passing it down otherwise

speculating on a new gentleness for suspended property in Athens, Greece

Graduation Report – A3
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Reading guide

This thesis approaches the problem of suspended private property in contemporary Athens as a problem of belonging. It is structured along an inversion of scales. The research moves from the macro scale of Athens, through the meso scale of the neighbourhood of Kypseli, to the micro scale of a single deteriorating house. The design response inverts this trajectory, beginning at the molecular scale of a crack in a wall and using dirt as a method, extending outward to a network of similar buildings in the neighborhood.

Part 1. Introduction

On Belonging and Alienation

Belonging and alienation are often treated as mutually exclusive conditions and are often both bound to place. If you belong, you are not alienated and if you are alienated, you do not belong. This thesis departs from the understanding that alienation frequently emerges not from the absence of belonging, but from a belonging that folds inward; into the self, the family, the property, or the like-minded group. In this case, belonging ceases to operate as exposure to exteriority and becomes protection from it, minimising contact with the different, and in doing so, producing the very alienation it seeks to avoid.

1.1 Problem statement

Since its designation as the capital of the modern Greek state, Athens has been shaped by repeated urban intensifications. Migration, housing shortage, postwar reconstruction, and recurrent geopolitical rupture compressed new populations and new demands into the city faster than public institutions could absorb them. These pressures were managed through provisional and largely private mechanisms that were formalised only afterwards. What was produced through this history was not only density and heterogeneity, but also a city in which responsibility for shelter, maintenance, and survival was increasingly placed onto property and the family. In this condition, privatisation became more than a legal arrangement. It became a mode of subject formation. 'Athens has retreated even more towards a profound segmentarity, a radical privatisation, a fully reactive subjectivity'[1], in which self takes precedence over the collective.

This thesis approaches that condition through the question of belonging. Belonging is treated here as a mode of relation to exteriority. Following Meillassoux, reactive belonging contracts that relation and conserves itself through withdrawal, while active belonging unfolds through an increased capacity to affect and be affected.[2] In Athens, this reactive belonging is condensed in the figure of the "ιδιώτης: a private citizen, the one that has no interest for the commons, enclosed in itself, refusing any opening to anything exterior'.[3] Its spatial manifestation appears in deteriorating and suspended building stock held in place by inheritance, fragmented ownership, bureaucratic delay or changes, emotional attachment, and fear of appropriation. The thesis understands these buildings as what Deleuze and Guattari call black holes, 'being one – unwanted but necessary – outcome for a failed line of flight'.[4]

Kypseli is the neighborhood through which this problem is examined. Over the course of the twentieth century, the neighbourhood was transformed from a semi-rural suburb into one of

[1] Stavros Kousoulas, *Athens: Notes on Urban Immanence*, Built Environment City Studies (Routledge, 2026), 101, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003650942.
[2] Quentin Meillassoux, "Soustraction et Contraction," *Philosophie* 96, no. 1 (2008): 67–93.
[3] Kousoulas, *Athens*, dd.
[4] Kylie Message, "Black Hole," in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, Rev. ed., ed. Adrian Parr (Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 34.

the most densely built districts of Athens. In this process, it absorbed the wider pressures that shaped the city, including migration, suburban exodus, densification, and current gentrification. Exodus does not in itself constitute a problem. It can produce availability for new forms of inhabitation. The rupture emerges where this cycle is interrupted by retreat into the private. Such retreat is produced through overlapping conditions that include fragmented ownership, inheritance disputes, bureaucratic impasses, and emotional attachment to property. As Sofia Dona observes, 'emotional property will never be sold, either because it contains the past, or because it is located among other emotional properties, where the 'foreigner' does not belong'[5]. Such structures are held as the possibility of a privately consumable future, while often becoming subject to forms of forceful appropriation that assume responsibility neither for their maintenance nor for their integration.

Within this dense and socially active environment, a recurring stock of (interwar) properties remains in suspension. These buildings are held in place by unresolved ownership, sentimental attachment, speculative pressure, and deferred decision making. The thesis locates its problem in this condition. It examines the constraints through which these houses are disconnected from their surroundings and asks how those constraints might be renegotiated so that withdrawal can give way to care, use, and habitation.

1.2 Relevance

The suspension of buildings in Athens exceeds the terms of a conventional housing shortage. The present crisis coexists with a vast stock of properties held outside everyday use, while rents continue to rise and affordable housing becomes increasingly scarce. Cut off electricity supply offers one material proxy for this condition, and Kypseli registers some of the highest percentages in the city. In this sense, suspension appears as a concentrated urban problem in which private property accumulates as withdrawn capacity, what Anna Tsing describes as "spaces of abandonment for asset production."[6]

The relevance of the thesis lies in the way it treats this suspended stock as an architectural problem without reducing it to architecture alone. Legal reform, fiscal restructuring, and wider cultural shifts in attitudes toward ownership all remain necessary. The contribution made here is more specific. It concerns the architectural capacity to produce conditions through which other relations to property may become possible. In this frame, value is expanded beyond exchange and approached through care, repair, knowledge, ecological restoration, and situated use. The proposal is grounded in Kypseli and Athens, but the condition it addresses extends beyond them, touching wider regimes of speculation, financialisation, and property suspension.

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[5] Sofia Dona, "Emotional Property," Exhibition, *Registered Time*, June 26, 2023, https://cross-section-archive.org/past/.

[6] Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*, New paperback printing (Princeton University Press, 2021), 6.

1.3 Objective and motivation

The objective of this thesis is to examine how belonging can be rethought through relation, care, and negotiated use within suspended property in Athens. Working through one house in Kypseli and its surrounding field of black holes, the project tests whether micro-architectures can open conditions through which buildings held in ownership, attachment, and delay may enter new relations with their surroundings.

The motivation is both situated and personal. Kypseli remains one of the last dense neighbourhoods in central Athens where interwar houses, active street life, and current pressures of redevelopment still coexist, a condition sharpened by the metro extension. The thesis is written from within this nuanced situation. My own emotional attachment to suspended property informs the work because it makes visible that sentiment is not only a source of delay, but also a form of value and a basis for care. The veduta developed at the beginning of the thesis emerged from this position. It treated unfinished and suspended structures as pending spaces of potential, and asked how architecture might work with what remains as a 'shelter of care'[7] and a structure still open to fulfilment.

1.4 Research and design questions

Main research question
How can the black holes of Kypseli be gently deterritorialised through the renegotiation of their membrane, so that they reopen to exterior relations and shift from reactive withdrawal toward active belonging?

Analytical question
Through which spatial, material, legal, and affective conditions are these buildings held in suspension, and how does that suspension become legible across the neighbourhood, the house, and the building fabric?

Design question
What enabling constraints can architecture introduce so that a suspended house admits new forms of care, use, and value beyond exchange, without reproducing forceful appropriation?

1.5 Scope

The project focuses on one specific interwar building in Kypseli, currently held under a four-owner inheritance structure, which is among the simplest configurations of fragmented ownership scheme, characteristic of these black holes, which typically multiply across generations. The building sits within a block of similar suspended buildings, two of which are read in juxtaposition. The wider scope is the field of such buildings in the surrounding neighbourhood, which the thesis maps and proposes as a synergy. The scope does not extend

[7] Platon Issaias, "Anamones: Polykatoikia and Self-Building," in *[UN]Finished*, ed. Maria Lalou and Skafte Aymo-Boot (Jap Sam Books, 2023), 122.

to comprehensive legal or policy reform. These are flagged as conditions of possibility for the proposal and are addressed only in the discussion.

Part 2. Approach

2.1 Theoretical framework

This section sets out the theoretical references through which the thesis has come to problematise belonging, vacancy, and ownership. These theories offer different points of entry into the question: how belonging is constituted, how it withdraws, how value is reduced, and how another mode of intervention might become thinkable through dirt.

Property ownership as reactive belonging

Property ownership is approached as a particular mode of belonging, this of alienation, materialised in building stock. Meillassoux's distinction between active and reactive becoming is used to understand belonging as a way of relating to exteriority. Reactive becoming is a disinterested retreat constitutive of the living being's effort to conserve itself, while active becoming proceeds through an increased capacity to be affected, individuating through relation with exteriority.[8] The high percentage of entire vacant properties in Athens is read here as a spatial condition of belonging through alienation and a self-consumed reactive subjectivity.

Suspension as failed line of flights (black holes)

'Every assemblage is territorial in that it sustains connections that define it, but every assemblage is also composed of lines of deterritorialisation that run through it and carry it away from its current form'.[9] The suspended buildings are read as 'ill-conceived attempts of deterritorialisation', or otherwise what Deleuze and Guattari call a black hole.[10] Dislodged from its former use and inhabitancy, they are held in suspension by overcoded layers of ownership, inheritance, fear, and deferred decision, sustained by an 'overly convulsive, self-consumed desiring subject,'[11] the ιδιώτη or neoellina, retaining them from re-entering processes of territorialisation. Sections 3.1 and 3.2 speculate on the 'thresholds that were crossed too quickly [or] intensities that were no longer bearable' causing these black holes.[12] The architectural problem concentrates at this membrane and in the question of how it may be renegotiated gently[13].

Value otherwise: from caring about to caring for

In the specific context, posing the problem at the membrane becomes a quesiton of value. A constraint reduces the degrees of freedom in a system, making some behaviours more likely and others less, so that the system settles into path-dependent change over time.[14] The design proposal therefore speculates on conditions through which the barriers of the complexity of

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[8] Meillassoux, "Soustraction et Contraction," 100–101.
[9] Lorraine Tamsin, "Lines of Flight," in *The Deleuze Dictionary*, Rev. ed., ed. Adrian Parr (Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 147.
[10] Message, "Black Hole," 33.
[11] Message, "Black Hole," 33.
[12] Message, "Black Hole," 33.
[13] Félix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, trans. Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton, Continuum Impacts (Continuum, 2008).
[14] R. A. Gorny, "A Flat Theory: Toward a Genealogy of Apartments, 1540–1752" (Delft University of Technology, 2021), xxxiii, https://doi.org/10.4233/UUID:8F7D924D-AD3D-4E90-A05F-1BBDAE23146C.

ownership can be raised or lowered to allow for flows to re-enter. Acting through repair, reactivation and the rendering visible of other values than exchange, these conditions act as a test for the modulation of the owner's relation to property, so that withdrawal gives way to negotiation, care and other forms of belonging.

The value this releases is measured outside capitalist development: in knowledge exchange, in sentimental value, in ecological restoration, and in the material repair and redistribution. Counting value this way shifts the relation to the building, along the distinction Puig de la Bellacasa draws between caring about and caring for. To care about the property is to hold it and defend its title at a distance; to care for it is to maintain and repair it.[15]

Towards a new gentleness

The black holes are caused by thresholds crossed too quickly or intensities that became unbearable. The question becomes how the membrane of the black holes can be modulated so that reciprocal affectivity becomes possible. Guattari's new gentleness offers the orientation towards a new gentleness. New ecological practices "will have to articulate themselves on these many tangled and heterogeneous fronts, their objective being to processually activate isolated and repressed singularities that are just turning in circles."[16] This calls for "new micropolitical and microsocial practices, new solidarities, a new gentleness."[17] The garden and the workshop, as a site of experimentation and knowledge exchange, emerge processually over time, and this gradual emergence is the spatial form of a new gentleness.

Staying with the trouble

From the social dirt to the very material dirt of the specific black hole in Kypseli, this thesis takes up dirt as a creative movement, asking what the neglected building still holds and how it could be conditioned otherwise by 'getting dirty together'[18] "Most powerfully, following the dirt can be a creative movement, a profound relationship with our local environment-world."[19] Following Douglas's 'dirt is matter out of place'[20], matter judged not to belong by a context organised around its norms of order and value.[21] Reading the black hole through its dirt, the cracks, debris, dust, sealed soil, exposed pipes, and failing plaster, operates in two registers at once. It is forensic, disclosing what the assemblage has buried in ownership, inheritance, and deferral; and it is projective, locating the dirt particles as singular points from which a processual transformation can begin.

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[15] María Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More than Human Worlds*, Posthumanities 41 (University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 5–6.
[16] Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, 50–51.
[17] Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, 51.
[18] Hélène Frichot, *Dirty Theory: Troubling Architecture*, 1. Auflage, with Art Architecture Design Research (Spurbuchverlag, 2019).
[19] Frichot, *Dirty Theory*.
[20] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978).
[21] Frichot, *Dirty Theory*, 9.

2.2 Methods

The methods are organised by approaching the building as an assemblage to be read across scales, temporalities, and relations. The research moves from the historical and territorial to the molecular. In the design phase, this direction is reversed, beginning from the micro scale and extending outward to the neighbourhood and the city. The overall structure therefore moves from macro to meso to micro in research, and from micro to meso to macro in design.

Historical reading
A brief historical reading of Kypseli was developed in relation to Athens in order to situate the neighbourhood within broader processes of migration, densification, and urban transformation through literature. This was followed by a closer examination of the system and operation of antiparochi, archival aerial photographs, and related visual and textual sources from media and newspapers, used to understand the thresholds that may have been crossed too quickly and the intensities that might have become unbearable.

Fieldwork
Fieldwork was conducted through three site visits across the research period. These included photographic documentation of the neighbourhood, observation of the everyday milieu of the block, mapping of signs of neglect, and informal conversations with residents and local actors. The purpose of the fieldwork was to situate the chosen house within its active exterior milieu and to identify the recurring spatial and social conditions through which withdrawal becomes visible.

Mapping of black holes
A site map of vacant and withdrawn properties in Kypseli is produced through walking, paired with a catalogue of recurring material signs through which black holes become legible from the street: locks, welded doors, wooden window sealing, broken glass, and faded for-sale notices. This material was developed in the form of a booklet and video catalogue. The aim is to show that the chosen house is situated within a wider neighbourhood field of suspended properties, and that its condition is tied to a broader historical and urban register rather than to an isolated case.

The house as archive
The selected building is read across several registers. Point-cloud photogrammetry is used to document its present condition and to render it as a spatial object of analysis. Ownership narratives from the four heirs are used to understand the internal tensions, attachments, and future imaginaries surrounding the property. A molecular reading of the material fabric identified evidence of multiple construction phases, economic compromises, and later modifications. Cracks, exposed floor structures, repairs, and traces of fire were treated as archival material through which the house’s historical formation and present instability could be read.

Inventory as site of extraction

A conventional renovation document, in the form of an inventory of materials, is produced and used against its usual function. Instead of itemising what would be removed, the inventory is used to reveal the latent material already embedded in the building. In this way, the inventory became a method of extraction within the site instead of reducing it to waste.

Research by design

Design begins from observations of what is ordinarily treated as dirt: a crack, a plant emerging through concrete, debris detaching from a wall. These conditions are read as material constraints and developed into enabling constraints through which new conditions may form. Design is used as a research method to speculate on how micro-architectures might modulate the membrane of the house, recalibrate relations of ownership and care, and admit other forms of use. Architecture is approached through situated transformation from within the condition itself.

Part 3. Research Results

The research moves from the city to the brick and the design from the crack to the network.

3.1 Athens and the production of withdrawal

Internal migration in the early twentieth century, the arrival of roughly a quarter of a million refugees from Asia Minor in the 1920s, post-war reconstruction, the migration that followed the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, and the contemporary arrivals from conflicts in the Middle East each compressed new populations and new pressures into the city without a state apparatus prepared to absorb them. Housing provision unfolded through the coupling of the polykatoikia with the operation of the antiparochi, what Issaias names the 'self-building duo'[22]. What distinguished the polykatoikia from any other apartment block was precisely this coupling, which depended entirely on private capital and private actors.

The way the land-allowance mechanism operated was that a plot owned by a family or an individual was exchanged, without further tax revenue, for built space through a private agreement between a property owner and a local contractor to trade the land for a percentage of the surface in a new building. The landowner gained income from the apartments they did not occupy, the contractor obtained land without recourse to bank loans. Two consequences of this structure matter for the argument that follows. First, its sequencing. The operation succeeded first and informed policy afterwards with. The state intervened afterwards, regulating and supporting the accumulation already set in motion. The revisions to the General Building Regulation in 1955 and 1968 did not introduce a model; they legalised an urban structuration already in progress, including informal acquisitions and constructions that had begun outside formal legality. The other concerns extent. The fragmented parcel structure of Athens allowed antiparochi to spread almost everywhere. It took shape as a near-total deterritorialisation organised through a dispersed network of landlords, contractors, workers, engineers, and lawyers, connected through trust and operating largely beyond the banking system.[23] Housing shortage was thus absorbed through a mechanism from and for the private.

The present crisis is structurally different. Athens holds an enormous stock of properties that remain suspended across the city, visible on nearly every block. This suspension coexists paradoxically with rising rents and a growing need for affordable housing. It is produced by a cluster of multiple conditions that resist resolution. The near-impossibility of decision-making under fragmented inheritance, successive changes in legislation, a dependency on family that substitutes for an absent or distrusted welfare system, and an emotional attachment to property that carries memory.[24] Vaiou's account of the Greek housing system registers the scale of this privacy in hard terms: owner-occupation stood at 74.6% of households in 2016, the majority of them without a mortgage, alongside widespread multiple-ownership, a central role for the

[22] Issaias, "Anamones: Polykatoikia and Self-Building," 120.
[23] Kousoulas, *Athens*, 65.
[24] Brooke Holmes et al., *(Un)Finished*, ed. Maria Lalou and Skafte Aymo-Boot (Jap Sam Books, 2023).

family in securing shelter for its younger members, and the almost complete absence of a social housing sector.[25]

During a period of extended touristification and gentrification, the dominant scenarios for dealing with this stock remain governed by the same speculative logic that produced its suspension, that of ther reactive subjectivity. Sale to a developer for demolition and luxury oriented redevelopment, or full demolition followed by vacant landholding in anticipation of future value uplift, both treat the property as a reserve of exchange value. The property tax operates as a governing constraint, pushing owners toward fast monetary measures that usually take the form of profit-oriented redevelopment. The same coupling that once absorbed intensification now consolidates withdrawal. Where the antiparochi-era subject was an actor in a collective, if private, process of construction, the contemporary Athenian subject is, in Kousoulas's terms, the 'ιδιώτης: a private citizen with no interest in the commons, enclosed in itself, refusing any opening to the exterior, so that the particles of Athenian involution shift toward an absolute and enclosed interior with no regulation of informational or energetic exchange in a collective manner'.[26] The unfinished and suspended buildings are the material trace of this subjectivity. They 'attract the gaze of the speculator'[27] or how Tsing describes them as "spaces of abandonment for asset production."[28] Read otherwise they are also the pending structures whose reactivation might let new commons emerge, treating space not as asset and investment but as a shelter of care.[29]

3.2 Kypseli: dense milieu in flux

Kypseli is one of the oldest and currently one of the densest neighborhoods of Athens and has been individuating along the previously mentioned intensifications. First mapped in 1860, included in the city plan in 1887 and delimited in 1908, it remained an area of farms and scattered cottages into the early twentieth century, crossed by the Levidis stream.[30] Its becoming can be read through dirt. By the 1930s, urban pressure and the absence of organised waste collection had turned the stream into a hotbed of pollution that the press of the day called the terrible stream and demanded be removed. The solution was to put the dirt out of sight: the stream was culverted in 1937 and replaced with a linear garden between two pedestrianised roads.[31] Concealment, not remediation, became the neighbourhood's way with dealing with dirt.

Densification followed the wider pattern of Athens: a bourgeois suburb of courtyard houses in the 1920s became, by the 1950s, among the most populated districts of the city, absorbing refugees, post-war migrants, and, after 1990, a mosaic of more than two hundred nationalities.

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[25] Ντίνα Βαϊου. and Βαΐου, Ντίνα, author, *Η Αθέατη Εργασία Των Γυναικών Στη Συγκρότηση Της Πόλης: Όψεις Της Αθήνας Μετά Τη Μεταπολίτευση*, Prōtē ekdosē: Noemvrios 2021 (Alexandreia, Αλεξάνδρεια, 2021), 56.
[26] Kousoulas, Athens, 95.
[27] Brooke Holmes, "Obsolescent Progress," in *[UN]Finished*, ed. Maria Lalou and Skafte Aymo-Boot (Jap Sam Books, 2023), 101.
[28] Holmes, "Obsolescent Progress," 107, citing Tsing, The Mushroom at the End of the World, 9.
[29] Issaias, "Anamones: Polykatoikia and Self-Building," 122.
[30] Ντίνα Βαϊου. and Βαΐου, Ντίνα, author, *Η Αθέατη Εργασία Των Γυναικών Στη Συγκρότηση Της Πόλης*, 136.
[31] *Το Απαίσιο Ρεύμα*, June 29, 1935.

The exodus of (younger) households to the suburbs, made desirable by the highways of Doxiadis's 1966 Ecumenopolis, left gaps in the building stock that drew the new arrivals in.[32] In 1991 the newspaper Kathimerini named Kypseli the Hong Kong of the state of Athens, condensing density, pollution, crime, and the growing number of foreigners into a single narrative of degradation, and concluding that the neighbourhood would be saved only if rebuilt.[33] Social and ecological dirt were folded into one logic in which demolition appeared as the sole response to decline.

Those who remained in Kypseli increasingly withdrew into private property, much of it later held in fragmented inheritance. This withdrawal registers the reactive subjectivity diagnosed across Athens and appears materially in the suspended interwar buildings that persist on nearly every block, as well as in the disconnected electricity supply that gives the 6th Municipal Community the highest recorded vacancy in the city by 2021.[34] Fieldwork identified structures standing since the 1930s that never entered the operation of antiparochi. These are the black holes of Kypseli, buildings caught between inheritance, speculation, and deferred decision currently under growing pressure from metro construction and redevelopment.

One suspended property has recently been on the news leaking a cement-like substance from its yard onto the neighborhoods streets, a material trace of the metro works that now accompany the neighbourhood's redevelopment. Read through Frichot's understanding of dirt as matter judged not to belong, such buildings disclose what ownership, deferral, and speculative waiting have buried within the urban assemblage, while also indicating the points from which transformation may begin.[35] Their persistence across decades of demolition and rebuilding gives them another significance. These structures have remained outside the cycle that converts interwar fabric into increasingly standardised real estate. In this sense, their suspension can be understood as a limited resistance of land and property to immediate redevelopment. As one of the last neighbourhoods in central Athens to undergo intense gentrification, Kypseli poses the question of how that resistance might be redirected so that these black holes re enter relation with their active surroundings on terms other than sale.

3.3 Mapping the field of black holes

Fieldwork identified black holes as a recurrent condition within the neighbourhood. Three modes of suspension were mapped together with a catalogue of recurring signs, including locks, wooden window sealing, welded doors, broken glass, and disconnected electricity. The chosen house belongs to this wider field of withdrawn properties, and the analysis that follows is grounded in that shared condition.

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[32] Ντίνα Βαΐου. and Βαΐου, Ντίνα, author, *Η Αθέατη Εργασία Των Γυναικών Στη Συγκρότηση Της Πόλης*.
[33] Γ. Σ. Τσιρος, *Κύψελη: Το Χονγκ Κονγκ Του "Κράτους Των Αθηνών,"* (Αθήνα), 1991, Ιστορικό Αρχείο Καθημερινής, https://kathimerini.pressreader.com/kathimerini-archived/19911103.
[34] Dimitra Siatitsa, *Vacant Dwellings in the Municipality of Athens: Spatial Dynamics, Methodological Challenges and Reactivation Policies to Address the Housing Crisis*, 2026, https://doi.org/10.17902/20971.130.
[35] Frichot, *Dirty Theory*, 9.

Three configurations recur across the mapped field. The first comprises early houses tied to suburban exodus and fragmented inheritance, where ownership remains in place while responsibility is deferred. These buildings become sites of tension between entry and sealing, use and refusal. The second comprises unfinished concrete structures, where construction was interrupted by economic thresholds, legal disputes, fragmented ownership, or regulatory change. The third comprises demolished plots held vacant after material removal, where redevelopment is anticipated but continually postponed. Across all three, vacancy appears as a suspended process of becoming, retained as future value, disconnected from present use, and organised through deferred decision.

3.4 The house as archive

The chosen house is an interwar building held by four heirs, a relatively simple instance of fragmented inheritance within a neighbourhood where such division often multiplies across generations. It is positioned within a block alongside two comparable cases and is therefore read both as a singular site and as part of a local field of suspension. The house is approached as an archive across material, narrative, and representational registers. Its significance lies in the way these registers condense longer histories of construction, adaptation, attachment, and deferral within a single building.

At the material level, the house records its own transformations. A crack on the front elevation near the roofline reveals a brick different from that exposed on the ground floor, indicating a second construction phase in which the upper floors were added. In one upper room, where a fire later originated, the exposed floor structure of poured concrete with brick infill points to an economy of construction shaped by cost efficiency and compromise. Successive aerial photographs from 1925 to the present show the house persisting through major transformations of the surrounding block.

At the narrative level, informal conversations with the four owners reveal a strong sentimental attachment to the house held in tension with divergent future projections. Preservation, demolition, sale, and redevelopment all appear as possible trajectories, but none has gathered enough agreement to become a decision. The house is therefore held in suspension by a conflict between memory and action. Family photographs and transmitted stories reinforce this attachment and add another layer of evidence. They register the house as a site of ordinary domestic life, while also functioning as sentimental constraints on change.

The point cloud survey adds a present tense register to this archive. As a document, it records the building with precision. It does not separate the house from its deterioration, nor creates a clean documentation.. The house stands between continued suspension and intervention. The archive assembled through material traces, owner narratives, historical images, and point cloud photo locates the specific capacities and constraints through which design can begin.

3.5 Demolition, preservation and the question of value

What counts as valuable enough to preserve, and under what conditions demolition can become productive. In inherited property, demolition is rarely immediate. Sentimental attachment, memory, and disagreement often suspend decision for years. When action does occur, speculative pressure can make demolition and sale to a developer appear as the most manageable profitable resolution, especially in a neighbourhood now reshaped by metro construction, touristification, and rising land values.

The position taken here concerns creative destruction. Demolition is approached as a calibrated operation whose value depends on what it can disclose, release, and regenerate. Megan Sykes's account of bone marrow transplantation is instructive.[36] Transplant medicine moved away from total eradication once it became clear that partial preparation could allow donor and recipient cells to coexist and produce more constructive effects. Applied architecturally, this suggests a gentler form of dismantling, one carried out with the same care usually reserved for construction. This orientation resonates with Guattari's call for a new gentleness.[37] It also recalls Matta Clark's cuts into abandoned buildings, which, as Halberstam argues, turned demolition into a critique of gentrification and speculative improvement by revealing the spatial and political logic of real estate from within collapse itself.

This leads to the question of value. The renovation is used here against its genre. It functions not as a list of waste destined for the landfill (out of sight, out of mind) but as a site of extraction. A way of uncovering the dormant material, energetic, and relational capacities already embedded in the house. In a diverse or more-than-capitalist economy in Gibson-Graham's sense, what lies under the waterline of the iceberg is a resource to be worked with toward, following Haraway, 'make the Anthropocene as short/thin as possible and to cultivate with each other in every way imaginable epochs to come that can replenish refuge'[38].

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[36] *Demolition*, Salon 57, produced by The Museum of Modern Art, MoMA R&D, 206 AD, https://momarnd.moma.org/salons/57-demolition.
[37] Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, 37.
[38] Donna Haraway, "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin," *Environmental Humanities* 6, no. 1 (2015): 100, https://doi.org/10.1215/22011919-3615934.

Design Response

3.6 Increasing the crack: Dirt as material resource

At the micro scale, design works with the creative potential of dirt as soil, rubble, debris, dust, and exposed matter. These are approached as material constraints through which new relations can be organised. According to Juarrero, 'constraints are entities, processes, events, relations, or conditions that raise or lower barriers to energy flow without directly transferring kinetic energy. Constraints bring about effects by making available, structuring, channelling, facilitating, or impeding energy flow'.[39] Design reassembles and reconfigures this matter into walls of urban spolia, dry stacked enclosures, railings, and supporting elements that raise or lower barriers and channel new flows of work, care, and occupation. The specificity of the house is decisive. Concrete rubble harvested from the site is recast into slabs that reinforce the former living room floor and allow heavy workshop use to take place. The same room is opened to the street by recessing the front facade and forming an exposed working space. Reclaimed metal mesh lowers the boundary with the neighbouring building and becomes the balustrade of the workshop void, bringing the neighbourhood into relation with this site of experimentation. In the courtyard, rubble removal reveals soil repressed under sealing for almost a century. Concrete is sorted and stored, water is introduced slowly through natural gutters, charcoal activates microorganisms, food waste returns daily to the ground, and tree planting initiates a longer ecological cycle. Over time, the courtyard shifts from dry soil to active ground and eventually to meadow, while a cooler microclimate and a food cycle emerge from the site's own resources.

3.7 The house as a site of experimentation

At the meso scale, the house is organised as a process and as a site of experimentation. Access to land is exchanged for caring for it. A collective of craftspeople, such as Boulouki, enters through private agreement with at least one owner and uses the site as a ground for repair, learning, making and unmaking. The house offers space, matter, and time. The collective offers labour, craft knowledge exchange, and maintenance. Workshop and garden establish the first sustained forms of occupation, from which shared spaces and later inhabitation can accumulate. Comfort is reconsidered through thermal and dust gradients, and value is located in what the building can sustain with what it already contains. The proposal therefore organises a new system of inhabitation grounded in limited means, ongoing care, and negotiated access.

3.8 From house to network

At the macro scale, the house operates as the first node in a wider network of black holes. Workshop, garden, and later housing are treated as collective formations that accumulate through time and through the resources made available by each site. As other suspended buildings enter the network, materials are reclaimed from those already giving way to speculation, stored, tested, and reused through similar processes of dismantling and

[39] Alicia Juarrero, *Context Changes Everything: How Constraints Create Coherence*, The MIT Press (The MIT Press, 2023), 40.

reassembly. The same logic extends upward into future dwelling, where upper floors may be formed through reclaimed matter and inhabited either by the workshop collective or through affordable housing arrangements. Once the workshop no longer serves only the surrounding black holes, the ground floor can continue as an open pilotis for gatherings, meals, and neighbourhood use. The project therefore advances from soil and rubble to workshop, garden, and housing, and from there to a wider network of buildings connected through shared labour, material circulation, and ongoing repair. The architectural result remains unfinished by design and open to continuous reconfiguration.

Part 4. Conclusion

4.1 Conclusion

This thesis speculates on the black holes of Kypseli as suspended properties produced by intensifications that have shaped ownership, inheritance, deferred decision, sentimental attachment, and speculative pressure. These properties are spatial formations of reactive withdrawal. Their condition is legible in sealed thresholds, disconnected utilities, unresolved interiors, and building fabric marked by dirt, detachment from their exterior milieu, and unproductive decay. The specificities of Kypseli, one of the densest neighborhoods of Athens and it's individuation are the ground of speculating in that context how these black holes in the particular neighborhood might have emerged.

The proposal suggest that this condition can be engaged architecturally through a gentle renegotiation of the membrane. It does not rely on forceful opening, nor on the immediate replacement of the existing building. It works through enabling constraints that reorganise thresholds, access, matter, and use. In the design, this begins from the very dirt dismissed as defect. A crack that produces rubble and sealed soil, detached plaster, and exposed matter become points through which new relations can enter. What follows is a processual activation of the house. A workshop for experimentation informs and is informed by the softening of the soil, as well as speculating on a scenario of later inhabitation. Could suspended property reopen to its exteriority, when transformation proceeds through negotiated access, material reuse, and caring for rather than caring about?

The project gives this argument an operative form through an exchange of use for care. Access to the property is exchanged for maintenance, repair, knowledge, and situated occupation. Through this exchange, value is rethought outside the narrow terms of sale and redevelopment. The proposal identifies value in ecological regeneration, material reuse, knowledge exchange, repair, and the gradual production of inhabitable conditions that are 'good enough'. It also extends this logic beyond one house. The black hole becomes the first node in a wider network in which suspended properties are linked through shared labour, material circulation, and ongoing reconfiguration. The architectural result remains intentionally unfinished because the project is structured as a process and not as a completed object.

4.2 Implications and recommendations

The implications of the proposal extend beyond this specific house. The proposal exposes a policy gap, beyond architecture. Greek property law -including the property tax and the liability regime around informal occupancy- actively governs against the kind of exchange the proposal makes. Even if owners are willing to offer access in return for care, current liability structures around tenancy, building maintenance, and informal labour obstruct it. The recommendation is not new social-housing legislation, it is the design of legal and fiscal instruments that incentivise care-based occupancy and reduce the governing constraints that currently force owners toward fast monetary measures. This is a question for policy rather than for

architecture. Architecture can only speculate on how the manipulation of existing material and spatial constraints could bring forward alternative ways of becoming.

The pattern that produces these black holes -property held as private withdrawal, value measured only as exchange, real-estate speculation rewarded by tax and planning regimes- is not Greek. The proposal is therefore offered as a localised exercise in a globally relevant problem. The specificities are that of Kypseli, but the operations are not. Architecturally, the logic generalises to other suspended buildings caught in similar regimes. Reading the dirt, identifying the germ is a method, but the constraints are situated.

4.3 Reflection

The role of the architect is recast as the design of enabling constraints rather than the imposition of finished form, working with the cracks and defects of a building. The deliverable here is not a building but a process, and the design becomes a documentation of potential points in time.

Dirty theory is a productive entry point but is in itself reductionistic. The problem of suspended properties is beyond mere material and spatial and would require a better understanding and studying of legal frameworks. This is a limitation of the thesis.

The project risks romanticising and aesthetisizing decay. It does not intend to claim that micro-architectures can resolve structural housing injustice. Its claim is more limited that material symptoms such as dirt, cracks, and leaks can serve as precise points of entry through which larger regimes of ownership, extraction, maintenance, and exclusion become legible and therefore contestable.

Regarding the archival research, engaging with the media coverage of Athen’s newspapers as a methodology made me understand that it is never neutral but it informed me on the reactive subjectivity that has produced these black holes. The same applies to the owner’s narratives that cary sentimental attachment.

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