Graduation Plan: Urbanism

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<th><strong>Personal information</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Problem Statement</strong></td>
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<td>There are two main aspects that should be taken into consideration when we refer to Athens nowadays, under the prism of the economic, political, cultural and physical crisis:</td>
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<td>1. Athen's shifting role. From the polycentric model for Athens the interests shift to the city centre. However, the formal plans and projects see the new reality only as a temporary problem and set the gravity point in strategies that bring value dependently to the needs the global market imposes.</td>
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<td>2. The image of the city. Areas where minorities practice their daily activities are considered as “ghettos” and “unsafe clusters” for the rest of the society. There is an unequal geography in the city, based in the distinction of secure-insecure.</td>
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<td><strong>Problem statement:</strong></td>
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<td>We conclude that there is a lack of tolerance and integration of specific social groups in the centre. Fragmentation and informality are the key issues in our approach towards the city.</td>
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1. Authorities fail to see reality
2. "Urban myths": fragments as threats

| **Research questions:** |
| In order to approach the posed problem, we need to answer the above questions: |
| 1. How can we address the issues of informality and tolerance towards the otherness in the centre? (informality and fragmentation in Athens, research on the creation of "urban myths") |
| 2. How can we achieve a synergetic co-existence in "Athina’s" fragment? (which are the agents and their potentialities, which are the users and uses, what is formal and what is not) |
This should be taken into account when writing the Learning plan / personal graduation statement there are showed research questions that arouse. In order to answer this set of questions, we research upon trends concerning the city we identify the main problematic phenomena in the city centre of Athens. To address the problem, we will use public spaces as a way to create interactions and dialogue. Our urban hypothesis therefore, refers to a suggestion that people’s interactions under specific conditions of public space will promote social cohesion and integration.

Aim:
More specifically, our goal is to re-activate the public space in a chosen fragment (“Athina’s fragment”) by reinforcing existing practices, making them obvious to the whole city and establishing the necessity of their existence. To promote conditions for co-habitation, we will focus on the dynamic character of the public space in the central spine: the street of Athinas.

**Literature and general practical preference**

Through literature studies, I address and define the character of urban fragmentation, as a phenomenon being expressed in the city of Athens. It is essential to research on theories that relate directly to the phenomenon. Baldo and Navez-Bouchanine try to discover the elements-fragments that compose the city. In the same time, the theories of Marcuse and his way of differentiating the terms of “ghetto” and that of “cluster”, give an important input to our way of seeing and reading the city of Athens. The articles and papers of Maloutas and Stavrvides are referring to current phenomena related to the urban myths of “ghettos” in the city centre of Athens.

- BALBO, M., & BOUCHANINE, F. N., 1995. Urban Fragmentation as a Research Hypothesis
- JANCHES, F. 2011. Significance of Public Space in the Fragmented City
- MICHELUTTI, E. 2010. An analytical framework for urban fragmentation analysis in the Global South city
- STAVRVIDES, S. 2002. Inhabitation and Otherness: Refugees and Immigrants in the City

**Process**

**Method description**

The following scheme presents the methodology being used in order to approach the project. Motivated by the current trends concerning the city we identify the main problematic phenomena in the city centre of Athens. To address the problem statement there are showed research questions that arise. In order to answer this set of questions, we research upon a theoretical and an analytical framework, which lead to a specific vision to be tested for a specific location in Athens. According to the framework and to a review in case studies, a set of principles is being developed which in the next step will lead to a set of recommendations that will accomplish our aims. Following the recommendations, we come up with a set of actions that concern a strategy for a new urban planning approach-reactivation method. Finally, we evaluate the proposed strategy in order to come to a design output.
Motivation
A “chaos” in the centre of Athens is being unfolded

Trends
a. authorities fail to see reality
b. public opinion is based on the fear of the “Other”

Problem Statement
Lack of integration of minorities groups
Social and cultural fragmentation

Hypothesis
Social and spatial integration
Imagine the city as an urban environment where social and spatial exclusions will be cancelled as soon as they arise

Aims
Co-existence in the centre
Activate the clusters
Make the reality of the city obvious to everyone
Destroy urban myths
Create urban dialogue

Context
Athinas Cluster

Research Questions
How can we address the issues of informality and tolerance towards the “otherness” in the centre?
How can we achieve a synergetic co-existence in the specific cluster in centre of the city?

Framework
Theoretical Framework
Urban fragmentation
Spatial and/or social clusters
Ghettos and segregation
Urban myths

Analytical Framework
Functional fragmentation
Cultural fragmentation
Shift in uses and users
Flows and connectivity

Proposal
Athinas as Central Avenue

Set of Recommendations
Set of recommendations
activate public space
highlight the common identity of the public space: multicultural
multifunctionality
formalise existing informal uses
bring new functions
motives for new users
regional integration
emerge the “central avenue” necessity for the entire city
capture the flows

Case studies
Santiago, Chile 2005-2008
Copenhagen, Denmark 1996

Governmental strategy
formalise the informal market in the street + emphasise its diversity because of culture
use of public spaces around-the-clock, all days of the week, and during all seasons
create/promote occasional events

multifunctionality
invest in retail and craftsmen
temporary housing for students, migrants, employers
pop-up offices and leisure businesses in the existing abandoned floors

regional integration
emerge the “central avenue” necessity for the entire city
capture the flows

Strategy/set of actions
Strategy/set of actions
activate public space
highlight the common identity of the public space: multicultural
multifunctionality
formalise existing informal uses
bring new functions
motives for new users
regional integration
emerge the “central avenue” necessity for the entire city
capture the flows

Local morphology
review semi-public spaces, closed markets, arcades, empty plots, abandoned buildings

functional relation (programming in multiple scales)

collective identity (defined by the sub-identities)

Case studies
Athinas as Central Avenue

Analytical Framework
activate public space
formalise the informal market in the street + emphasise its diversity because of culture
use of public spaces around-the-clock, all days of the week, and during all seasons
create/promote occasional events

multifunctionality
invest in retail and craftsmen
temporary housing for students, migrants, employers
pop-up offices and leisure businesses in the existing abandoned floors

regional integration
emerge the “central avenue” necessity for the entire city
capture the flows

Design output
activate public space
formalise the informal market in the street + emphasise its diversity because of culture
use of public spaces around-the-clock, all days of the week, and during all seasons
create/promote occasional events

multifunctionality
invest in retail and craftsmen
temporary housing for students, migrants, employers
pop-up offices and leisure businesses in the existing abandoned floors

regional integration
emerge the “central avenue” necessity for the entire city
capture the flows
**Approach**

1. **Principles**

From the theoretical principles concerning the issue of fragmentation we define three to spatial variables:

1. “Culture divisions” have to do with ethnicity, religion and lifestyle differences;
2. “divisions by functional role” concern the separation of uses (residential, industrial, service etc); 
3. “differences in hierarchical status” refer to relationships of power and domination.

**(Marcuse 2001)**

- 1. activate public space
- 2. multifunctionality
- 3. regional integration

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**2. Social and spatial analysis of the fragment**

We define the type and the character of the specific fragment of Athinas. Through history we see how the specific area has been transformed into an urban threat. The proposal will be based on the analysis of the context of the specific location (fragment of Athinas - behind Omonoia square).

a. **Literature Studies:** In order to be able to tackle with the issues and phenomena as stated in the problem statement and the vision of the proposal it is important to research on relevant theories. A variety of sources can provide information concerning phenomena and terms that relate to the proposal, such us ‘urban fragmentation,’ ‘informality,’ ‘urban myths’ and ‘public space.’

b. **Mapping:** Mapping of social and spatial characteristics of the regions, along with the related data research, we will focus on the specific conditions of the public spaces of the area. We should stress the importance of mapping in multiple scales, as the proposal does focus on a specific location in order to test a hypothesis for the issue of fragmentation in Athens. As a result we should analyze the location in a broader context, and therefore at least two scales should be used in mapping (city and local scale).

c. **Data Research:** So as to be able to base the proposal on the existing reality of Athens and have as much relevance as possible it is important to research on statistics, figures, and data concerning: i. Social issues: population of immigrants (percentages and ethnicities), amount of residents, actions and activities taking place in the public spaces, elderly population, ii. Spatial characteristics: land uses, building heights, percentage of abandoned buildings, traffic conditions, type of buildings, land price, vertical distribution of uses.

d. **Observations:** It is important to involve the public in the recommendations that will be made. In order to insure that the actions proposed that may concern policies, shift in uses, restructure and reconstruction of buildings and spaces, will not exclude the needs and practices of the already existing actors, we should have public consultation in all phases of the proposal.
3. Case studies

In order to address the phenomenon of urban fragmentation and deal with parts of the city considered as ghettos, we can research on similar cases and test solutions and strategies proposed to come along with issues of segregation. We can see approaches that consider small-scale interventions for a specific part of a city (Santiago, Chile 2005-2008) while others engage policies and actions as part of a general strategy fulfilling a long-term vision (Copenhagen, Denmark 1996).

4. Output / Activating the fragment

The strategy concerns policies about land uses around the public spaces, time parameter, and urban abandoned spaces. Along with the rethinked-recommendations about the use of public space, a set of actions that involve neglected backyards, abandoned ground floors and the arcades that form now the urban environment of the fragment of Athens, will support the suggested interventions in public space. Therefore, the hypothesis will be based primarily in activating the public spaces of “Athinas” (streets and squares) and secondly in the surrounding environment. Formal and informal networks will be linked in space and time in public spaces of “Athina’s”. Through the process of action and reaction, the specific location will no longer be considered as a threatening urban cluster.

In order to promote the three variables as defined through the theoretical research, we recommend a set of actions:

1. activate public space
   a. highlight the diversity of commerce because of multiculturalism
   b. use of public spaces around-the-clock
   c. promote occasional events (socio-cultural issues)

2. multifunctionality
   a. temporary housing to students, migrants, employers
   b. motives to owners to rent with low profit (less taxes, renovations, etc)
   c. pop - up offices, leisure businesses in abandoned building floors.

3. regional integration
   a. “go through” and “go to spaces” system accessible from the city
   b. enhance traffic control system/public spaces as points of reference
   c. highlight the uniqueness of the market in the city

5. Evaluation

In order to apply the above principles, we should test the above set of actions in space. More specifically, we have to apply the recommendations in the exact location according to the fragments current conditions. It is important to base our evaluation process on the proximity to the real conditions of the fragment as well to the existing policies, regulations and plans of the municipality. The evaluation should engage functional relations with the rest of city (multiple scales) as well as focus on the identifiable collective character of the fragment.

Reflection

Relevance

In Athens, the decay of the urban environment is increasing and there is an intense societal demand to provide strategies that address these phenomena. This project relates to the current needs of a society whose reality is being shifting constantly. Also, the results that this research and design proposal will offer will contribute to the amount of the approaches concerning public space. It intends to give examples-patterns that could be used in a city where the asymmetries in the structure of the society are expressed through space.

Time planning

[Diagram showing the process of time planning with various stages and outputs]