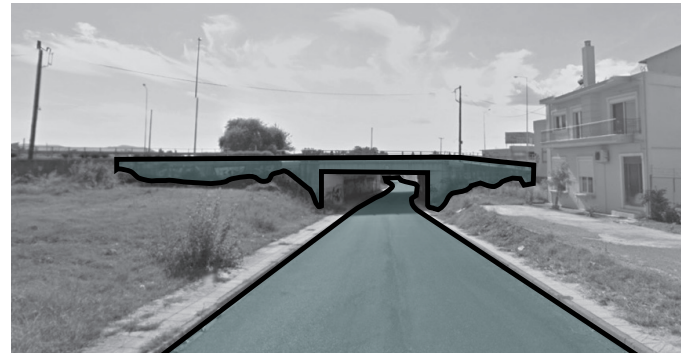


figure 50: connection D / tunnel
source: by author
illustration by author

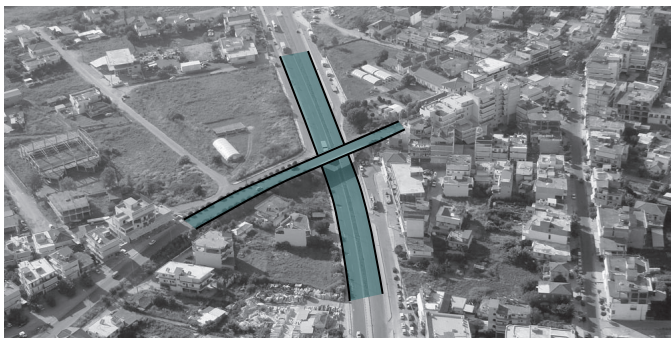


figure 51: connection E / bridge
source: www.airphotos.gr
illustration by author

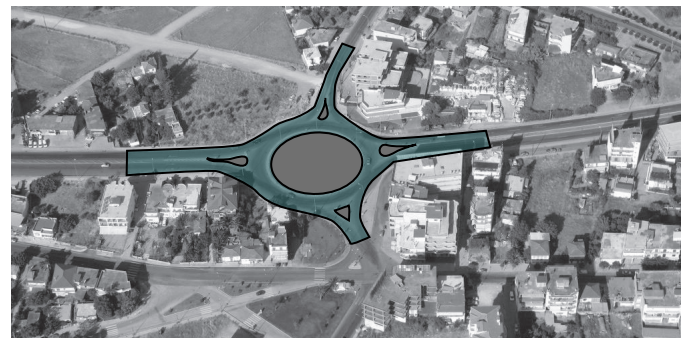


figure 52: connection F / south entrance
source: www.airphotos.gr
illustration by author

Lack of attractions and tourism

As far as tourism is concerned, the promotion of the region is very low, and there is a significant lack of tourist infrastructure and culture. The municipality has not taken advantage of its natural, cultural, historical and archaeological resources in order to turn them into attractive destinations for mild forms of alternative tourism (eco-tourism, thermal, congress, religious, etc.), resulting in very low traffic of tourists coming both from inside and outside the country. Accommodation is also limited, with seven hotels in total, without any hostels which are undoubtedly more suitable for young people.

Besides the external flows of people though, citizens are also not experiencing in the city in its full potentials, since they are restricted in terms of recreational services and activities. The city offers only two cinemas, one theatre, three pedestrian roads with restaurants and cafeterias (figure 53), one stadium, one football field, all of them concentrated in the city centre, but no cultural centres or any other kinds of attraction.

Lack of local identity

On top of all that, the lack of continuity in the network of streets and public spaces, internal and external, the scattered traces of the former (covered) streams (figures 60), as well as the abandonment of the city's historical and cultural heritage (image 54) leads to a lack of historical continuity in the image of the entire city. The elements of the urban fabric are elements of identity and character. Their disruption or their disappearance prevents the development of an intimate relationship with its residents as they are not able to get attached to the environment in which they live. The result is a city that loses its young, vibrant and productive population, thus steadily losing its live-ability and vibrancy.



image 53
source: by author



image 54
source: by author

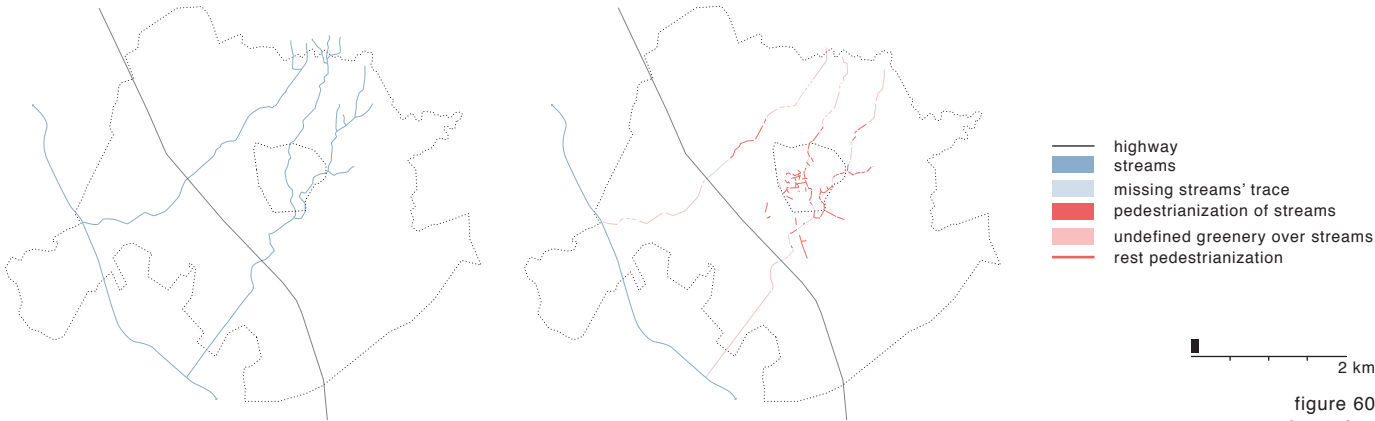
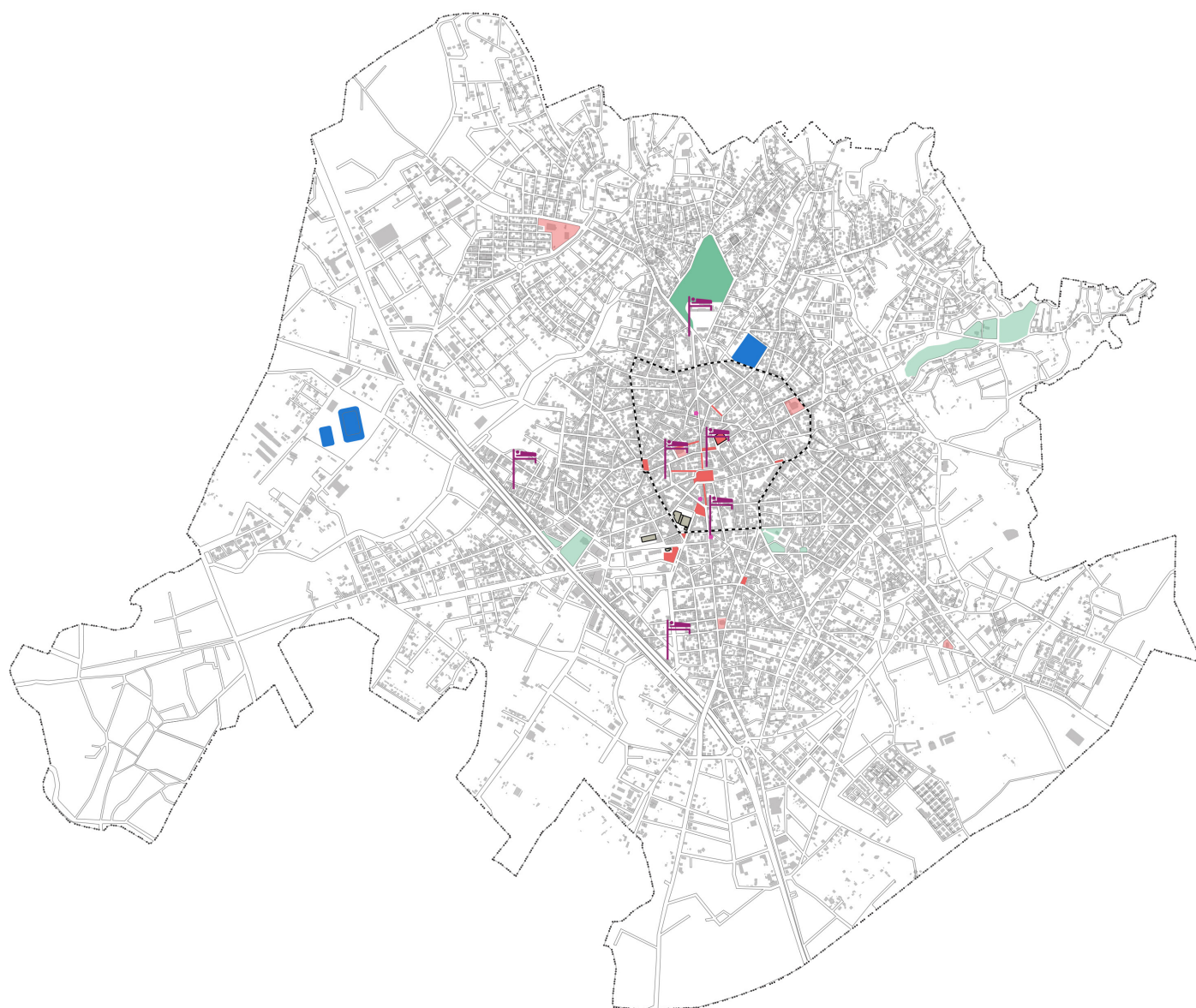


figure 60
source: by author

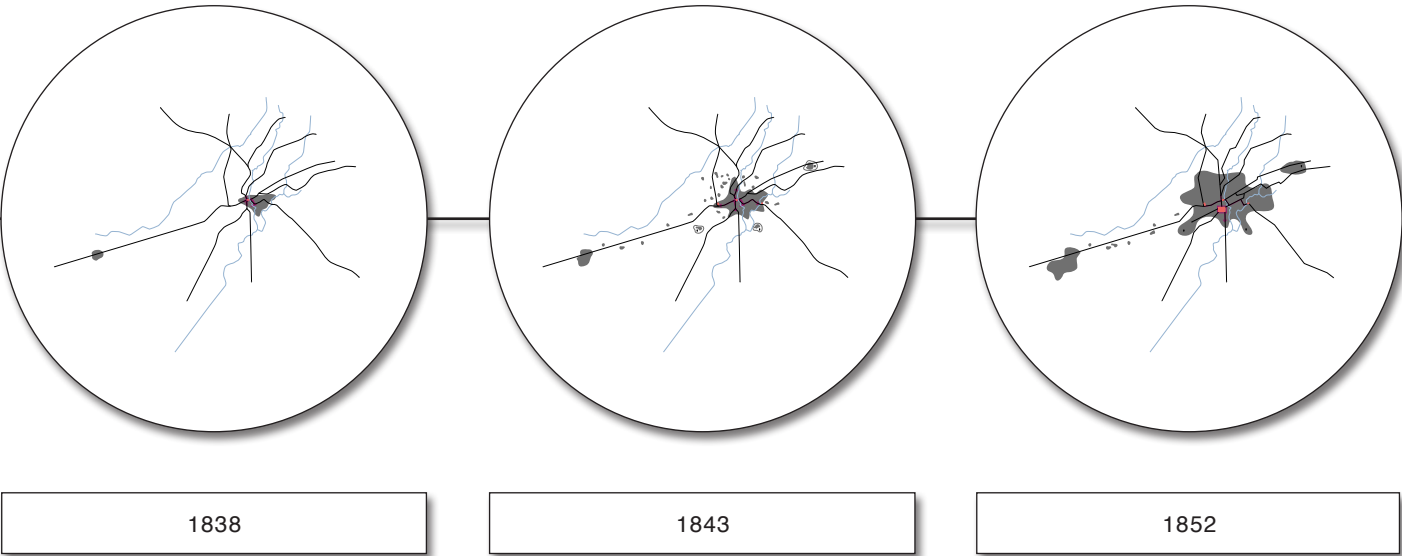


- sport fields
- public squares
- open space surrounding church
- pedestrian streets with cafeterias / restaurants
- municipal park
- green space surrounding church
- abandoned tobacco warehouses
- municipal parking
- cinemas / theater
- hotels



figure 60: city's attractions and recreational spots
source: by author

CONCLUSIVE SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT OF AGRINIO
from the past to the present



- triangular development between the two streams (Katurlis and Lycorachitis)
- construction of the central square (Stratou)
- radial street network commencing from the central square
- central market along four central streets (Staikou, Kyprou, Papastratou, Tsaldari)

- construction of two new squares (Chatzopoulou and Karapaneika)
- expansion of central market to the West - East (towards the new squares) and to the North - South including one more street (Dimotseliou)
- development around the churches (Saint Chistoforos, Saint Dimitrios and Saint Triada)
- sparsely built around the main development

- replacement of radial narrow streets with linear ones of fixed width (geometric development)
- expansion of central market around the central market
- integration of the churches' neighbourhoods into the main development



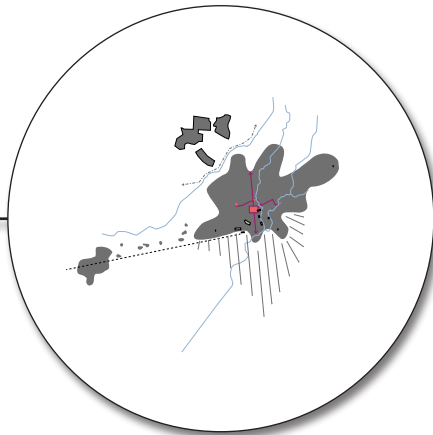
figure 60
source: by author

streams
streams' traces
urban structure
central market

public squares
open space surrounding church
park
green space surrounding church

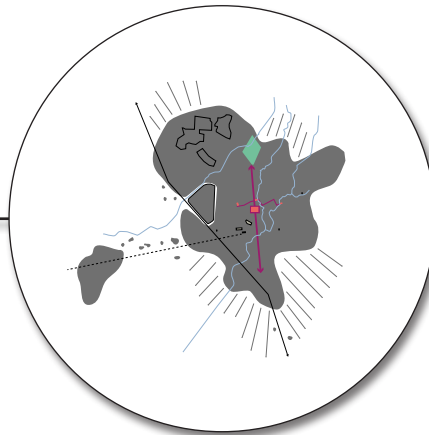
refugees' neighbourhood
tobacco warehouses
church

streets
railway
railway station



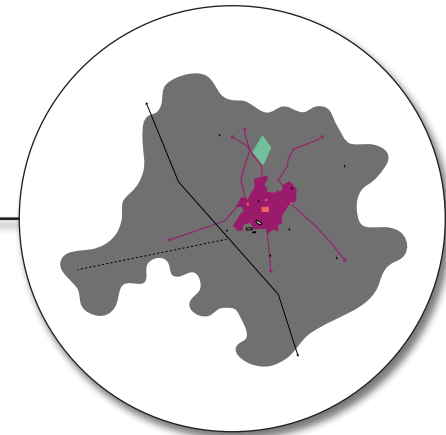
1929

- South extension of Papastratou street (Trikoupi)
- formation of a strong North - South axis (Papastratou and Trikoupi streets)
- expansion of the central market along this axis and the previous commercial roads (cross - shaped)
- construction of tobacco warehouses scattered in the South
- expansion of the city to the South, since the North part was almost built
- construction of the railway station
- formation of three new neighbourhoods for refugees in the North, separated from the main development by Rebelias stream (Agios Konstantinos, Erithrea, Kapelia)



1966

- demolition of most tobacco warehouses
- formation of a new refugees' neighbourhood (Fouskari)
- integration of the refugees' neighbourhoods into the main development
- expansion both to the South and North
- construction of the highway
- construction of the Municipal park at the North



2017

- occupation of the centre's neighbourhood by the central market
- conversion of the former radial streets into commercial routes
- covering - up of streams by buildings or scattered pedestrianisations
- construction of new churches and public spaces around them
- abandonment of the remaining tobacco warehouses
- cease in the railway function and de-construction of part of the rail-tracks
- integration of the west development into the city's urban structure
- replacement of the former highway by a provincial boulevard of administrative offices and logistics
- placement of the university campus at the suburbs of the city

THE VOICE OF THE CITIZENS (SITE - VISIT)
understanding the present

During the site visit, a questionnaire is distributed to people of different ages and social / economic backgrounds and some interviews are carried out. The discussions are not focusing on specific sites of the city, but they are structured in a way that they let citizens to lead them themselves. In this way, they allow a better understanding of the city as a whole and its spatial issues, and they help to define the areas of intervention later on. Since the research location is the city itself, with several issues and problematics, it is crucial to let the citizens give their own perception of the malfunction of their urban environment, so that it can be associated to the trends and issues emerging from the spatial and desk analysis made before.

The findings are really interesting. When citizens are asked to define the borders of the area that they perceive as the central one of the city, the one which they visit on a daily base for their recreation and the one that they are willing to walk, without making use of their cars, surprisingly, they indicate an area of around 200 - 300 meter diameter, taking up to 2 or 3 minutes to move within it. This area is even smaller than the official centre neighbourhood and is the one including the few squares of the city (figure 61).

And here comes the oxymoron. The former highway that is intended to become the new attraction pole of the city by gathering all the administrative, logistic functions and offices lays just 1 km away from the historic centre and the walking time to get to it does not exceed the 10 minutes. Instead they prefer to take their car, thus adding to the increased traffic congestion, especially since there are only two designated parking spots of the city (figure 62).

When they are asked to draw a map showing the areas that they feel convenient in being around them (figure 63), again they draw the city centre and a few green areas and squares surrounding existing churches. It is strange that they include the Municipal park in the map with the uncomfot areas (figure 64) that they draw, together with the space in-between the centre and the former highway. Of course, this can be explained by the degradation of the park and the unclear uses and abandonment that characterise the in-between area. It has to be mentioned that this area also integrates the old tobacco warehouses, leading to the conclusion that although these buildings used to be the highlights of the city, nowadays they are seen as the ghosts of the past.



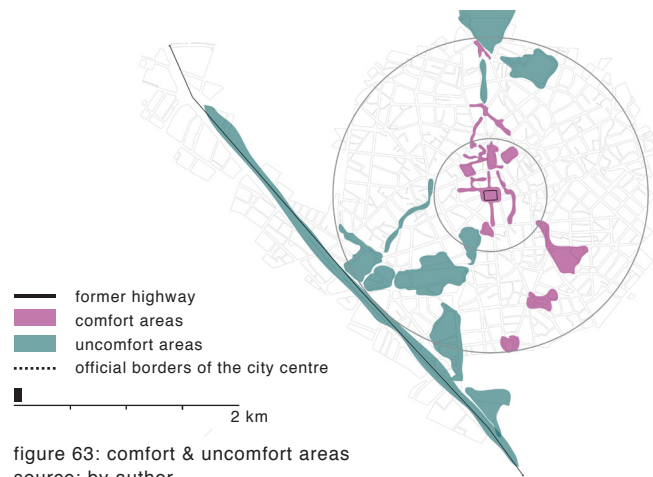


figure 63: comfort & discomfort areas
source: by author

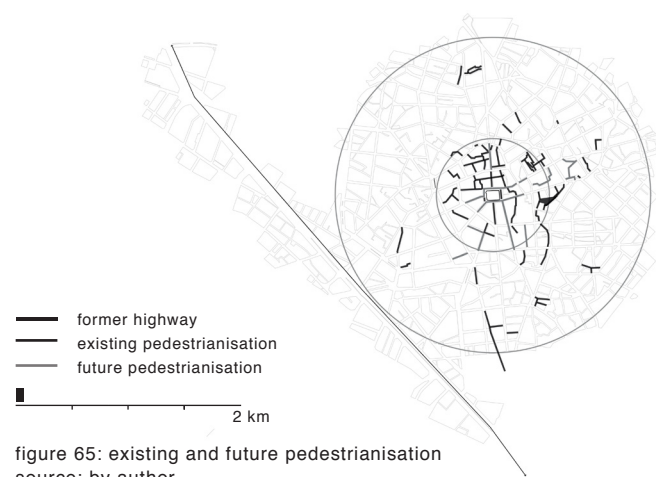


figure 65: existing and future pedestrianisation
source: by author

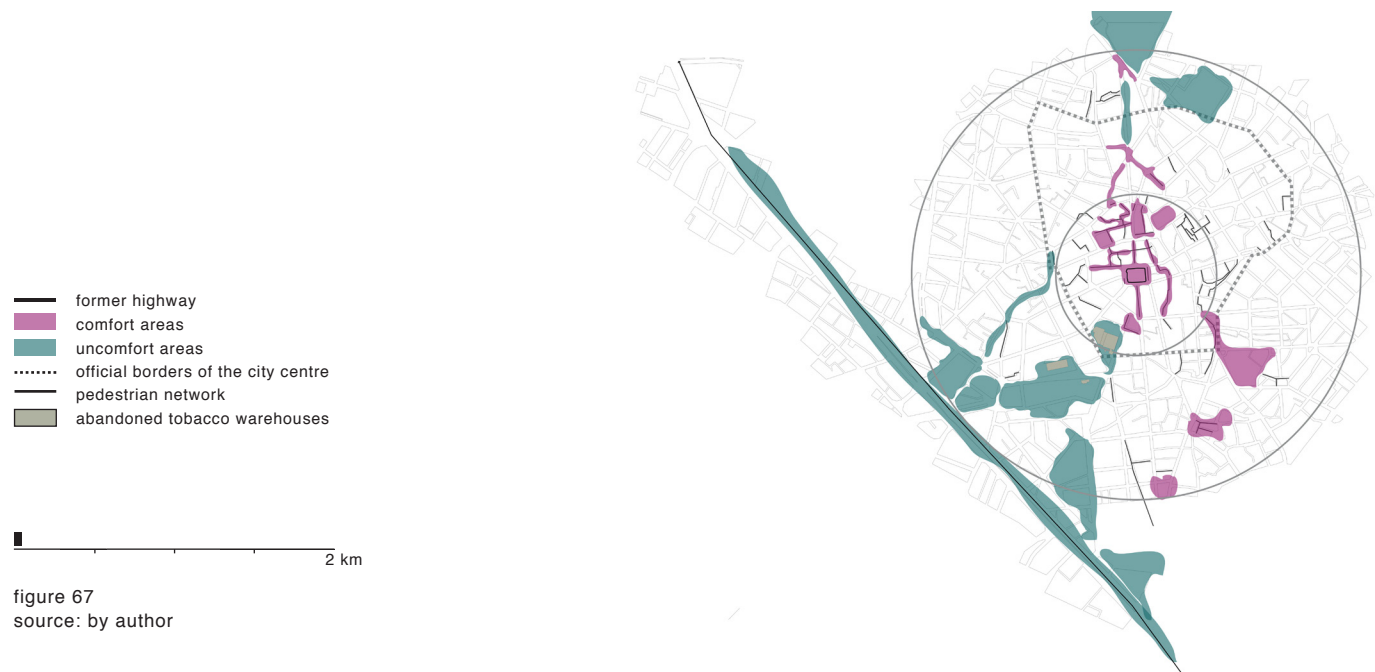


figure 67
source: by author

Overlapping these two maps with the current pedestrian network (figure 67), it becomes clear why citizens prefer the city centre which is dominated by pedestrian roads (figure 65), protecting them from the extensive use of cars. Of course, there are more pedestrian streets in the city but there are scattered, most of them following the trace of the covered streams, but they remain unconnected and neglected. Even the Municipality, in its future urban plan of the city is focusing on the pedestrianisation of the urban blocks surrounding the central square (figure 66), without taking into consideration the rest of the pedestrian network, and without designing new parking spaces to accommodate cars.

Last but not least, the general mentality of the Greek society has to be pointed out. As a nation, they are the generation of “coffee” entertainment. They prefer to meet at a cafeteria, drinking one or two coffees and chatting, rather than use a park or an open space (like Germans or Dutches). It is only the last years that a shift in these habits is observed due to the economic crisis. Since they cannot afford to pay for their drinks, they have appreciated gatherings in open spaces and playing sports at free fields. Thus, it is now more than ever that the citizens of Agrinio are realising the lack of public spaces in the city.

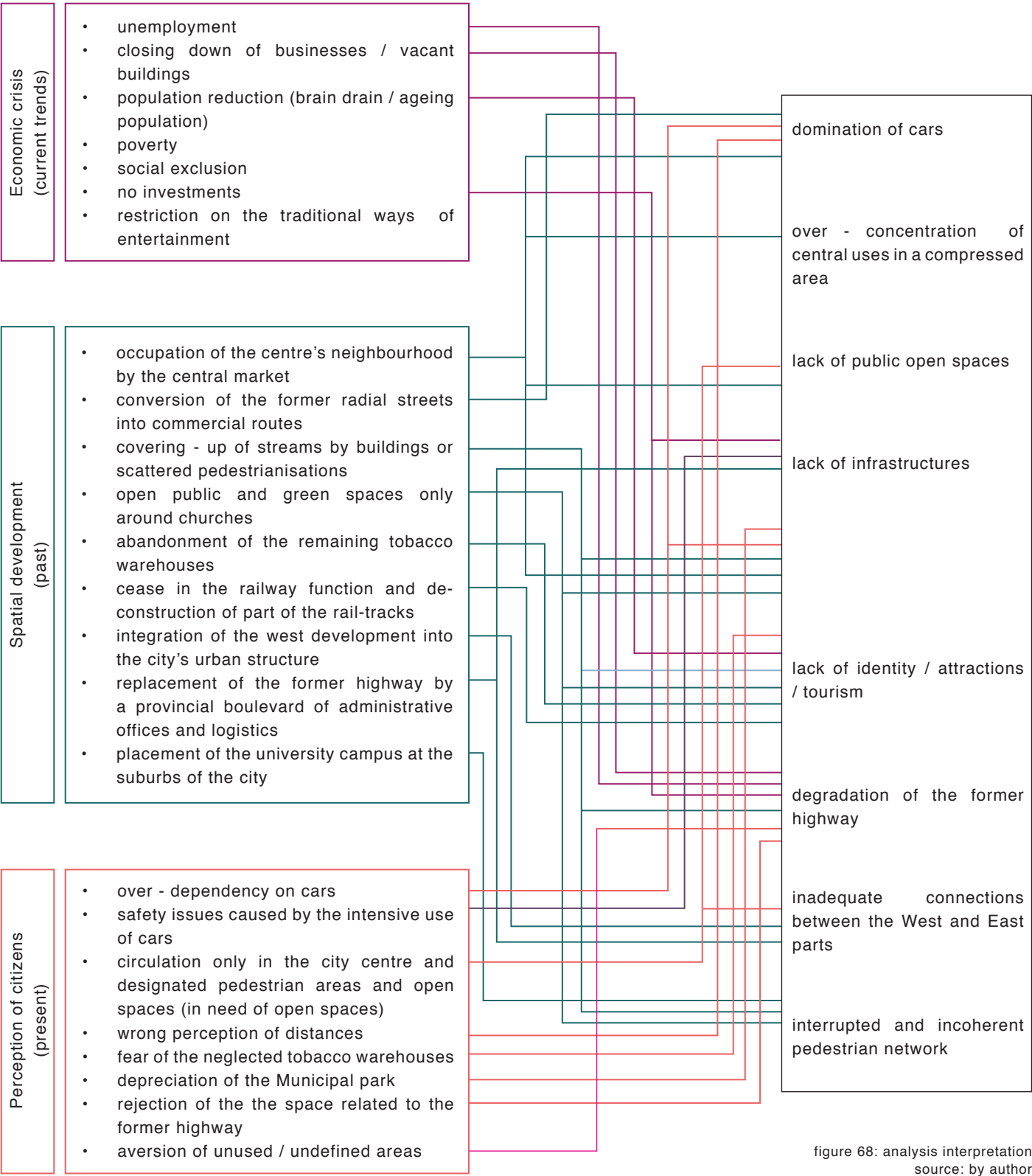


figure 68: analysis interpretation
source: by author

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Agrinio, as a medium-size city of Greece, is also suffering by the economic crisis that is infesting the country. However, besides the harsh phenomena the country, as a whole, is experiencing - increased unemployment and illiteracy rates, poverty, brain drain, population migration, social exclusion, spatial and environmental degradation -, it is also demonstrating a few more, depicting the urgency of interfering (figure 68).

Overall, despite being an important city of the Western Region of Greece, it remains unknown not only for people outside the country but also for the inhabitants of the country itself. Its recognition can not be compared to its former glory of the 19th and 20th centuries, during which it was experiencing a huge production and occupation in the primary sector with exportations of products to many countries. Its inhabitants were also highly involved in cultural events and national games. Over the years, along with the crisis, these qualities started to retreat, distorting the local identity.

The analysis of the hard data regarding Agrinio and the repercussions of the crisis demonstrating the current economic and social trends occurring in the city, its historic spatial development revealing the causes of the formation of the current urban fabric, together with the interpretation of the citizens' perception upon it, allow a more detailed insight into the city's problematic issues (figure). High levels of unemployment, shrinkage of the population, environmental degradation, informal settlements, traffic congestion, urban sprawl that undermines the local quality, marginalization of its components, inadequate infrastructures and public spaces are, in general, its basic, to name a few, characteristics.

It goes without saying that all of them are fiercely influencing the urban grid and are clearly evident in the city's tissue, in the sense of limited qualitative spaces (figure). What is clearly characterising the city now, is the lack of an economic and spatial strategy, able to stimulate urban regeneration, not only for the city itself but for the whole region.

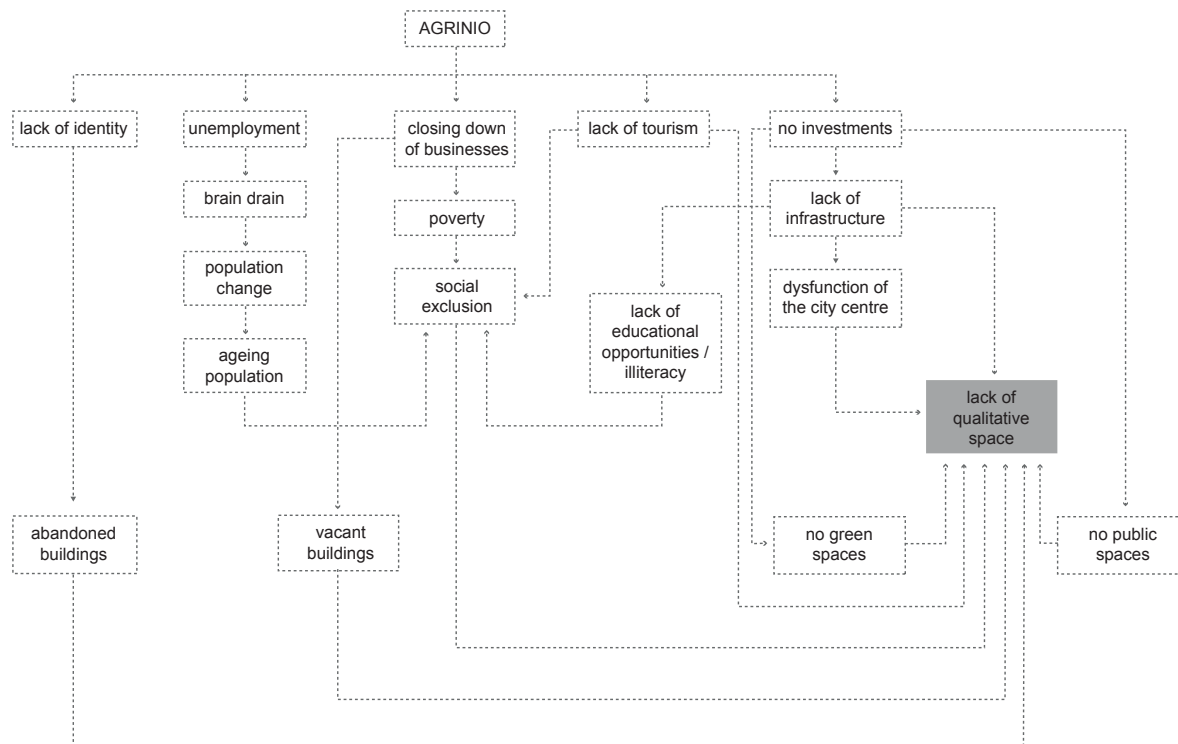


figure 68: problematic issues of Agrinio related to space
source: by author

PHASE II: DESIGN RESEARCH

PROJECT FRAMEWORK

Objectives

This project is a design approach to alleviate the current issues of the city, by developing a strategic vision not only for Agrinio itself, but also for the whole region since its qualitative characteristics can benefit both of them. The main objective is to re-generate space, and especially the public one, at different scales, with the belief that public space can be used as a tool for improving the economic, social, cultural and spatial quality of the environment. For this, it is attempted to re-create a spatial narrative of the city, by making use of its public space and heritage. In order to achieve that, a vision is set, consisting of a network of public spaces, official and others, as well as of the re-use of abandoned buildings that are scattered in the central core of the city. By re-generating space, this agenda will strive to bring Agrinio again to the front line of the competitive cities of the country by giving it a strong identity, and ultimately, a strong economic base. In this way, it can be used as a framework and key principle for redefining the role of the municipality and its position in the context of Greece, tackling the unemployment rates and preserving its social cohesion.

Methodology

The methodology (figure 69) follows a simple structure and is divided into four main phases (figure 70). The project begins with the first phase (phase I: research and analysis), by studying the general phenomena caused by the crisis in Greece, in order to understand the issue and its repercussions in different sectors of daily life, such as the economic, social, cultural / identity, and of course, the spatial one. Then, the motivation of choosing Agrinio as a location is explained and a detailed analysis is carried out to identify its issues related to crisis but mostly, the ones related to the urban fabric. The last part of this phase is the definition of the problem statement which will be tried to be tackled through this thesis. For the next phase (phase II: design research), a hypothesis is made and a theoretical framework is set in order to support the hypothesis, together with the analysis of certain case studies. The selection of the sites of intervention (local scale) is decided in the third phase (phase III: strategy development) after the site visit and the development of the strategic visions for the regional and city scale. By the aid of the theoretical framework, the necessary design principles are defined for all scales and are the ones implemented in the last phase (phase IV: design) in the selected sites. The final design is tested and evaluated.

figure 70: spatial network
source: by author

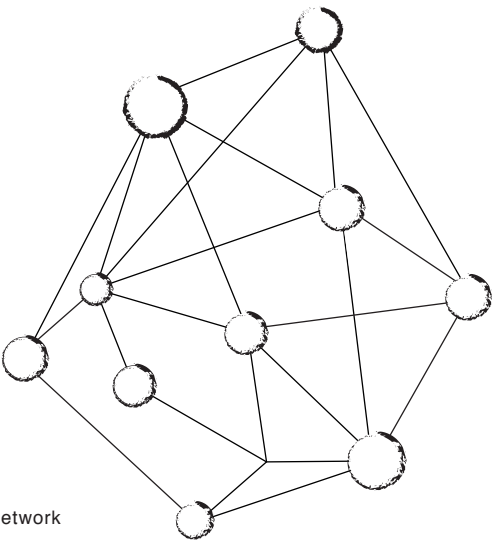
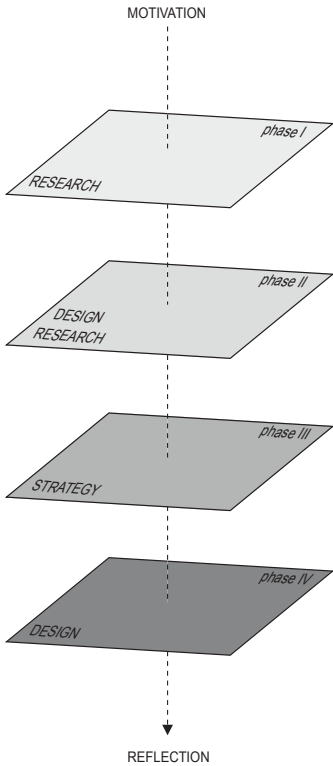


figure 70: phases
source: by author



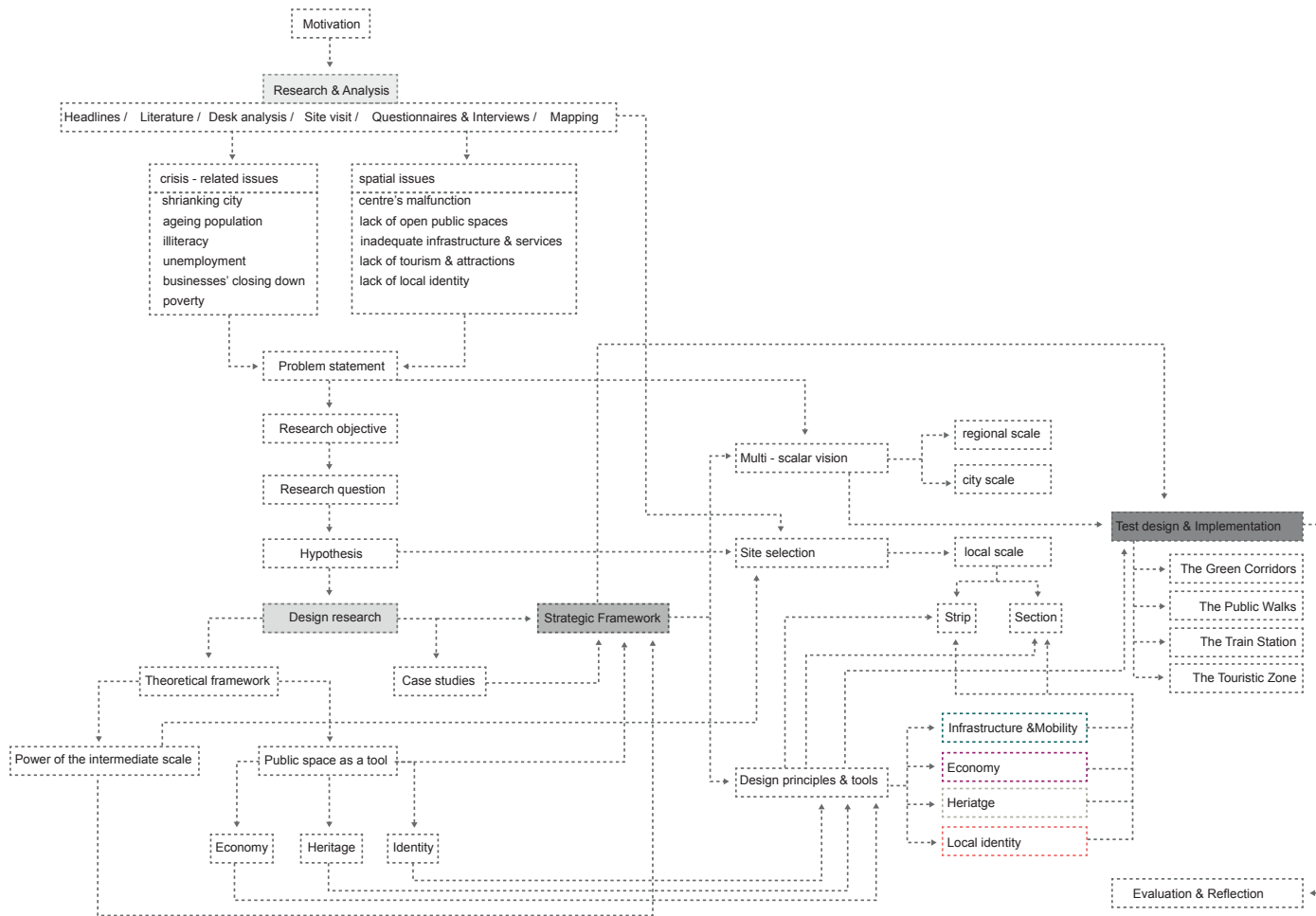


figure 69: methodology scheme
source: by author

Timeline

The different phases of the design are divided along with the different stages of the evaluation of the project - P1, P2, P3, P4 - (figure 71). It has to be mentioned here that the site visit, although it takes place relatively late, at the period between P2 and P3, it is of significant importance for the selection of the areas of intervention, together with the design principles deriving from the theoretical framework. Since the project concerns a whole city with several issues, it is hard to choose the urban space, the re-generation of which can prove to be strategic key for the re-generation of the whole city, and region.

Methodology tools

For this thesis to be conducted, a wide range of tools are being used for the various components of the research and design procedures. Since the graduation plan is divided into four main phases, each of them demands the appropriate approach.

Phase I

The motivation for this thesis is the outcome of the constant headlines on the social media regarding the economic crisis infesting Greece. However, the crisis in Greece does not stand alone. It derives from the socio-economic transformations of a wider scale, such as the European Union and the Global world in general. Hence, a brief academic literature study is carried out since it is essential first to understand the term of economy and its impact on the many assets of the society. Soon after the theories are understood, an extensive collection of data is followed (demographic, economic, etc), in order to translate the phenomenon into numbers and figures that can immediately and easily demonstrate its repercussions on the scale of the country.

After familiarizing with the problem field and having formed the diagnosis, the project acquires a specific location, which is the city of Agrinio, thus a detailed analysis is carried out. Headlines and data collection again are used to point out its peculiarities and urgencies. A detailed analysis on the city through mapping follows. For the analysis, historic books of the city are consulted, interpretation maps are produced, governmental data are collected from the municipality and elaborated, and a site visit is organised, all helping to understand the city and its spatial transformations and development through time and history. During the fieldwork, a questionnaire is distributed to people of different neighbourhoods, social and economic backgrounds, and many interviews are carried out. Observing, sketching and photographing are also important tools for the site visit. All this research is finally leading to the formulation of the problem statement.

Phase II

The research question is created as the answer to the problem statement and a hypothesis is made, supporting that the intermediate scale, using public space as a vehicle, can re-generate space, local identity and economy. In order to justify this belief, the theoretical framework consists of papers and books regarding the power of the intermediate scale, the notion and the role of public space, as well as the relation between public space and economy, public space

and heritage, public space and identity. In addition, two case studies are studied, related to the theories explored. This framework helps to define the necessary principles to be used in the design process.

Phase III

As soon as the design principles are decided, the importance of a multi-scalar approach is explained, resulting in a strategic vision for the region, the city and the local scale. Four fields are chosen, infrastructure & mobility, economy, heritage and local identity, and for each one of them, goals, actions, key projects and actors are investigated. The theoretical framework and the findings of the site visit assist to define the local scale which will be the areas of intervention. Thus, the “strip” and the “section” are chosen, and a separate strategic vision is developed for both of them, using the defined design principles.

Phase IV

The last part of the graduation is linked to the design testing and is approached through the method of research by design. By mapping again, collage-ing, providing illustrations and visualizing the spatial qualities created, the final products derive. An evaluation is finally made, as well as a reflection upon the outcomes and the methodology process of the project.

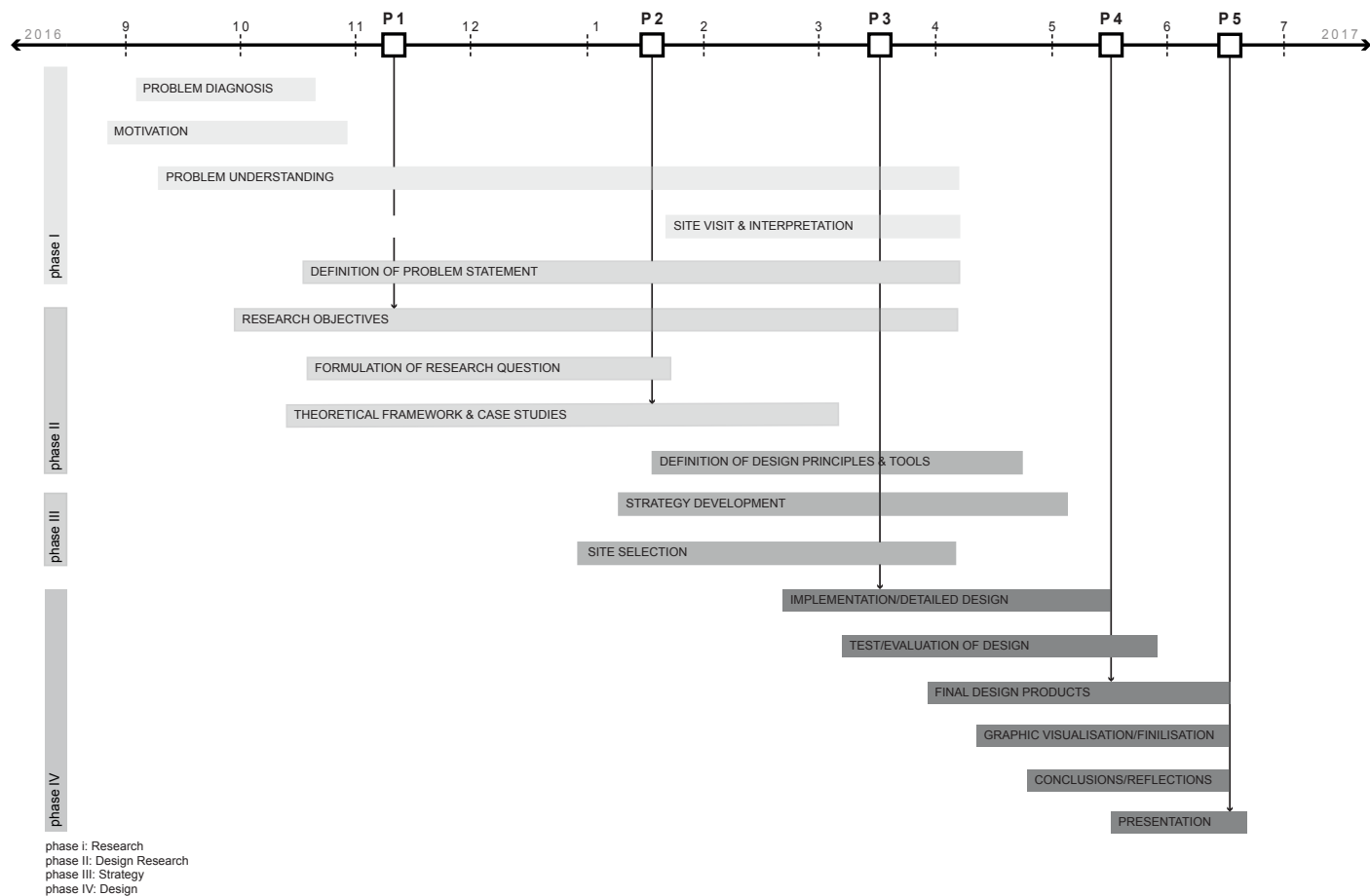


figure 71: time-frame of the graduation process
source: by author

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The problem statement led to the formulation of the following design question that this graduation project will attempt to answer through its research.

“ What spatial interventions related to public space, touristic, cultural and historical assets could be implemented in the city of Agrinio, in order to act as stimulators for urban regeneration and strengthening of its identity in the regional context? “

Sub-research questions

For the main question to be answered, a process of answering certain sub-research questions is required that actually divides the main issues into smaller ones. The sub-research questions which are going to be answered are the following:

In which way did history, economy, trends and politics shaped the city?

This first question is of vital importance since it is the key element to understand the current form the city. Reviewing historic books, obtaining and analysing historical maps from the municipality's archive, finding and reading newspapers of the past, all are tools which can help to acquire this knowledge. At the same time, a brief review is made regarding the urban planning policies of the same periods in Greece in general, in order to be able to make comparisons and evaluations of those that occurred in the city.

How are these factors manifested in the urban environment?

This question can only be answered through tracing and mapping, both historic and current maps. Additionally, interpreting data and figures and translating them into maps can also add to the best comprehension of facts and trends.

Which is the current state and function of the public spaces and the cultural- historical heritage in the city?

For this attempt, an analytical spatial analysis is needed. Firstly, an hierarchy is set concerning the public spaces and buildings of the city. They are investigated in terms of public-ness, way and frequency of use, and later on, an extended analysis of their current conditions and opportunities is carried out.

What are the main forces that keep driving its development?

Taking into consideration current trends and issues of the city, both in regional and national level, converting them into relations between people and space, it is possible to conclude on the way that the city keeps expanding and evolving.

What are the current planning concepts for the city and how do they address the public space network?

Acting individually is not a successful path to be taken. Thus, co-operation between different stakeholders is needed. It is important to take into consideration the current government's and municipality's plans. Again, obtaining this data is necessary, as well as translating their plans into maps, and relating them to the public space.

What is their relationship between the urban space and the inhabitants' mentality/behaviour, between the urban space and the retain of identity?

A site visit plays significant role in answering this question. During the visit, behavioural mapping is attempted through personal observation and interviews. This results in the selection of the appropriate sites for interventions.

In which way public space can be perceived as public?

A literature review is needed in order to interpret space in terms of public-ness and use it for the identification and the classification of the public spaces in the city.

Which design principles could help to regenerate the city?

This question is based on two factors. One is the theoretical framework set in order to find ways of relating public space with economy, identity and heritage. The second one is to assess the city's needs along with the current economic and political processes of the country.

What are the urban features that could keep the public space flexible for coming generations?

The answer to this question can be given only after the method of research by design. The design interventions are tested and evaluated at the selected sites in order to ultimately decide upon the desired design products. Only then, a clear statement can be made regarding the intended goals.

HYPOTHESIS

The intermediate scale can be used as a strategic urban project since it has the power to meld different scales, integrate different programs and spatial qualities. By using public space as a catalyst within its context, it can ultimately bind a city together and advert the estrangement of the urban environment. By re-generating space, a strong and distinguishable identity can be formed that will in, its turn, generate a stronger and more sustainable economy.

” *A strategic urban project has to be structural, multi-dimensional, visibly innovative and beautiful (Calabrese, 2011).*

Strategic urban projects are essential for the regeneration of a city since they propose actions that bring changes, rearrange discontinuities and fiercely influence the fundamental features of a city. They are capable to connect, mediate and coordinate diverse actors and actions, especially in cases where the spatial quality of the urban fabric is incomplete, defined by the conjunction of clashing elements and unities. But most importantly, they are projects characterised by feasibility, visibility and innovation (De Meulder, Loeckx, Shannon, 2004), and this is what distinguish them from a random master plan or design. For their realisation, the interaction between urban planning policies and involved stakeholders becomes a necessity, towards the production of a radical change in the city's image and perception. Strategic urban projects have the ability to alter the existing conditions, to offer ground for future development and to create a stronger identity.

Urban design is undoubtedly one of the steering wheels of strategic urban projects, requisite to trigger the development process. It is the intermediate tool through which potentialities upon the examined sites are investigated, enhancing the existing spatial qualities. It acts as the vehicle for negotiation, constantly triggering strong open-ended plans that make room for evolution and adaptation. And,

“While urban design is the ‘key’ to the strategic urban project, the ‘hero’ is urban space itself” (De Meulder, Loeckx, Shannon, 2004).

Strategic urban plans merely cope with urban space, exploring the numerous possibilities of the existing space by profiteering from its mediating capacity. Thus, strategic urban projects are inextricably “linked with their medium-term perspective and the intermediate scale” (De Meulder, Loeckx, Shannon, 2004).

The intermediate scale is nothing more than the scale of the urban project, referring to it as the kind of project which concentrates on an urban fragment, regarding it as the initiator power for dealing with wider issues of the city and different scales (Busquets, 2004). In this way, it can evoke fundamental spatial impacts outside its area of intervention (De Sola Morales, 1989). Hence, urban projects are just the components of a bigger strategy, which constitutes a project by itself and is what Busquets is naming ‘a project of a projects’. Taking into consideration this theory, local projects become the substantial parts of a wider group of projects.

POWER OF THE INTERMEDIATE SCALE

The question of the intermediate (in - between) scale in contemporary planning theory and practice, is forming both a conceptual approach and a design approach, translated into a theoretical and a design concept.

The interest in the intermediate scale derives mainly due to the need to understand 'vague areas' that are mediating between certainties, between dominant identities, between intentions and mentalities.

The activation, via the design, of an intermediate space between two considerations of a concept can yield a creative correlation between them and innovative approaches towards this concept. At the same moment, it is developing a reflection on planning as an evolution.

The intermediate space (in-between)

Today, certain features and procedures of space are visible, which contribute to the formation of an unstable image. The planning community, as well as the scientific one interested in the interpretation of contemporary phenomena of space and combined with other areas of knowledge intend to record this phenomenon, seek interpretation tools and devise design adaptation practices under such conditions. Most importantly though, this phenomenon is regarded as a creative opportunity to revise planning as a practice aimed for stability and permanence.

Unfortunately, in contemporary years, the knowledge of space is separated from the stability of content and the certainty of meaning. The production of space may be a complex process, which is not directly linked to elementary and obvious intentions. Moreover, the activity in space does not necessarily correspond to social practices over time.

Consequently, it is interesting to cope with space that is not characterized by clear conditions, both in terms of the intentions that define it, the forces (social, institutional, economic, etc.) that permeate it, as well as its identity. Space is traditionally related to a complete and self-sufficient identity, that is a definite form of activity which is associated to specific institutional structures.

What happens in spaces where either the identity remains unclear or in spaces that mediate between identities without actually depicting a clear structure themselves? In these cases, the activity presents special forms and the structures can not

be considered just spatial, since they are mainly functioning as spaces of transition, exchange, interpenetration. Such spaces are often found in urban environments, both in metropolitan and urban areas of smaller scale, which are transformed under conditions which pose new institutional structures (globalization, post-crisis structures etc.). Also, in non-urban environments, which have not an urban character, but also have lost their rural structure, whilst their identity as localities is placed under negotiation (formerly rural areas, areas intensively used by infrastructure, regions which act as 'left-overs' between urban areas etc.). In all of these spaces, questions are raised regarding the correlation of concepts of the issues opposed, such as the dipoles 'old-new', 'urban-rural', 'local - delocalised', as well as issues of programming and land-use.

In a few words, it is about spaces that 'mediate', which have no clear structure, which connect, yet without prejudging the stability of the related parts, spaces that are changing and evolving - in the same way that the structure of organizations evolves (as demonstrated by the theory of evolution), and and their relationship with the environment. Such spaces are considered as the "intermediate scale" and an attempt should be made to identify their characteristics.

In-between space and systems

The intermediate space sets up the topology, which refers to systems in which "conditions are not precise, but ambiguous, confusing, unworkable, hybrid, uncertain" (Morales, 2003). But how the intermediate space concerns spaces confused by ambiguity of intentions and dubious identities? As Simondon mentions "a being does not possess unity in its identity, that of a stable order in which no transfiguration is possible, on contrary, a being has a transductive unity, meaning that it can break its own limits in relation to its centre" (Grosz, 2001).

The intermediate is the space that defines this potentiation of identity, the possibility which constantly threatens to break the boundaries of the identities that constitute it:

"The space in-between is the place for social, cultural and physical transformations: It is the only space - the space around or between identities - where the process, the opening towards the future, outweighs the conservative impulse to regain consistency and unity" (Grosz, 2001).

This confusion is caused by an intermediate space due to

the reversal of any attempt to revoke a pre-formed identity. And this is primarily because of the possibility offered by this space for experimenting with codes, for the production of innovative associations.

The intermediate space, which has no identity, thereafter holds intermediate positions, limits and margins, in a system configured between spaces with no formed identities, i.e. an integrated social space system. Since it is considered to be a space that enables correlations, it should also be regarded as a space which has the ability to redefine the identities of the remaining elements of space. Otherwise, it will be a left-over space, awaiting for activities which merely complement the whole, while the other components retain their identities intact.

Of course, the intermediate space, as a condition of a creative use of space, does not belong to the concepts of the 'gap' or 'margin' between programs. Even more, it is not by itself a stand-alone program with its own identity formed. It is the space dealing with associations, overlaps, intersections, looking for delimitations between programs.

Thus, an "in - between" space which becomes the desired design of planning can play the role of the intermediate scale, at the level of negotiation between different concepts, and the discovery of their boundaries. That is the space that negotiates the different requirements between two different scales, programs or systems, trying to build their institutional relationship.

The beneficial structural discontinuity program

The intermediate space (in-between), the space of negotiation and change, presents one more feature. It is the space which, as mentioned before, does not have a specified identity, its notion is unclear and its character incomplete. Thus, it is necessary as an intermediary factor between scales and levels with unclear relationship. In this way, the intermediate space becomes the space of potentialities. It can act as a beneficial structural discontinuity, which determines the structural relationships between different programs and uses. A space, which is structurally unspecified can produce varying correlations while the total 'organism' which is generated can be unstable and therefore, negotiable. As a result, this structural discontinuity of the intermediate space can form the unstable relationship between two different systems. It goes without questioning that this relationship is not grounded, and will always arise as a problem and a question, which can be submitted to different solutions and

answers. The intermediate space is the space in which this relationship is actuated and wherein the configuration of its balance is possible.

Intermediate space as a structural gap, a discontinuity, a disruption in the system

Due to its nature as a margin, a boundary between programs, the term intermediate space may include any discontinuity of a homogeneous system, any ambiguity or any undefined space between different systems. Thereby, a new dialogue is developed between vacant-full, but not in the sense of the absence of volumes and masses or of the construction gap. The space here is not the 'rest', but a factor which can separate and connect, to affect correlations and determine identities.

"It is a clipping between events, which serves as a link, given that it is the gap itself which allows the circulation of corridors, supports and accesses, which produces networks of interconnections, both existing and potential ones" (Gausa, 2003).

In addition, the intermediate is the space which can provide structures with interfaces with external factors, with asymptote systems and to develop communication between them. The 'in-between' becomes an 'open interface' of a system. At the same time, it becomes the 'a-rhythmical' environment of the osmosis between different and heterogeneous spaces.

PUBLIC SPACE AS TOOL

The re-designing of the public space can become the a project - “medicine for all ills that the city suffers” (Coelho, 2017). Within the context of the intermediate scale, public space can act as a stimulator for transformations and regeneration. The theoretical approach of dealing with public space is based upon three different pillars. First, comes the understanding of the notion of the term, then the realisation of its role in the society and the city, and last but not least, the research on its relation with economy, identity and heritage.

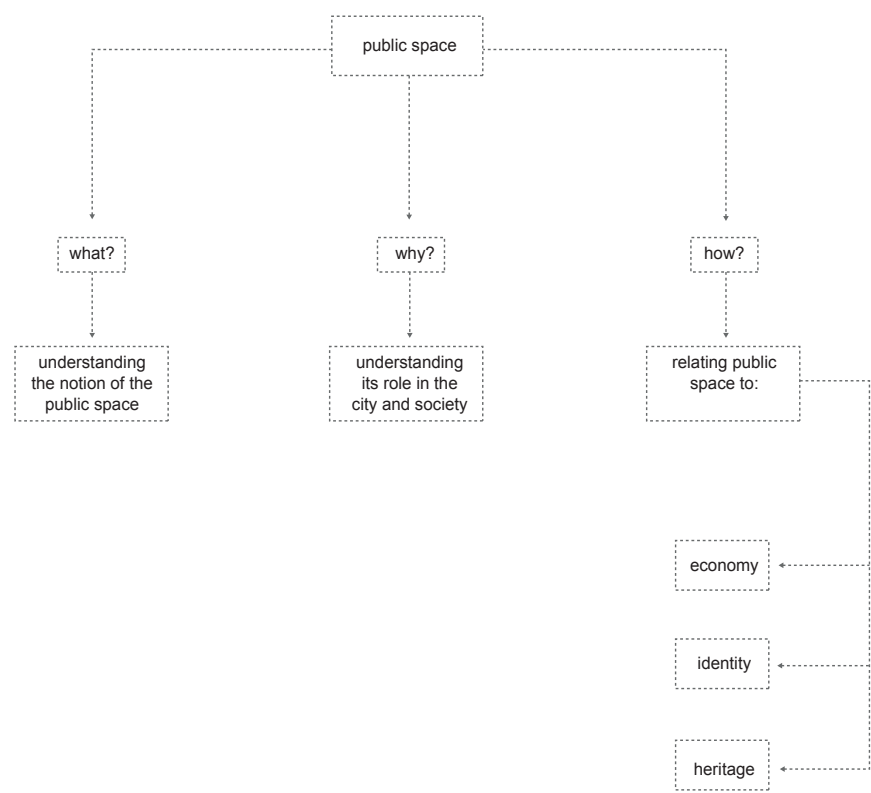


figure 72: theoretical approach of public space
source: by author

Public space is a social space that is generally open and accessible to people. Roads, public squares, parks and beaches are typically considered public space. To a limited extent, government buildings which are open to the public, such as public libraries are also public spaces, although they tend to have restricted areas and greater limits upon use. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/>).

In modern descriptions of dictionaries, “public” is defined anything related to the public, the people, anything which is meant to be for all the whole of the society (Mpampiniotis, Dictionary of Modern Greek). As a notion defined in the common consciousness, public space is a vague and often subjective content, perceived and interpreted differently by everyone, depending on his/her personal experience and understanding that has for the city and the life within it. Certainly though, the common sense connects the public space with the citizenship, even vaguely and intuitively,

shaping the second nature of man as a member of a whole. The most appropriate perhaps way of clarification of the concept of public space is through the distinction of dipole private / public: the private and the public, protected and exposed, work and leisure, the individual and the collective, the traditional and the innovative .2

Hannah Arendt, in her book “The Human Condition”, through a political and philosophical perspective, she argues that public space is eminently a political space and bi-directionally linked to the concept of public freedom. Although governed by laws and rules of behavior, it is an open space, potentially appropriable, and through its operation, it justifies the role of the city as a core of co-existence, communication and interaction.

As public space mutates in each historic period, adjustable to the spirit of different periods, its role in the urban fabric is extended or limited. Through the meanings which it compacts, it becomes possible to draw conclusions concerning the history of the area to which it belongs, to outline and interpret its course in time.

The way it is organized and formed, creates feelings of pleasure or displeasure, security or insecurity, it raises the interest, attracts or repels. Depending on its position and its relations to other spaces, it is accessible or not, participating or not in the system of places and spots points that people feel the need to remember (Kosmaki, 2009).

Public space was created as a place to work as a field of activity for the people, a field of assembly, worship, transaction, interaction. Following the evolution of the city, it was enriched with features, facts and values, that gave it a special meaning, a character and an identity. As such, it has acted as a place of law, act, production, cultural, political and social activity, of competitions, development and circulation of ideas, elements that are directly linked to the social status of the individual.

In any case, the main objective of the existence of public space is the appropriation by its users, not just as a “roof” of their common life but as a special living experience. The way in which public space is experienced, is the way that characterises it as functional or not, and the activities on or around it depend greatly on the functions and the users to whom it is addressed.

The role of public space

The offer of public space within a city, especially of the one formed through a design process, is complex and distributed at different levels. At a functional level, it is used as a hinge between different functions, serving the movements within the city and the communication between private spaces. It also act as a gathering place either for social or for emergency situations.

Equally important is the social offer of public space, the everyday use of which constitutes a form of participation in the public life of the city. Public space is reserved for collective action, development of social relations and relaxation from the hectic pace of the city life. Its use prevents socially exclusion and offers an as much as possible smooth psychosomatic development of the citizens (Aravantinos, Kosmaki, 1988). Sometimes also, public space acquires a special character acting as symbol or landmark of an area, contributing to a better understanding of the city.

In the economic sector, the existence of public space is related to the goodwill, which is being appropriated by the neighboring building blocks, as well as to the favorable conditions created for the development of economic activities in the surrounding areas.

The public space within a city constitutes an integral part of the urban fabric. The roads, the squares and the monuments of the city are meeting points, which are elements of the reality of the urban space (Attart, 2004). On contrary, the degradation and the lack of such sites lead to the disappearance of consciousness and the identity of the city (Lefebvre,1977). Moreover, the necessity of maintaining or creating public spaces is observed in the Charter of Athens, being considered as an integral part of the urban planning and design (Le Corbusier, 1987).

The design of urban spaces is a complex issue and historically, dealing with such spaces depends on the environmental, social, political and religious demands of the time (Moughtin, 192). Therefore, out of the total of public spaces, the connections between them and their relations with the built environment of the city as well as with the natural environment, it is possible to identify the identity of a city. Especially in the city centres of some cities, there are public spaces that are updated and re-adapted to the successive historic periods, integrating new functions and

roles, simultaneously achieving to bring memories from the past.

The force of certain types of public spaces to resist in time, their elasticity and adaptability to changes in the socio-economic and cultural conditions demands timeless examination (Aravantinos, Kosmaki, 1988).

Public space and Economy

The urban dimension of the crisis is associated with the models of economic and social participation and organisation to such an extent that the damage done to the consumption - production processes can be recognised in the nature of the public space as well.

Economic recovery requests drastic changes to the urban space, such as restructuring of public spaces, new housing programs, reinforcement of the existing physical - or not - infrastructure, that go hand in hand with necessary urban development policies and plans. These new policies by setting a new urban model have the power to form new types of sociability and urban spaces. Therefore, a better approach towards the economic crisis can be generated, responding better to the issues and demands of the 21st century, and to the multi-dimensional social and spatial changes (Burkhalter, Castells, 2009).

The re-use of abandoned built structures within the city premises can also add to the attempt towards the formation of new urban models. Buildings that lost their functionality under the umbrella of the economic crisis and are lying empty can be transformed into mixed use housing, cultural and commercial services, at the same time that their enormous areas reserved for parking can be inverted into communal spaces, like community farming.

Functional cities demonstrating a functional economy as well are highly dependent on timely and competent movement of goods, information and people. The economic development of a city is inextricably related to this matrix of movements. Particularly, during the new era of the idea based economy, the more connections established from people to people and between people and information, the more productive the city becomes and more the possibilities for a creative economy to be produced. Hence, the economic welfare of a city relies to a certain extent to its communication system (Burkhalter, Castells, 2009).

However, there is another type of communication system that constitutes an integral part of the urban social life. This is

the public space, a space where people gather, meet, and interact. Public space is multi-functional and can be used for a series of events, such as celebrations, commercial markets, street theater, musical performances. Public spaces should be distributed throughout the whole city, being treated as a key element of the urban living and giving the opportunity to its residents to spend some creative time in the space in between their home and work (Burkhalter, Castells, 2009).

Public space and Identity

Self-awareness is a basic human need, the lack of which can cause existential confusion. This observation leads to the study of self-identity and to the research of the elements that form it. It is proved that - among others - the place constitutes the self-identity and that without the knowledge and the experience of it, man feels disorientation, alienation, "one confusion of meanings, spatial and existential insecurity" (Norberg-Schulz, 1979). A geographical area, in order to be perceived as a place, it has to exhibit a set of features.

The ability to focus on the field of human intentions, experiences and attitudes is a fundamental quality of place (Relph, 1976), as well as the stability, the orientation, the readability, the existence of meanings and values, the development of emotional bonds, individual and social activities (Relph, 1992). Thus, the space is impregnated with qualities and properties, creating the place, which is then defined by its particular identity. In the urban theory, the identity of a place is considered as a uniqueness of the entity of a place, as expressed through its landscape and perceptual image (Stefanou, 1999), as well as a unique and universal relationship between a specific place and its constructions (Rossi, 1991).

Public space is defined, with regard to its use, as a space that is open and accessible to all, regardless gender, race, ethnicity, age, social and economic level and as regards to its nature, as an open space consisting of roads, squares, parks and built space, consisting of libraries, cultural buildings, government agencies etc. However, space also consists, of various other tangible and intangible assets, such as trademarks, advertisements, sights, smells, sounds, habits, traditions etc. Thus, the concept of public space gather much more elements beyond space and physical accesses (Chua, Edwards, 1992), such as sensations, feelings and messages deriving from them, which are also public and accessible to all.

Under these conditions, the concept of place identity,

which as discussed consists of the elements of space and their connotations, is of particular importance since it now addresses to the common and public. Indeed, the identity of space when it comes to public space is converted in an open interaction field, where the public participation constantly reconfigures towards new directions (Stefanou, 1999). Therefore, in order to protect the identity of a place, priority should be given priority on how it is represented and perceived in public places.

Public space and Heritage

The current era is characterised by a collision between old and contemporary spaces, as the contemporary element overlays the traces of the old (Aravantinos, 1998), a collision between the dynamic and changing present, and the static, unchangeable yesterday. Everything is reviewed, and daily revised in a period where the content of known concepts and established is changing, at the same time that new ones are also adding (Zivas, 1991). “Everything flows” ... and among them are the cities, their functions, their expressions (Aravantinos, 2006).

The dynamic structure of the urban environment evolves and changes due to economic, social, political and cultural processes. The transformations taking place in modern cities are rapidly increasing. The new structure of the modern city is unpredictable and complex, given the continuous mixing of cultures that brings new elements to the already complex identity of placed, breaking, mixing and reconstructing the complexity of urban life and fabric (Sepe, 2007).

The natural environment is the one that disappears, leaving behind indistinct traces. As for the man-made one, people are searching for something to hold on in order to understand. They are longing for history, tradition and a prominent past identity, a relevance to the present creations (Aravantinos, 2006). Monuments and historic sets are subjected to this degradation of the urban environment. They are scorned and many times converted into urban gaps, into places without identity, without depicting their historic load.

Regarding the historic dimension of cities, in the Greek city, buildings, stations of the past remain in place, the emblematic buildings as remains of the past that witness history constitute a minority. If their image is perceived as final and consolidated, it could be the end of architecture, urbanism, history, culture, and art (Aravantinos, 2006). The Greek urban environment should not be regarded as something negative or something that disappears, but

something dynamic that is approaching.

Public space in general is nothing but a stage, a show where people meet everyday, interact with each other, fight for a common cause, rest, daydream, thus approaching in the best possible way the nature and identity of each space separately, but its role in the establishment of the city and the urban fabric as well (Gatos, Gerontopoulou, 2014).

Through its multiple contents, public space is now an important subject of the design process, as well as a political issue with complex connotations, becoming even more complex in the context of the crisis. As Sharon Zukin said “public spaces are a window to the soul of the city.” Hence, only through history and the elements of the past, public space can acquire identity and content, and be recorded in the memory and in the daily life of the spectators / tourists / residents. The co-existence of the old (historic buildings) with the new (public space and public life) can create a spatial experience reminding the past and applying to the present. Historic buildings are the link between past and present, modern and old, between space and collective memory, giving identity to the urban space. It is the “bridge” between the changes that occurred in the past, leaving their imprint of the course of time, and the present, thus the continuous modern urban change (Petridou, 2005).

CASE STUDIES

Third square, Athens, Greece

The most important improvement of public places is ensured by increasing them. This can happen with mild interventions such as street widening or enlargements of squares, even with the creation of new public spaces at the expense of private ones. This certainly requires interventions that are feasible within the existing institutional framework, such as purchases, expropriations, change of building factors, self-compensation, etc. A typical example of urban green space conversion is the case of the former Korean market in a central neighbourhood of Athens.

Within the framework of the implementation of the Athens Integration Program, it was decided to give Athens a new square, Keramikos square, with the expropriation of the ruins of the old Korean market, at the junction of Ermou and Piraeus streets opposite to Gazi neighbourhood. This would result in the creation of a new pole in the historical centre of Athens, in a particularly degraded area, which could be still larger in size from Sintagma Square. Thus, in 1990, an architectural competition was carried out by the Municipality of Athens having as a theme the formation of this square. At this point it is important to note that this area was studied by Kleanthis and Schaubert in the first urban plan of Athens in 1833. The plan foresaw for Athens the creation of three pole-squares in a triangular order, that for each one of them certain characteristics were defined (figure A). Sintagma square was about to become the centre of powers, Omonia square the commercial centre and Kekropos square, also known as the “Third Square”, placed in Keramikos area, the cradle of culture and civilisation.

The objectives of the competition were:

- the re-construction of the Third square that will satisfy the functions of the area and the city,
- the creation of a new pole of attraction for Athenians by providing the degraded areas with a large area of pedestrianisation and greenery,
- the restoration of the urban fabric of the city by combining the western districts with the centre and, in particular, the connection of Thesio with Keramikos ,
- the restoration of the historical continuity of the city and the preservation and highlighting of the wealth of the building heritage of the area,
- the arrangement of the road traffic in the area.

The design proposal that won the first prize proposed the

construction of the Third square at the crossing of Ermou and Piraeus streets. The square had the form of a road, following the Acropolis - Gazi axis, the same axis which coincides with the ancient Piraeus street, one of the main access points to the centre of classical Athens. The road-square constitutes the bridge between Thesio and Keramikos with Gazi and the western districts, while at the same time creates a new attraction pole by creating a large area for walking and green.

As it is at the end of the “Great Walk” (the path consisting of the paths of Dionisiou Aeropagitou - Apostolou Pavlou - Ermou), it gives the opportunity to highlight the elements of memory of the area, both from antiquity and from the newer history, such as the archaeological site of Keramikos, the historic centre of Piraeus Street, the industrial complex at Gazi (today known as Technopolis) and the Pouloupoulos factory (today known as the Cultural Centre of Melina) and to integrate them in the creative process of formation of the new cultural identity of the city.

With regard to the formation of the square, it is a discrete intervention of creating a communal urban green space with the formation of low slopes, soil surfaces and paths of green. The formation of the low slopes, the inner paths and the planting were made using as a reference the view of the unobstructed view of important focal points, such as the hill of Lycabettus and with respect to the influence units such as Keramikos - Ermou and Technopolis.

Basic choice for the square was the use of a simple architectural vocabulary as well as the reuse of materials from the area itself that substantially reduced the total cost of the construction and stimulated the institutions involved in the regeneration of spaces regarding the issue of environmental sensitization and recycling. For the slopes, excavation soil from the neighbouring Botanicus garden was used, for the construction of the lithic seatings, stones from the demolition of the Korean market were recycled and re-used as well as wooden parts from the railway lines and for the steps at two of the entrances to the green space, old marble parts of the Athenian pavements.

From the urban planning perspective, the square becomes part of the general urban planning as part of the third half-pole in the centre of the city. Apart from its connection to Thesio and Gazi, its linear character and axial approach unifies and connects the area with Sintagma and Omonia

squares. From an environmental planning point of view, it upgrades the neighbourhoods of Thessio and Gazi by providing them with the up to now non-existing free space for the expansion of functions that the constant and strict construction policies prohibit. Moreover, the green planted in a significant expanse of the intervention area is giving the city a valuable lung away from the suffocating atmosphere of the asphalt. Important part of the proposed intervention was the extensive expropriation of the necessary plots or buildings in order to ensure the appropriate space for the overall planning. On the other hand though, this action raised the difficulty of implementing the proposal.

At this point, it is worth mentioning that for the first time an expropriation program at the centre of Athens is fully implemented and not for the purpose of new commercial and residential exploitation but for returning the space to the citizens with the form of green space. Indeed, the area's image has changed radically today. The Athenians are discovering a new recreational area that has not been burdened with any building. A new square, a breath of freedom in the centre of the city, is now spreading over the entire space of the two building blocks formerly occupied by the slums of the Korean market.

On the occasion of the construction of the new square, an additional railway station was constructed, the Keramikos station. Attiko Metro S.A. proceeded to the seizure of the surface area of the underground, which is now delimited by the new station and afterwards, to a new formation of the square in the centre of Gazi neighbourhood. The aesthetics of the station and the re-construction of the square contributed substantially to the upgrading of the area's image. To begin with, part of Tritopolemos street was pedestrianised in order to create a united and flowing space in the square. In addition, this free space functions as a connecting hub of the area with Technopolis through another shaped free space that is offered as a space with semi-circular seatings. This space is crossed by a pedestrian-flow path pointing to the back entrance of the Gazi area. Particularly interesting is the underground square created in the station area and which is the transition stage to the area of the metro. This area is a place of movement as well as a common meeting space. In general, a linear centre is created providing free spaces for the inhabitants of the area and for the visitors of Technopolis.

Since these interventions were implemented in the area, There is observed in the area a booming in functions beyond the local character are observed within the urban fabric of Gazi neighbourhood. Undoubtedly, the formation of the overlying square above Keramikos metro station, as well as the Third square encouraged the consolidation of these new functions along their edges, which rushed to profiteer from this privileged position. Thus, visitors who make occasional use of the activities in the area are growing day by day. The new functions also shape the times at which these interactions take place, extending them into the night. Consequently, while the peak hours of the area were more early in the morning between residents and visitors, today the neighbourhood is active also in the evening (Bakali, 2007). In this context, the local character of the area varies, as the composition of the population (both qualitative and quantitative) changes together with their habits and their daily routine.

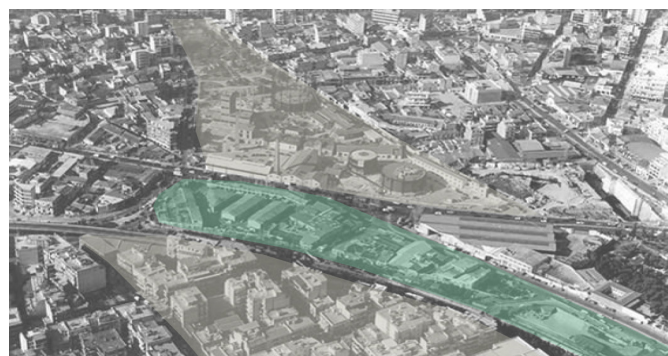


image
source: by author



image
source: by author

Superkillen, Copenhagen, Greece

Norrebro, an area in the Danish capital, has a population of 71,891 inhabitants which are representing more than 50 different nationalities. In 2007, Copenhagen and a non-profit corporation, Realdania (based on a mortgage credit association), run a competition for this site. The program called for solutions that emphasize the multi-cultural aspect of the neighbourhood and celebrate the diversity of the community. The main objective was to make immigrants feel more at home by evoking their memories of where they had grown up. The winning project was a proposal made by extremely talented and distinguished: architects BIG (Bjarke Ingels Group), the landscape architecture firm Topotek1, the participatory artistic team of Superflex as well as with the collaboration of the residents.

This transdisciplinary attempt resulted in a unique design concept that manages to combine historical themes of the pleasure garden and the amusement park into the contemporary urban context of Copenhagen, while at the same time develops new and innovative methods of enhancing the architectural and urban qualities of the area. The outcome was the creation of a multicoloured and multi-faceted surreal public space of about half a mile, divided into three very distinctive zones that meld into each other horizontally: the Red square, the Black market and the Green park, based on the pre-existing topography of the site.

The most striking intervention was the importation or replication of elements arising memories of all the involved nationalities. For this purpose, the designers of the park placed over 100 objects in the place from different places of the world, such as Brazilian benches, a scrawl from the British coastal resort of Blackpool, sewers from Switzerland, seven different types of parking spots for bicycles from all over Europe, a Moroccan fountain, a painted chess from Bulgaria etc. Some of the objects in Superkillen are prototypes, some others are copies, designed to comply with the Danish regulations for materials in playgrounds and public spaces. All of them were selected after surveying residents of the area on their preferences, which come from so many different cultural backgrounds.

At the southern part of the site, the Red square is designed as an extension of the Norrebrohallen sport and cultural centre, providing space for sports and recreational activities. It constitutes the biggest surface of the whole neighbourhood and it is merely used by the local community for social events, such as concerts, open-air theatres and similar happenings.

The middle section of the project, the Black market, is perceived as the urban living room of the neighbourhood. The main characteristic of this intervention are the parallel, yet diverging, white stripes drawn on the ground that are meant to define the movement of the different flows of people on the site, around and towards the different elements placed. The northern part of Superkillen is taken by the Green park. Although being the thinnest zone of all, it is still the longer one and it best meets the initial requirements and expectations of the users that are striving for more green spaces in the city. It consists mainly of green, like lawn surfaces and trees.

The undoubtedly bold experiment succeeded after having managed to gather daily at the same place chess players in deep concentration, teenagers cycling or skating as if they are in Santa Monica, or infants who are hiding under an octopus from Japan or sliding on an elephant from Chernobyl. It is the meeting point for the community and is associated with vividness and vibrancy. The initial expectation of the design to convert the neighbourhood from an unrecognisable area into an attraction pole for the whole city is succeeded and local residents across different gender, ages, cultures, religions and interests are profiteering from it. The area's qualities as a mono-functional route are transformed into a multi-functional public space, generating new surfaces for the future matching international standards and offering a new mix of passage functions, open-air activities and recreation.



image
source: by author



image
source: www.archiscapes.wordpress.com

PHASE III: STRATEGIC AGENDA AND VISION

MULTI - SCALAR APPROACH

For this project, the implementation of an integrated and multi-level approach is needed, serving the principles of a smart, sustainable and inclusive development that can make the city and the whole region an attractive place to live, work, visit and invest. Not only for the young, productive and creative population, but also for elderly people encouraging them to remain independent, equal and active members of the society.

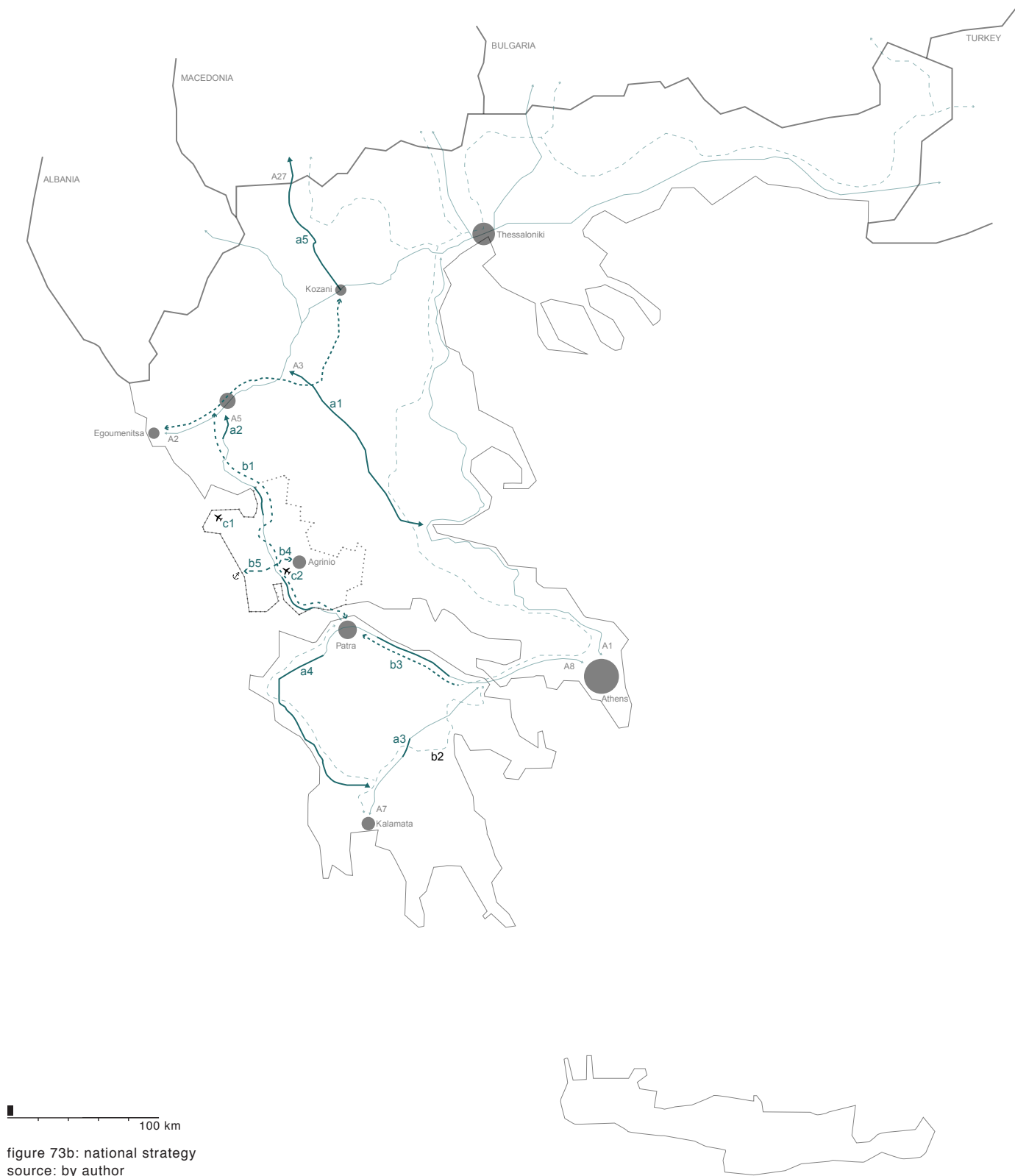
For this purpose, a multi-scalar strategy is made for the region, the city, and ultimately, after the site selection for the local scale, resulting in inter-connected projects. Both the region and the city will use their strengths and they will try to benefit and complement each other. According to the special characteristics and qualities of Agrinio and Aetolia-Acarnania, four different assets are put under investigation, the infrastructure & mobility, the economy,the heritage and the local identity.

For each one of them, and for each scale, different goals are set. The actions for achieving these goals are presented and very often they overlap in all assets. For the actions, the necessary key projects are proposed, as well as the actors and the stakeholders involved. The projects are mainly the outcome of top-down approaches, since the citizens are highly influenced by the economic crisis, they have lost their belief and interest. Thus, bottom-up approaches are feasible only through the organisation of contests and competitions, or by altering their mentalities and way of perceiving the urban space.

The surrounding natural environment of Agrinio is the most strong element for the project, as well as its geographic position. Consequently, protecting, promoting (image 20) and making use of the natural and cultural resources offers considerable potentialities of exploitation as recreational sites or as sites for economic development. The combination of mild forms of alternative tourism and additional complementary production activities are able to stimulate the local economy and contribute to the retention of residents while at the same time creating new employment opportunities. It goes without saying that it is an imperative need to preserve and promote the diversity of this environment as well as to protect the cultural heritage with special consideration towards the “landscape” in order to turn it into an important component of the urban, environmental, cultural and rurally economic planning policies.



image 49
source: www.agrinionews.gr



STRATEGY FOR THE REGIONAL SCALE

For the regional scale, the main goals are mostly related to the first two assets, infrastructure and mobility, and to economy. It is of vital importance for Aetolia - Acarnania to turn it again into an important transportation node, to enhance its local production as a rural area and to promote its natural surroundings by investing on alternative forms of tourism. In addition, making use of the existing university campuses by reinforcing their prestige and the natural resources, it is possible to transform the region into an attractive pole for students, which is the most creative and dynamic generation.

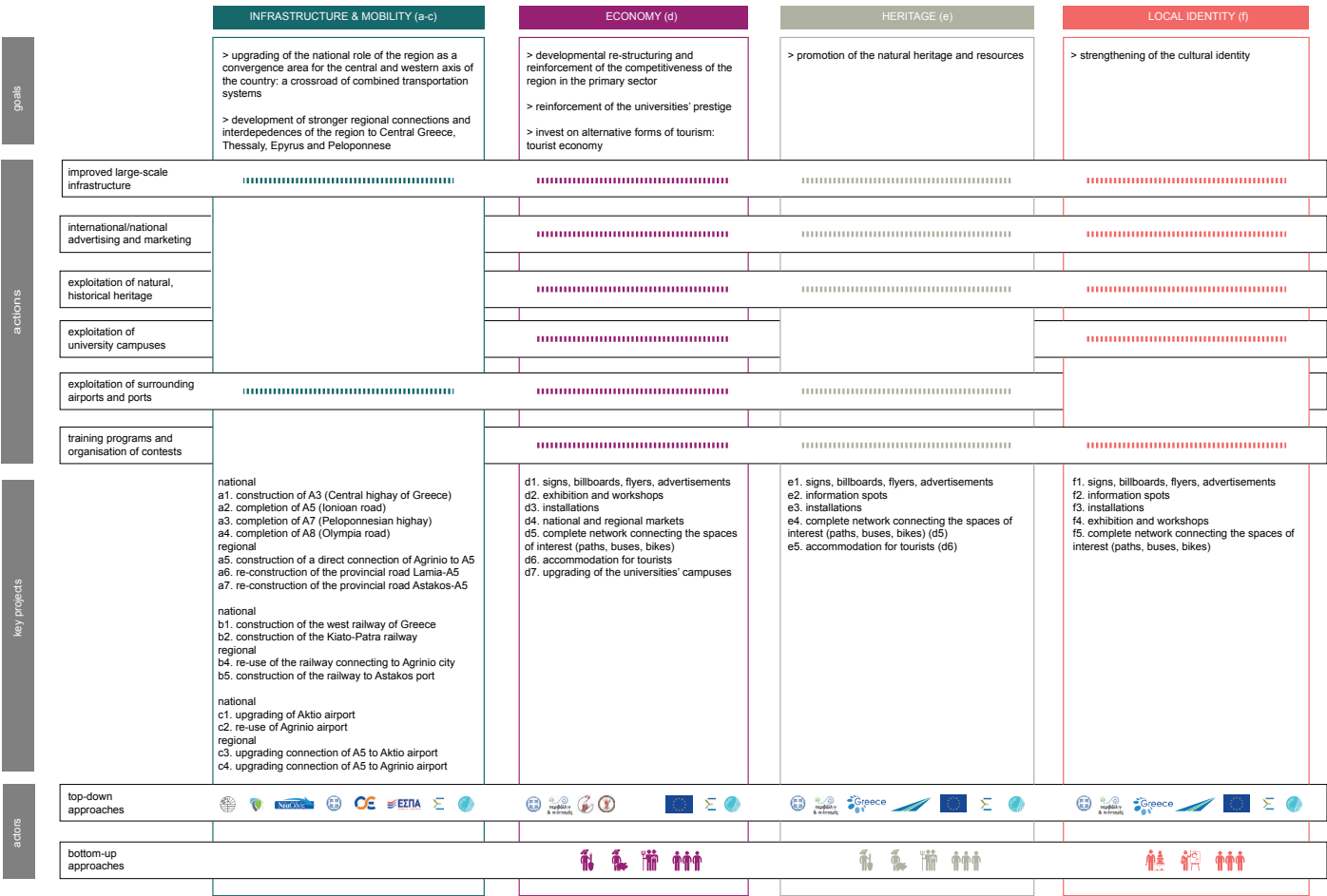


figure 73: regional strategy
source: by author

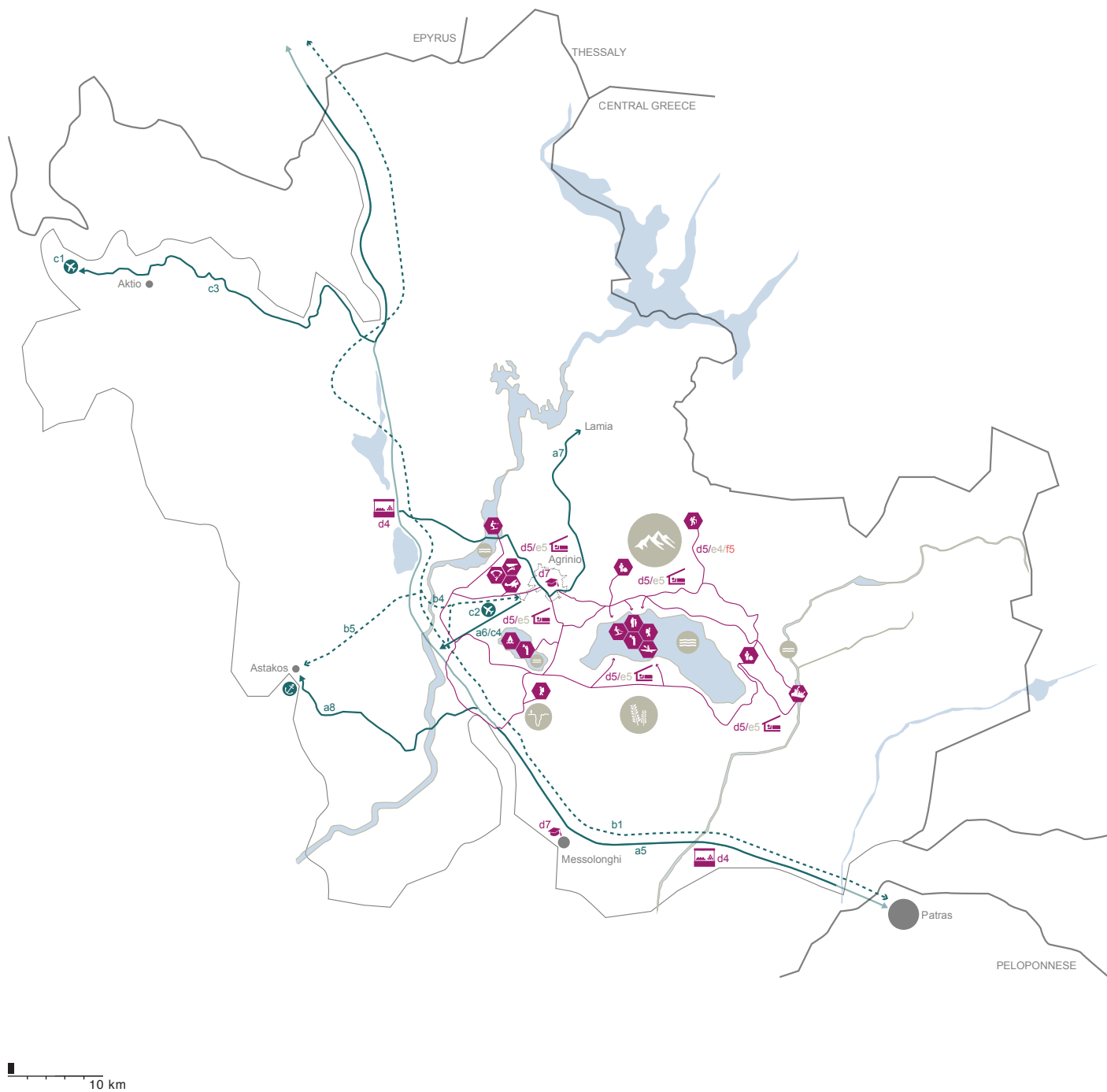


figure 73c: regional strategy
source: by author

STRATEGY FOR THE CITY SCALE

For the city itself, the assets of heritage and local identity become equally important since the city has an abundance of history and heritage to demonstrate, as well as the power to become the regional centre. Hence, apart from improving mobility within its entity and in relation to the whole region, it is of vital importance to promote its historic and cultural characteristics, but also to provide more qualitative spaces, able to deal with its spatial, social and economic issues, such as the degradation of its urban environment.

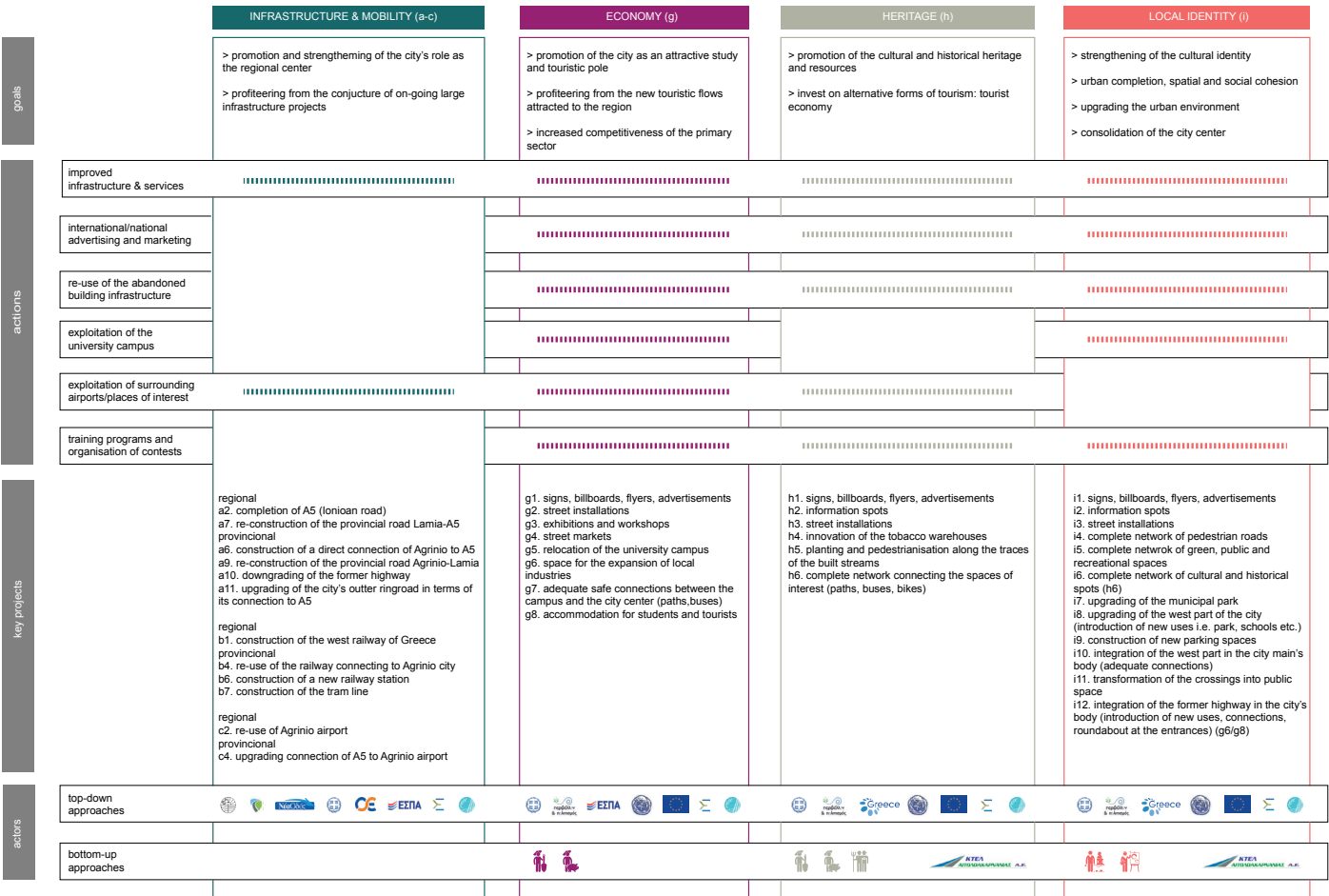


figure 74: city strategy
source: by author



figure 74b: city strategy
source: by author

THE ZONING

After the strategic vision set for the city scale, new poles of attraction are created of different character and programs. The public realm is organised mainly in four zones:

Zone A: the recreational

This zone includes the Municipal park, the Football field of the local team Panetolikos and the recently constructed squares between them. The Football field itself is an attraction for citizens but as well for people from all over Greece every time that Panetolikos is playing. A few years ago, Panetolikos escalated at the first category of the national football world. As a result, fans of this specific sport visit Agrinio during matches and this is the reason why the Municipality upgraded the surrounding space. However, these new flows of people do not choose to spend the night at the city but they prefer to drive back to their own cities. By giving to the city a certain prestige, multiple activities and temptations, the visitors may get the chance to combine their hobby with a pleasant excursion to a promising city, exploiting the touristic attractions of the region. This zone is completed by the upgrading of the park and its transformation into the biggest green lung of the urban environment.

Zone B: the commercial

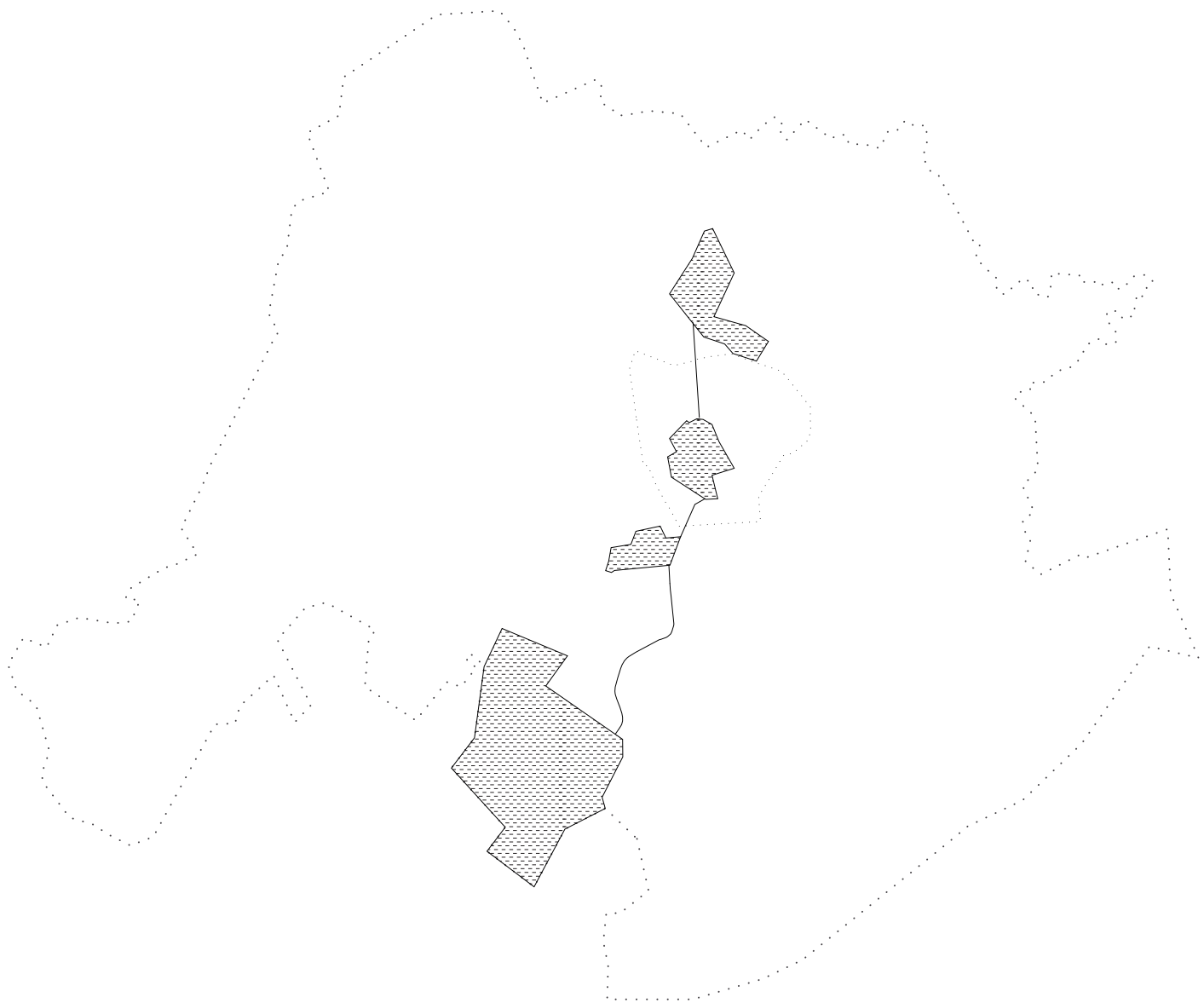
The historic city centre already comprises the main commercial activities of the whole city. Most of its part is already pedestrianised, and is already including the four town squares. It also includes three pedestrian streets filled with cafeterias and restaurants and is daily the main attraction for citizens. What is planned for this zone is its complete pedestrianisation and the prohibition of cars within its borders. In this way, the city centre can be consolidated and people can be tempted to leave their cars at the new designated parking spaces and walk. In this way, citizens will be able to enjoy their shopping without the fear of traffic or of a parking fine. Fortunately, the city centre has always been an important intervention area for the Municipality, neglecting the rest of the urban environment. Consequently, it constitutes the least in-need area for interventions and upgrading. It already provides good spatial qualities that can be used as design principles for the rest of the city.

Zone C: the touristic

This is the zone that is actually missing from the city. In this area, the tobacco warehouses are put back in function under creative uses, like spaces for new entrepreneurs and co-working offices, or even as museums imitating the tobacco warehouse and reminding people of the city's former glory. In addition, since many urban blocks lay unused within its premises, they are exploited and turned into public spaces, such as squares and green areas. Thanks to the city's rich mythology and heritage, some areas are transformed into thematic parks, creating spatial narratives for the history of Agrinio. New entertainment uses are also proposed, such as open-air theatre, cafeterias, restaurants and sports fields, creating an attractive pole both for citizens and tourists visiting the city. On top of that, it creates a smooth transition from the historic city centre to the newly designed and planned former highway into a boulevard of important functions.

Zone D: the educational

The current university campus is located at the south-east part of the city totally disconnected from the centre or the pedestrianised network. Moreover, although it is at the borders of the city, the neighbourhood is surrounded by low-density blocks and houses that do not provide it with the opportunity to take advantage of the urban space and associate it with the study scope. The university integrates three departments under the umbrella of the University of Ioannina, the Department of management of Agricultural Products and Food (DEAP), the Department of Management of Environmental and Natural Resources, and the Department of Management of Cultural Environment and New Technologies (DIPNT). All of them can be supported by on-site knowledge by making use of the rural space. Thus, its relocation is proposed at the west part of the city, that through the unified pedestrian network created, students can connect to the rest of the three zones.



1 km

figure 75: the four zones
source: by author

SITE SELECTION

After the analysis of the theoretical framework regarding the notion of strategic urban projects, the power of the intermediate scale and the public space as a tool ,and after the findings of the spatial analysis of the city and the site visit related to the in-between space of the centre and the former highway, the project is focusing on the intermediate scale and is narrowing down to the local scale and two specific sites framed by different patterns of urbanisation and context and is implementing the design principles set from the strategic visions of the regional and city scale. Within these sites, it is finally possible to creatively speculate upon the possibilities to re-organise and develop them with qualitative urban spaces and urban activities. These two sites are the strip, which constitutes the intermediate scale between the region and the city, and the section, as the intermediate scale between the city and the urban fabric.

The strip

With this term, the former highway is defined. In the past, this strip had the character of a national connector between the city and the rest of Greece. Since its removal, it lays as a divisor between the two different parts of the city, without a clear character or identity. Since the Municipality is intending to convert this space into a boulevard of administrative functions, logistics and offices, sooner or later, it will become an everyday pole of attraction for the citizens. Moreover, as for this project a multi-scalar approach is followed, it can also serve as the intermediate scale between the strategic goals set for the region and those for the city. Therefore, it is chosen as the ‘in-between’ space of these two scales that can accommodate the design principles related to them. In this way, not only it can reinforce the desirable visions for the region and the city, but it can also act as a transition from the west part of the city to the east and vice versa, meliorating their connectivity and alluring citizens to make use of the city’s whole potentials, in terms of space.



figure 58: the strip
source: by author

The section

From the spatial analysis of the city, and especially from the results of the site visit, it becomes clear that the historic city centre is the one and only attractive core for the citizens, while the space in-between this core and the former highway remains unclear and undefined. However, certain qualitative elements are found in this area, reminding history and associating it with the lost culture and heritage. Taking into consideration the transformation of the strip into an important lane of the city, it will intensify the uncharacterised identity of what is called in this project as “the section”, as it will be bordering with two strong centres. Consequently, this space is seen as an opportunity for transformations, especially since it mediates between the city scale and the local one, a space where the design principles developed for these scales can be implemented. It goes without saying that it is attempted to link it to both of the two centres (historic & administrative one) as their continuation, and to form a complete and unified public space network.



figure 58: the section
source: by author



figure 58: the key projects
source: by author

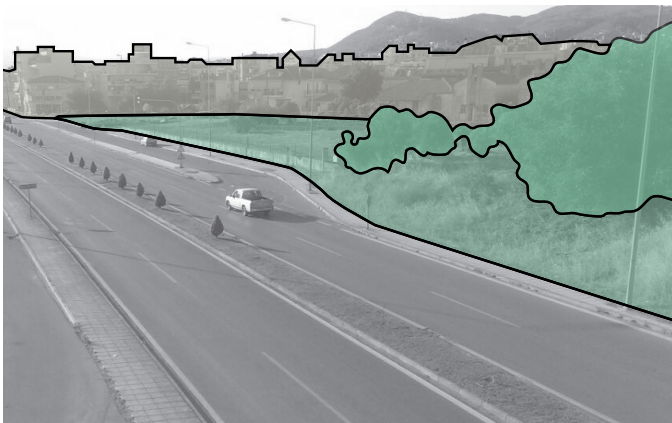


image 55
source: by author

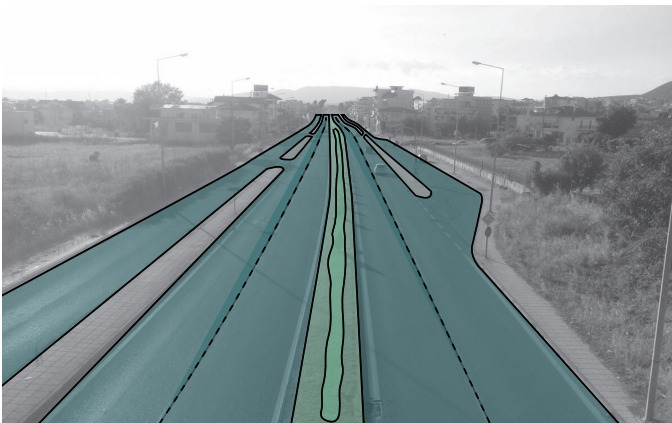


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source: by author



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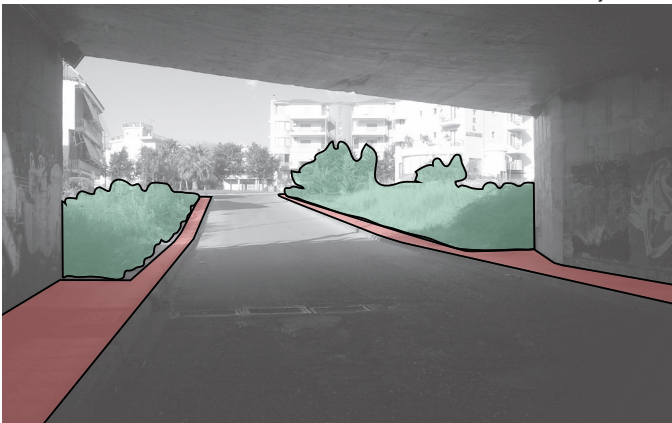


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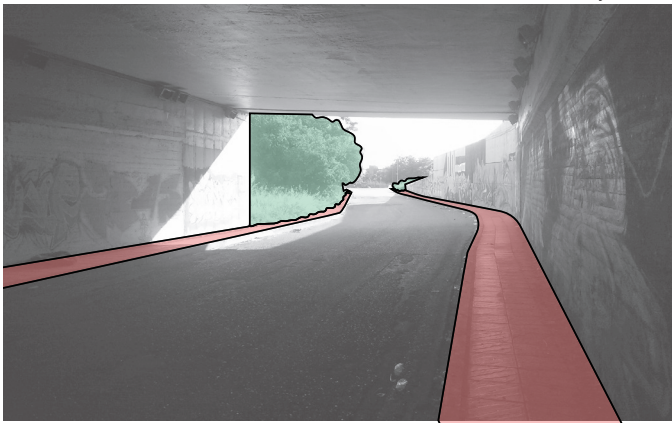


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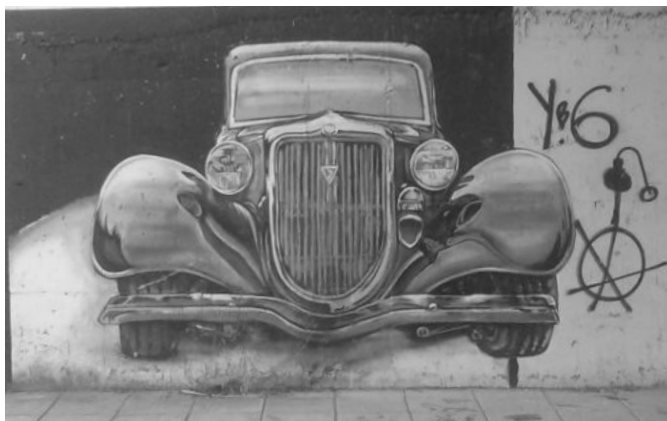
THE STRIP

Current situation



Up to now, the urban blocks along the former highway have been either completely empty (image), or occupied by retail shops and businesses (image). However, after the economic crisis, most of the businesses were closed down and the buildings were left abandoned and empty (image).

In addition, due to its width and the lack of interesting facilities at the west part of the city, citizens from the east part are not tempted to cross it. On the other hand, citizens from the west part have to commute to the city centre for their basic shopping needs or recreational desire but they always prefer to make use of their cars, since there are no safe pedestrian connections with it.



To be more precise, the configuration of the strip since it was designed following the dimensions required for a highway consists of two lanes for every car direction separated by a very small buffering zone planted with bushes, while for the entrance and the circulation in each part of the city, frontage roads have been constructed, taking over the space that could be used for sidewalks of the blocks along them (image). Hence, after the re-location of the highway and its conversion into a provincial road, most of the space is left unused, resulting in a waste of space.

As for the already existing underground connections between the two parts of the city - connections B, D, (see figure 59) - , their condition witnesses that they are only used as transition points. Their space is neglected and the only decoration they have to present is the multiple graffiti artworks on the walls, done by the young inhabitants, since they are searching for ways to express themselves and their creativity and Agrinio is not giving them such opportunities (image).



image 55
source: by author

Strategy

Thus, for the strip, apart from the Municipality's plans to allow on it uses such as offices and logistics, the project intends to integrate its under-over ground connections (A, B, C, D) into the public realm by converting them into public spaces. The ones following the traces of the covered streams of the city (A, C) are turned into "green corridors", as an attempt to bring back to the memory of the citizens their existence, especially since water used to be an important element for the shaping of the city. In addition, they will constitute the links between the existing Municipal park and the new one proposed at the west part of the city, and between the new university campus and the existing park surrounding the church of Saint Christoforos.

Connections B and D are transformed into large "public walks", both of them meeting at the brand new designed touristic zone. Connection D is already an overground connection of the two city parts, crossing over the highway with a bridge and is making use of parts of the existing pedestrianised network. Connection B is the location of the new light-rail station, at the end of the rail-tracks. However, instead of using street lights to cross the highway, the station is constructed in multiple storeys, creating a public bridge for both citizens and newly-arrived people and connecting with the touristic area. The train station is also the starting point of a sightseeing train introduced for the city and the main spot of bike renting, as an alternative solution to the increased use of cars.

Taking into consideration the strategic agenda set for the region and the city, it is evident that new places to accommodate the new flows of people attracted to the area, both tourists and students, are needed. The upgraded and promoted campus is expected to attract more young people that will be in search of a nice living environment, close to their university and the centre. Thus, apart from the relocation of the campus, new student housings are suggested for the empty urban blocks surrounding it. As for the tourists, their hotels are placed at the west part of the city, besides the new public spaces or integrated in them, mixed with other programs of those intended by the Municipality to occupy the strip.

In this way, citizens will be encouraged to leave their cars and their passive behaviour and walk along these public spaces, and tourists will be able to get rid of their cars, the confusing directions to the city centre and the stressing search of parking lots and explore the whole city on foot.

Of course, since these road connectors become part of the public realm, new ones are proposed, closely related to the main entrances of the city, either by opening new streets or by widening existing ones, ultimately facilitating the transition between the highway and the designated parking spaces. This action is supported by detailed signs and directions. Last but not least, a buffering zone of greenery is proposed between the strip's urban blocks intended for heavy uses and the ones behind them, planned for housing.

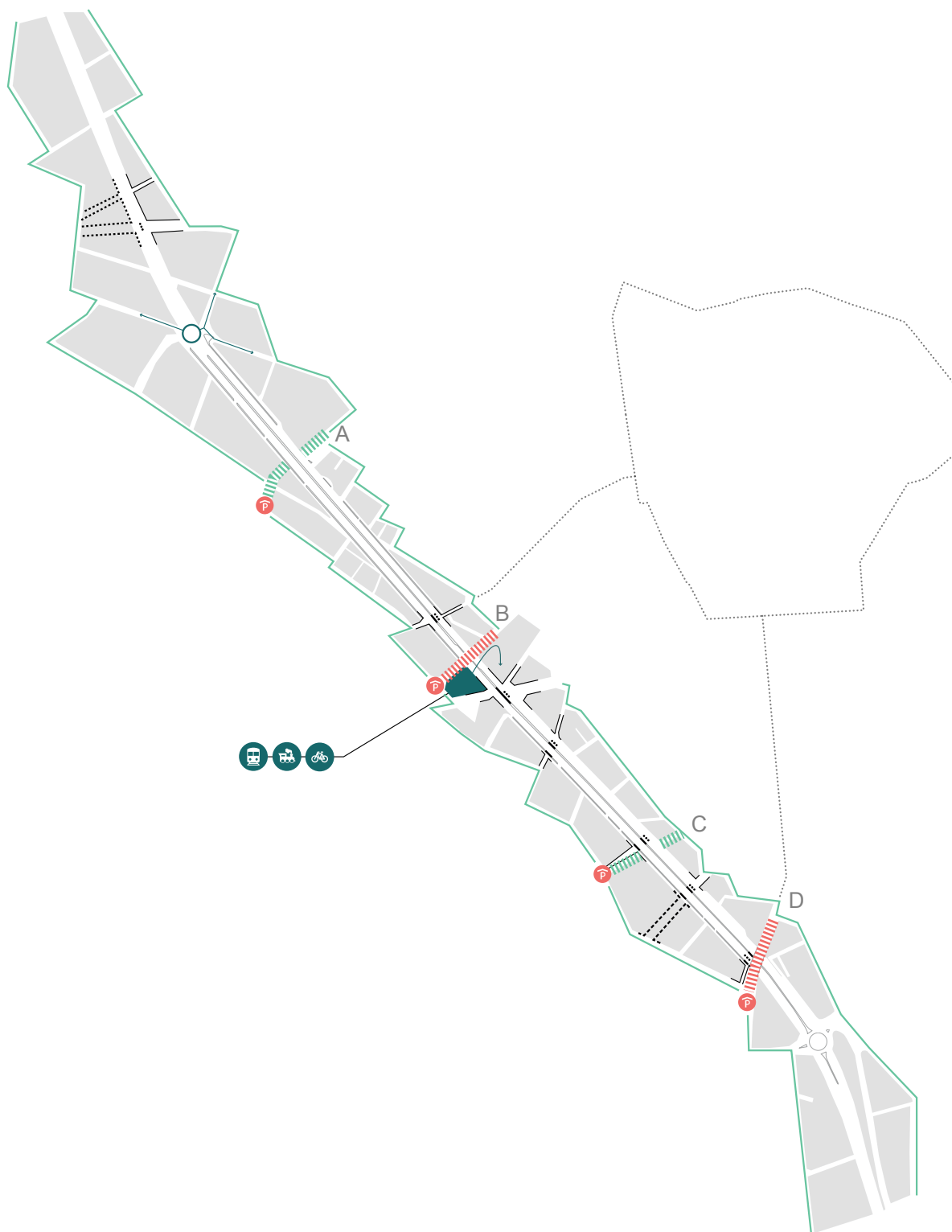


figure 78: strategic vision for the strip
source: by author

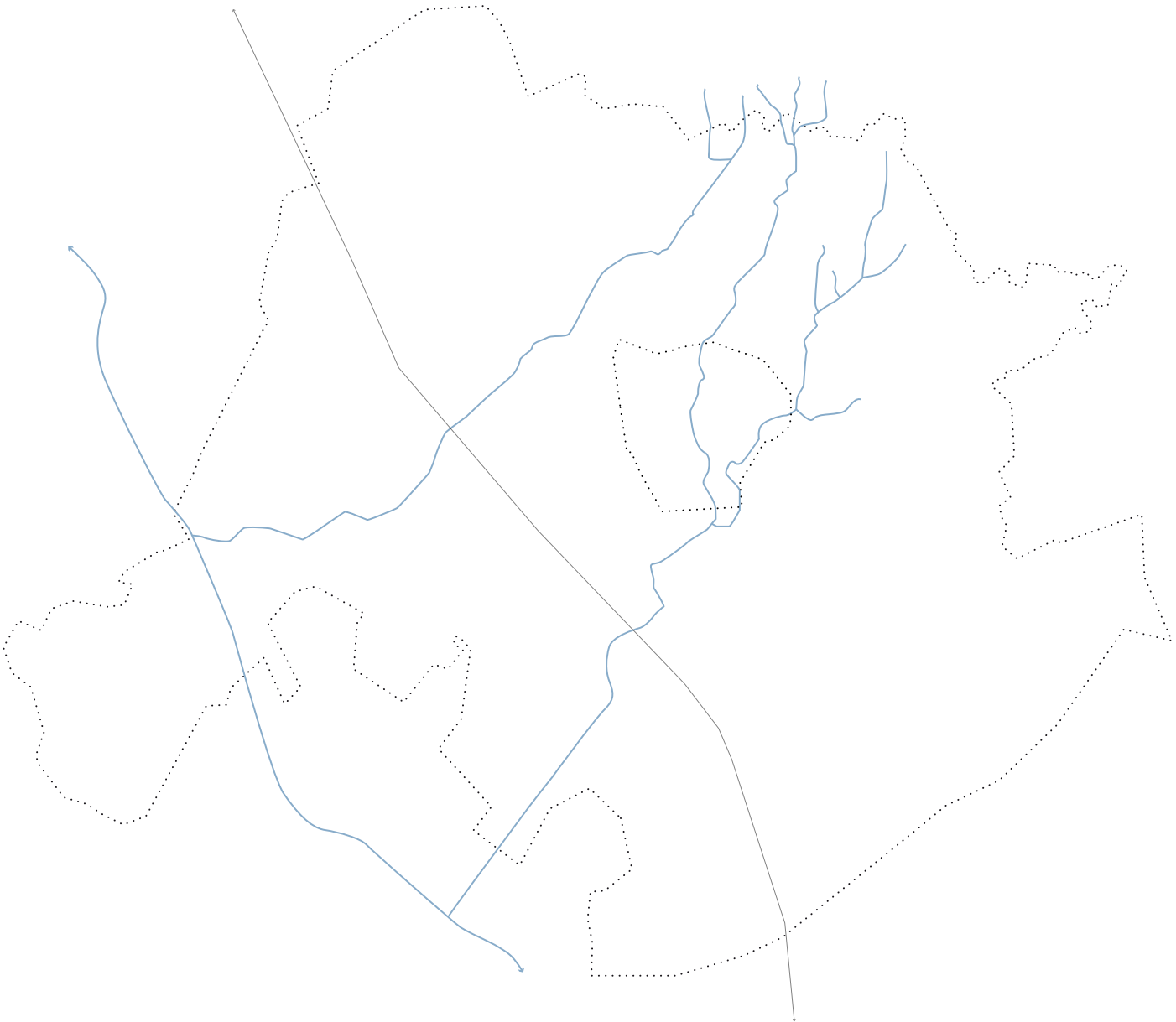


figure 77: former streams
source: by author

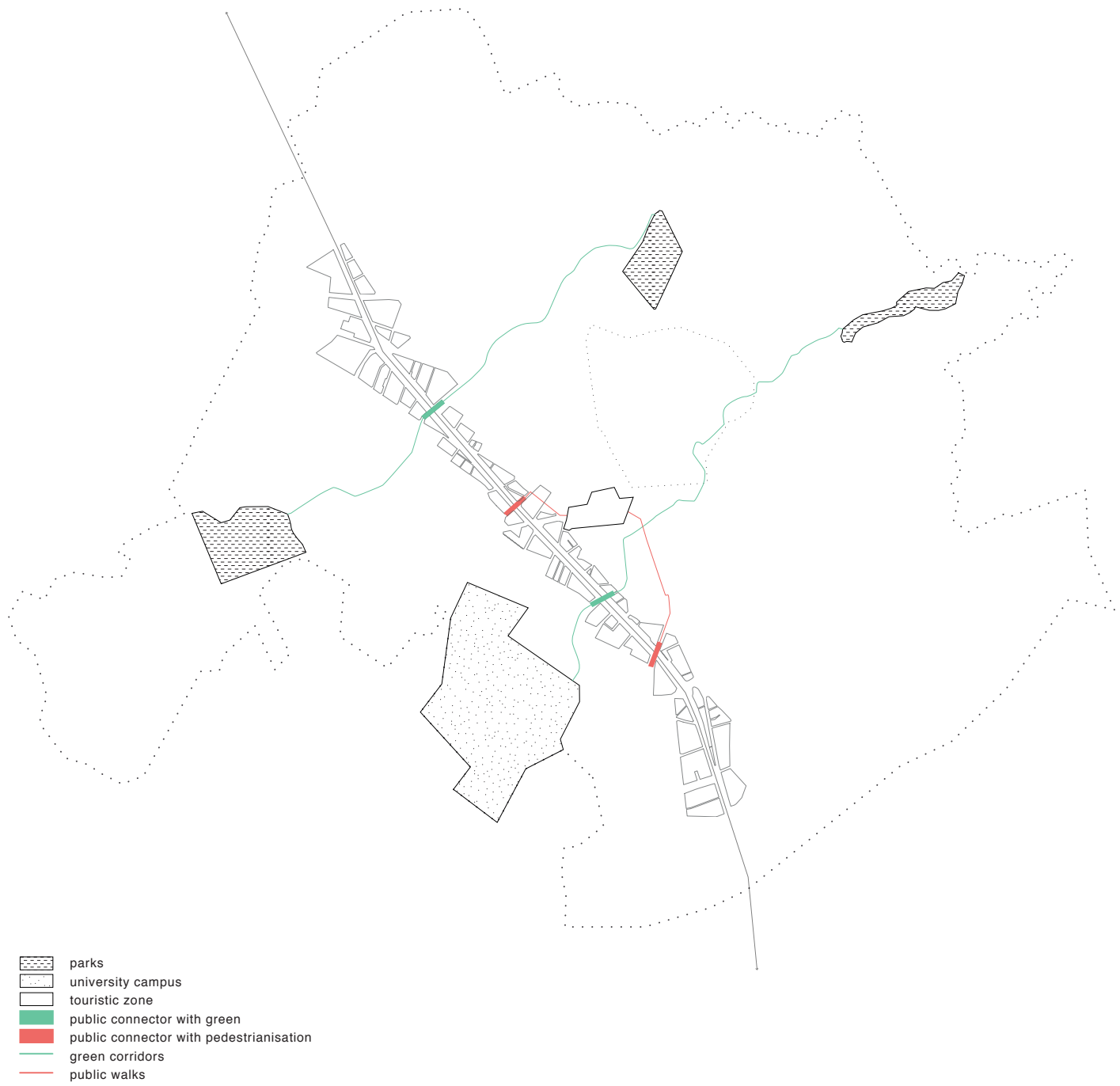


figure 77: strategic vision for the public realm connectors
source: by author

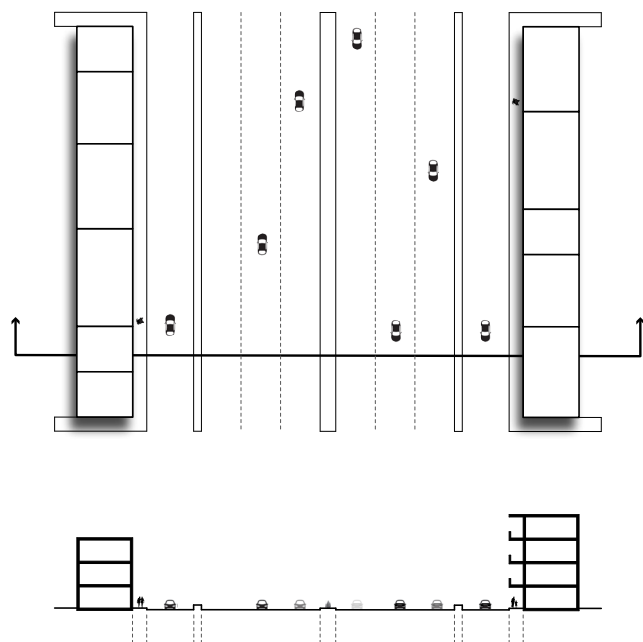


figure 78: current configuration of the former highway's structure
source: by author

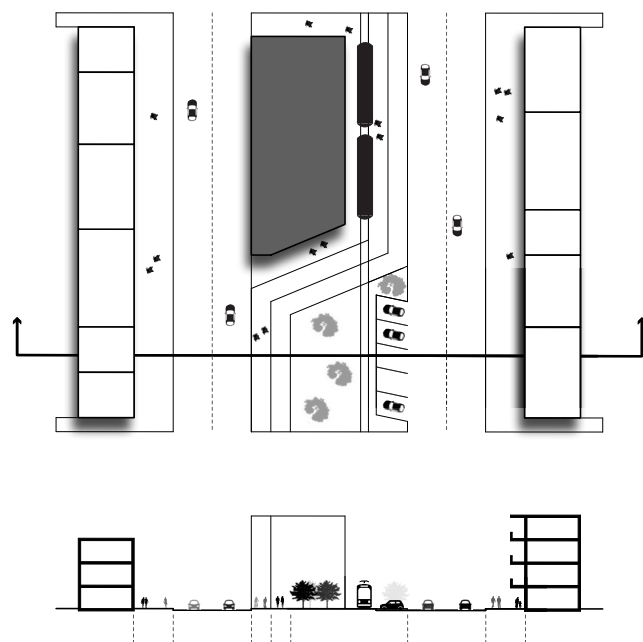


figure 78: proposed configuration with the greenway
source: by author

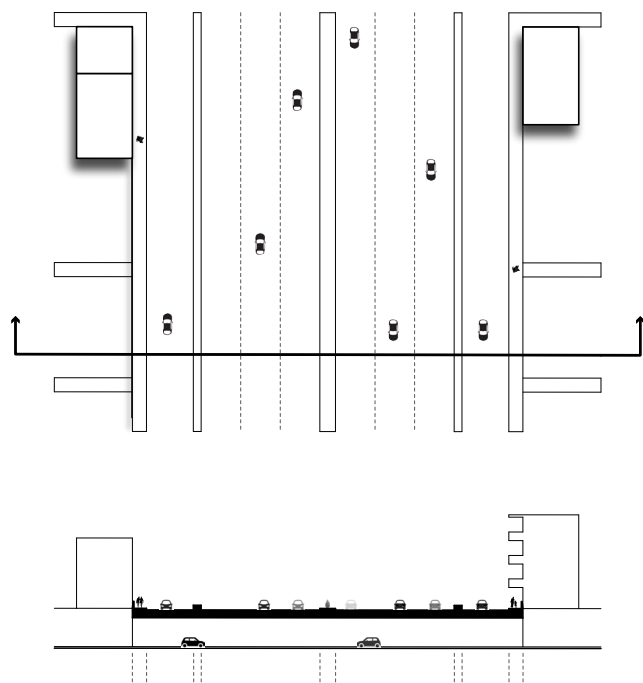


figure 78: current configuration of the connectors' structure
source: by author

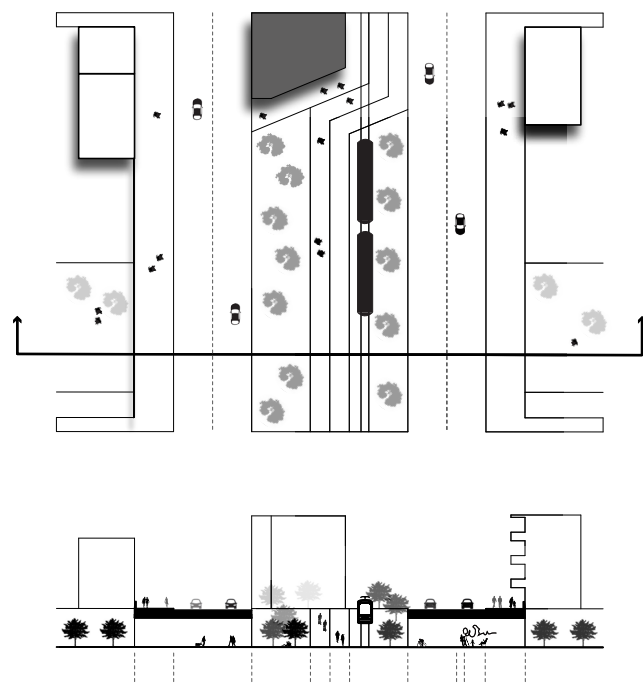


figure 78: proposed configuration with the greenway
source: by author

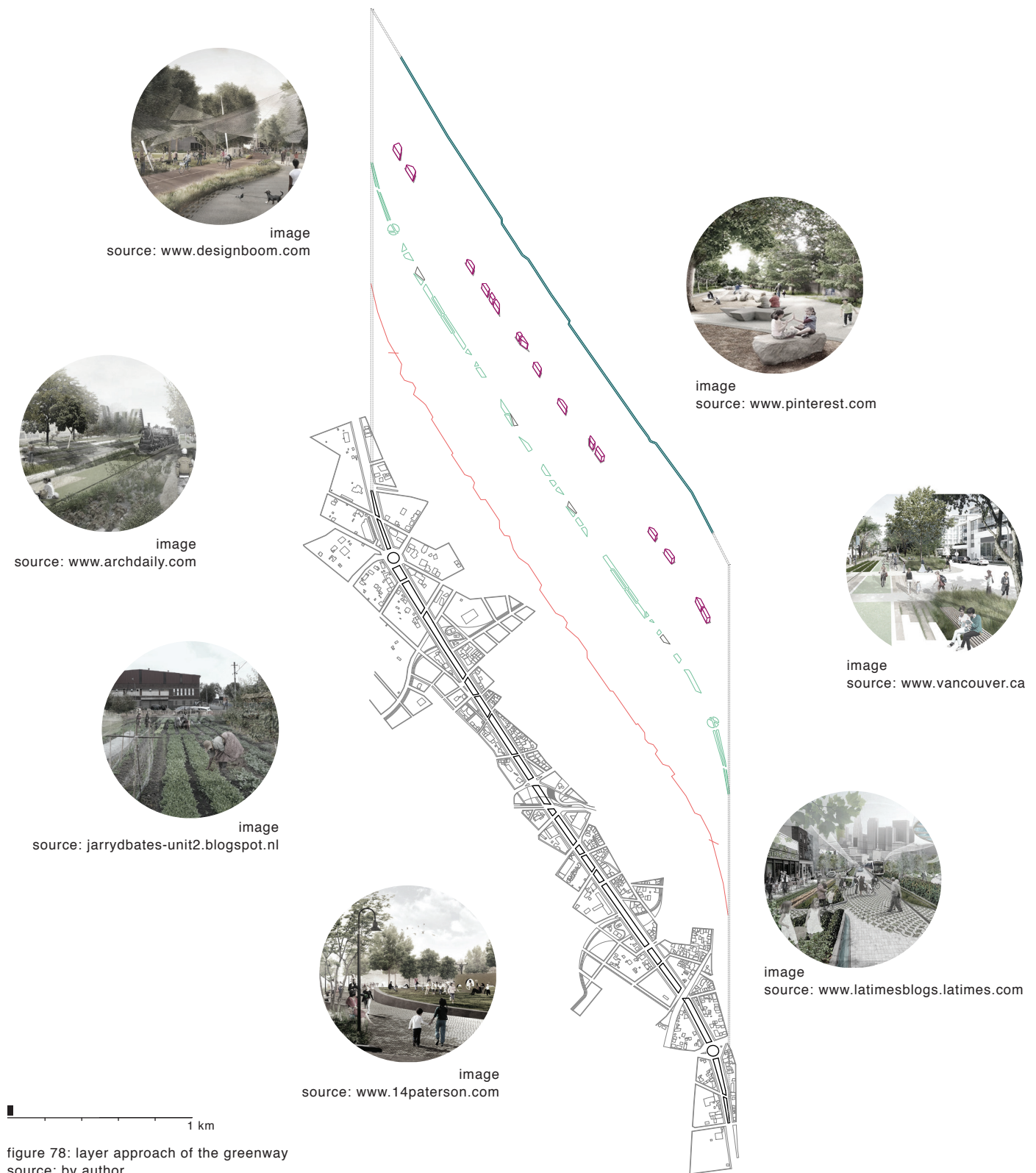


figure 78: layer approach of the greenway
source: by author



image 55
source: by author



image 55
source: by author



image 55
source: by author



image 55
source: by author



image 55
source: by author



image 55
source: by author

THE SECTION

Current situation



image 55
source: by author



image 55
source: by author

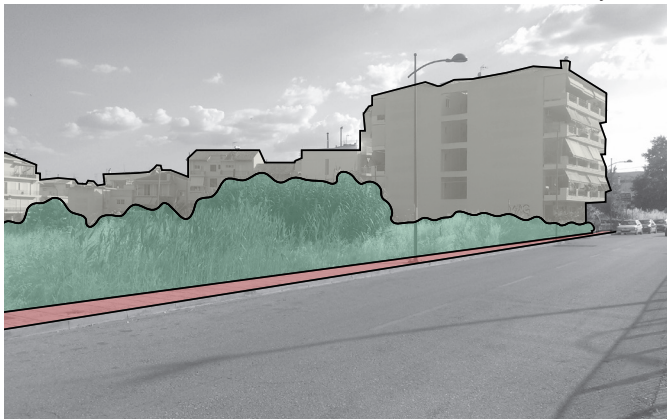


image 55
source: by author

The area is delimited by two important roads, both of them connecting the highway to the city centre. It is mostly occupied by housing although there are many empty blocks. Within its limits, a Municipal parking area exists but without being used by citizens or people from the neighbourhood (image). It also includes one of the tobacco warehouses integrated in the urban fabric (image 60), yet surrounded by fences. Two high schools are also located there (image 55), together with their sport fields, an old people's house, and the old church of Saint Dimitrios surrounded by a square and some trees (image). All of these elements are enclosed within fences.

As far as commercial functions are concerned, there is a big super market and toy store on top of it with its own outdoor parking (image), as well as the Centre of the Prefecture's services - bordering with the highway - (image 53) and some departments of the Municipality - bordering with the city centre - . The former bus station of Agrinio was also situated there in the past (image 53), before its re-location on a plot along the highway, at the outskirts of the city.

When the train was still present, due to the tobacco warehouses, the rail-tracks were passing through this area, resulting in the former train station, situated opposite of them, next to the schools. After the re-planning of the city and the new formation of the new urban blocks, the rail-tracks were removed at the east part of the city, leaving behind them just the station which is today used as a technology educational centre for the community (image 59). Apart from this building, there is nothing left to remind the station and the city's former glory as an important transportation node. Finally, at the edge of the old station's block, the street passing by the unused blocks is used by local producers to sell their products once a week, in the form of a street market.

In a few words, the section does not comprise any functions to attract the citizens, and even if they have to visit the Prefecture's offices or the educational centre, they prefer to approach them by car. The abandonment of the tobacco warehouses as well as the empty plots (image)create a sense of fear and lack of safety in the area.

Strategy

The section constitutes the area where the touristic zone is formed. It is called touristic as it concentrates all the necessary functions for a stranger to get the possibility to understand the city's past in depth and to entertain them. However, it is an important spot for the citizens themselves, searching for new forms of recreation and more open qualitative spaces. In addition, it provides young people with the necessary knowledge to learn their city and their region and adopt a feeling of pride for it.

Thus, a thematic park is designed which is depicting the myth of the fight between Hercules, the demigod and the river god, Acheloos. The tobacco warehouses is put back in function as co-working spaces for new entrepreneurs, and the train station is converted into a museum / exhibition centre with footage from when it was still in use.

Within this strategy, the fences of the tobacco warehouses, the high schools and the old people's house are put down, and the buildings are integrated in the public realm, surrounded by greenery, pedestrianised roads and bike lanes, connecting to one of the green corridors, to the public walks and to the city centre as well as the other tobacco warehouse which acquires the use of an exhibition centre, educating on the tobacco production. The removal of the high schools is accompanied with the redesign of their sports fields, and a new designated area is used as playground .

For the creation of this new zone characterised mostly by open public spaces, the expropriation of a few blocks is planned (a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i , j, k), while new plots are designed in the area of the current Municipal park. The latter one is transferred to the west part of the city, since the idea for this area is to become pedestrian-friendly, getting rid of the cars and the parking lots within its premises. For this reason, it is divided into three blocks and intended for housing construction, even for students.

Since the former space used by the street vendors is replaced by the new public space, a part of the location is specifically designed for them as an open-air market, enhancing their attempt for local production and. In order to support this market and to enhance local economy motivating inhabitants to be activated and involved, space for communal gardens is also designed and provided for free.

Last but not least, the plots adjacent to the existing retail facilities are planned for local commercial activities, the

trace of the former rail-tracks are re-produced and pieces of old train units are placed along them and given to citizens to transform them into cafeterias and restaurants. The rail-tracks are also used for planting, necessary to provide shadowed spaces. Also, the sightseeing train passes through this park before entering the city centre, reaching the recreational zone and finding its way back to the station.



figure 79: strategic vision for the section
source: the author

PHASE IV: DESIGN

GENERAL MASTERPLAN



















figure 57: plan (current structure)
source: by author

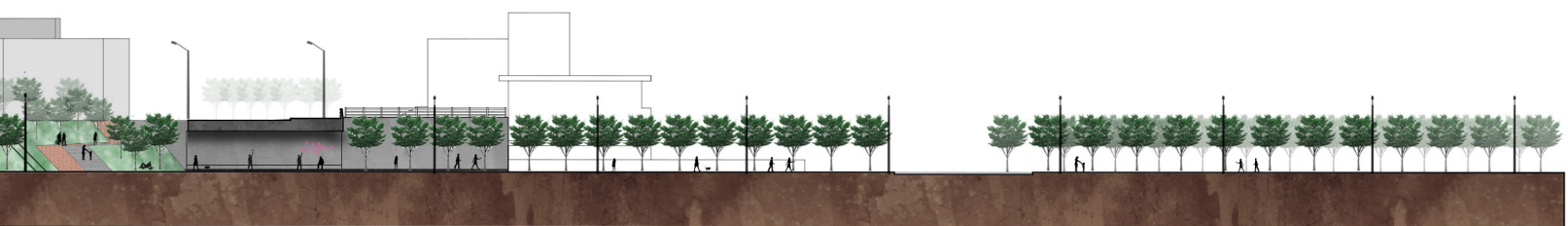
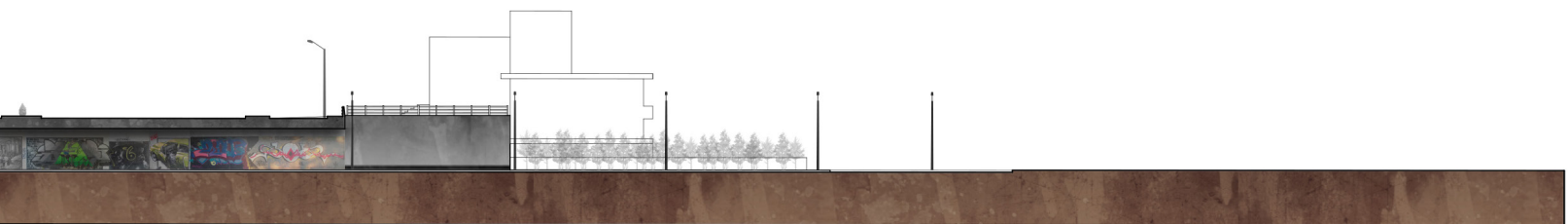


figure 57: plan (proposal)
source: by author

50m



figure 57: section (current and proposed structure)
source: by author



50m



figure 57: spatial quality
source: by author



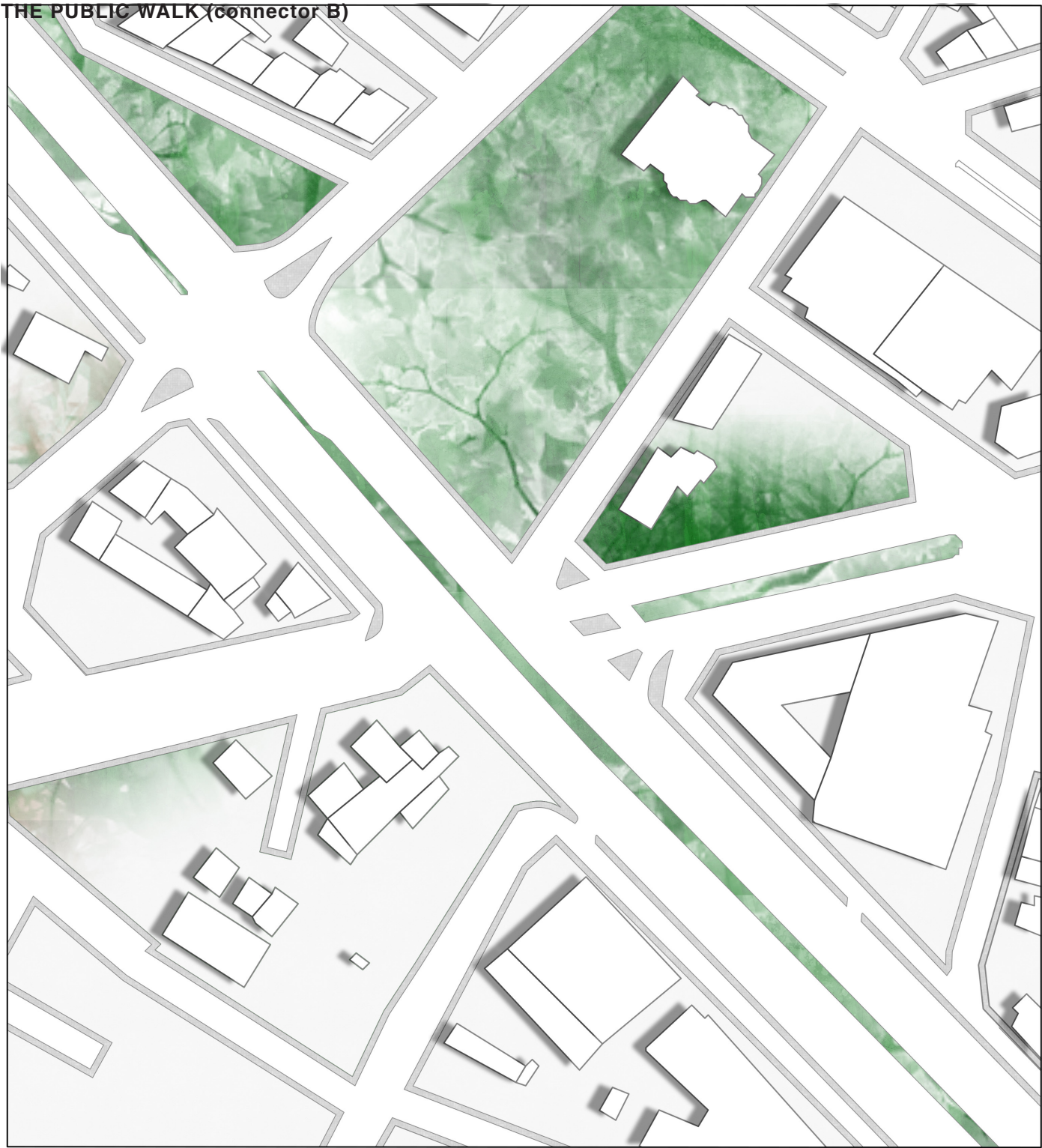


figure 57: plan (current structure)
source: by author



figure 57: plan (proposal)
source: by author



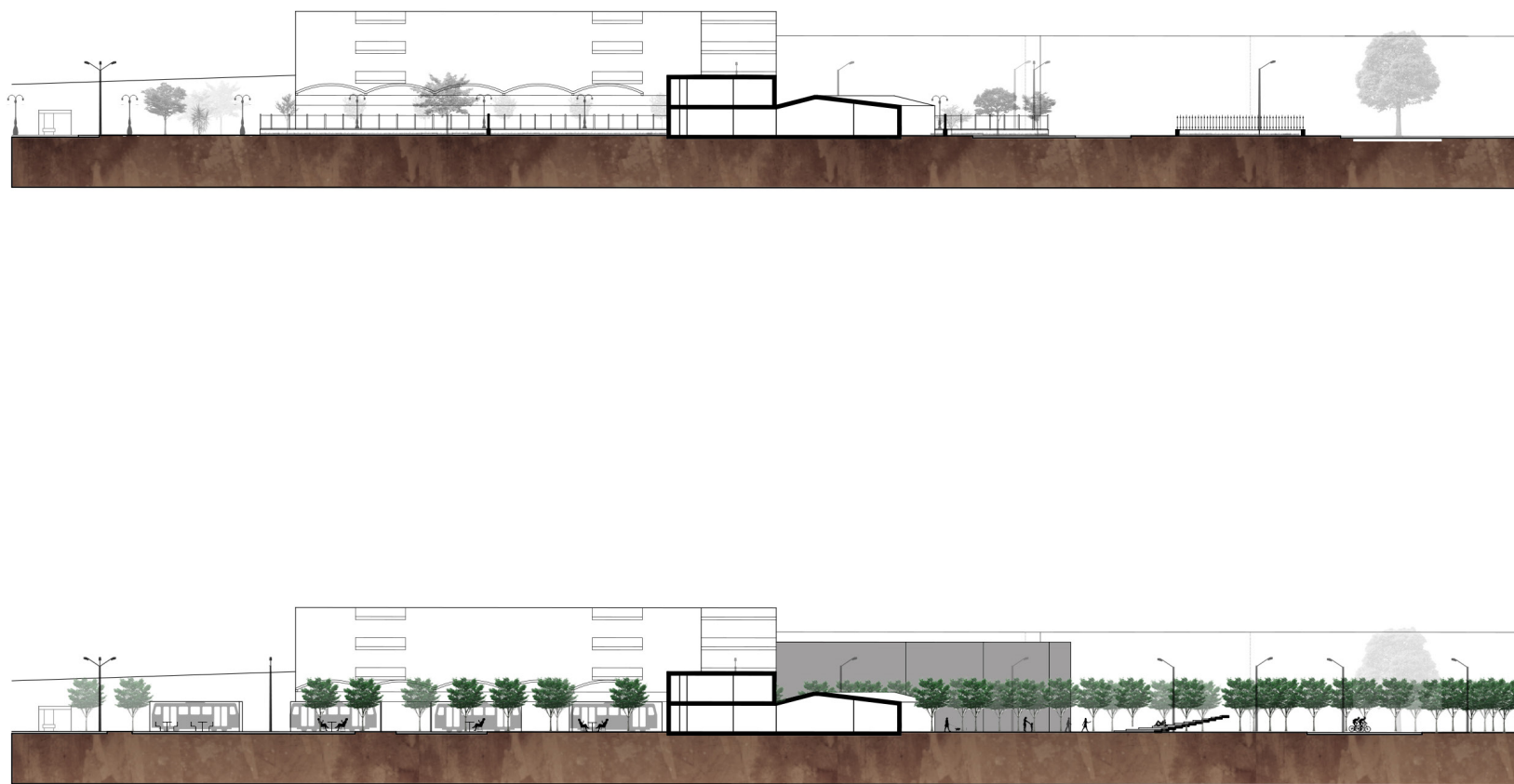
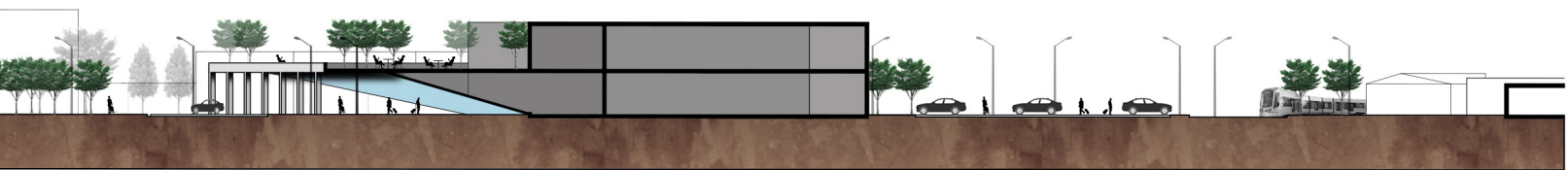


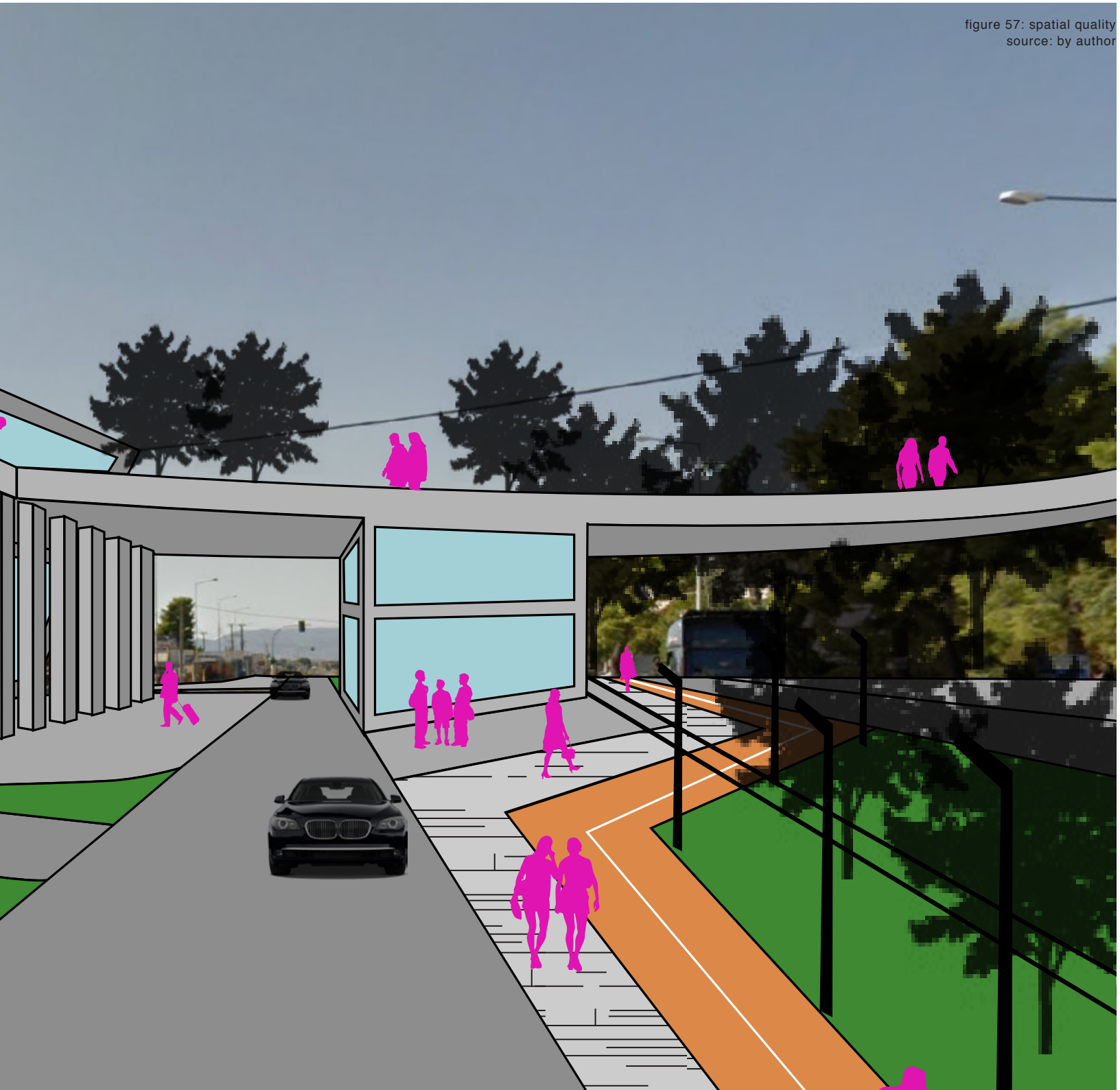
figure 57: section (current and proposed structure)
source: by author



50m



figure 57: spatial quality
source: by author



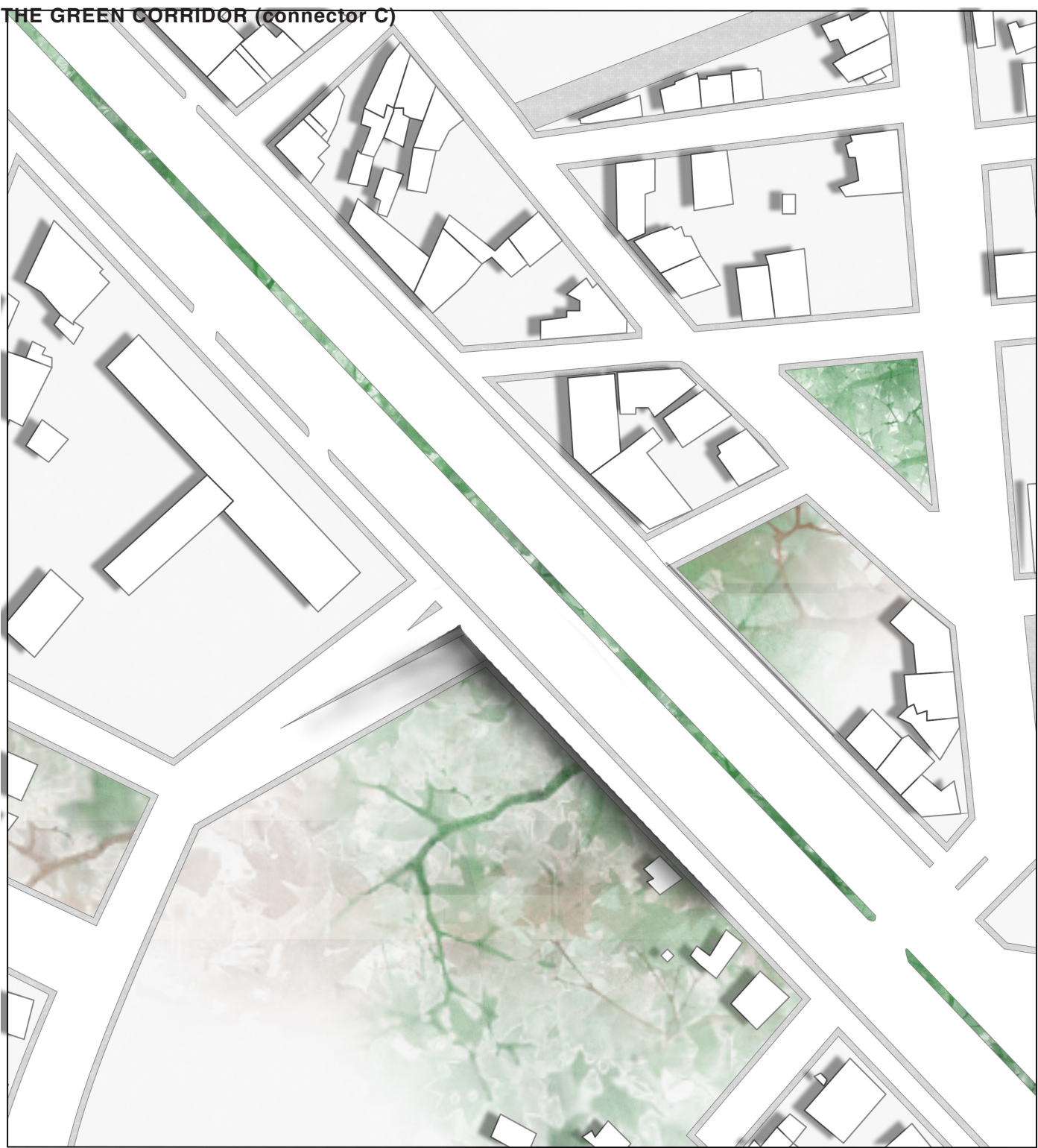


figure 57: plan (current structure)
source: by author

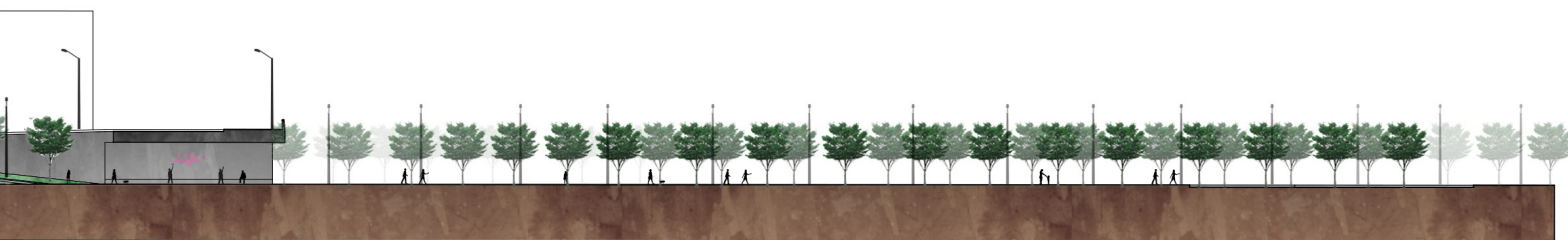
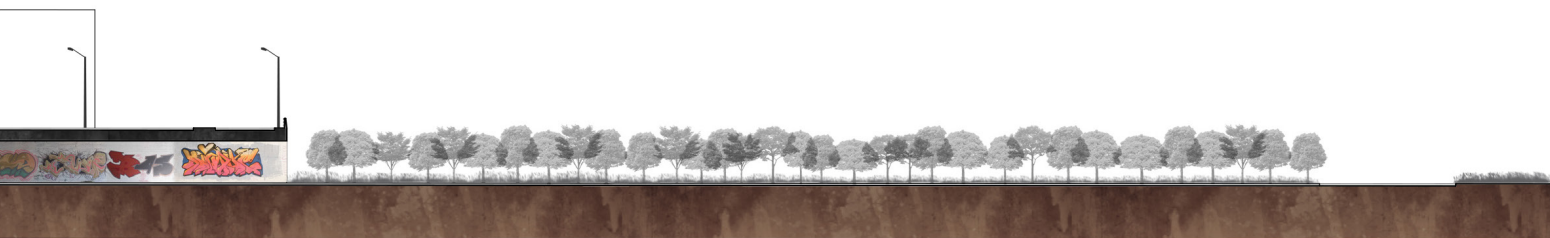


figure 57: plan (proposal)
source: by author





figure 57: section (current and proposed structure)
source: by author



50m





figure 57: spatial quality
source: by author

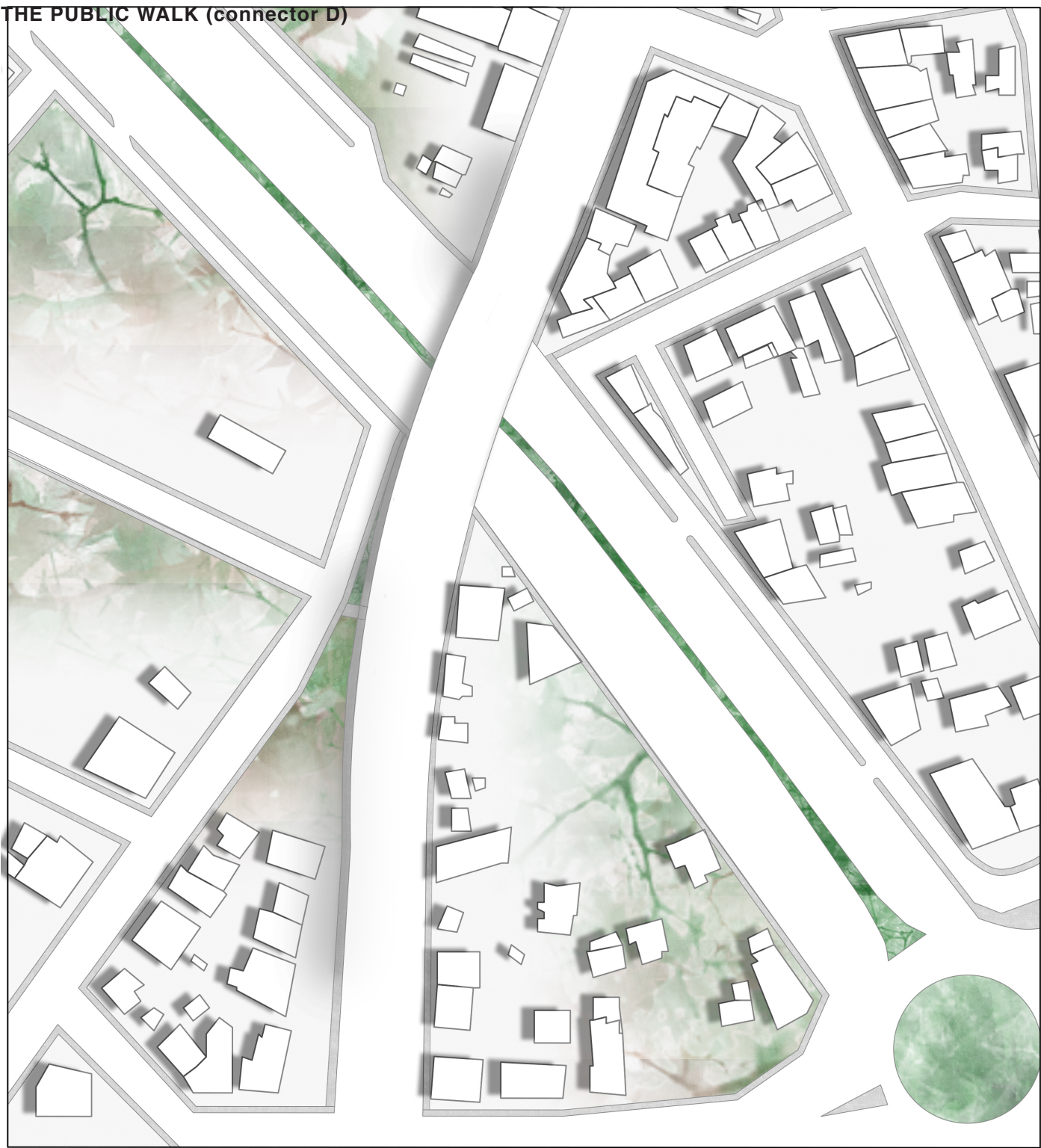


figure 57: plan (current structure)
source: by author



figure 57: plan (proposal)
source: by author

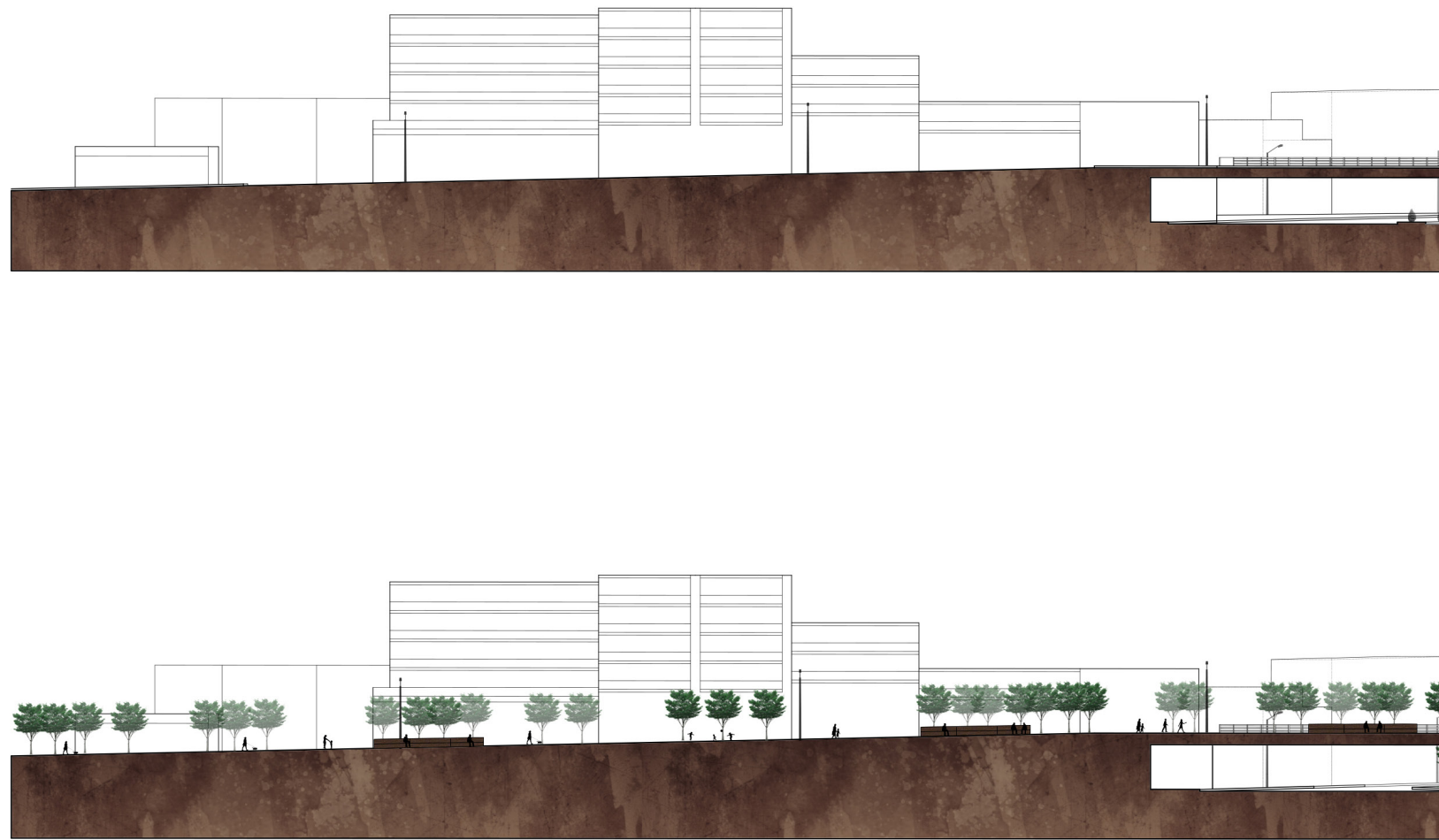
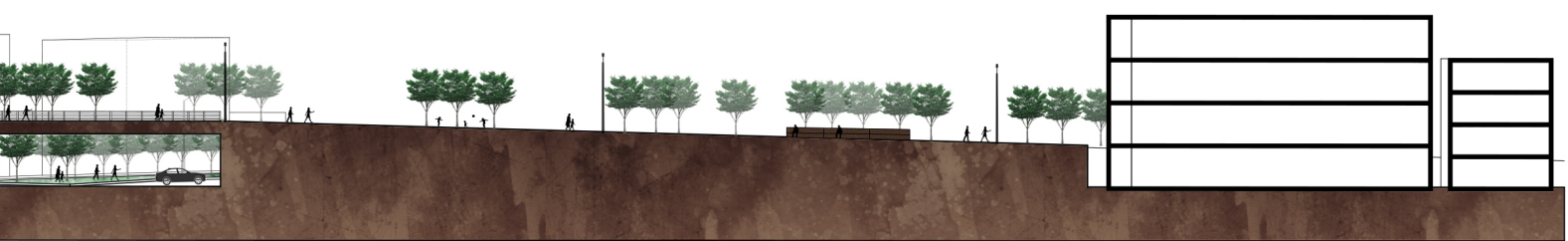
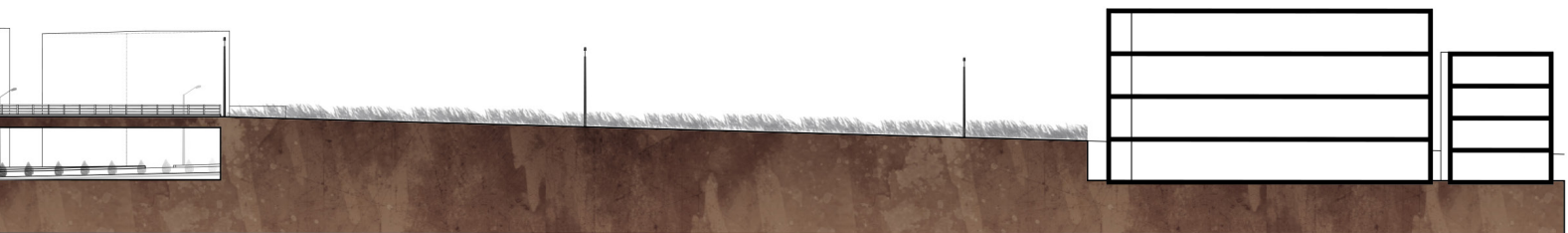


figure 57: section (current and proposed structure)
source: by author



10 m







figure 57: spatial quality
source: by author



figure 57: plan (current structure)
source: by author



figure 57: plan (proposal)
source: by author

50m

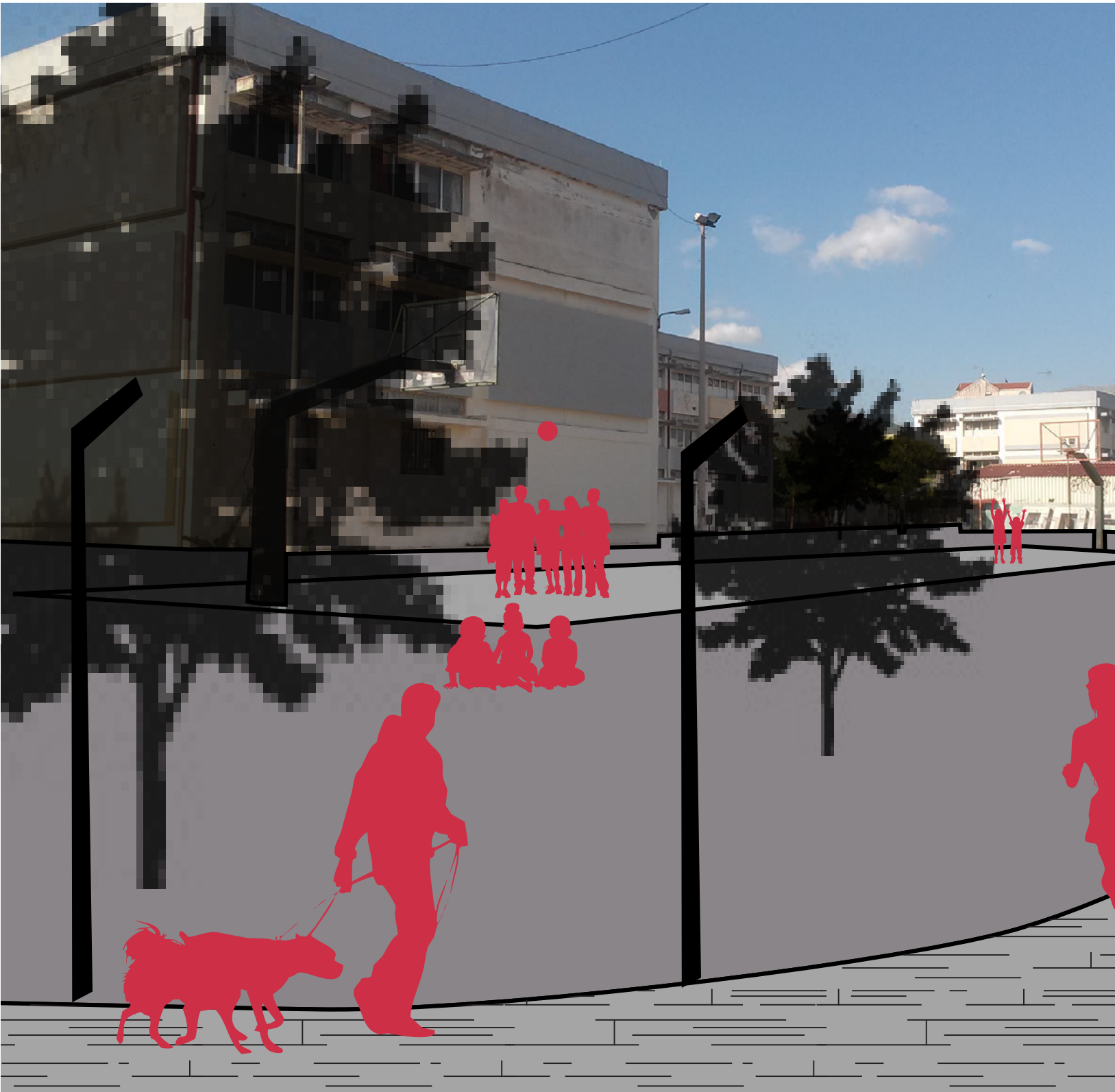


figure 57: spatial quality
source: by author



CONCLUSIONS & EVALUATION

CONCLUSIONS & EVALUATION

The initial aim of this project is to strengthen the identity of the city itself and within the regional context, while using a feasible approach that will allow the treatment of the urgent urban issues caused by crisis, and immediately improve the urban environment, by turning it into an attractive pole.

The research on the planning system in Agrinio revealed the cause for the socio - spatial problems in the city, evident in the urban tissue. An urban development initiated mainly by the city centre without a strong framework, able to regulate urban processes. The Municipal strategy had always been and continues to be mono-dimensional promoting the centre. The approach proposed in this thesis suggests that public space becomes a priority in the municipal vision. Using public space is a way to achieve urban development, is particularly appropriated for cities in transition. It allows development because of its flexibility and low investments inputs.

In this project, public space is used as a tool to form top-down framework and it becomes the most strategic and defined element in the urban design of the intermediate scale. The design suggests concrete spatial actions by suggesting different types and functions of public spaces in relation to the established goals in the strategy of the region, the city and the local scale.

The first role of the public space design is to improve the environment and benefit the citizens. After establishing the space, it is also filled with tourist activities and attractions. The project takes advantage of the natural resources of the whole region, investing in the tourist economy and see it as an opportunity for re-generation. History and the built heritage, which are strong visitor attractors, is used to benefit the new public spaces. In the same way, the different typological fragments which until now were scattered in the city, now become connected into an experience, spatially narrating the evolution of the city.

Moreover, the interconnection of the two city parts through public space, apart from increasing the amount of open and green spaces, it also provides bigger opportunities for the development of neglected areas and offers the ground for new possibilities and investments.

Unfortunately, evaluating the initial goal of the project which is the consolidation of a strong and distinctive urban identity, is hard and uncertain, attractive and place - specific environments are most likely to contribute to a

better reputation and identity. The project intervenes in two locations, the strip and the section, that are of crucial importance for the mono - centric city. By combining the different scales and approaches, the impact of the proposed strategies and design in terms of identity and urban attention address to all possible scales.

Of course, the implementation of the built heritage strongly contributes to this aim of the project. The strategies contribute to the improvement of the conditions of heritage and highlights it. However, the exploitation of the historic buildings in the proposed design is not concerning only the past. By converting them into contemporary spaces of occupation, past, present and future manage to meet in a more creative way.

RELEVANCES

SOCIETAL RELEVANCE

Space is now an integral part of the socio-economic processes, since all the social and economic phenomena are reflected into it. More precisely, it acts as the key element which influences these phenomena in a dialectic relationship of interdependence and inter-definition. Since the recent-present crisis has affected human life (in all possible domains), it is undoubtedly implied then that it has affected the space as well, to such an extent that each single design, in all fields and sectors, is largely taking into account the crisis, its consequences and how it can manage to overcome them.

However, it should become clear that there is not a specific model describing “a city in crisis”, but different combinations of policies, mechanisms and pre-existing urban structures that define the relationship between fundamental socio-economic transformations and the urban space. The spatial dimension of the crisis and the extent in which the economic and social aspects of the crisis are represented, are closely linked to the peculiarities of the cities themselves and the wider geographic context in which they occur. Understanding the particular conditions, problems and peculiarities of the cities during the period of crisis is an essential step for the detection of the necessary policies and tools to address them. The different historical evolutions of the cities, their geographic location, the distinct urban policies and the conditions related to the interaction of the local with the global elements, create strong urban differentiation and heterogeneity towards the way that modern European cities experience the crisis. The disparate trends and unequal geographic transformations lead in their turn to different ways of development and adaptation against the various changes brought up due to the crisis.

In any case though, the crisis is causing significant changes in any aspects of the cities, related to their economic, social, environmental and cultural structure, and their urban functions. It is leading to precarious work, unemployment, and ultimately poverty that results in social exclusion. The unemployment also relates to increasing population migration, health issues, crime rates, illiteracy levels, anti-social behaviours and lack of identity. The crisis also exacerbates the environmental pressures and the degradation of the urban environment.

Consequently, in a societal point of view, it can be argued that the research and the products done through this graduation project can be inextricably linked to the



image 23

source: <https://aformi.gr/>

urgent issues of the society, not only the Greek one. The methodology followed in the project can open the way for further research upon cities that are suffering from crisis, degrading the urban environment. Developing and testing design processes deriving from a multi-scalar strategic approaches can be proved beneficial for a whole region, for a whole city. Therefore, it's high time to see urban space as an opportunity for social and spatial change. As a challenge to review a deadlock mentality and behaviour and to promote a healthy collective consciousness towards regeneration and progress.

SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

The global economic recession of 2008 has turned the city into a “landscape” of crisis, into a field of economic, social, cultural and political events. More precisely, it spatially affects urban areas and the people living and acting in them. The 80% of the population resides in cities and urban areas since they are places of spiritual concentration of wealth and economic resources, creative and cultural sites.

Consequently, the magnitude of the crisis effect is momentous. It is demonstrated in the image of modern cities, acquiring spatial dimension. Cities are living organisms that evolve, grow or decline under the influence of exogenous and endogenous factors, which are associated with their production structure, their geographical location, human resources, their choices and changes in the wider

environment. Hence, crisis is an exogenous factor that can only be classified as an urban phenomenon affecting the structure, the flows, the function of modern cities, as well as the life of its inhabitants.

However, it is hard to notice the economic crisis, but even more difficult to realize the speed of the transformations it causes. These transformations influence the image and the reality of cities in many fields. Such effects - that have nowadays turned into urban problems - are the unemployment, the increase of poverty and crime rates, degraded areas, urban gaps and vacant building shells, the lack of infrastructure and urban reconstruction programs, the degradation of the built and unbuilt environment, the lack of social and spatial cohesion and the social exclusion. It becomes apparent that the social, economic, political, cultural and urban impact of the crisis is a modern phenomenon that needs to be addressed.

Since the late 1980s, many approaches, interventions, institutional processes and design practices have been developed targeting to change the image of cities in, increase their competitiveness and attract new investments. The combination of spatial planning, urban policies and sustainable integrated urban development programs is a way of dealing with it, towards regeneration at multiple levels, aiming to the public benefit. Specifically, urbanism can be a key factor for generating socio-economic conditions, even though it is not clearly linked to such notions like economy and societal issues. The transformation of space can be used as a tool for setting the framework for new approaches and possibilities. I tend to believe that small and intermediate scale interventions are the ones that can trigger larger spatial conditions for a city. To conclude, after dealing with the specific case of Agrinio, certain ideas, approaches and guidelines will be produced. Consequently, why not use this case for defining a model for cities where similar conditions are dominant, like Italy and Spain?

REFLECTION

REFLECTION ON THE PROJECT

The relationship between the theme of the graduation lab and the subject/case study chosen within this framework (location/object)

This thesis is conducted under the Urban Fabrics graduation studio. This studio is focusing not only on transforming physical and tangible environments (elements, materialisation, form, scales, density, networks) but also on non-visible structures (psychological, socio-cultural, managerial, economical). Such structures can be translated as people's mentalities, behaviors, relations, way of thinking, thus their interaction with their surroundings (space).

This project can be considered as an interesting example of the studio since it is aiming to alter the identity of a big, yet unknown city of Greece, Agrinio, by using public space as a trigger in order to awake citizens towards exploiting the numerous qualities provided by the natural, cultural and historical resources. Space is present but is currently being highly misused or even under-used. People are found trapped in problematic conditions, mostly deriving by the economic crisis that is infesting the whole country, they are being driven by apathy and ignorance towards the possibilities offered by the city itself.

As an attempt to gain better understanding of the city's urban fabric, a sequence of certain trends and norms that led to the existing structures along with their repercussions is researched and analysed. Only after realising the "why" it is possible to proceed with developing design processes and testing them on site before the final implementation. This approach is compatible with the research studio, since it is a design-perspective driven one and promotes evidence-informed design methods.

In addition, the studio follows a multi-scalar approach, running across different scales, developing strategies for each one of them separately but testing their repercussions on all of them at the same time. Since Agrinio is closely related to its surroundings (hills, lake, river, airport) and can benefit from their presence, strategies are also developed for the regional scale, apart from the city scale and the local one (public space). The ultimate urban design is the outcome of collaborative design processes in all scales, supported by several stakeholders and by applying both bottom-up and top-down actions.

Last aspect of the studio, but not least, is that within it,

the urban fabric is perceived as a system of systems, a complexity, combining elements from the social scene, geography and urban planning. For this project, especially since multi-scalarity is attempted, the selection of the second mentor was made from the Complex Cities studio, giving valuable insights regarding the planning design processes, preventing the mono—dimensional aspect (concentration of the public space) of the project. As a result, in this multi-actor project, strategical visions are risen in order to support and drive the design process, achieving to convert desirable future images and ideas into concrete design interventions.

The relationship between the methodical line of approach of the graduation lab and the method chosen in this framework AND the relationship between research and design

As mentioned before, the studio is design driven and is merely based on a specific kind of methodology, where design research and research by design go hand in hand. These two methods constitute a coherent approach for urbanism projects, especially when smaller scales are involved, ultimately ensuring a systematic analysis framework and a knowledge-based design proposal.

Research by design is an interesting method of understanding a sequence of design decisions taken by professionals at various scales in the wider physical, behavioural, economic, aesthetic, social and cultural context given. Such is the case of the project. Before proceeding with any design scenario or even intervention, a detailed analysis is carried out through the lenses of historical processes. Analysing spatially historical maps from the municipality's archive and reviewing the urban planning policies of the city and of the whole country for the same periods, enabling certain comparisons and evaluations, proved to be of vital importance in order to acquire knowledge for the city's form. Tracing, mapping and interpretations of data and figures into maps also help with comprehending facts and trends of the society manifested into the urban environment and the forces that keep driving its development. Taking into consideration the current trends and problematics of the city, both in regional and national level, converting them into relations between people and space, it is possible to conclude on the way that the city keeps expanding and evolving and to define the problem. In other words, this method set the necessary information base on which later design decisions were made.

On the other hand, research by design is the method where scenarios are developed implemented, tested on site and evaluated. It goes without saying that the context in which the design is generated derives from the design research. As part of this stage comes the experimental design, where composition elements of other case studies with similar problematics are investigated, transformed and applied into the current project. In this way, by critically studying the effects of various designs regarding public spaces and transformation of areas into magnets of attraction, certain principles are generated that in their turn, help to generate the final composition and design. Principles and types of

interventions become specific for the project and become suitable to the intended new functions and programs. In a few words, it is the stage where study emerges from the design and sets the foundations for a knowledge-based final design composition.

Unfortunately, though there is a big shade laying above the whole project. Greece is still undergoing the prolonged phase of decline, the recession is continuing and the future lurks unknown, without knowing whether tomorrow will be another "European day" for the country or not. This is the reason why acting in all the three scales (region, city, local) is a key feature for the project. Its main objective it to benefit from the existing touristic movement and flows in the country and to profiteer from the qualitative values that the region has to offer. By taking advantage of the tourist economy, Agrinio can generate economy and find the financial resources to start realising its projects and bringing its citizens out from the static situation that have been involved.

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