

BORDERS AND TERRITORIES: COLLECTIVE MAPPING OF THESSALONIKI

Blow up, Fragment, Reconfigure

Repetitive acts of unearthing in Thessaloniki

Key words: (decomposition?) fragmentation, process-oriented, blow-up, assemblage, ecologies, control

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Thessaloniki demonstrates a sprawling case study for the diverse domains of contemporary life. In the face of complete economic integration, the city's roles, images, and relationships extend far beyond its administrative boundaries. Thessaloniki presents many subjects concerning contemporary urban dynamics such as the redefinition of economic sectors, spatial politics, population displacement, and resource management. The morphing values of modern agglomeration intersect with the rich history of many cultures, nationalities, languages, and roles. In our collective research, we examine these modern and historical forces that have shaped Thessaloniki through the lens of border and territorial conditions. Our research into the transient nature of the city led us to the key themes of 'Ecologies' and 'Control' which were then explored through our cartographic investigations.

TERRITORIES

For the territorial analysis we were exploring the concept of how control¹ is exercised on the city level. The egalitarian democratic nature of the city (Kokkinidis, G, 2014)² forms a complex entanglement of control mechanisms. By unravelling these unofficial emerging relations we wanted to construct a spatial representation of the tensions between the components and the assembly. For our exploration, we created a conceptual framework that intended to encompass the non-territorial multivariate nature of the city directed by control. Our investigation can be broken down into 3 main phases where we defined, refined, and reconstructed our synthesised information.

Define

From our initial research we understood Thessaloniki to be a uniquely organised and arranged city. We found a great similarity between the organisation of the city and the tradition of the Greek mosaic, where each individual part has its unique characteristics but together form an autonomous whole. By doing a micro scale analysis we were more easily able to visualise the spatial dynamics of the city. We defined 9 categories; Agriculture, transport, formal settlement, institutions, informal settlement, industry, military, public space, and monuments, which served

¹ "Control is understood as a function of occupation and use" - Nishat Awan, 11.11.2021

² Kokkinidis, G. (2014). Spaces of possibilities: workers' self-management in Greece. *Organization*, 22(6), 847–871. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508414521098>

as classifications for the spatial occupation of the city. These 9 categories were projected onto a triangular grid to map this out visually. This presented an incredibly diverse and overlapping agglomeration of occupied functions which on a microscale seem almost random but, on a macroscale, presented clear trends.

Refine

The power dynamics of the city exist as a dichotomy of the bodies which control and are controlled, which in the spatial language occupy and are occupied. These intertwining relations were identified based on the historical, socio-political, and spatial study of Thessaloniki. Subsequently, following their argumentation a second characteristic is imposed over the triangulated areas: the controlling forces, corresponding to the 9 categories from before. Through this act we refined the information exclusively of spatial conflict.

Reconstruct

Nine categories of controlling force were spatially pinpointed on the map as a power center toward which the characterized areas gravitate. Thus the fragmented map is reorganized following the logic of the new controlling agency. As a result of the reconstruction, new territorial microstates emerge, conditioned by their systems of control.

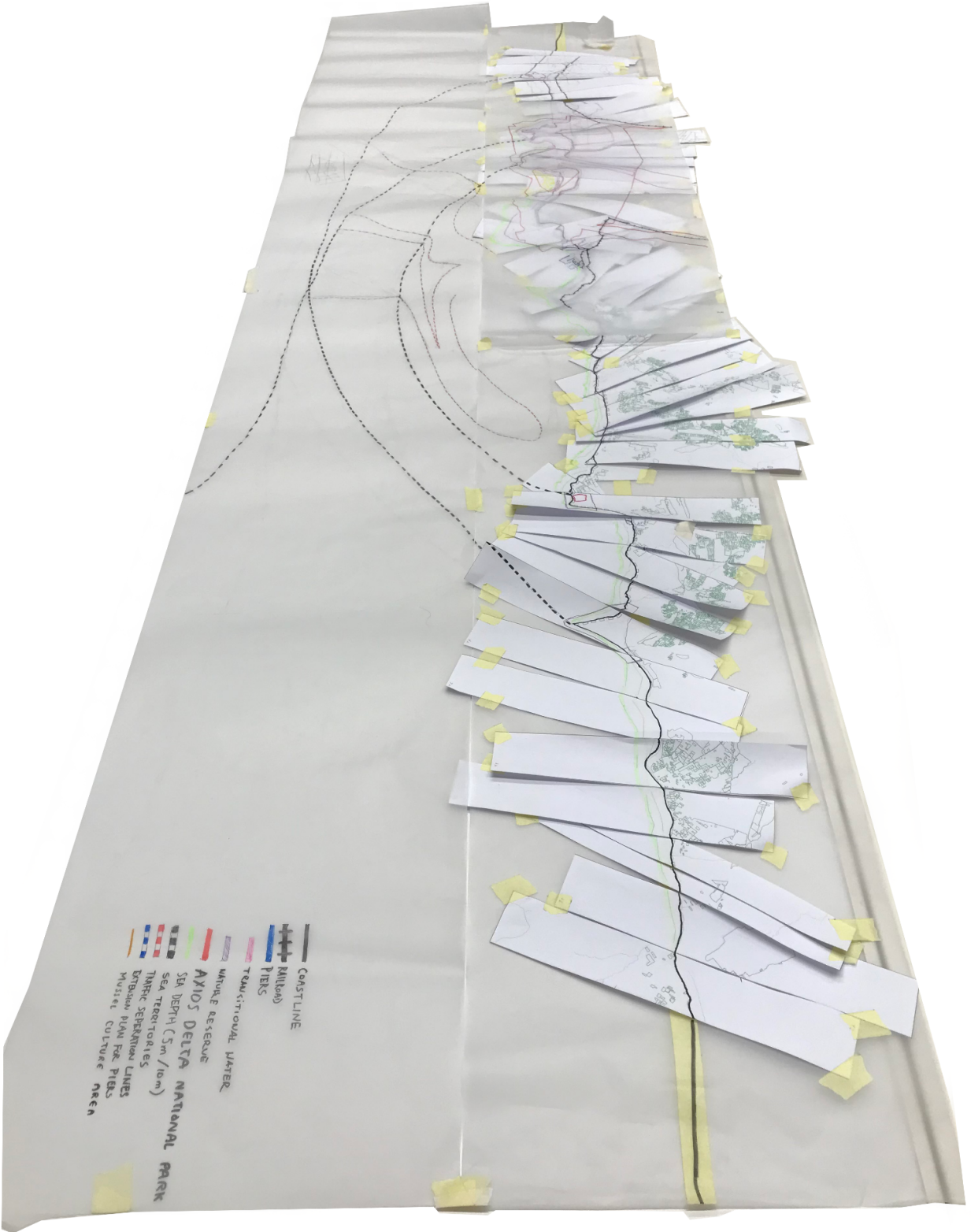
The argumentation derived from the extensive research used to assign the governing category is symbolically represented through radially distributed imagery which at the same time communicate the quality and character of those newly created microstates.

Fragmentation and reconstruction of the map conveys the idea of control as a borderless mechanism to mediate the collective social behaviour of the occupants. The representation breaks the geographical relation of the reality while projecting a systematic understanding of the control dynamics between the owner and occupants via the traces.

BORDERS

The primary tool of reference in situating Thessaloniki within its geographical context is the gulf and its characteristic outline, separating water and non-water. Our interest in this collective mapping exercise thus focused into this border through an investigation of the coastline and the border conditions related to water systems. As a result, a collection of border conditions was mapped ranging from groundwater systems to the coastal evolution of the bay. The different sets of borders were then overlaid on top of each other generating an assemblage that could then be read and interpreted as a heterogeneous connected system that shifts the gaze away from the city of Thessaloniki towards a larger holistic perspective of the gulf's borders and its interrelationships.

The coastline along the gulf is identified as the primary border condition, becoming a line that transitions between water and non-water. The method we employ aims to find an alternative projection system, to rethink the common ways of understanding borders. As the first step we unfold the coastline, to approach the enclosed gulf in a linear sequence that can be read by following the line. The operation of unfolding was an iterative process, which began with manual experiments where we cut the coastline into strips and re-stitched them in a linear sequence. We also tested different ways of unfolding by cutting out the gulf from a Mercator projected map and attempting to straighten by manual folding.



- COAST LINE
- MILLERS
- PIERS
- TRANSITIONAL WATER
- WILDLIFE RESERVE
- AXIOS DELTA
- SEA DEPTH (5m/10m)
- SEA TERRACES
- TRAFFIC SEPARATION LINES
- MAP PLAN FOR PIERS
- MUSEUM CULTURE AREA

Through weekly iterative reflections on the experimental mapping, we systematically developed a critical analysis of the intentions and tectonics of the method. The final version of the unfolding reflects the fragmentation of the coastline as the slices produce an aggregation that is inherent to the multiplicities of an assemblage³. The fragmentation of the coastline emphasizes the borders that exist both along the water and also throughout the territory, highlighting the disconnection and interrelations across different fragments. The final unfolding reveals a critical shift of the gaze from one centered on the city to a perspective focusing more on peripheral borders that are fundamental to the continuity of the city.

In order to visualize the data in the borders map we used representational practices that visually respond to the fragmentation. The strips are positioned with a gap in between so that the map is read as a collection of frames, instead of a uniform sequence. The removal of a background is created by printing on tracing paper, which draws attention to the fragments. Color and varying line weights are employed to mark border conditions. The density in which they appear on the map reveals intensities embedded on the borders. When viewed from afar the fragments melt into an understanding of the ecology as a whole, while from up close the connotations of the different lines are discerned using the legend.

CONCLUSION

Through the collective mapping exercises we aimed to understand and read Thessaloniki through multiple lenses, experimenting with methodology, representation and technique to reveal underlying forces, and intensities. The iterative process of redrawing and rethinking led us to see through initial suppositions, uncovering underlying systems and connections.

By placing the central gaze on water ecologies, the Borders map reveals the infrastructural, socio-economic and natural systems that construct and support the territories of Thessaloniki. The importance of the Delta ecosystem and areas of transition are brought into relevancy for observing the coastline's shifting pressures and underlying forces, creating a different and new visual storyline.

Shifting to the territorial map, the focus remained around urban dynamics, emphasising the levels of control as a system of occupation and use, thus exposing the underlying tensions between authoritarian control and civic liberties. To summarise, mapping both territorial and border conditions within the greater context of Thessaloniki introduced a new way of comprehending and visualising spatial concepts from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. Revealing, to us, a fragment of the complex, entangled mechanisms embedded in the urban structure and helping us to understand the city not as one, univocal form, but rather a discontinuous array of relational layers.

³ Woodward, K. (2005). On the border with Deleuze and Guattari. B/Ordering Space.