MAKING THE “INVISIBLE” VISIBLE
a re-activation strategic project starting with the invisible groups and the spatial formation of the area, using a neighborhood as the activator unit

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Introduction / Εισαγωγή
Conditions and phenomena that will play an important role to the elaboration of my graduation project:

- The economical crisis is a starting point of changes, since its effects have start to show in the physical space of the city center of Athens.

- These changes can be summerized in the following: inaccessibility of public space, demonstrations, squatting, violence, rise of extremes.

- The social, political and economical context have influenced and still influencing the urban form causing asymmetries and shifts in the conditions of the city.

**Fear and loaning in Athens / General conditions**
Methodology / Μεθοδολογία
Methodology

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
strategies for the social, spatial and urban systems and networks that organize the daily life of their inhabitants (Jordi Borja, Mathew Carmona, Jane Jacobs) fragmentation (Daniel Kozak)

APPROACH
MAKING THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE:
by identifying the socially disadvantaged groups & progressively and actively integrate them into a neighborhood structure

OBSERVATION
the current fragmentation between the urban form and its functional connections and disconnections are clearly expressed in the city center, which is what is considered as a process of decay in the current functional meaning of the center

considering policies → dichotomy
considering the morphology of the area and of the block type
the current structure or the governmental plans are not viable anymore since they are not updated according to the existing actors and functions of the area

the reality of the condition of the city center is considered as functional decay on the role of the center of the city (less functions/more abandonment) on its links to other urban and regional nodes, combined with the informality of the use of space and its functions contribute to the center’s stagnation and decay

HOW?

HYPOTHESIS
the current situation and the governmental plans are not responding to the reality or the demands of the area and its actors. However, by taking into consideration the morphology of the area and its spatial demands a new active space can be formalized, consisted of a neighborhood as a basic activator (socio-spatially) with a new type of block that could respond to the current demands and could be connected with the rest of the city.

regulate & activate the invisible groups through progressively evolving actions & functions
identifying, using & expanding the spatial potentialities of the built environment
re-activation of blocks through space and functions
abandonment
empty plots

a re-activation strategic project starting with the invisible groups and the spatial formation of the area, using a neighborhood as the activator unit

actions
1. define & map the invisible & visible groups
2. define & analyze the spatial & functional potentialities of the block
3. define & map the key-challenge & conflicts
4. recognize & define the flows and functions

strategic goal
urban and social analysis
key-factor of the project is to reset the identity of the block
design project
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fragmentation (Daniel Kozak)

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considering policies

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strategic goal

key-factor of the project is to reset the identity of the block

urban and social analysis

design project
A dichotomy between the governmental projects for a multicentered city and the current interest for the development of the city center, as part of the vision of Athens as a western city and a global destination.

A dichotomy between the notion of urban decay about the center of Athens and its social and spatial reality, which have a relational dimension to the city space where individual and common values from different groups manifest creating between them the ‘fear of the otherness’.

Problem statement

the planning framework driven by economic centered forces for the development of the center
**Hypothesis / Research questions**

- How can an urban reactivation project tackle the phenomena mentioned before and take into account the real conditions of the city of Athens?

- Would the answer be in the redefinition of the already existing urban space, recognizing and creating quality spaces that respond to the current conditions of the city center of Athens?

The hypothesis is that by taking into account the above, we can create a new type of urban space that attempts to tackle with the needs of all the actors and **create space for co-existence and co-habitation** for these groups by **recognizing the conflicts and the capacities**.

> ‘A new type of urban space can be defined by the intersection between the individual or group and the rest of the city, a space where the city accumulates the multiple social and economic transactions.’ (Margaret Crawford, 2005)
The question of what kind of city we want to have cannot be separated from that of what kind of relations to space, social links, lifestyles and aesthetic values we desire and the vision of my project follows this direction. It can be summerized with the following:

- Make **visible the feared and the undesirable** part of the city, from abandoned places to social groups
- Make the characteristic of living in the city of Athens, of living in a realm of smudged and invisible boundaries, of friction and sometimes disorder, part of the city life by giving **space for co-habitation**.
- Make the phenomena mentioned in the problem statement **visible** and open in order to activate an area.
Gentrification is class war.
Area of intervention
**Historical analysis**

1831_ First plan for Athens in which Metaxourgeio is a central part of the city with commercial functions and high income housing. Never realized, and Metaxourgeio becomes the **industrial zone** of Athens.

1890_ **High demands of housing** due to emigration, that are realized in Metaxourgeio. The new inhabitants, workers and emigrants, are reinforcing the identity of the area as an industrial and low income area. The character of Metaxourgeio remained the same until now.

2004_ As a part of the vision for Athens as an Olympic capital, a **gentrification process** started (moving inhabitants, adding uses and buildings). But with the economic recession in 2008, the process has stopped leaving the area with an interesting mixture of uses and inhabitants.
MAKING THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE: by identifying the socially disadvantaged groups & progressively and actively integrate them into a neighborhood structure

- By organizing socially vulnerable groups & integrating them into a neighborhood structure
- Progressively & actively integrating socially disadvantaged groups

NEW BLOCK will be constituted by the unification/separation of blocks & the inclusion of empty plots, abandoned buildings & inner courtyards

- Morphology of the area
- New policies
- Extended land uses
- Programmatic policies
- Needs for redefinition
- The actors involved
- Proposed uses & functions
- Use of open spaces as a gentrification tool
- Design proposal
- Evaluation/strategic planning involved

REDEFINE THE BLOCK: spatial & socio-economic reorganization of the neighborhood

ACTIVATE FLOWS WITH FUNCTIONS: use of the morphology & the spatial demands

INVOLVEMENT & INFORMATION OF AND BY THE INHABITANTS: the project will be set up/maintained/expanded according to the inhabitants

- Strategies
- Vision
- Principles
- Scenario 1
  - Evaluation process
  - Strategic vision
  - Strategic action
  - Flexible tenure
  - Integration of the whole neighborhood in the design process
  - Development of social relationships

- Scenario 2
  - Action
  - Planning & design tools
  - Feasibility
  - New rules according to the vision, answering to the gaps of the governmental plan
  - New policies on ownership
  - New policies on abandonment
  - Participation of the inhabitants in the decision-making process
  - Creation of new functions according to spatial demands
  - Creation of new flows within the area

- Scenario 3
  - Action
  - Planning & design tools
  - Feasibility
  - New rules according to the vision, answering to the gaps of the governmental plan
  - New policies on ownership
  - New policies on abandonment
  - Participation of the inhabitants in the decision-making process
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  - Creation of new flows within the area

- Actions
  - Strategic vision
  - Strategic action
  - Flexible tenure
  - Integration of the whole neighborhood in the design process
  - Development of social relationships

- Planning & design tools
  - Spatial planning approach
  - Incorporation of the local demands within the design vision
  - Flexible land use

- Evaluation process
  - Strategic vision
  - Strategic action
  - Flexible tenure
  - Integration of the whole neighborhood in the design process
  - Development of social relationships
MAKING THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE:
by identifying the socially disadvantaged groups & progressively and actively integrate them into a neighborhood structure

the new block will be consisted by the uni/fication/seperation of blocks and the inclusion of empty plots, abandoned buildings and inner courtyards

the morphology of the area and new policies applied in different scales (neighborhood scale, city scale)

new programs and extended land-use programmatic policies aiming in participation and collective involvement

rede/fine the ownership of the plots and land (collective instead of private)

rede/fine the land-uses (mainly housing) according to the spatial demands so as to activate new flows within the new blocks

need for redefinition of public space, the actors involved, the proposed uses and functions, the use of open spaces as a gentrification tool, the design proposal that does not take into consideration the morphology of the area

apply through

strategic vision

SCENARIO 1
Governmental plan

SCENARIO 2
Vision

the role of the new block

establish collective programs and actions that would work for the maintenance of the open spaces of the block

create a collective approach of the inhabitants of the block towards its expansion through participatory functions

REDEFINE THE BLOCK spatial and socio-economic reorganization of the neighborhood

ACTIVATE FLOWS WITH FUNCTIONS use of the morphology and the spatial demands

INVOLVEMENT AND INFORMATION OF AND BY THE INHABITANTS the project will be set-up/maintained/expanded according to the inhabitants

PRINCIPLES
Strategic vision

**SCENARIO 1**

**Governmental plan**

**REVIEW WITHIN THE GOVERNMENTAL PLANS**

**agree with**
- need for redefinition of public space
- add new uses and functions

**disagree with**
- the actors involved
- the proposed uses and functions
- the use of open spaces as a gentrification tool
- the design proposal that does not take into consideration the morphology of the area

**evaluate the planning framework to show the GAPS to reach the recommendations and guidelines of the proposal**

**SCENARIO 2**

**Vision**

**strategic vision**

**involve and involve the inhabitants**

**involve**

**SCENARIO 1**

**Governmental plan**
the proposed grid of the official plan does not agree with the morphology nor with the spatial demands of the area of Metaksourgeio.

the new uses that are proposed (mainly offices) do not cover the demands of the inhabitants
MAKING THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE:
by identifying the socially disadvantaged groups & progressively and actively integrate them into a neighborhood structure

the new block will be consisted by the unification/separation of blocks and the inclusion of empty plots, abandoned buildings and inner courtyards
redefine the ownership of the plots and land (collective instead of private)

redefine the land-uses (mainly housing) according to the spatial demands so as to activate new flows within the new blocks

establish collective programs and actions that would work for the maintenance of the open spaces of the block
create a collective approach of the inhabitants of the block towards its expansion through participatory functions

the morphology of the area and new policies applied in different scales (neighborhood scale, city scale)
new program and extended land uses
programatic policies aiming in participation and collective involvement
Specific phenomena (i) / Abandonment
In the area of Metaxourgeio, 46% of the privately owned land is either abandoned or open and vacant.
Specific phenomena (i) / Open spaces
Specific phenomena (i) / Building environment
Specific phenomena (ii) / Gentrification process
Specific phenomena (ii) / Blocks
Specific phenomena (ii) / Blocks

The gentrified or the semi-gentrified block is working in an **introvert** level, in terms of spatial morphology as well as in terms of functions and uses. On the other hand, the traditional block of the area is working as an **extrovert** block, opening to the street and to the public and is hosting a variety of functions and uses.
Introvert block  

- NEW HOUSING  
- OFFICES  
- GALLERY  

Extrovert block  

- HOUSING  
- OPEN PLOT  
- ENTERTAINMENT  
- COMMERCE  
- ABANDONED BUILDING
Specific phenomena (ii) / Blocks

**TYPES**

- Block with a fragmented inner courtyard
- Block with a perforated urban facade
- Block with a dead-end in the inner courtyard
- Block with an introvert inner courtyard
- Block with transversal inside movement
- Solid block with no or small inner courtyard
- Block as one building

**PLAN / SCALE 1:2000**

**DENSITY / SCALE 1:20000**
The gentrification process was attempting to change the identity of the area and bring new inhabitants. But the economical crisis put this process to a stop leaving the area with an interesting mixture of social groups. Although there are still groups that are not taken into consideration from the official plans or the planning framework, the groups that were characterized before as invisible. One of the main aims of this project is to make these invisible groups into actors.
Specific phenomena (iii) / Actors

- NGOs
- Immigrants
- Drug-addicts
- Prostitutes
- Creative class
- Municipality
- Homeless
- Working class
- Middle class
- Developers
Specific phenomena (iii) / Actors

- Homeless
- Drug-addicts
- Prostitutes
- Immigrants
- NGOs
- Working class
- Middle class
- Municipality
- Developers
- "Creative" class

Urgency

Power

Legitimacy
Visible ‘CREATIVE’ CLASS
“Invisible”_HOMELESS
"Invisible" PROSTITUTES
“Invisible”_DRUG-ADDICTS
Specific phenomena (iii) / “Invisible” groups
Making the Invisible Visible

by identifying the socially disadvantaged groups and progressively and actively integrating them into a neighborhood structure

the new block will be constituted by the unification/separation of blocks and the inclusion of empty plots, abandoned buildings and inner courtyards

the morphology of the area and new policies applied in different scales (neighborhood scale, city scale)

new programs and extended land use policies aiming at participation and collective involvement

redefine the ownership of the plots and land (collective instead of private)

redefine the land uses (mainly housing) according to the spatial demands so as to activate new flows within the new blocks

need for redefinition of public space the actors involved the proposed uses and functions the use of open spaces as a gentrification tool the design proposal that does not take into consideration the morphology of the area

agree with cross-testing within apply through apply through

disagree with add new uses and functions

evaluation process

final approach

strategic vision

Scenario 1

Governmental plan

Scenario 2

Vision

the role of the new block

Establish collective programs and actions that would work for the maintenance of the open spaces of the block

create a collective approach of the inhabitants of the block towards its expansion through participatory functions

Spatial and socio-economic reorganization of the neighborhood

Activate flows with functions use of the morphology and the spatial demands

Involvement and information of and by the inhabitants the project will be set-up/maintained/expanded according to the inhabitants

feasibility

new rules according to the vision, answering to the gaps of the governmental plan

by unfolding the existing flows of the area to introduce a re-organization of the area block and new functions

which are the capacities that the tools allow to flourish what is the framework of the reality of the intervention

Applying Strategy

Strategy

Design Method

Planning tools

Testing by Design

Strategy

Design Method

Planning tools

Testing by Design

Strategy

Design Method

Planning tools

Testing by Design

Strategy

Design Method

Planning tools

Testing by Design

Incorporating Principles

Incorporating Vision

Incorporating Strategy
In order to resolve these phenomena, I will propose a **local strategic plan** and vision that:

- will create the conditions for the different groups of inhabitants to be **participant**
- will use the morphological and functional **potentialities** of the area as part of the design
- will be a morphological **development** for the area

That means that I will use an open system of planning using the permeability of the area, in order to **activate** the local parameters.
The new blocks
Flows / Morning
Daily systems / Night

Drug-addicts presence homeless public space prostitute houses street prostitution culture entertainment public space
Current flows
To conclude, the final product is a **research by design** proposal that will focus on the following key-points

- the requirements for **transformation**

- the **integration of the abandonment** in an urban acupuncture level by creating the condition to use it

- the demands in terms of the local level though **collective planning** by recognizing the potentialities of each group
PROPOSED FLOWS

Vision / School
PROPOSED FLOWS

Vision / Community services

pedestrian areas common spaces open market program connectivity
PROPOSED FLOWS

Vision / Private functions
Vision / Public and common network
The potential framework can start from the creation of one urban megablock from the *polykatoikia* unit to the *block* unit.
RE-THINKING THE BLOCK

The concept of the new permeable block derives from the idea that by re-forming the urban structure of the area, according to the potentialities it provides, it enables new conditions for a collective approach and an integral use of the space.

The new block provides a mixture and an activation of diverse actors by creating new neighborhoods based on the existing, and uses the daily systems of the inhabitants as well as the morphology of the area so as to respond to the demands of the inhabitants and the actors.

NEW PERMEABLE BLOCK

1. PREVIOUS CONDITION
   the current urban morphology of the area is following a grid pattern, even though the daily systems of the inhabitants do not agree with that grid

2. CURRENT CONDITION
   the new permeable block proposes a new structure of neighborhood meeting the local and the neighborhood potentialities and demands

3. INTENTION
   the new block will be the mean for a transformation based on a public and common spaces network, so as to re-propose the urban structure
Proposal / The new permeable block

PROPOSED FLOWS

0m 250m 500m

pedestrian areas street connections with the city
Proposal / The new permeable block
Proposal / The new permeable block
Proposal / The new permeable block
Proposal / The new permeable block
Proposal / Spatial guidelines and policies

**SPATIAL GUIDELINES**

1. **AMALGAMATED**
   - the urban block is consisted from at least 4 blocks

2. **LAND TRUST**
   - the abanond buildings and plots within the urban block will host new functions

3. **CONNECTIVITY I**
   - the urban block is connected with one of the main street axis

3. **CONNECTIVITY II**
   - the urban block is connected with one of the pedestrian axis
### Proposal / Spatial guidelines and policies

#### ORGANIZATION

1. **BOARD**
   - the homeowners + munipal officials
   - collectively owns the land
   - manages the funding
   - plans the reconstruction of the abandoned buildings
   - regulates the construction of new buildings

2. **FUNDING**
   - funds for reconstruction of public space
   - funds for reconstruction of abandoned buildings
   - revenues from the re-use of abandonment

3. **ABANDONMENT**
   - hosts new uses
   - demolition of buildings in bad conditions
   - characterization of abandonment within 10 years

4. **OWNERSHIP**
   - the ownership of the land is collective while of the buildings is individual
   - land will be taken away from the real estate market for long-term affordability
   - land acquisition: empty plots/abandoned building/inner courtyards

5. **CONSTRUCTION**
   - constructed by local constructor
   - choice of typology and functions made from the board

---

#### NEW FUNCTIONS

- Collection of campaigns 
- Collectively owns the land
- Manages the funding
- Plans the reconstruction of the abandoned buildings
- Regulates the construction of new buildings

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#### POLICIES

- **BOARD**
  - = the homeowners + munipal officials
  - collectively owns the land
  - manages the funding
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- **FUNDING**
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Proposal / Flexibility

vicinity_ importance of common spaces

relation of public and common

network of routes
Proposal / Flexibility

relation of public and in-between spaces

network of routes
the new urban block of the proposal
abandon buildings within this new urban block
removal of abandoned buildings in bad condition to keep the permeability
Proposal / Design process

program filling of the abandonment
creation of public and common networks
connections through an open market
Proposal / Design process

creation of pedestrian routes
perforation of internal limits
diffusion of the market in the inner courtyards
connections through the market and the common spaces
Proposal / Public and common
Proposal / Public and common
Proposal / Existing and new conditions
Proposal / Existing and new conditions

Before
Proposal / Existing and new conditions
Proposal / Points of intervention

- Main Street Axis
- New Opennings
- New Program
- Public Space Network
- Common Space Network
Proposal / Points of intervention

- MAIN STREET AXIS
- NEW OPENINGS
- NEW PROGRAM
- PUBLIC SPACE NETWORK
- COMMON SPACE NETWORK
Proposal / Points of intervention
Proposal / Points of intervention
Proposal / Points of intervention
ATHENS FUCKING CITY, BABE
Conclusions

The urban megablock acts as an activator unit for the re-activation of Metaxourgeio to its current needs.