Questioning urban myths
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens

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Questioning urban myths

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In search for co-existance and integration in Athens

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Questioning urban myths
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens
Contents
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens

α Recognising/Αναγνωρίζοντας 7

motivation 8
introduction 10
  The role of the city
  The image of the city
problem statement 14
hypothesis 15
aims 16
research questions 17
relevance 18
  societal relevance
  academic relevance
analytical framework used 20
theoretical framework 24
methodology 28
case studies 30

β Specifying the phenomena/Προσδιορίζοντας τα φαινόμενα 33

location 34
fragmentation process 36
visions for the fragment 40
the role of the fragment in the city 46
  functions and centralities
  pressures and conflicted demands

γ Setting the Hypothesis/Ωρίζοντας την υπόθεση 53

approach 54
strategic planning framework 56
  Recognition of the actors
  Recognition of the daily systems
  Recognition of the role of the fragment in the city
  Review existing instruments and tools
actor relational approach 68
emerging tenancies 72
specify location 76
activating the subclusters 78
emerging scenarios 97
reflections 100

δ Organising/Οργανώνοντας 107

P5 Reflection 108
phasing 110

References 112
Questioning urban myths

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In search for co-existence and integration in Athens

α Recognising
Αναγνωρίζοντας
Motivation

Since the first decade of the 21st century, the Eurozone is facing extended financial and economic fluctuations that are shocking the core of their societies and threaten its consistency (i.e. the considerations of a ‘grexit’). The weakest countries of the European Union, countries with vulnerable economies, are in a crisis that challenges multiple levels of their status quo. Greece and especially Athens, as facing its 5th year of economic recession (Eurostat, 2012) constitutes an arena where the process of crisis is unfolding through several aspects of everyday life and that extents through multiple layers of the city (economical, political, education, commercial, etc.). Reality has shifted: austerity measurements, suppression of demonstrators, the rise of extremities, the abolishment of the welfare state and the degradation of urban life.

A “chaos” in the centre of the city is being unfolded. It takes different forms and it evolves in radically uneven ways. It’s not the high level of inequality that bring the city in a case of an emergency and immediate reaction but the high amount of people in fear and despair that have to deal with new conditions and way of living. The lack of policies, actions and measures has almost obliterated the access to all of the necessities of daily living.

“It could be a vicious chaos that brings no good or it could be a productive chaos. It could be a chaos which brings heavy or heavier state repression or it could be a chaos that throws up very real alternatives for social organization”

(Smith 2008)

1 The mix of formal and informal activities, the presence of conflicting means of transportation, the inequality in accessibility of social goods, the myriad of street vendors, the deserted apartments, the squatted buildings, the bad sanitary conditions in the streets, all testify an alive and dynamic chaos.
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens
Introduction
The role of the city

As far as the way the city evolved through time is concerned, public and collective land have formed a pole of economic interest. After the Olympic Games of 2004, the Regulative Plan for Athens sets the gravity point in the expansion of the city to the whole prefecture of Attica. The proposals and the new projects underline polycentrality. (See Centralities map in next page) New centralities are proposed and start to be developed along the axis of Attica highway showing the clear tendency to attract economic inventions to the city. Businesses, relocation of some public sector services from the centre to the north, shopping malls attracting the commercial use outside of the city, and new residential poles form the new centralities. Athens in a metropolitan level is still considered as an enterprising bond of the EU with Middle East and Asia. However the lack of economic flow and the unfavourable conditions, block most of the projects and plans that aim to reinforce the status of Athens/Attica in the system of the European and global metropolitan cities. As a result, the processes seem to cease temporarily in expectation of new economic sources evincing a pause of this trend and a shift from the polycentric model to the intensification of the role of the city centre.

This second tendency that, in the current moment is prior, appears and focus on the city centre seeing the heart of the city as a field for development. There is a shift from the interest in regional projects to the city centre. (plans for infrastructure, architectural and urban competitions/projects/plans: “Athens x4”, “Rethink Athens”, expansion of tram line and metro etc). New movements and initiatives (apart from the demonstrations) expressed in the physical space try to find solutions and space for the real needs of the society.

The official plans for the city however, fail to see the reality. City plans and projects do not consider immigrants, homeless, drug addicts part of the society even though they form a big part of the population in the city that form the city centre currently (as shaped through years) and consider the existing situation only as a problem. Immigrants (legal or not) and their daily practices constitute the heart of the city, as a result that came along with the vision of Athens as a global city. The tendencies for the city however do not embrace such results and consider such phenomena as temporary problematic issues that should be shifted. These plans fail to accept the relatively new reality that is already rooted in the city centre.

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1 “Athens, thus, is considered a prefectural european metropolis, in the context of a spread European Union, whose geopolitical gravity point is being sifted to the East… the entrance of Bulgraia and Rumania strengthen the role of Athens in the South-East European environment.” Eutixia Kursari 2008 Athens and urban spread

2 This reality is being characterized by phenomena that arose in the city the last years: high concentration of legal and illegal immigrants, informal markets, abandoned buildings, offices, businesses and public services leave the centre, lack of residence in central parts of the city, extensive drug trafficking etc.
NEW CENTRALITIES

This map shows the main centralities in the region of Attica, as well as the new centralities in the periphery of the city. The new cores of attraction which are supported by the new infrastructure have reformed the structure of the city.
Introduction
The image of the city

Walking in the streets of the city everything changes gradient. The amount of people in the streets decreases or increases, the origin of people we encounter differs, the traffic becomes more or less, and the tissue varies in density. Different areas, uses, users and atmospheres form the city centre. Although the characteristics vary, it is difficult to strictly distinguish the limits of each region. The margins of each zone or area are almost lost in those of the neighbour one. The gradient passage from one to the other makes the city seem almost homogeneous- a view of Athens from Acropolis almost gives the same image.

However, the city centre of Athens does not form one specific mono-centric unit but it is actually an assemblage of parts and even clusters that share different characteristics (spatial and non-spatial ones). On a city level, land uses are mixed. However, having a closer look to each part of the city centre, we see some uses prevailing over others. In the same time, actions and activities that have to do with these uses (or the absence of them) seem to exclude others. Entire parts of the city centre frighten, alienate or discourage groups of people. As the media is creating myths and there is an intense surveillance and security measures in the centre 1, have a great affect on the way people perceive the city and provoke sentiments of insecurity and fear of an upcoming unpleasant event. The distinction of what is safe and what is not designates also what is acceptable, legal or right to prevent such unpleasant events, while in the same time social groups are being classified and connected to a possible hazard. This leads to an unequal geography in the city, which is based in the distinction of secure-insecure. This inequality refers to fragments in the city, places, specifically central public spaces, regarded as “ghettos” and being inaccessible in the city, enlarging the gap and the distance between some social groups. (See maps in the Collective Report)

1 The last decades, along with the advanced technology, an extensive amount of machines is being used for the surveillance of space. Cameras, guards and other equipment control the presence and expression of people in space.
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens
As recognized in the introduction, there are two main aspects that should be taken into consideration when we refer to Athens of today, under the prism of the economic, political cultural and physical crisis.

First we should clarify that the official plans and visions for the city do not answer the demands of the current society. The national response to issues related with immigration, prostitution, drug trafficking, and acts of violence is limited and oriented to a non-existing context. The formal plans avoid seeing the city as a system of social connections and set the gravity point in strategies that bring value dependently to the needs the global market imposes.

In the same time, myths have being generated to the public opinion, intruding in our way of seeing people around us: we categorize people as law-abiding citizens, criminals, or victims. The public opinion considers as “others” the unknown and the different, fact that brings along a defensive mechanism to the people. Aggressiveness, strong measures and short-term solutions are being promoted not seeing the reality and its potentialities. The areas the “others” practice their daily activities form “ghettos” and “unsafe clusters” for the rest of the society. The urban fragments, according to public opinion seem to threaten the cohesion of the city. (See maps in the Collective Report)

Finally, resulting from the above, we can conclude that there is a lack of tolerance and integration of specific social groups in the centre. The current strategies do not engage the new actors and their activities as fixed factors and part of the city life and therefore the related strategic planning excludes an significant part of the reality.
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens

Hypothesis

In order to address the problems stated in the previous section we are developing an hypothesis. The scenario regards the causes and the effects in the lack of tolerance of minorities’ groups and tests the social integration in parts of the city considered “urban threats” or “ghettos”. Can we imagine the city as an urban environment where social and spatial exclusions will be cancelled as soon as they arise? Allport (1954) proposed that ‘prejudice against racial or cultural minorities becomes reduced through contact because exposure to the “Other” enhances knowledge about him or her’.

We will test our hypothesis in the centre of the city in the fragment of Omonoia. More specifically, the area of Gerani, will be the test site-urban background where our scenario will base on. Its character will be strengthen, and expressed in public space, representing the multicultural identity of the whole cluster and will eliminate the urban myth of the ghetto. Our hypothesis aims in reactivating a central part of the city by reinforcing existing practices, making them obvious to the whole city and establishing the necessity of their existence. We aim in promoting conditions for co-existence, based in the dynamic character of the cluster in the city centre: “Gerani”.

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2 The origins of the Contact hypothesis lie in the monograph *The Nature of Prejudice* by the psychologist Allport. According to his theories: interpersonal contact between members of different racial or cultural groups can reduce prejudice and increase positive attitudes toward each other, and in turn lessen conflict between such groups.
The long-term vision of this project, as driven through the phenomena recognized in the problem statement, is that of co-existence in the centre of the city, considering all the possible groups as part of the same society and questioning existing social “myths”. This project aims in socio spatial integration of minority groups by making the reality of the centre of the city obvious to everyone and strengthen its potentialities.

“Thus, many places in the city cease from being those defined as others, in a certain urban dialogue to enter a process of radical segregation that may even culminate in the racial stigmatization of societies and places” (Janches, 2010)

Along with this classification of people, there are public spaces in the cities also categorized as “ghettos”, “criminality clusters”, “unsafe places”. We aim to reconnect the urban fragments by socio-spatial activation through public space. Public space, as a place where everyone has the right to be present regardless of his/her economical or social position, forms an environment people meet and exchange ideas, emotions, news and socialize. As Marcel Henaff mentions, public space has always been a contestation. (Hénaff, 2001) This project will use such public spaces as a way to create interactions and dialogue.

“Safety comes from ‘eyes on the street, the kind of involved neighborhood surveillance of public space…A sense of personal belonging and social cohesiveness comes from well-defined neighborhoods and narrow, crowded, multiuse streets.” (Jacobs 1961)

Public space can be used as the urban environment where the goals of the proposal can be showed in its most expressed form. As far as public space forms a place of no restrictions and may address to everyone, and is an everyday space of encounters, therefore we can have the maximum amount of interactions between different groups. What if we use public space in order to address the issue of co-existence? Our urban hypothesis therefore, refers to a suggestion that people’s interactions under specific conditions of public space will promote social cohesion and integration. “Urban public spaces are important parts of urban environment creating the framework for public life.” (Poklembovái, 2012)

Our scenario stresses that the increased contact in public spaces between the in-habitants of the city centre will reduce prejudice, stereotypes and the “fear of the other”. More specifically, in order to address the above issues mentioned earlier, there is proposed a local-actor related transformation so as a cohesive urbanization can be reached. We aim to make main public spaces of the city centre that are now underestimated or exclude many social groups, places of coexistence of every possible “user”. These urban strategies should refer to an equality among diverse groups, in accessibility to the urban resources offered in public spaces. As mentioned earlier, in order to address the issue of coexistence and social integration in the city, there is chosen a specific part of the centre of Athens as a case study to test the urban strategy of the project. This is the area of “Gerani”, located in the souther part of along the axis of Omonoia Square.
Research questions

There are two main questions that should be researched in order to approach the issues mentioned earlier:

A. How can we address the issues of informality and tolerance towards the otherness in the centre?

1. **Informality** and **fragmentation** in Athens is an attribute that forms and defines many of the daily practices in the city centre. It is expressed by actions of multiple groups in space. From the facades of the buildings, temporary markets, public spaces popping up in empty plots, abandoned apartments or buildings being squatted etc. How has this informality aroused in Athens and what is its form? How do informal networks influence the evolution of the city and the daily practices of the people? Which is the relationship and the dependency of informal networks with the built environment?

2. Urban **myths** are created in the city. Marginalized groups and areas are a consequence of a fear that should be questioned and researched. We should define how the fear has been generated and which are the characteristics of public spaces that make them repulsive for specific social groups. How is “otherness” defined in Athens and how can we talk about **city and civility**?

B. How can we achieve a synergetic co-existance in the specific location of centre of the city?

1. Who are the actors of each of the **networks**? Who belongs in the informal one and who can participate in the formal one? Which are the potentialities of each group?

2. Which are the **potentialities** of each group and which are the links that we can find so as to integrate the «others» and question the social myths?

3. How can we use the existing abandoned buildings in order to revatilise the area and bring more users? Which are the **uses** that could attract possible users in the specific locations? (temporary housing, cultural activites, public services, commerce, offices) Could we take advantage of the low rent in the centre of the city?

4. Which are the **policies** that could be applied in order to make visible the informal existing network and not dissociate it from its environment?

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3 City and civility share their etymology but they differ in meaning as the civility treats the “others” as strangers and creates a social bond based on this social distance, while the city is a human’s community where it is more probable strangers to meet. In these terms, civility forms a safety net of ourselves from the environment. Petta, (2007)
Relevance

Societal relevance

The economic crisis of Greece and events related to it, forms a part of an 'ongoing financial crisis' that depletes many European countries with those of the South Europe being affected the most. Political decisions, austerity measures and bailout programs are being constantly updated in order to deal with the crisis. In the same time the financial crisis is having political and social consequences: unemployment, poverty, immigration, drug trafficking, rise of extreme right parties, violence and homeless people and many more. All of these issues are expressed in the city centre and have direct effect to the physical space. In Athens, as described earlier, the decay of the urban environment is increasing and there is an intense societal demand to provide strategies as solutions that address these phenomena. The society is expecting policies and ways to reconsider and improve the environment of the city centre that is in decay. This project addresses public spaces in the city centre through planning and proposing alternatives to bring quality to the urban environment in terms of diversity in uses and users.

For these reasons we can claim that this project relates to the current needs of a society whose reality is being shifting and challenged constantly.

Academic relevance

Many urban studies have addressed issues of fragmentation and the phenomenon of "ghettos" in the city. However most of the theories and the literature researches take as main examples and case studies cities of the global south. This project, takes into consideration how urban fragmentation is being conceived and how it is expressed in other cities and tries to see its character in the city of Athens. The strategies that will be proposed will contribute to the amount of knowledge concerning the phenomenon of fragmentation.

The results-strategies that this research and design proposal will offer will contribute to the amount of the approaches that concern solutions to problems around the public space. More specifically, these results will form part of the possible alternatives to be tested on places of a city that phase extreme social and economic situations and have direct impact on public space. It intends to give examples-patterns that could be used under the existing policies in a city where the asymmetries in the structure of the society are expressed through space.

For my graduation studio the method of analysis that is currently used can be divided in two parts. The first part refers to a collective analytical framework of how to approach the main topic of the studio, while the second part is a set of tools and instruments to answer the personal research questions.

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4 Wikipedia for the “European sovereign-debt crisis”: The European sovereign debt crisis (often referred to as the Eurozone crisis) is an ongoing financial crisis that has made it difficult or impossible for some countries in the euro area to repay or re-finance their government debt without the assistance of third parties (Last access 12/01/2013)
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens

**POLITICS**

Greek Elections Scenario: After May 6th, Again on June 17th?

**ECONOMY**

**SPACE**

**SOCIAL**
Collective analytical framework:

First of all the key method is research through time. A timeline starts from the creation of the Modern Greek state (1832) until now, trying to unpack the existing situation in Athens. As part of a collective research we see which events during history affected directly or indirectly the form of the physical space. The events that are mentioned belong in the above categories: GLOBAL EVENTS, POLITICS, ECONOMICS, SOCIAL and PHYSICAL SPACE. These categories include subcategories such as: European Union, political systems, state-Church relations, political parties, political scandals, loans, economic figures, educational policies, social movements, immigration, media, drug addiction, cultural events, plans for Athens, regulations and policies for the urban environment, urban projects etc. Many of the events tend to belong to more than one category while in the same time we can see specific dates and periods when there is a “density” in events in many of the categories. While dividing the events in general categories, we divided the line of time in periods that form a specific era for the Greek State and influenced the physical space.

The second method, focusing more in the materiality of the existing situation in Athens, is being based in investigating the central part of the city that shares asymmetries. There have been selected specific public spaces of the city centre (case studies) to be analyzed and compared according to their use (and users), historical or monumental reference, location in the city, accessibility form of public space and urban characteristics around them. Literature study plays an important part on this part of the research as we should define the meaning of public space in the case of Greece and Athens, and see the transformation of public space because of the crisis. In the same time, in order to be able to understand the socio-spatial character of these spaces there have been interviews of various people (users, citizens, stakeholders) as well as discussions with people that are dealing with the current situation in Greece in a academic, research or professional level (Greek Association of Architects, Professors in the Technical University of Athens, Archeological Association, KETHEA etc)
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens

Individual analytical framework:

A. Literature studies

In order to be able to tackle with the issues and phenomena as stated in the problem statement and the hypothesis 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 as ‘urban fragmentation,’ ‘informality,’ ‘urban myths’ and ‘public space.’ By reviewing literature through different media (books, journals, papers, articles and internet) we establish a theoretical framework (See section #) that will help us answer the first set of research questions, that of informality and fragmentation in Athens. In the same time, this framework will form the background where our hypothesis and proposal will base on. The main authors reviewed are Baldo and Navez-Bouchanine, Michelutti, Marcuse and Janches. In the same time it is important to review studies that concern the case of Athens. By reviewing the papers and reports of Stavrides, Maloutas and Vaiou we can filter the previous theories through the reality of Athens. These authors will provide us with a broader understanding of the situation of Athens concerning minorities and the “otherness” condition of the city as the presence of the “others” in public spaces concerns most of these papers. In the diagram below we can see where the literature review aims:

Goals

- Define urban fragmentation and informality for the case of Athens
- Explain the phenomenon of...

Products

- Theory of Urbanism Paper
- Theoretical framework as a background of the proposal

B. Mapping

The proposal will be based on the analysis of the context of the specific location (fragment of Athinas - behind Omonoia square). 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.

1. City scale:

- After mapping social-economical-spatial characteristics in the part of the collective research, we can identify the character of the fragments of the city. It is important to map the character-role of the selected fragment in the city as well as that of their public spaces. As our hypothesis is based in converting Athinas street in the central avenue of the city, it is important to clearly define its identity and its importance for the city. Its position in a map that shows us the main function-use of this area will help us base our hypothesis. We may need to strengthen, convert or totally alter the role of the fragment and the use of its public spaces in the city, activate them and make them places of interactions and coexistence.

- In the same scale level we should see the spatial...
relations of the fragments. Are these fragments connected and if yes, how? By mapping the connectivity we understand capture the flows and the city and we can possibly predict see how our proposal may affect the system these fragments work.

**ii. Local scale:**
- Priority in this scale is again public space. It is important to map the types of public space there are in the region, their connections and their role in the city. Which are the uses of these spaces and which are the qualitative characteristics. These maps will show us the hierarchies between the uses and the users in public space and indicate a set of recommendation that will bring integration and create a pole of reference, a common space for every possible individual.
- It is important to show not only the amount of abandoned buildings but also the type of these buildings. Also, as there are many spaces neglected in the inside of the building blocks, as well as many apartments or floor levels abandoned, they should be mapped as well so as to know the potentialities and the possible uses these places can engage. After mapping these places we can classify them and see which of these can be re used, under which conditions and which can be their relation to public space.
- In the same time we should map the type of commerce being practiced in the buildings but also in the streets. It is important to map the informal network that is present nowadays in the public space of the area. Market and commercial activities practices mainly by immigrants form an informal network that works parallel with the formal one.
- Mapping the routes and stops of the public transports as well as the most busy street conjunctions will give us an understanding of the meeting points of people as well as the most stressed parts of it in terms of traffic. Also we see the relations of these public spaces (which are streets) to other main public spaces (such as the squares) and reference points of the area.
- In order to propose solutions that base on real conditions we should map which of the existing uses and characteristics of the public spaces and their surroundings have a supralocal character. As the area is located in the centre of Athens and there are many buildings related to public sector services, as well some historical buildings or metro stations, we should map them so as to include them in our suggestions for the area.

### Goals
- Define the character of the urban fragment in the city
- Understand the present condition

### Products
- Visualize specific problems and possibilities
- Argumentation of the selection of the fragment

### 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. By using databases of multiple institutions we tackle the issues of infrastructure, mobility, uses and form of public space. More specifically there should be researched data that relate to the location selected as a case study. In order to define the common identity for the central avenue of Athinas, it is important to relate it directly to the existing conditions. This step is important, as we
need to reinforce the character of the area and highlight its potentialities. As we have mentioned earlier, we refer to fragments in a time of multiple shifts. Therefore, it is important to compare the data that with find with those of earlier measurements or with those of other regions. In order to analyze the urban fragment behind “Omonoia” square, which will form our case study, we should find data that relate to:

a. Social issues: population of immigrants (percentages and ethnicities), amount of residents, actions and activities taking place in the public spaces, elderly population
b. Spatial characteristics: land uses, building heights, percentage of abandoned buildings, traffic conditions, type of buildings, land price, vertical distribution of uses.

**Goals**
- Spatial analysis of the case study
- See the lack or excess of specific uses or activities
- Define needs, similarities and differentiations to other fragments

**Products**
- Information to be used in maps
- Tables, schemes and diagrams to justify the recommendations of the proposal

**D. Site observations**

Planning, implementations and design concepts are often confronted in reality by the users. There is the possibility that people will accept the new conditions as it will cover their needs or they will reject them. It is important to involve the public in the recommendations that will be made. Through surveys and interviews to the inhabitants who can be people passing by, shopkeepers, employers, residents and people practicing daily activities on the public space. 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.

**Goals**
- Involve public opinion
- Capture the existing needs and current problems

**Products**
- Protect the current activities and the needs of the existing groups
- Find out how new actors can be integrated
Theoretical framework
Informality and fragmentation in Athens

Many definitions and variations have been given in order to explain the phenomenon of fragmentation and its relevance to the social structure of the city. This paper aims to address and define the character of urban fragmentation, as a phenomenon being expressed in the city of Athens and how elaborated theories address the issue of fragmentation as related with social and spatial characteristics (ethnicity, education, density, functions etc.). We will focus in outlining an analytical framework as tool to explore the phenomenon of fragmentation in the urban planning dimension for a Mediterranean global city: Athens.

1. Main theoretical framework studied

   It is essential to research on theories that relate directly to the phenomenon. Baldo and Navez-Bouchaninie try to discover the elements-fragments that compose the city mainly in the developing countries while their theories seem to apply in the context of other cities globally. Michelutti’s paper connects urban fragmentation to the socio-spatial characteristics of the city and stresses the physical conditions of the fragment. 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 as well as understanding the use of such terms and their significance in the creation of public opinion. Finally, it is important to research on theories and arguments that base on the reality of Athens. The articles and papers of Maloutas and Stavrides are referring to a current phenomenon, the increased amount of migrants, and set their critique in to tactics, actions and behaviors that relate to them. Through literature studies we notice that the phenomenon of fragmentation that appears in the city can take various forms and identities. As M. Baldo and F. Navez-Bouchaninie define it, fragmentation of urban space is evident through distinct spatial patterns in the city. Even though the paper of Baldo and Navez-Bouchaninie (1995) is based in the issue of urban fragmentation in the developing countries, we could try to see if his theories and approaches apply to the European southern context.

   The way we conceive cities is as places of fullness in built form and functions. Cities, as man-made environments engage activities and practices that although they make the place dense, they are still flexible and capable of engaging more and more activities. However, global tendencies and shifts often seem to change the structure and the form of the city. The uses shift, the profile of the users changes and new relationships are shaping and transforming entire parts of the city. The conflict between globalization tendencies and local identities and the presence of cultural differences and diversities may generate fragmentation dynamics in the city.

   As Kozak (Kozak et al., 2008) mentions, the relation between the phenomenon of fragmentation and the globalisation process is based on a “global and local” level. The distinctions and the city’s inside boundaries become more and more obvious and distinct and the city appears as an entity of unconnected parts.

   Urban transformations that are directly related to fragmentation processes have been often considered an aftermath of globalization by an increased number of researchers. However we should mention that many other studies related to the phenomenon, consider recent transformations in cities around the effects of local processes and shifts. Kozak (Kozak et al., 2008) makes the clear distinction between the two contrasting studies stating the theories of Welch Guerra and Matthew Carmona. Welch Guerra bases his theories on local explanations that have to do with changes in the income and job distribution, the arising life-styles and the relationships between the centre of a city and its peripheries. (Kozak et al., 2008) On the other hand, Carmona tries to unfold how the globalisation influenced the fragmentation process in the cities by stressing the fact that metropolitan areas responded quicker to the changes in the world economy than other smaller regions and got benefited from international investments. (Kozak et al., 2008)
3. Type of fragment

3.1 Social/spatial fragments

According to Baldo and Navez-Bouchaninie (1995), spatial fragmentation is perceived as a problematic phenomenon by the western model of development that concerns a compact, homogeneous city. However, as Michelutti (2010) describes in his paper:

The city appears as a whole of socio-spatial fragments that can be visualized through the image of the mosaic and/or archipelago of pieces of territory, through separated or unbundled networks, through different approaches and uses of places, through contrasting scalar dynamics: to this socio-spatial universe corresponds a whole of different institutional devices (visible and invisible; legal, illegal or simply tolerated) that shape the structure of the city. (p. 4)

Therefore, Michelutti (2010) seems to see the fragmentation more as reality to accept and work on and an evidence of the alive and vivid character of a city full of complexity rather than a problematic condition. But which are the characteristics that make this phenomenon an obstacle to the development of the city under the western prototypes?

Trying to research upon these characteristics, we come across with approaches that tackle the issue from different angles. First of all we could see fragmentation as a phenomenon directly connected to vulnerability in a specific sector as Michelutti (2010) notices: conditions of the urban environment and housing, connectivity, accessibility to public goods and services, etc.

In the same time we could categorise the fragments of a city according to homogeneity and a common identity that they may engage. They may havea common political, religious, historical or ethnical background that unifies that forms the origin of a fragment. Therefore we could define a fragment either as an aftermath of specific conditions related to form, urban environment and spatial or as an area of specified by an identity related to culture, economy or ethnicity etc.

3.2 Fragments and segregation

While a fragment can be part of both of the above categories, we can see how the second one, that of the culture-economy-ethnicity related fragment has concerned many authors as it addresses social issues that emerge the last decades in cities around the world.

According to the definition Marcuse (2001) used in order to address the issue of segregation, ‘a cluster is an area of spatial concentration of a population group. It is the generic term covering any concentration of members of a particular group, however defined, in space, at a scale larger than a building’ (p. 2). The reason why it worth’s mentioning a definition for the term “cluster” is so as to show its difference in meaning with the term “ghetto” which according to the same paper of Marcuse (2001), refers to an area limited to specific population group, ‘externally defined as racial or ethnic or foreign held to and treated as inferior by the dominant society’ (p.2).

Marcuse (2001) states that the city can be seen as an entity of various patterns of clustering which most of them are social: nationality, income, occupation, age, culture etc. However in order to categorize the type of clusters or fragments, Marcuse finds three main types according to: culture, functional economic role and position in the hierarchy of power. “Culture divisions” have to do with ethnicity, religion and life-style differences; “divisions by functional role” concern the separation of uses (residential, industrial, service etc); “differences in hierarchical status” refer to relationships of power and domination (Marcuse 2001, p.3).

4 Are fragments a threat or an “urban myth”?

As mentioned above, in many European cities, the trends of spatial fragmentation stem from a socioeconomical restructure that came along with the globalization and the vision of a global city. The global scenario brought cultures, identities and characters in an urban discourse.

4.1 The stigma of the ghetto

Nowadays, entire parts of the city centre frighten, alienate or discourage groups of people. As the media is creating myths and there is an intense surveillance and security measures in the centre of the European cities, there is a great affect on the way people perceive the city and provoke sentiments of insecurity and fear of an upcoming unpleasant event.

The distinction of what is safe and what is not designates also what is acceptable, legal or right to prevent such unpleasant events, while in the same time social groups are being classified and connected to a possible hazard. Deffner and Hoerning (2011) refer to the “stigma” that fragments of the city have to bear. This leads to an unequal
geography in the city, which is based in the distinction of secure-insecure. Many places, specifically central public spaces, are regarded as “ghettos” and inaccessible in the city, enlarging the gap and the distance between some social groups (migrants-indigenous, migrants of the 1st immigration wave-2nd immigration wave, homeless – inhabitants, drug addicts-inhabitants etc).

4.2 Informality and organisation

Along with the categorization of places in the city and the “urban myths” that stigmatize entire parts of the city, there are informal-spontaneous or self-organised activities taking place in a city’s fragments are seen as problematic.

These fragments of the city, because of the fact that they contain informal activities and actions and they do not form part of a planned system, they are often considered as irregular, unorganised or disordered environments. However, the informal systems that characterise the fragments are structured under a complex yet organised system. There is a specific informal spatial and time-related framework under which people and actions seem to discipline creating a complex but not disordered system. According to Sobreira and Gomes (2001, p.4) ‘there is a difference between disorded systems and complex ones. When they are complex, they follow rules that can be measured by non-linear functions: The functions and the informal activities that relate to the complex systems as defined above, do not necessarily lead to a disorder and we therefore can support that informality by itself may promote or support an organised system.

5 Conclusions

Through demographics, socio-economic, ethnicity and density maps, as well as through societal trends and notions, we identify parts of the cities in the European South, as segments with special characteristics. They are separated as “rest” or “non active city parts”. These parts of the city are often represented in debates and media as obstacles of urban security and order. Such perceptions form a barrier to the urban community’s social cohesiveness. These “clusters” are the parts of the city where urban myths find place. They may be seen as gaps or holes in the city’s structure but they cannot be considered as voids, empty of uses and users as the research evinces.

We should see the new reality that arose in the city the last years either it is a global or a local effect, and consider its. As Stavrides (2002) sets the question:

Should we not be glad for the formative effect of those who have been temporarily cast ashore on the neighbourhoods of this city by globalisation? And should we not imagine a city where exclusions will be cancelled as soon as they arise, thanks to the multifariousness of heterogeneous inhabitation practices, diverse encounter points, doorsteps between communities, between hangouts, between the private and the public, but also between the “here” and “there” of one’s place of origin? (p.3)

Along with Stavrides (2002) input, we can conclude how urban fragmentation has been regarded as a process whose results disconcert the social cohesiveness. The image of the specific parts of the city, the image of clusters as “ghettos”, the stigmatisation of groups of people and city’s parts show an intolerance towards the informal, the “other” and the not known. Urban myths are appearing and multiplied in the city, based on inequalities, lack of integration of specific groups and disconnected parts of the society.
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens

(i’m suffering)

photograph: ksalonikidi 2013
**Methodology**

The scheme above 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. Next there is showed the main aim and the two sets of research questions that will forward the goal. In order to answer this set of question we research upon a theoretical and an analytical framework, which lead to a specific proposal for the test-location in Athens. Through the proposal for the specific location, there follows a review on existing planning framework and a strategy which consists of goals and sets of actions. The strategy is summarised into five core-actions under an actor-relational approach. This action plan will be evaluated through transformations to the four sub-clusters of the area. These transformations aim in answering the main questions and achieving the general goal of the project.

**Motivation**
A “chaos” in the centre of the Athens is being unfolded

**Trends**
a. authorities fail to see reality
b. fragmentation in planning process
c. image of the city: fragments as threats

**Problem Statement**
The lack of tolerance prevails the integration of specific social groups and determines spatial clusters

**Aim**
Re-connect the urban fragmentents by socio-spatial activation through public space
Question the image of the city

**Research Question A**
How can we address the issues of fragmentation and lack of tolerance towards the “otherness” in the centre?

1. How has the informality aroused in Athens and what is its form?
2. How do informal networks influence the evolution of the city and the daily practices of the people?
3. Which is the relationship and the dependency of informal networks with the built environment?
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens

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

Analytical Framework
- Functional fragmentation
- Flows and connectivity

Proposal
Socio-spatial activation of Gerani’s fragment through an actor relational approach

Context
“Gerani” cluster

Research Question B
How can we achieve a synergetic co-existence “Gerani” cluster?
- Who are the actors of each network (formal and informal)?
- Which are the potentials of each group and the possible links between them in space + program?
- How can we use the existing abandoned property (plots and buildings) in order to reactivate the area?
- Which are the policies (spatial and not) that could be applied in order to make visible the informal existing network and not dissociate it from its environment?

Define the fragment
- existing planning framework
- fragmentation process
- actors and formal/informal systems

Spatial issues to reconsider
- street width
- building height
- pedestrian width
- dead end arcades
- ground floor facades
- urban equipment

local-actor related transformations for the four subclusters
- functional criteria
  - human flows-mobility
  - connectivity in an urban level
  - land uses
  - activities in public space
- spatial criteria
  - public squares
  - inside-the-block arcades
  - pedways
  - abandoned property

Socio-spatial activation of Gerani’s fragment through an actor relational approach

Review of the regeneration plans for the area by counter proposing a strategy that recognises the existing actors and their daily systems.

Strategic planning framework
A. Recognition of the actors (needs and demands)
B. Recognition of the daily systems
C. Recognition of the role of the fragment
D. Review existing instruments and tools

Strategy
Goals
- Cohabitation of groups in space and time
- Secure the stay of the existing groups
- Expand daily systems and variety of actors existing and new in the whole area
- Public squares
- Inside-the-block arcades
- Pedways
- Abandoned property
- Human/flows-mobility
- Connectivity in an urban level
- Land uses
- Activities in public space
- Offer adequate space to informal activities

Set of actions
- Expand daily systems and variety of actors existing and new in the whole area
- Correlate the diverse networks
- Use the potentials of the vulnerable groups to show the necessity of their participation
- Promote associations and give cooperative perspectives

Principles
A. Activation of public space
B. Multifunctionality/review the image of the city
C. Regional integration

Actor-relational accord upon the core action plan:
1. Review inside the block arcades
2. Activate existing public space
3. Housing in abandoned buildings and units
4. Setback of building lines
5. Activate empty plots

Context
“Gerani” cluster

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

Analytical Framework
- Functional fragmentation
- Flows and connectivity
Case studies

Santiago, Chile 2005-2008

Context: Las Condes plazas and its commercial galleries had become just a place to pass through. The form of the public space as designed was directly related to the increased numbers of criminality related actions. Unsafety was the key problem of the area.

Proposal: The redesign of public space of SubCentro engaged relatively small changes aiming in restoring safety. Lighting was one of the main factors to be enhanced. Also the barriers between businesses were replaced with glass panels to create a feeling of continuity and openness. The resulting effect was a marketplace, “blurring the distinction between inside and out, and between private and public.”

Relevance: The reason why this project forms a case study for my proposal is because we can find similarities in the problem dealt. The feeling of insecurity is also a characteristic condition in the centre of Athens. In both cases there are actions that transform public spaces to unwanted fragments of the city. Through the specific proposal, we see how small interventions that concern urban equipment and the surrounding environment of public space, such as the facades of the buildings can bring safety and establish the principles of the Jacobs “eyes on the street”.

Source: Placemaking and the Future of Cities, By Project for Public Spaces Inc. 2012
Copenhagen, Denmark 1996

**Context:** Residential uses in the centre of the city seem to be an important factor for Copenhagen. The vitality of the city centre is directly related to the existence and the location of the five educational institutions in the centre. The presence of 14,000 students daily activates the city. They move in space during day and night and they support local economies such as bookstores, galleries, cafes etc. They walk all around the city for various purposes and they contribute to the vitality of the city. In the same time it worth noticing the distribution of uses in the vertical dimension. The four-to-five story buildings in the city engage shops and restaurant in the ground floor while in the upper ones we can find offices and residences. The integration of various functions contributes to the city’s vitality.

**Relevance:** The reason why these transformations needs to be considered is because the enhanced the quality of public spaces in Copenhagen without drastic changes and interventions but gradually (34 years). More specifically, it is very useful as a case study as we can identify specific actions that contributed to the change of the urban environment. The ones that worth noticing and can relate to our project are those stressing the importance of the residential use in the city centre (and students specifically). In addition the network of public spaces that can be categorised as go through or go to spaces seems an interesting way of how to set the hierarchies in public space and which part of the region should be highlighted.

Source: Jan Gehl and Lars Gemzoe, Public spaces and Public life, 1996
Questioning urban myths
Specifying the phenomena

Προσδιορίζοντας τα φαινόμενα
This graduation project will have as a final product a report that includes proposals and strategies that concern public space in Athens. Based on literature, research concerning multiple fields connected to physical space that express the current situation in Greece as well as findings during our study trip in Athens, this project will conclude on a design strategy that deals with the public space of Athens, as a space of integration of minority groups in a spatial and social approach.

This project aims in dealing with social and spatial integration of the spatial fragments of the city centre in Athens. The output of the proposal involves the existing public spaces as places of co-existence. We search for a collective process of a variety of actors in a multigovernance level.

The area that I am focusing in, is in the centre of the city, the fragment behind Omonoia square, called “Gerani”. This proposal aims in highlighting the existing activities and the needs of the users. As an area that engages an increased amount of migrants, and as an area considered as ghetto by the non-migrants, “Athinas” public spaces can form the base to test our hypothesis. This proposal activates a central part of the city under a vision of socio-spatial integration. The final output of this project will be a pattern of co-existence. There will be proposed strategies that promote a multifunctional use of public space. Time will play an important factor of the proposal as the project focuses on activities and practices and their relations through the day. It is important to secure the existing uses and to bring new ones that will not exclude the others.

The strategy concerns policies about land uses of and around the public spaces, time parameter, and urban abandoned spaces. Along with the rethought recommendations about the use of public space, a set of actions that involve neglected plots, abandoned property and arcades that form now the urban environment of the fragment of Gerani, will be proposed.
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens

photographs source: ksalonikidi, www.lifo.gr
The axis of “Athina” street intersects the old city while it joins mentally the Acropolis with Otto’s Square (Omonoia square) where the administrative centre of the new city was supposed to be located. Along Athinas street the commercial zone of the city would be developed, and even though the palace was never built there, the street preserved its commercial character.

In almost all the urban plans, the role of the broader area southern of Omonoia Square was that of the commercial core of the new capital. The inability of legalization and appliance of the plans had as a result, until the end of 1970’s fragmented actions and interventions that did not follow a general and constructed action plan under a main vision for the area.

Until the 1990’s, commercial use was dominating the ground floors of almost every building block while craft industry is concentrated in the floors of the “triangle”. The stock market of Athens (Sofokleous street) and the central offices of the National Greek Bank (Aiolou street/square) attracted new businesses of the financial sector: banks, brokerages, lawyers, accountants etc., which located in the upper floors of the surrounding buildings.

The buildings are mainly neoclassical, “polykatoikies” of the 1960’s, quite high comparing to the rest of Athens. There are also some buildings of industrial neoclassical architecture (Athinas + Sofokleous). The uses of the buildings cover a wide range of the urban functions. The main uses are supralocal and local commerce, and services while the residential and industrial use are not developed in the same level.

Nowadays, the presence of immigrants and refugees in “Gerani” is dominant. (see Migrants concentration map) There are gathered many different migratory groups in the region, most of which are attracted from the employment opportunities that are created around the “Varvakeios” public market and the street of Athinas. The specific characteristics of each individual group or community even though they differ a lot, the extent are sufficient not to cause significant clashes. The migrants are mainly occupying lower positions in the social subdivision of work, with the Chinese community as the most indulgent social group between the immigrants.

Greeks form the biggest part of the population that practice a profession in the area while the rest of the population shares different origins. The main ethnic groups are those of Indians, Afghans, Iranians, Kurdish, Chinese, Nigerians, Eritreans, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis.
The most numerous groups are those of Pakistanis (2nd in population after the Greeks) and Bangladeshis, which remain in Athens for many years already, and most of them are now staying in Greece legally. People form Pakistan have introduced two newspaper which offices are in Evripidu street (crossing Athinas street). They run small commercial businesses such as restaurants, cafes, phone shops, mini markets, video clubs, butcher shops etc. The second most numerous ethnic group is that of Nigerians, who are mainly outdoor salesman or run shops selling electronic devices (phones, watches, stereos etc). Last but not least is the ethnic group of Chinese people who are mainly occupied with commercial activities concerning clothing. Most of the people arrived in Greece recently with an Italian passport (they left Italy for competitive reasons), bringing their businesses, which are importing cheap clothes from China) and they are having the 3d place in terms of presence in space. (see maps of the two next pages). The coexistence between the migrant and non-migrant shopkeepers does not seem to be particularly problematic, however many people claim (interviews to be sited) that the presence of immigrants discourages their customers. Even though the commercial activity is declining, the shopkeepers regardless of their origin do not wish to leave the region. The streets that intersect the street of “Athinas”, differ in character and use. Evripidu street for example, while it remains commercial, the type of commerce is mainly based on food products, such as coffee, spices, nuts and tea while in the same street we can also meet small craftsmen industries and shops selling sponges, toys, clothes and cords. As described above, the cluster of “Gerani” is composed by smaller fragments, most of them engaging a commercial character. More than commercial hubs, people in these places exchange the news of the day, from their daily habits and stories to national politics. They build social bonds between them. However, this type of relation is being unfolded between specific groups, most of them migrants. The lack of presence of non-migrant population limits the range of the urban dialogue.
Another important characteristic of the cluster of Gerani is the difference in the character of the streets and blocks of the two sides of Athinas. In many cases we can notice that the character of these streets differs before and after Athinas street. Uses and users are not the same after the meeting point with Athinas street.

“Athinas” street seems to follow the division of the city into West part and East part. As an example we could see Sofokleous street. From Stadiu street until Athinas street it is improbable to meet any immigrant while west from Athinas street the ground floor of the buildings contain commercial activities addressing mainly to immigrants. The quality of the urban environment, the type of buildings and their condition differs between the two parts. Public buildings and office spaces have concentrated in the blocks of the east part of the “triangle” and many projects concerning pedestrianisation, renovation and preservation of architecture or archeological identity have been realized the last years. On the other hand, in the west part named “Gerani” a complete different situation is being unfolded. In the street level, we see building entrances locked and abandoned shops. However, not all of these places are left unused. Many of them engage invisible activities. Many offices spaces have been converted to self-organised dormitories of migrants, or small apartments have been rented to an increasingly high amount of migrants resulting in really low quality living conditions. In the streets that cross Athina, in the arcades and in the small streets around, especially in the area west of Athinas Street, public space is being actively used.
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens

- Plans for the palace to Omonoia / military / services / Pireus axis
draftsmen and commerce develop towards the West

- Zone of production / zone of upper social classes + services

- Land use “Athinas” dividing uses / the role of the city
Visions for the fragment
fragmentation: an on-going process
Gerani 2004-2013

2004  ■ Remodeling of Athinas Street
       (EAXA- Unification of the Archaeological Sites of Athens S.A)

2010  ■ Program Athens-Attica 2014
       (YPEKA-Ministry of Environment, Energy & Climate change)
       ■ Competition for preliminary designs for the restructuring of the Theatrou Square area
       (EAXA- Unification of the Archaeological Sites of Athens S.A)
       ■ Research for “Gerani” CCR
       (CityCommonResource) Athens Gerani 2010 pilot study
       (NGO: SARCHA)

2011  ■ Competition Athens 4x4
       (EAXA- Unification of the Archaeological Sites of Athens S.A)
       ■ Tax incentives for the city centre
       ex. fair market value of the property dropped by 50% (ground floors) and 30% (upper floors)
       (YPEKA, YPOIK)

2012  ■ European competition Re-Think-Athens
       (Onassis Foundation in collaboration with the Ministries of Environment, Energy and Climate Change and of Infrastructure, Transport and Networks, the Attiko Metro S.A., the Region of Attica and the Municipality of Athens)

2012-  ■ Operation “Xenios Zeus”
        (Greek Police operation, 70-90% EU funding)

2013+

In search for co-existence and integration in Athens

Illustration: OKRA2012
Visions for the fragment
fragmentation: an on-going process
Police Operation “Xenios Zeus” in Attica
08. 2012 - 02.2013

2013
77,526 brought in for questioning
4,435 arrested for not having the prerequisites to stay
59 arrested for illegal possesion of guns /drugs and other
525 house search

207 shops (retail, bars, restaurants) searched
11 places of illegal commerce (3.5 millions products)
13 illegal “mini casinos” detected (213 persons arrested)
121 brothels searched (276 persons arrested- 126 deported)
2,547 womens brought in for questioning + sued

* “Xenios Zeus” took the name of the king of the ancient Greek gods in his role as protector of guests
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens

photograph: ksafonikidi 2013
Visions for the fragment
fragmentation: an on-going process
Police Operation “Xenios Zeus” in Attica
08. 2012 - 02.2013

2010 main actors:
- homeless
- drug-addicts
- NGO’s + support
- prostitutes
- immigrants
- drug-dealers
- shopkeepers

people's concentration
- commerce
- homeless
- drug use
- drug trafficking
- immigrants
- prostitution

support
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens

NGO’s + support

prostitutes

drug-addicts

immigrants

homeless

drug-trafficking

shopkeepers

2013

main actors:

homeless

drug-addicts

NGO’s + support

prostitutes

immigrants

drug-dealers

people’s concentration

commerce

homeless

drug use

drug trafficking

immigrants

prostitution

support
STRATEGIC GOAL: Recognition of the functions

area of focus: Gerani

level of importance of centralities in the city

transportation hubs  
commercial centers  
cultural areas  
leisure areas  
green spaces  
archaeological spaces

area of interest  
secondary connections  
primary connections
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens

**STRATEGIC GOAL: Recognition of the functions**

- **area of focus:** Gerani

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>homeless centrality</th>
<th>concentration related to commerce</th>
<th>support offered</th>
<th>arriving point</th>
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The role of the fragment in the city
Pressures and conflicted demands
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens

area of focus: Gerani

STRATEGIC GOAL: Recognition of the actors

- review the conditions of the built environment and its connectivity to the rest of the city
- answer to homeless needs for the whole city
- question-reply to the pressure of the official plans

official plans for the city

- associations that offer support
- concentration of homeless
- pressures and demands
“The acquisition of a home by those who are deprived of it or are inadequately housed are subject to special treatment of the State.”
(Greek Constitution 1975, article 21, par.4)
type of homelessness *

- a. people in the streets/roofless
- b. people with no house live in shelters/houseless
- c. people who live under unsafe conditions of housing/insecure housing
- d. people who live under inadequate conditions/inadequate housing

homeless people profile **

**traditional** Homeless
- Unemployment, low income
- Mental health problems, mostly dual diagnosis (gambling, drug/alcohol addiction)
- Absence of supportive network

**Neo-homeless**
- Unemployment, low income
- Middle / Higher Educational Background
- Former Satisfactory Living Standard
- Middle Social Level
- Occupied in economic branches particularly affected by the crisis

Immigrants Asylum Seekers in transitory stage
- "Hidden Homelessness"
- Roofless for a short time but in adequate housing and/or extreme overcrowding for long

Greeks, Russians, Bulgarians, Polish
Greeks, immigrants with good level of societal integration
Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iraq, Nigeria, Sudan, Morocco, Algeria

ethnicity
- 10.3% immigrants
- 49.7% Greeks, Russians, Bulgarians, Polish
- 40% other

sex
- 17.8% women
- 82.2% men

age
- 60% 41-55 years old
- 26% 26-40 years old
- 14% under 26 years old

education
- 40% secondary level educated
- 20% higher educated
- 40% still studying

occupations
- 25% having in technical jobs
- 22% private sector freelancers
- 18% tourism employees
- 16% other

needs hierarchy
- 85.6% shelter
- 83.1% medical care
- 76.5% employment
- 75% sanitation

criminality
- 44% robbed in streets
- 33% physically abused
- 21% of women sexually abused
- 30% min. 1 night in jail

* FEANTSA - European Federation of National Associations Working with the Homeless
**EUROPEAN RESEARCH CONFERENCE: Homelessness, Migration and Demographic Change in Europe, Pisa, 16th September 2011
Questioning urban myths
Setting the hypothesis
Ορίζοντας την υπόθεση
**WHAT** The projects sets a review of the regeneration plans for the areas by counter proposing a strategy that recognises the existing actors and their daily systems. By recognising the identity of the central cluster we will explore how fragments of the city can serve as activators to promote cohabitation. Our aim is to **re-connect the urban fragments by socio-spatial activation.**

**HOW** The project bases on a **participatory planning approach** as a method where a multiplicity of actors and their demands are being recognised. A constuctive collaboration among stakeholders, decision makers, agents and users is being proposed so as to reach a cohesive urbanization. As Luuk Boelens sets it: “To plan from and with, instead of against differences, fragmentations, uncertainties, complexity”. Therefore, key point of the proposal forms the organisation of the multiplicity of actors under an **actor-relational accord.**
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens

THROUGH The set of principles in order to forward the proposal, which is to re-connect the urban fragments by socio-spatial activation, can be divided in three categories:

a. activation of public space
b. multifunctionality and
c. regional integration.

These principles have been formed through the theoretical framework concerning the issue of urban fragmentation and engage all the actions proposed through the strategic planning framework.

a. activate public space: Formalizing the informal market that is taking place many years in the streets and pedways is one of the policies that will strengthen the commercial character the area always had. There should be given emphasis in the diversity of the type of commerce in the market and in the intersecting streets, because of the multicultural identity of the region. Time patterns should be implemented according to old and new uses. It is also necessary to promote occasional events and activities in public space (theatrical plays, festivals, workshops etc) The mixture of activities brings diversity in users as well and the streets become more and more vibrant during the day, while at night the distribution of night functions provide a safer environment for the whole region.

b. multifunctionality: Along with public space there should be given emphasis on the surrounding uses. Investments should base in retail and craftsmen in order to reinforce the commercial character of the cluster. In the same time, in order to bring motives for new users we propose new functions for abandoned buildings and floors of the area. Students for example, form an important part of the society that could be a possible new group in the area. The university is in a walking distance, the area is very well connected to the existing public transportation network, and Athinas is literally in the heart of the city. Students help keeping the city and alive during the whole day and night, while their temporality allows changes in uses and users, fact that makes the street flexible to its needs. As the National Technical University of Athens is also situated in the city centre, workshops, lectures and events could take place in the public space or in the abandoned spaces (buildings and floors) for educational or recreational purposes. (case study of Copenhagen 1995-public spaces, public life). Along with the students there should be given motives to pop-up commerce related small businesses taking advantage of the low rent and keep the area active the whole day.

c. Regional integration: The multicultural character of the cluster should be highlighted and its necessity for the entire city should become obvious. It is important to develop a system of “go through” and “go to” spaces easily accessible from the rest of the city. Even though the area is very well connected with public transport, traffic problems during the peak hours form a problem for the region. Therefore there should be proposed policies and facilities to promote walking and reduce the car dependency.
Recognition of the actors (needs and demands)
- municipality (safety, densify, economic attractor)
- homeless (housing, hygiene facilities, employment-participation)
- vendors (safety, more space)
- inhabitants (better living conditions, safety, space to practice their religions)
- NGO’s (support, housing, coordination)
- students and young people

Recognition of the daily systems
- homeless system (daily support-dependent in NGO’s, associations and religious institutions)
- citizens and vendors (selling and buying in the market, in the streets and in small shops daily)
- inhabitants (they spend the most of their day in the streets-market looking for job opportunities or trading)

**Strategic planning framework**

**goals**
- _cohabitation_
of groups in space and time
- _secure the stay_
of the existing groups-

**set of actions**
- _expand_
daily systems and variety of actors existing and new in the whole area
- _formalize_
informal activities and offer adequate space
- _create the conditions to_
correlate the diverse networks
- _promote associations and_
give cooperative perspectives
- _use the potentialities of the vulnerable groups to show the necessity of their participation_

**Dynammic function/ spatial programming**
- _ex._ students associations activities
- _ex._ recognise street vendors activities and offer them space
- _ex._ vendors may engage homeless or immigrants in their system (exchange)
- _ex._ coordination between the associations offering support to poor or homeless
- _ex._ exchange knowledge, workshops, use their skills (construction, commerce etc)

**Tested into space**
- _ex._ find a tool to apply a system of squatting abandoned property
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens

**Recognition of the role of the fragment in the city**
- 3 different subclusters: homeless cluster, market cluster, arriving point cluster
- 1 common characteristic: multicultural
- dense urban environment, urban structure allows criminality

**Review existing instruments and tools**
- abandoned buildings change property if squatted more than 20 years
- permission for outdoor ambulant (itinerant) trade does not apply to the inhabitants
- tax exemptions for buildings' restoration
- inside-the-block arcades should always be open to public

**Strengthen the role of the market cluster in the city**
- new functions and sub centres
- question the urban myths and deal with criminality

**Regulatory framework for re-using abandoned property**
- flexibility in building regulation
- evaluate the urban structure in the street level
- deal with abandonment
- to house the “otherness”

**Formalise activities in space**
- use urban environment and public space to highlight the character of the sub centres
- give motives to owners to rent their places to the existing groups

**Evaluate ownership-private land for public use**
- restrictions in buildings lines, heights, street widths and uses

**Give motives to owners to rent their places to the existing groups**
- activate the areas between the clusters
- improve accessibility to the market

**Use urban environment and public space to highlight the character of the sub centres**
- activate abandoned plots and urban form to host activities
- low rent for a certain period
- restoration

**Evaluate ownership-private land for public use**
- ex. transportation nodes and pedestrian axis related to the market area
- ex. use public space to give the transition zones functions and role
- ex. activate abandoned plots and urban form to host activities

**Regulatory framework for re-using abandoned property**
- ex. private and semi-private land to act as buffer zones-host daily activities
- ex. demolish buildings in advanced decay
- ex. use empty plots

**Give motives to owners to rent their places to the existing groups**
- ex. demolition buildings in advanced decay
- ex. use empty plots
- ex. set back of the buildings lines

**Formalise activities in space**
- ex. transportation nodes and pedestrian axis related to the market area
- ex. use public space to give the transition zones functions and role
- ex. activate abandoned plots and urban form to host activities

**Evaluate ownership-private land for public use**
- ex. private and semi-private land to act as buffer zones-host daily activities
- ex. demolish buildings in advanced decay
- ex. use empty plots
- ex. set back of the buildings lines

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**Evaluate ownership-private land for public use**
- ex. private and semi-private land to act as buffer zones-host daily activities
- ex. demolish buildings in advanced decay
- ex. use empty plots
- ex. set back of the buildings lines
Recognition of the actors

(needs and demands)

- government (safety, densify, economic attractor)
- homeless (housing, hygiene facilities, employment-participation)
- vendors (safety, more space)
- inhabitants (better living conditions, safety, space to practice their religions)
- NGO’s (support, housing, coordination)
- students and young people
STRATEGIC GOAL: Recognition of the actors

- Secure the stay of the existing groups
- Cohabitation of groups in space and time

**HOW**

Expand daily systems and variety of actors existing and new in the whole area

Formalize informal activities and offer adequate space

**Places**

Ex. students

Ex. associations offering support or culture related

Ex. homeless

Ex. authorities + reference points

Ex. citizens (vendors + customers)

Ex. shelter to homeless and associations

Ex. coordination of actions, participation

Ex. space to street vendors, workshops, cultural activities

Ex. new associations + support system

Ex. students and young people

Ex. places of cultural practicies

Ex. streets vendors cultural/ students

Ex. citizens (vendors + customers)
Recognition of the daily systems

- Homeless system (daily support-dependent in NGO’s, associations and religious institutions)
- Citizens and vendors (selling and buying in the market, in the streets and in small shops daily)
- Inhabitants (they spend the most of their day in the streets + market looking for job opportunities or trading)
STRATEGIC GOAL: Recognition of the daily systems

- coordinate between the associations offering support to poor or homeless
- exchange knowledge, workshops, use their skills (construction, commerce etc)

"poor" and homeless people flows and system
inhabitants' main flows
commerce related flows and system

associations offering or culture related
authorities + reference points

HOW

- give motives to the networks to support each other
- promote associations and give cooperative perspectives
- use the potentialities of the vulnerable groups to show the necessity of their participation
- find new systems relating to the existings

new associations + support system

- shelter to homeless and associations
- coordination of actions, participation
- space to street vendors, workshops, cultural activities

students and young people system
Recognition of the role of the fragment in the city

3 different subclusters:
- homeless cluster, market cluster, arriving point cluster
- 1 common characteristic:
  - multiculture
- dense urban environment, urban structure
  allows criminality
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens

CITY SUB-CLUSTERS
people's concentration in time

>60 hours per week | no concentration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>religious places</th>
<th>support for vulnerable groups</th>
<th>food market</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Former City Hall
National Bank of Greece
Recognition of the role of the fragment in the city
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens

**STRATEGIC GOAL:** Recognition of the role of fragment in the city

**concentration related to commerce in time**

**concentration related to inhabitants, homeless and poor population in time**

- authorities + reference points
- associations offering support or culture related

**_HOW_**

- Revise the traffic control system and parking _ex._
- Strengthen the role of the market cluster in the city
- Activate the areas between the clusters
- Strengthen pedestrian axis
- Improve accessibility to the market
- Use urban environment and public space to highlight the character of the sub centres

new associations + support system

- shelter to homeless and associations
- coordination of actions, participation
- space to street vendors, workshops, cultural activities

students and young people cluster
Review existing instruments and tools

- Review existing instruments and tools
  - abandoned buildings change property if squatted more than 20 years
  - permission for outdoor ambulant (itinerant) trade does not apply to the inhabitants
  - tax exemptions for buildings’ restoration
  - inside-the-block arcades should always be open to public

Review existing instruments and tools
  - regulatory framework for re-using abandoned property
  - flexibility in building regulation
  - evaluate the urban structure in the street level
  - deal with abandonment to house the “otherness”
  - formalise activities in space
  - give motives to owners to rent their places to the existing groups
  - ex. demolish buildings in advanced decay
  - ex. low rent for a certain period
  - use empty plots
  - ex. private and semi-private land to act as buffer zones- host daily activities
  - ex. evaluate ownership-private land for public use
  - restrictions in buildings lines, heights, street widths and uses
  - ex. setback of the buildings lines
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens

photograph: ksalonikidi 2013
Actor relational approach

The multiple actions proposed in order to achieve the strategic goals as set in the strategic planning framework, demand the participation and the coordination of more than two groups of actors. It is important to understand that both in policies the concern spatial interventions or not, it is necessary to recognise the demands and interests of each actor and progress into collective processes.

The multi-actor approach requires all levels of power involved. As we can see in the diagram in the following page, there exist actors, agents, stakeholders and decision makers from an international, a national, a municipal, an association-based and a local level. The needs of each one differ as diagnosed in the strategic planning framework, as well as the level to which one is involved.

“Actor-relational planning focuses on concrete (not broad and general) issues between self-organising actors, in specific networks.”

“My suggestion would be to ‘follow the networks’ in order to deliver successful or sustainable actor-relational results “

Boelens 2011 - The Town Planning Review

- recognize street vendors activities and offer them space using already existing public squares and pedways
- consolidation abandonment of property
- consolidation existing public space
- activate abandoned plots and urban form to host activities that refer to the whole city
- use empty/ abandoned plots and private and semi-private land to act as buffer zones- host daily activities
- use public space to give the transition zones functions and role to the public space network
- find a tool to apply a system of squatting abandoned property
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens

The most of the actions proposed have to do with the issue of ownership and tenancy. Under the conditions of the socio-economic crisis, these actions take the form of emerging an emerging action plan that reconsiders the issue of ownership based in temporal issues. Therefore, time-related policies deal with the issue of abandoned property and the use of public space.

Finally, after taking into consideration the multiple actions that aim in reactivating the fragment socio-spatially, we conclude in three main actions that activate participatory planning and it fundamental to develop.

**_action #1:_**
- tenancy of public space with no fees + permit to practise outdoors commerce

**_action #2:_**
- concession of abandoned property to house NGO’s, associations, homeless, residents

**_action #3:_**
- free concession of shared spaces (arcades) to students and associations

- revise the car traffic control system and parking and create transportation nodes and pedestrian axis related to the market area

- setback of the buildings lines and increase the width of the sidewalk

- exchange knowledge, workshops, use their skills (construction, commerce etc) by using the inside and around

- re-integration
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens

Ministry of Environment and Climate Change
Ministry for Health
Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs

Municipal Agency: City of Athens Homeless Shelter (KYADA)

General Directorate of Restoration, Museums & Technical Works

UN HABITAT
FEANTSA
Hellenic Union of Property Owners
Cultural union "Panathinea"
NGO: "Monumenta"

Independent Trade School Athens (TSA)
Cultural union "Panathinea"

Hellenic Union of Property Owners

action #2: free concession of abandoned property for a limited period (1-3 years)

land / building/ unit owners

Independent Trade School Athens (TSA)

Cultural union "Panathinea"

Hellenic Union of Property Owners

action #2: free concession of abandoned property for a limited period (1-3 years)

land / building/ unit owners

Independent Trade School Athens (TSA)

Cultural union "Panathinea"

Hellenic Union of Property Owners

action #2: free concession of abandoned property for a limited period (1-3 years)

land / building/ unit owners

Levels of involvement
International
National
Municipal
Intermediate corporations
Local actors
Emerging tenancies

Key issue in all the actions proposed, the issue of ownership and tenancy. Either an action refers to public, semi-public or private space, it is important to make clear distinctions and elaborate on the conditions and terms under which these actions can be applied.

**Ownership**

“No one will be deprived of his/her property except for public benefit that has been proved in an appropriate way, as and when required by law, and always preceded by full compensation, which corresponds to the value of the expropriated property at the time of discussion in court for a provisional determination of compensation.”

(Greek Constitution 1975, article 17, par.2)

**Tenancy**

Types of lease:
- a. Residential lease
- b. Commercial lease to exercise commercial activities
- c. Public lease to house services of public benefit

- 3-5 year contracts - tenancy of property by the municipality or the state
- 3 year permits for public space
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens
Questioning urban myths

1 week - 6 months

free concession of shared spaces to associations and unions. Workshops-lectures and occasional events may take place, activating the inside-the-block arcades. They simultaneously belong to the city and the building, linking the public to private.

tenancy of existing public space with no fees for outdoors commerce. Street vendors may occupy public squares and pedestrian areas to practice commerce which type does not come into conflict with the already existing.
free concession of abandoned units (17% at 2008) for the homeless population. The intermediate NGOs related to homelessness will provide the terms under which each homeless person can be provided shelter.

concession of abandoned buildings to residents that live currently under bad housing conditions and associations that need space. The time of tenancy goes along with the needs restorations of the entire buildings.
Specify location

main areas of concentration and points of reference

how to activate the rest of the area?

how to activate the rest of the area?
In search for co-existance and integration in Athens

Strategies: Dealing with the intermediate authorities + reference points. Associations offering support or culture-related buildings around the area of focus. Abandoned property (plots/buildings), building passage, arcades/covered passages.

Spatial characteristics: Reviewing the spatial characteristics of subclusters in the cluster, functions, and actors.
The first subcluster is located in the north part of our area of focus. It engages blocks that surround the central square of Athens: “Omonia”. The buildings of these blocks are some of the highest in the area (7-12 floors), while most of them are or used to be: hotels, offices, retail shops and a health clinic. Abandoned masses, empty arcades and abandoned backyards are the main characteristics of the block while a significant amount of homeless find shelter in the entrances of the closed shops and arcades.
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens

abandoned property (plots/buildings)
public space/ squares + pedways
building passage
spatial characteristics

use abandoned buildings for housing and various associations

proposed pedestrian flows connecting to the city
interconnections (buildings + passages)

The reactivation of the inside-the-block passages will be promoted through events and actions that are based on time and temporality. Workshops from the students associations, lectures and seminars from business and commerce related unions, cultural events and festival run from the inhabitants aim in reconnecting the blocks to the city. The abandoned, former office building in “Athinas” street will be offered through the municipality and the involvement of supporting associations (as mentioned in the actor-relational approach diagram) to house homeless people from one to three years.
Questioning urban myths

existing general hospital of Athens: “Polykliniki”

abandoned buildings
(relatively good condition)
temporary uses (3-5 years):
housing to vulnerable groups
(homeless population, immigrants - residents of the area)

passages connecting buildings of temporary uses with the arcades-backbones

abandoned - listed buildings
temporary uses (3-5 years):
housing to associations
(NGO’s, culture/student associations)

entrances and exits as attractors
students day+night workshops
and activities along with the homeless and inhabitants

organisation of shop keepers to reform the arcades - thematic passage
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens
The second subcluster engages the building of Athens's City Hall, opposite from the square "Kotzia" that has been redesigned recently. The main land uses of the area are that of commerce and office. The block where the city hall is established is supposed to serve as a square (green spaces, sculpture, benches). However, the areas on the two sides of the city hall are either empty or homeless people sleep in the green space. In the same time, just around the block, a small street leading to the square seems to serve no purpose as its length is almost too small to serve traffic purposes.
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens

We propose an occupancy of the existing public space in the subcluster #2. As one of the main needs of the actors in the area (that has been defined through the strategic planning framework) is that of employment, we propose that the municipality offers to the inhabitants (residents, homeless, street vendors) the right to practice street commerce in the exact location. As soon as the type of commerce do not come into conflict with that of the “Varvakios” public market located 2 blocks away, the union of the vendors of “Varvakios” market, along with associations that base on exchange of good activities could support and stress the importance of such an action.
abandoned - listed buildings
(temporary uses 3-5 years):
housing to associations, NGO’s and unions related to commerce, storage, and handcrafts

Athens City Hall

abandoned buildings
(relatively good condition)
temporary uses (3-5 years):
housing to vulnerable groups
(homeless population, immigrants - residents of the area)

passages/arcades penetrating the blocks, facilitating the flows of the residents and the inhabitants activated around the market

area serving the purposes of the market (parking, cargo loading, passages)

market area/- exchange of goods/ commercial practices
(everyday use objects, recycled material, craft work, peddlers)
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens
The third subcluster has mainly residential uses. Central part of the location forms the street “Geraniu”, a street of extremely small width. The sidewalks are either too small to walk or destroyed through the years. The buildings on the street have been left abandoned while a significant amount immigrants stay into apartment in bad living conditions (ex.8 people per a room). The street width makes the car traffic almost impossible while the big amount of people that residing in the area pass most of their day in the streets. This street has been considered a place with high criminal activity (thefts, fights, drug use, prostitution).
The spatial characteristics of the area form part of the biggest problem of the cluster. The lack of lighting, the narrow streets and the bad conditions of the buildings, allow criminal activities to take place. Therefore we propose (as a long-term action to be applied) a setback of the building lines so as to offer adequate space for the daily activities of the inhabitants and for the rest of the citizens to pass through, daily. It is important also to use the abandoned apartments and units to house residents of the area that live under inadequate conditions or homeless people. This action can be applied through the relations and collaborations proposed in the actor relation diagram (page 73, action 2).
abandoned buildings (relatively good condition) temporary uses (3-5 years): housing to vulnerable groups (homeless population, immigrants - residents of the area)

passages/arcades penetrating the blocks, facilitating the flows of the residents and promoting common activities (meals, laundry etc)

empty plots to be used for outdoor activities for the residents (cultural, religious etc)

informal mosque

setback of the building lines- increase the sidewalk width and review on the parking by the street.
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens
The last subcluster is located in the axis of the “Varvakios” market. Central part of the area is the building of the former school “Diplarios” which is rarely used nowadays for cultural activities. Important characteristic of the subcluster is the inefficiency of the streets surrounding the block-“Diplarios” school. Therefore their main purpose is that of parking. In the same time there are many shops run by immigrants (Chinese, Pakistani and Bangladeshi) while NGO’s and the municipality often offer support to vulnerable groups (homeless, immigrants, unemployed and others.
There is proposed a pedestrianised area, the street that connects the “Diplarios” school to the square where the food market takes place. This axis can contribute to flows and transitions that relate to the market and form the a place of opportunities for exchange between homeless, residents and vendors (job offers in return of food, clothes, payment). In the same time, it is important to reactivate the existing abandoned arcades, penetrating the blocks so as to advance the flows and bring connections between the are of “Gerani” and the area “Psiri” that is located southern of our area of focus. Last but not least, associations and NGO’s that offer support could be located in empty buildings of the area, under the conditions set in the actor-relation diagram (page 73, action 2).
abandoned buildings
(relatively good condition)
temporary uses (3-5 years):
cultural and education related activities

around the block arcades
hosting exhibitions and commerce related activities

abandoned - listed buildings
temporary uses (3-5 years):
housing to associations, NGO’s and unions related to commerce, storage, and handcrafts

market area/- exchange of goods/commercial practices (everyday use objects, recycled material, craft work, peddlers)

correlations of the “Varvakios” market, vegetable market and the proposed market at “Theatru” square.
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens
Questioning urban myths

Urban acupuncture pinpointed interventions

The action plan being proposed, sets particular interventions for each of the subcluster in the cluster. Each of these pinpointed interventions can be accomplished by itself as there is not a linear process or a hierarchical order for these actions to be applied. However, we should notice that it is the ensemble of these interventions that will re-activate the whole cluster and will question the urban myth of the fragment as ghetto. It is important to understand that the project bases on local resources involving small, bottom-up, micro-scale interventions having a wider impact in the city. The urban renewal and management project that is proposed, tries to use as light investments of municipal funds as possible, realising the current economic conditions of the city. It focuses on the emerging social issues and is activated through initiatives, citizen-activists, associations and intermediate cooperatives, pressuring and demanding new conditions for the existing city needs.
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens

Abandoned building/temporary housing homeless population (3-5 years):

Market area/exchange of goods/commercial practices (everyday use objects, recycled material, craftwork, peddlers)

Athens City Hall

Area serving the purposes of the market (parking, cargo loading, passages)

Setback of the building lines - increase the sidewalk width and review on the parking by the street.

Pedestrian zone to facilitate flows and exchange activities between "Varvakios" public market and the street commerce

Reactivation of arcades/entrances through workshops and commerce oriented events
Emerging scenarios
shares spaces + abandoned buildings

emerging scenario #1c
- concentration of homeless (need for shelter)
- homeless + associations related to commerce, common activities/ workshops
- commerce related seminars/ lectures activating shared spaces and shops

emerging scenario #1b
- high concentration of homeless (need for shelter)
- re-activation of closed shops + abandoned arcades

emerging scenario #1a
- concentration of homeless (need for shelter)
- homeless + student common activities/ workshops
- students concentration activating arcades
Emerging scenarios

public space

emerging scenario #2a
- need for commercial practices
- permit to peddlers to practise commerce in the square
- type of commerce differ from that of the public market "Varvakeios"

emerging scenario #2b
- need for commercial practices
- cultural events bringing more citizens in the area during day/night, weeks, periods

In search for co-existence and integration in Athens
Emerging scenarios
shares spaces + abandoned units and plots

emerging scenario #3c
- need for adequate housing for existing residents
- shared spaces for the residents promoting common activities (laundry, common meals, storage, religious practices)
- setbacks of the building lines/ car parking need

emerging scenario #3b
- need for adequate housing for existing residents
- shared spaces for the residents promoting common activities (laundry, common meals, storage, religious practices)
- setbacks of the building lines

emerging scenario #3a
- need for adequate housing for existing residents
- shared spaces for the residents promoting common activities (laundry, common meals, storage)
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens

Emerging scenarios
public space

emerging scenario #4b
- need for adequate space to associations offering support
- pedestrian zone-market coordinating with “Varvakios” public food market
- cultural events bringing more citizens in the area during day/night, weeks, periods

emerging scenario #4a
- need for adequate space to associations offering support
- pedestrian zone-market coordinating with
Interventions within the fragment and the reactivation of the cluster will bring links within the existing networks of the city: the networks and the subclusters are formed through cooperative daily systems. They bridge the gap between the formal and the informal, breaking invisible social borders. It is important to see how the transformation of each subcluster through the action plan proposed address the same goal. The multiplicity of actors involved, the spatial characteristics of the areas and the variety of uses (existing and proposed) form a collective process that aims in a more cohesive form of urbanisation.
In the diagram below there are described the two parallel routes being followed composing the proposal. It is essential to understand the non-linearity of the process that has being followed. The approach bases on a facilitated platform that recognises existing conditions and transformations and activates the spatial and social potentialities.

The first flow explains the multiple variables proposed (actor-relational approach, local strategic planning framework, emerging tenancies, new actors proposed) to achieve the main goal which is question the urban myth: fragments as a threat. The second flow presents the materiality of the proposal, based on spatial characteristics of the area. It engages interventions that search for quality while in the same time correspond to the reality of Athens under the economic crisis.

Both of the flows set the approach towards an urban renewal and management project recognising actors, systems and roles and activating the fragment.
Along with the goal of connections the various subcluster, the action plan as set, is based on the principal goal that concerns the whole area: the cluster “Gerani”. The new planning framework and actions proposed bring attach the cluster back to the city through the necessities of its actors and the city.

The area of my project is in the in-between zone of two major proposals that are about to be realised in the city centre. Both of these plans, Re-thnik Athens and the official plan for “Metaxurgio” address to different groups and actors than those my project engages. With a strong commercial character and housing that does not consider social affects, the two proposals do not come into accordance or share relations to my project.

However, seeing the potentialities of the rest surrounding area, there could be a very strong correlation between projects and practices. More specifically, in the area of “Psyri” southern of “Gerani”, there are frequently actions taking place, claiming the city for the residents and existing activities (reuse of empty plots, reactivation of pedways, reuse of abandoned buildings for cultural purposes). In the same time, actions that are proposed for the area “Gerani”, such us the reuse of vacant offices or public buildings under emerging tenancies, could be also applied in the area of “Agios Konstantinos”. This area shares many social and spatial characteristics to “Gerani” cluster, and could be therefore reconsidered under the prism set for “Gerani”. Concluding, we can support that the proposal for the re-activaation of the cluster does not come along with the official plans for the city centre. However, the emerging character of its action plan, its flexibility concerning the shifts in social conditions and its temporality, bring this project as an emerging necessity. It can form part of a general approach for the city, composed by proposals that see the reality of the city through its current necessities and its socio-spatial conditions.
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens

*Re-think Athens*

*Questioning urban myths*

“Agios Konstantinos” empty public buildings and plots

“Psyri” initiatives

103
Case studies

small scale, low-cost interventions in the city

Test Site/ Rotterdam/ ZUS

WasBar/ Gent/ Pinkeye studio

Luchtsingel / Rotterdam/ ZUS

€25.-

€125.-

€1250.-

Vertical living room/ Rio de janeiro/ Tiago and Gabriel Primo
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens

Navarinu park/ Athens/ Residents of Exarhia

The Wächterhäuser scheme/ Leipzig/ HausHalten e.V.
Household association:

WORM/ Rotterdam / Superuse studios

Common garden/ Athens / Residents & employers of Psyri
Questioning urban myths
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens

Organising  
Οργανώνοντας  
δ
Aspect 1: The relation between research and design

Through demographics, socio-economic, ethnicity and density maps, as well as through societal trends and notions, there have been identified parts of the city as segments with special characteristics. They are separated as "rest" or "non active city parts". These parts of the city are often represented in debates and media as obstacles of urban security and order. Such perceptions form a barrier to the urban community's social cohesiveness. These "clusters" are the parts of the city where urban myths find place. They may be seen as gaps or holes in the city's structure but they cannot be considered as voids, empty of uses and users as the research evinces.

This project aims in socio spatial integration of minority groups by making the reality of the centre of the city obvious to everyone and strengthen its potentialities. The long-term vision of this project is that of co-existence in the centre of the city, considering all the possible groups as part of the same society and questioning existing social "myths".

The strategic planning framework proposed along with the design proposal-interventions in the specific location tries to reconnect the socio-spatial fragments to the rest of the city. Through actions that require partipatory and collective planning and base on the recognition of the existing conditions of the area, the proposal bases in small scale interventions in public space using the potentialities of the area.

Aspect 2: The relationship between the theme of the studio and the subject/case study chosen within this framework (Gerani cluster)

The theme of the graduation studio which is c under the Explore Lab is "Fear and Loathing in Athens: Shifting Perspectives of Space". It focuses on assymetries arising in the city of Athens as an aftermath of the widespread crisis along the Southern Europe. Therefore, there has been selected a part of the city centre of Athens as an area to be researched along with the studios apporach. Each of the five students chose a more specific location which in my case was the area “Gerani”, acluster right in the city centre. The selection of the location, has to do with the need to forward the studio's statement which is the “Fear of Otherness and social segregation in Athens” into a concrete proposal that addresses this issue recognised. Therefore, by identifying the specific urban fragment and reconnecting it to the rest of the city, there is proposed a specific method to approach the rest city-fragments, and try to answer to the main statement of the studio.

Aspect 3: The relationship between the methodical line of approach of the studio and the method chosen by the student in this framework

For my graduation studio the methodical line of approach of the studio refers to a collective analytical framework of how to approach the main topic of the studio, while the methodology used to proceed with my
individual project is a set of tools and instruments that try to answer the personal research questions. First of all the key method is research through time. A timeline that starts from the creation of the Modern Greek state (1832) until now, trying to unpack the existing situation in Athens. As part of a collective research we see which events during history affected directly or indirectly the form of the physical space. As a second step, we tried as a studio to focus on the materiality of the existing situation in Athens, based in investigating the central part of the city that shares asymmetries. There have been selected specific public spaces of the city centre (case studies) to be analyzed and compared according to their use (and users), historical or monumental reference, location in the city, accessibility form of public space and urban characteristics around them. Literature study plays an important part on this part of the research as we should define the meaning of public space in the case of Greece and Athens, and see the transformation of public space because of the crisis. In the same time, in order to be able to understand the socio-spatial character of these spaces there have been interviews of various people (users, citizens, stakeholders) as well as discussions with people that are dealing with the current situation in Greece in an academic, research or professional level. As far as the methodological line used to approach my individual project, it seems to go along with the second step of the second part of the collective method used for the studio. Mapping the existing conditions of the specific location chosen, literature studies to base my theoretical framework-base for my main hypothesis, data research to engage the maximum of the information possible for the current situation, and observations to achieve a better understanding of the socio-spatial needs, demands and character of the area.

Aspect 4: The relationship between the project and the wider social context

The economic crisis of Greece and events related to it, forms a part of an ‘ongoing financial crisis’\(^1\) that depletes many European countries with those of the South Europe being affected the most. Political decisions, austerity measures and bailout programs are being constantly updated in order to deal with the crisis. In the same time the financial crisis is having political and social consequences: unemployment, poverty, immigration, drug trafficking, rise of extreme right parties, violence and homeless people and many more.

All of these issues are expressed in the city centre and have direct effect to the physical space. In Athens, as described earlier, the decay of the urban environment is increasing and there is an intense societal demand to provide strategies as solutions that address these phenomena. The society is expecting policies and ways to reconsider and improve the environment of the city centre that is in decay. This project addresses public spaces in the city centre through planning and proposing alternatives to bring quality to the urban environment in terms of diversity in uses and users.

For these reasons we can claim that this project relates to the current needs of a society whose reality is being shifting and challenged constantly.

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1. Wikipedia for the “European sovereign-debt crisis”: The European sovereign debt crisis (often referred to as the Eurozone crisis) is an ongoing financial crisis that has made it difficult or impossible for some countries in the euro area to repay or re-finance their government debt without the assistance of third parties (Last access 12/01/2013)
In the above schedule we can see the activities, official presentations and delivered products of the graduation track. It is presenting a conceptual overview of the different steps of the process until the completion of the graduation project.

P1 presentation 19/11/2012

Product: Preliminary Thesis Plan

Problematic
Historical Analysis
Conclusions

P2 presentation 25/01/2013

Product: Final Thesis Plan

Problem statement
Hypothesis
Theoretical Framework
Urban (Site) Analysis
Strategic Proposal

P3 presentation 21/03/2013

Product: Preliminary Thesis I

Urban Analysis
Defining instruments and set of actions
Testing the strategy

P4 presentation 23/05/2013

Product: Preliminary Thesis II

Testing the strategy
Design proposal
Evaluation

P5 presentation 04/07/2013

Product: Final Thesis

Conclusions
Reflections
In search for co-existence and integration in Athens
References
Literature


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JANCHES, F. 2011. Significance of Public Space in the Fragmented City - Designing Strategies for Urban Opportunities in Informal Settlements of Buenos Aires City. UNU-WIDER.


