

The Architecture of Distributed Social Care: The case of Athens

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Abstract

The financial crisis that emerged during 2008 in Greece resulted in funding cuts to social services that contributed towards various forms of social care being forced to close or to relocate. In some cases, social care provision became mobile, offering skeleton services across streets and public spaces of Athens. This thesis examines the architectural characteristics of these distributed social care services and identifies the nature of supportive infrastructure and the need for it to become embedded within public space.

The thesis begins with an examination of the political, economic, and social drivers for the relocation and redistribution of social care including an identification and appraisal of key theorists in this field. Collectively, they have emphasised on the specificities of social care in Greece, the struggles of public healthcare to cope with funding cuts forced by austerity policies, the range of informal solutions that emerged and the implications of these events for public spaces of Athens. For the purpose of this study, emphasis is also given on theories concerned with the production of space and with informal activity in the urban environment. The literature further identifies the correlation between the rising number of hospital closures at the early stages of the crisis and the effects on social care provision. Moreover, it also evidences the extent to which cuts in public funding have contributed to the decline of social care and the rise of distributed street based social care. Subsequently, in order to understand the nature of the contextual issues, the study examines different types of Athenian urban space where the distributed social care provision is situated.

Primary evidence collected during field work followed four distributed social care case studies, and identified that the re-distributed social care services fall into three spatial categories; (1) citizen-led (2) municipally funded and (3) private initiatives. The study identifies the architecture of distributed social care provision in terms of their materiality, structure, and equipment. It also considers the sites where social care is situated across Athens, and the extent to which these facilities rely upon and leverage public space, where there are shortfalls in practical resources, and the ways in which public space could be adapted or re-designed to better support distributed social care.

With the realisation that ten years into the crisis the redistribution of social care into public space remains prevalent, the study evaluates the impact of the transition from perceiving public space as a social space to a public space where social care can also become intrinsic. As part of this evaluation the theme of whether the two could be mutually supported through thoughtful re-design within today's public spaces in Athens is considered.

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Introduction

The thesis begins by setting the context for this study: the city of Athens since the austerity period began in 2008. It considers the effects that funding cuts have had on public sector services such as social care, and how these cuts have curtailed, closed and resituated social care on streets and in public squares. Specific social care provisions in the city have been distributed or modified, accentuating their influence on public space and its limitations in accommodating them. The literature analysis identifies the drivers for the distribution of social care in Athens. It provides an examination of the political, economic and social conditions that form the basis of the inquiry. In order to approach the argument in this context, emphasis is being placed on data collection from studies and statistics that have been published by Greek and international bodies on the specificities of social care in Greece, the rising number of hospital closures at the early stages of the crisis and the effects on social care provision. These demonstrate the breadth and depth of the impact of the crisis and the aspects that have led to the collapse of social care services. The study further defines social care in Greece and what it entails. Subsequently, it addresses the possible implications of informal social care for public spaces of Athens. This chapter then describes the aims, research questions and contribution of the research. It initiates speculation over the implications on the role of architecture in the described context and identifies Athens as a catalytic setting for the study of the impact of austerity on social care and the architecture of its distribution. This is also approached through cases and events from countries both in Europe and globally, including the Indignados in Spain, the post-war welfare state in the UK, Gezi Park in Turkey and Tahrir Square in Egypt.

The case for the thesis

This research examines the emergent forms of spatial impact, led by the ongoing financial crisis, on the functions of public spaces of Athens. Since the beginning of the crisis in 2008, there has been an emergence of distributed social care in the city. This occurred both as solely triggered by the socio-political landscape and the cuts in funds, but also as a drive for pre-existing groups to address those issues. Undoubtedly, the unprecedented depth and unknown duration of the crisis led to fundamental changes to the context in which social care operates. This inquiry aims to explore this context and its architecture. It will seek to record and interpret distributed social care and examine how it challenges norms and generates spatial arrangements. Looking at how the relationship between the state and the citizens is manifested in the urban environment, the study addresses the spatial influence of socio-political phenomena in the city.

Focus of the study

A number of studies have engaged with the charged socio-political phenomena of recent years in Athens from a variety of disciplines; political economy (Mitsopoulos, 2011; Karyotis, Gerodimos, 2015; Bournakis, 2017;), anthropology (Papailias, 2011; Knight, 2015; Dalakoglou, Agelopoulos, 2017; Tziogas, 2017, Sotiropoulos, 2018), sociology (Petropoulos, Tsobanoglou, 2014; Tsilimpoundi, 2016), philosophy (Douzinas, 2013), health sciences (Simou, 2014; McKee, 2016; Christodoulou, 2016; Karl, 2018; Saridi, Souliotis, 2018) etc. However, this inquiry is looking at a particular scope of the effects of the crisis, not through its financial and sociological consequences, but through parameters that are fundamentally affecting the urban environment of the city and its potential to adapt to new challenges. Emphasis is given on theories that perceive space in the city as a social space. The research seeks to draw from these perspectives to examine the emergence of the distribution of social care and identify its architectural characteristics.

Aims and objectives

The aim of this thesis is to examine the architectural characteristics of the distributed street based social care services, identify the nature of supportive infrastructure and the need for it to become embedded within public space. It also seeks to examine how the financial crisis has contributed towards the decline of social care provision and how this has led to the rise of the distributed street based social care. For this purpose, the study will identify the architecture of distributed social care

provision in terms of materiality, structure, and equipment. It will consider the sites where social care is situated across Athens and the extent to which these facilities rely upon and leverage public space, where there are shortfalls in practical resources, and the ways in which public space could be adapted or re-designed to better support distributed social care.

With the realisation that ten years into the crisis the redistribution of social care into public space remains prevalent in multiple ways and consistencies, the study evaluates the impact of the transition from perceiving public space as a social space to a public space where social care can also become intrinsic. As part of this evaluation the theme of whether the two could be mutually supported through thoughtful re-design within today's public spaces in Athens is being considered. The financial situation that still prevails and the amplified effects that it triggers have intensified the need to rethink actions and possibilities that promote and facilitate the reassessment of public space and the requirements it fulfills. Of course, there have been other circumstances and moments in history when citizens initiated collective action to assist their needs. What differentiates the present condition from other moments in history are the prevailing memorandums, the socio-political spectrums of the crisis and the additional impact of the refugee crisis. Triggered by these continuous sources of unrest, escalating numbers of groups of citizens have been mobilised. The socio-political effects, unemployment, inadequate healthcare provision and the inability of welfare to cope with the new demands, suggest that this is a significant moment in modern Greek history to raise the question of the role of public space, as it is where these conditions become manifested.

The emergence of distributed social care in Athens has brought together the need to attempt to tackle possible reconsiderations of public spaces. This may lead to conclusions addressing the parameters that affect the constant changes in cities and the varying levels of adaptability to socio-political instability. It aims to inform planners, architects, activists, artists and scholars who are concerned with relevant discourses, as well as users of the urban environment and the municipality of Athens. In this context, Athens is an indicative case study because of its urban scale and population, the extent and impact of the crisis as well as the level of tolerance in public space that allows for certain phenomena and behaviours to be broadly manifested. Thus, the need to reconsider the role of the architect in these conditions is being highlighted.

Research Question and subquestions

The literature review examines the context that led to the distribution of social care in Athens and leads to the formation of the principle research question and overarching aim of the thesis as:

What is the architecture of distributed social care in Athens?

In order to answer this question, the political, economic, and social drivers for the distribution of social care will be examined. Four Athens based studies will be analysed in order to identify whether they share a common architecture, and their locations will be mapped as will their supporting infrastructure, (e.g. utilities such as water), highlighting any shortfalls in provision afforded by the squares and streets in which they are situated. In doing this, it can then suggest the ways in which public spaces of Athens be adapted or redesigned to better support the presence of distributed social care, concluding with a critical analysis of whether this would serve to support or exacerbate the problem.

The contribution to knowledge

The thesis addresses a gap in existing knowledge that is concerned with what the architecture of distributed social care looks like, through an examination of its cause and effects. Therefore, it seeks to examine whether the financial crisis has resulted in cuts to social care, affecting traditional social care infrastructure, and if this has contributed to the rise of the distributed social care. At the moment, there is no analysis of the architecture of distributed social care as a typology, its link to the financial crisis, its survival and persistence and whether it is as public as the pre-existing forms of social care.

To respond to that, the study will a) provide an insight into what the architecture of distributed social care consists of, b) provide an understanding of whether distributed social care is likely to remain present in public space c) consider the different emerged categories of distributed social care and d) identify the nature of supportive infrastructure for distributed social care and the need for it to become embedded within public space. The thesis also considers ways by which public space could be adapted or re-designed to better support distributed social care. With the realisation that ten years into the crisis the redistribution of social care into public space remains prevalent, the study evaluates the impact of the transition from perceiving public space as a social space to a public space where social care can also become intrinsic. As part of this evaluation the theme of whether

the two could be mutually supported through thoughtful re-design within today's public spaces in Athens is considered.

This may lead to conclusions addressing the parameters that affect the constant changes in cities and the varying levels of adaptability to socio-political instability. It also aims to inform planners, architects, activists and scholars who are concerned with relevant discourses, as well as users of the urban environment. In this context, Athens becomes a representative case study because of its urban scale and population, the extent and impact of the crisis as well as the level of tolerance in public space that allows for certain phenomena and behaviours to be broadly manifested. Now, a decade later, the need to reconsider the effects on architecture and the built environment under conditions of austerity measures is being highlighted. The concepts explored could translate into possible future urban design strategies and typologies that will inform architectural practice. There are a number of studies that explore these dynamics from social and political science perspectives. In this study, the interpretation and analysis of case studies will contribute to existing reflections on civic engagement, in a city that attracted global attention due to the unprecedented recession.

Methodology

The study examines four case studies of distributed social care - ranging from healthcare to the provision of basic needs. It identifies the architecture of distributed social care provision in terms of their materiality, structure, and equipment. It also considers the sites where social care is situated across Athens, and the extent to which these facilities rely upon and leverage public space, where there are shortfalls in practical resources, and the ways in which public space could be adapted or re-designed to better support distributed social care. To begin with, quantitative and qualitative data is collected, through research regarding the types of social care providers that have emerged during the years of the crisis. Primarily, online sources are used such as Solidarity4all.gr, Project Omikron and the websites and blogs of various distributed social care providers. However, it is identified that these are not necessarily regularly updated and do not reflect the total number of providers that currently operate in Athens.

Statistics

The research initially addresses data from statistics regarding the impact of the crisis in Greece and its social services. Sources of statistics include the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT), INE/GSEE

(Institute of Labour of the General Confederation of Trade Unions), Eurostat, OECD and the European Commission.

Fieldwork

Fieldwork in Athens facilitates the selection of case studies that are analysed, the identification of the spaces they occupy and enables

- Visits at specific spaces of distributed social care in Athens
- Discussions with members of distributed social care groups (including architects)
- Participation in workshops and assemblies

Primary data is collected by looking at four case studies the researcher interacted with during fieldwork in Greece, all of which are solely or partially concerned with social care and are based in Athens. Each of the case studies are described and compared in order to propose an operational taxonomy against which they can be critically considered. The thesis will be focusing on a demonstration of data and visual material that has been obtained from participation in a workshop, observation in the streets of Athens and research on online news platforms. Primary data include a participatory design project as part of the workshop *Transforming the (Re)Public*, discussions with architects and members of community assemblies, and empirical data. Emphasis is given on case studies that consist social kitchens, residents committees, social groceries, community assemblies and municipal initiatives in an attempt to highlight their drivers, organisation and architecture characteristics (materiality, structure and equipment). Each of the case studies will contribute towards an understanding of their relationship with their location within the city, their spatial requirements, the extent to which these facilities rely upon and leverage public space, where there are shortfalls in practical resources, and the ways in which public space could be adapted or re-designed to better support distributed social care. The selected case studies consist characteristic examples, each concerned with a variety of distributed social care activities, but with a separate and distinct organisation model and architecture. Information is also gathered from groups and their archives (UrbanDig Project, Urban Dwellers, Nomadic Architecture Network, Mavili Collective, Academia Platonos residents committee), personal archives of artists, activists and scholars, as well as news platforms.

Interpretation and Analysis

A critical examination of case studies will be undertaken, focusing on examples from the beginning of the crisis until now. In this way, through the course of the research, updates have been

demonstrated in parallel with the most recent findings and observations of the researcher. Additionally mappings and drawings are used to interpret the materiality and operation of case study initiatives that are situated in a variety of locations in the city of Athens. In addition, observation of events will be represented through photographs and sketches.

Literature Review

The literature review begins with an examination of the political, economic, and social drivers for the relocation and redistribution of social care including an identification and appraisal of key theorists in this field. Collectively, they have emphasised on the specificities of social care in Greece, the struggles of public healthcare to cope with funding cuts forced by austerity policies, the range of informal solutions that emerged and the implications of these events for public spaces of Athens. For the purpose of this study, emphasis is also given on theories concerned with the production of space and with informal activity in the urban environment. The literature further identifies the correlation between the rising number of hospital closures at the early stages of the crisis and the effects on social care provision. Moreover, it also evidences the extent to which cuts in public funding have contributed to the decline of social care and the rise of distributed street based social care. Subsequently, in order to understand the nature of the contextual issues, the study examines different types of Athenian urban space where the distributed social care provision is situated.

Outline of the Thesis

The following is an outline of the structure of the thesis and brief description of the content of each chapter:

Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the research topic. It sets out the drivers for the thesis, the research framework and the context of Athens during the years of austerity. Firstly, it provides a description of the events that led to the emergence of the socio-political and cultural conditions that form the basis of the inquiry. In order to approach the argument in this context, this chapter emphasises on data collection from statistics that have been published by Greek and international bodies and theorists. These will demonstrate the extent and impact of the crisis and the aspects that have led to the collapse of social care services in Greece. The chapter further defines social care in Athens and explores the new typologies that have emerged. The second part of the chapter focuses on speculation over the implications on the role of architecture in the described context and identifies Athens as a characteristic example for the study of the impacts of austerity on public

space. This is also explored through comparative cases from countries both in Europe and globally to include the Indignados in Spain and the post-war welfare state in the UK.

With a focus on themes of urban planning and environment, **Chapter 2** deals with the specificities of Athenian public space, its use and occupation. Emphasis is given on spatial modifications of the post-austerity period. The different typologies that are found in Athens and their characteristics are described in order to then highlight the significance of urban space during periods of austerity. The analysis also contributes towards an understanding of the role of public space within the city and the impact of the distributed social care that emerged during the recent years, upon the previously existing typologies.

Chapter 3 is focusing on a demonstration of data and visual material that derived during fieldwork in Athens. This includes primary data from participation in the workshop *Transforming the (Re)Public*, discussions with members who are actively involved in initiatives, and empirical data. Emphasis will be given on four case study initiatives to include a social kitchen, a residents committee and social grocery, as well as a municipally led social care venture in an attempt to highlight their drivers, organisation and architectural characteristics. Each of the case studies contributes towards an understanding of their relationship with their location within the city and their spatial requirements.

Chapter 4 consists of a comparative analysis and reflection of the case studies with regards to their architecture in terms of materiality, structure, and equipment. It also considers the sites where they are situated across Athens and brings to the surface an understanding of their drivers and organisation. Additionally, the chapter addresses latest events that may affect the operation of the case studies and the nature of their adaptability.

Chapter 5 consists of an analysis of the outcomes of the research and the findings in relation to the original aims. makes suggestions for future research in the field as well as propositions regarding potential infrastructure in the city of Athens. Finally, the chapter addresses the impact of this research for Athens, the design of public spaces, and the future of the architecture of social care in this context.

Chapter 1

The emergence of distributed social care in Athens

1.1 Introduction

Funding cuts to social services

Indicatively, after a series of austerity measures and cuts in public spending, the budget for hospitals in Greece declined by 26% between 2009 and 2011, while as shown in Fig.3, by 2013 the number of uninsured citizens was approximately 2.5 million¹. This means that almost 30% of the total population of Greece did not have access to public healthcare. Social care, which is generally understood as the provision of support to the most disadvantaged or vulnerable who are also in economic hardship (Moukanou, 2009), did not prove to be able to respond to the sudden increase in demand. As expected, this has been detrimental for the majority of the population.

Distributed architecture

Throughout this enquiry, distributed social care refers to social care provision that was formerly housed within civic or state-owned buildings and spaces that has, as a consequence of the crisis, been forced to become mobile or itinerant. The thesis seeks to examine whether these mobile or itinerant provisions share common architectural characteristics and what these elements are. A factor that determines the architecture of the distributed social care is the people involved. Lefebvre understood this involvement as a form of co-design, where the production and the product are not distinct elements, and that, 'social relations of production have a social existence to the extent that they have a spatial existence'². Reflecting on this, Schmid mentions that space does not exist "in itself " but it is produced'³. Within these concepts, space can be shaped by its users through the means of social construction and appropriation (Lefebvre 1991). On this matter, Low (2000, 127) further addresses the fact that "social production and social construction of public space are contextualizing the forces that produce it and showing people as social agents constructing their own realities and symbolic meanings". The hypothesis here is that architecture can be perceived as contrived of the presence of people (social agents) and their interaction with materiality and spatial elements. By redistributing social care into different locations of the city, structures become temporary, informal without necessarily responding to specific infrastructure criteria and considerations.

¹ Karakekes, D. (2016) *Financial Crisis and Health*, University of Thessaly, Volos, p.68

² Lefebvre, Henri. (1974) 1991. *The Production of Space*. Oxford: Blackwell, p. 129

³ Schmid, C. (2008). P.28

The context of the Greek financial crisis: political, economic and social drivers

Situated at the epicentre of the Eurozone crisis, Greece has regularly been on the frontline with its economy and politics being a popular topic in the news but also in research published in books and academic articles during the recent years. In most of these studies, the analysis has been approached from a sociological, financial, anthropological or political perspective without predominantly giving emphasis on the actual spatial effects that have emerged.

As already mentioned, the increased number of distributed street-based social care providers emerged as a response to both deteriorating living standards and the new sociopolitical landscape – an outcome of the harsh austerity measures taken by consecutive Greek governments in return for loans from the IMF and European institutions. The range of activities and nature of these providers varies. They are all however addressing the basic needs of the most disadvantaged members of the community, with some also organising cultural events, as a form of raising awareness or encouraging political activism against austerity measures. In many cases, providers are found in the form of collectives, cooperatives, time banks and assemblies. A large number of these emerged at the aftermath of the ‘Indignant citizens’ in Syntagma Square in 2011⁴. Additionally, others were absorbed by already existing groups that were however provided with new drivers as the crisis deepened⁵. It therefore turns out that the target group is not solely those in need of support to cover their basic needs. An important target group also consists of those who regularly participate in initiatives as activists and volunteers, and of course society as a whole.

Polyzoidis asserts that, since the beginning of the crisis, Greek NGOs have played a significant role in welfare provision⁶. This implies that they sought to approach the issue of the emerged shortfall due to the decline in state provision. As greater attention was given to the contribution of other institutions rather than the solely state funded, the term ‘welfare state’ was replaced by the term ‘welfare regime’, which includes the non-profit sector (Esping Andersen, 1999). The current crisis, the failure of the public sector to face the growing needs of the population, the radical change of the

⁴ Simiti, (2014), p.5 in <http://www.lse.ac.uk/europeanInstitute/research/hellenicObservatory/CMS%20pdf/Publications/GreeSE/GreeSE-No82.pdf>

⁵ Eugenia Vathakou, *Citizens’ Solidarity Initiatives in Greece during the Financial Crisis*, Austerity and the Third Sector in Greece: Civil Society at the European Frontline

⁶ Polyzoidis, P. KIFIs

traditional family model are all affecting the role of the non-profit sector. According to Polyzoidis (2016) data collection on NGO activity in Greece is still at an early stage and not adequate for systematic analysis as there is also a general lack of data prior to the crisis. The website *enallaktikos.gr* presents locations across the country where social kitchens are active. In many cases, soup kitchens are organized in the courtyards of churches. Further to those, most networks, groups and municipalities contribute towards the distribution of food. This is evident in the fact that in more than 200 self-managed social spaces we can find social kitchens where people cook and eat collectively. One distinctive example is the nomadic social kitchen O Allos Anthropos (The Other Human) which mainly operates in Athens and will be further examined in Chapter 3.

Greece was the first European country to see austerity measures implemented by the IMF and although it isn't an isolated case, (Ireland, Portugal, Spain soon followed) it was a symbolic one⁷. Athens, where half of the country's total population are situated, will be dealt with as a contemporary example and a ground that facilitates the study of the impacts of austerity on the architecture discipline. For Athens in particular, architect Aristide Antonas explains that, "today, at its current state, it cannot be seen as a typical city but as an exemplary urban case. In that sense, Greek architects are not so much concerned with what is being built, but with the complex transformations that the city is experiencing"⁸.

Looking back in history, crises have been known to usher in public building projects such as homes and hospitals. In the UK for example, the welfare state was created after the austerity period following the second world war. It was, 'defined an architectural era that was responsible for creating government offices, public institutions, schools, hospitals and homes. It was a cornerstone for the profession'⁹. In the more recent events at Gezi Park in Turkey, the emergence of the Occupy Gezi Architecture initiative was fuelled by plans to build a shopping mall at the site of the park¹⁰. As a means to empower the resistance, protesters introduced an informal mosque, a mobile food initiative and a social hospital on the site. These were informally placed and adapted according to the time they were needed. Architecture For All stated regarding this initiative that, "we need new

⁷ Vradis, A., Dimitris, D., (2011) *Revolt and Crisis in Greece: Between a present yet to pass and a future still to come*, AK Press and Occupied London, p. 14.

⁸ <http://antonas.blogspot.co.uk/search?updated-max=2010-12-24T09:49:00-08:00&max-results=15&reverse-paginate=true>

⁹ Monk, T. (2018) *HLM50+ Towards a Social Architecture*, Routledge, p.1

¹⁰ <https://www.dezeen.com/2013/06/24/occupygezi-architecture-by-architecture-for-all/>

definitions for architecture in situations when architecture is removed from architects”¹¹. In the following chapters, the role of and effects on architecture under such circumstances will be further explored in the context of Athens. In order to approach the current challenges that the city, its people and its space are facing, the study will begin by looking into fundamental aspects that form the society and which have experienced dramatic shifts over the last decade.

1.2 The decline of social care in Athens

Social care and the Greek welfare state

The Greek welfare state is a relatively new welfare state in its current formation, which started to become more consolidated a few years after the fall of the military dictatorship in the late 1970s – early 1980s. Some first steps towards establishing the foundations of the welfare state were previously attempted in the 1960s but they were interrupted during the dictatorship, which neglected social spending and social care. At that time, the society was far more introvert and the responsibility is likely to have fallen on family bonds and the Orthodox Church. The first years after the fall of the dictatorship, the government placed more emphasis and state budget on enforcing national defence¹² and therefore public spending on welfare was not as evenly distributed.

Various studies have attempted to classify groups of countries according to the characteristics of their welfare regimes¹³. These debates, however, did not focus explicitly on social care strategies. Bettio and Platenga (2004) for example, argue that a distinct typology arises when the focus of the study is shifted from welfare models to specific care regimes. They further propose a classification that places countries into four clusters. Greece has been classified in the first cluster (along with Italy and Spain) that “delegates all the management of care to the family”. According to similar classifications, the Greek welfare state resembles the “southern” model as a synthesis of Esping-Andersen’s and Ferrera’s typologies (Esping-Andersen, 1990, Ferrera, 1996). Its characteristics are mainly posing clientelistic features – mostly related with the public sector (often in exchange for political support) instead of the provision of welfare benefits.

¹¹ Petrescu, D., Trogal, K. (2016) *The Social (Re)Production of Architecture: Politics, Values and Actions in Contemporary Practice*, Routledge, p. 86

¹² due to the conflict with Turkey

¹³ several authors (see for example Ferrera, 1996) argued for a distinct welfare type that is typical of Southern Europe

Even in the past, prior to the economic crisis, Greek civil society was underdeveloped¹⁴. The reasons for its underdevelopment were found in the domination of civil society by political parties, which intervened in major associations, such as labour unions and student unions, as well as in NGOs. Successive governments took the interests of professional associations and public sector unions into account to a disproportionate extent. The underdevelopment of civil society was also related to the stronger bonds and trust shown among members of Greek families. These reveal valuable insights towards the understanding of the socio-cultural parameters that have affected both the escalated consequences of the crisis, but also the increase in volunteerism that has emerged.

Looking back to the 1980s in order to outline the scope of the effects of the current socio-political condition, statistics reveal that Greece faced a particularly high risk of poverty compared to other EU countries (Deleeck et al. 1991; Papatheodorou and Petmesidou 2004, 2005). Since the 1990s, and before the outbreak of the crisis, poverty rates in Greece were at 20-22% when the EU average was 15-17%. The high rates are mainly attributed to the weak distributional impact of the social protection system and inefficiency of a deeply fragmented social protection system in utilising available resources towards targets¹⁵. Therefore, there has been an increased need for affordable social care and this may have been an early sign that led to the current condition that has forced people to find charity-based alternatives.

An analysis of social care in Greece

Among the multiple aspects of Athenians' lives that have been affected dramatically after the introduction of austerity measures is social care. Under the harsh conditions, the demand became higher while the support supply even more scarce. The public National Health Service soon began to struggle, with necessary shortages of staff but also of drugs and a general lack of funds for equipment. 12.9% of Greece's population declared that they did not receive any, or received delayed medical care due to very long waiting lists (several months). It is also alarming that 9.4% were affected by a lack of doctors of specific specialties. In addition, 13.6% of the people could not afford to receive medical care, while 11.3% did not have the financial means to buy prescribed drugs¹⁶. These conditions stem from the fact that around 30% of the population had no health coverage.

¹⁴ Sotiropoulos, D. (2013). *Civil Society in Greece in the wake of the economic crisis*, ELIAMEP

¹⁵ Schubert, K., de Villota, P., Kuhlmann, J. (2016) *Challenges to European Welfare Systems*, Springer, p. 293

¹⁶ <http://www.defenddemocracy.press/kafka-action-half-million-greeks-suffering-depression/>

Definition of social care

In Greece, social protection is comprised of three main aspects: healthcare services, social security and social care. The social care sector as a whole has been weakly developed, while the family and the Greek Orthodox Church have played an important role in covering excessive needs (Polyzoidis, 2009, p.191). Social care commonly refers to the provision of support through personal social services and informal care¹⁷. It is closely associated with the community and local networks (Stasinopoulou, 1993). In Greece, social care has been marginalized being part of the social protection system and has suffered from a lack of strategic planning and structure. It is generally understood as the provision of support to the most disadvantaged or vulnerable who are also in economic hardship (Moukanou, 2009); families and children, young people, the older population, people with disabilities, people with mental health problems and other vulnerable groups of the population that are found at the risk of social exclusion.

Within the general comparative studies in Europe, social care usually refers to the personal social services and a wide range of informal support and activities provided by families, friends, neighbours, colleagues and volunteers on an unpaid basis (Munday 2003; Munday, 1996). In the U.K. for example, social care services fall into the responsibility of local authorities. In Greece, the role of the third sector is catalytic, as long-term care services have been provided via institutional care, with the role of the family being of high importance at the same time. The term social care was introduced by Law 2646/1998 on the 'Development of the National Social Care System'. According to this Law, social care is defined as the "protection provided to individuals or groups of people via prevention or rehabilitation programs and aims at creating equal opportunities for individuals to participate in the economic and social life and at ensuring an acceptable standard of living. The support of the family is a fundamental objective of the above mentioned programs"¹⁸. By interpreting this, social care should be considered a right of every citizen. The law suggests accessibility and entitlement for all, but it occurs that in reality this is not always the case as affordability plays a crucial role. Of course, social care provision should be focusing, not only on those considered vulnerable (because of a lack of adequate income or healthcare), but on the varied needs of the entire population.

¹⁷ Moukanou, E. (2009). *Social Care Services for the Elderly in Greece: Shifting the Boundaries?* Hellenic Observatory, European Institute, LSE

¹⁸ Law 2646/1998, article 1, paragraph 1 (FEK 236 A') (accessed at <https://nomoi.info/ΦΕΚ-Α-236-1998-σελ-1.html>)

Familial social care

In Greece, Care services for the elderly are provided at Day Care Centres (KIFI) operated mainly by municipalities¹⁹. These were developed in the 1990s as a result of initial EU funds (Bettio and Vershchagina 2010). It has been observed that, due to massive migration inflow since 1990s, a large part of the family's share to long-term care has been shifted to migrant workers, particularly women (Petmesidou 2013a; Bettio and Vershchagina 2010). Since 2010 social and into the economic crisis, care responsibilities were moved to local authorities which were unable however to undertake responsibilities due to a lack of resources. Even projects such as the Day Care Centres that operated with EU funds were suspended for a period of time. As a result, the central role of the family in the social care system of Greece has been particularly evident during the years of austerity as many young or unemployed people moved back with their family. The family provides a collective responsibility and a form of informal care, either providing care directly or hiring it. The majority of older people for example are hiring private care services such as nurses at their home, while elderly care homes are considered a luxury on many occasions. As the population had already been seeking alternative types of care to fill in inadequacies of the system, distributed social care during austerity soon became a frequent substitute.

Volunteering according to the Greek Constitution

In Greece, any organised volunteer activity may take three legal entities: Associations, Foundations or Non-profit Corporations²⁰. According to the Greek Constitution (art.12), non-profit associations and corporate schemes are supported and protected as part of the field of Social Care provision and Social Responsibility. The Orthodox Church of Greece, although a public organisation, also has the legal right to form voluntary services and non-profit philanthropic foundations. It is recognised by the European Union as a Non-Governmental Organization in the Social Sector. Volunteer work in Greece was first recognised in 1998 with the issue of Law 2646/98 (on the Revision of the National Social Care System), as 'a socially important service'. The law also states that, in order to qualify for service provision and for receiving State or EU money, non-profit welfare NGOs have to meet certain eligibility criteria and then register in a national file for accredited NGOs. As it appears, the above formations consist part of the social care providers that operated since the beginning of austerity.

¹⁹ Schubert, K., de Villota, P., Kuhlmann, J. (2016) *Challenges to European Welfare Systems*, Springer, p. 291

²⁰ *New Orientation in Social Policy Formation* (accessed at: http://www.ecclesia.gr/greek/holysynod/committees/welfare/Welfare-0008_en.htm)

1.2 The post-austerity period

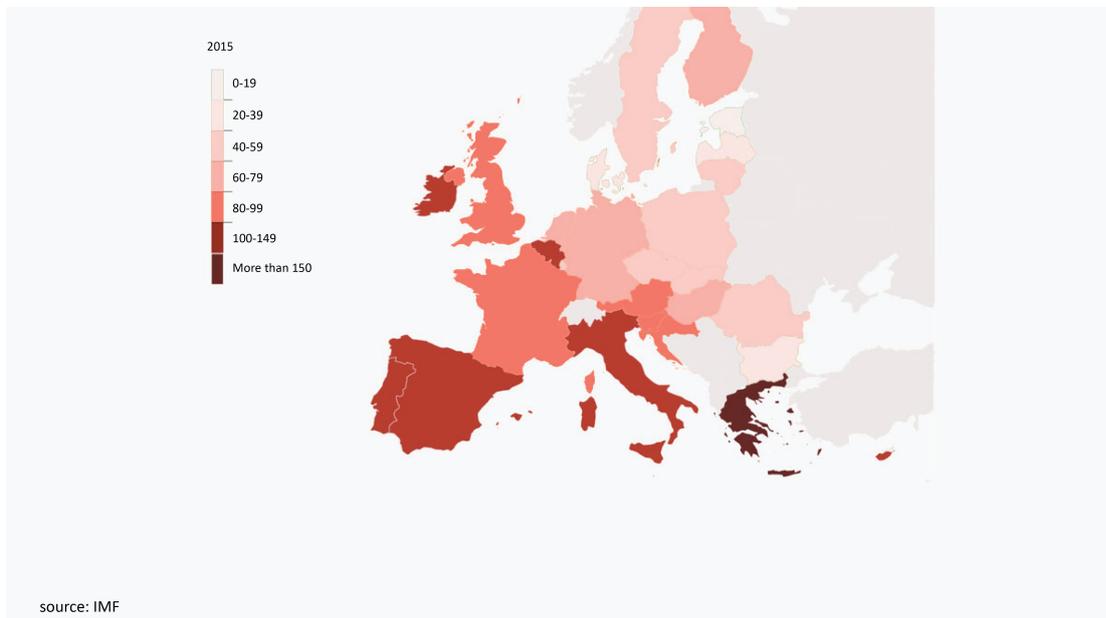


Fig. 1 Public debt as % of GDP

The effects of austerity policies on hospitals: cuts, closures, ghost buildings and uneven distribution of patients

The three main categories of hospitals in Greece comprise of: (1) public hospitals of the NHS (2) public hospitals used by the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Justice (3) private hospitals, the majority of which are private profit institutions. As shown in Fig. 2, the NHS owns and operates almost 32% of the total number of hospitals, private hospitals account for about 62% of the total amount, while the remaining 6% are public hospitals not belonging to the NHS. Nevertheless these rates are misleading in terms of capacity, since private hospitals tend to be quite small. Therefore, the NHS accounts for 63.5% of the total capacity of patients, while private hospitals only for 28.8%²¹.

²¹ Karakekes, D. (2016) *Financial Crisis and Health*, University of Thessaly, Volos, p.30

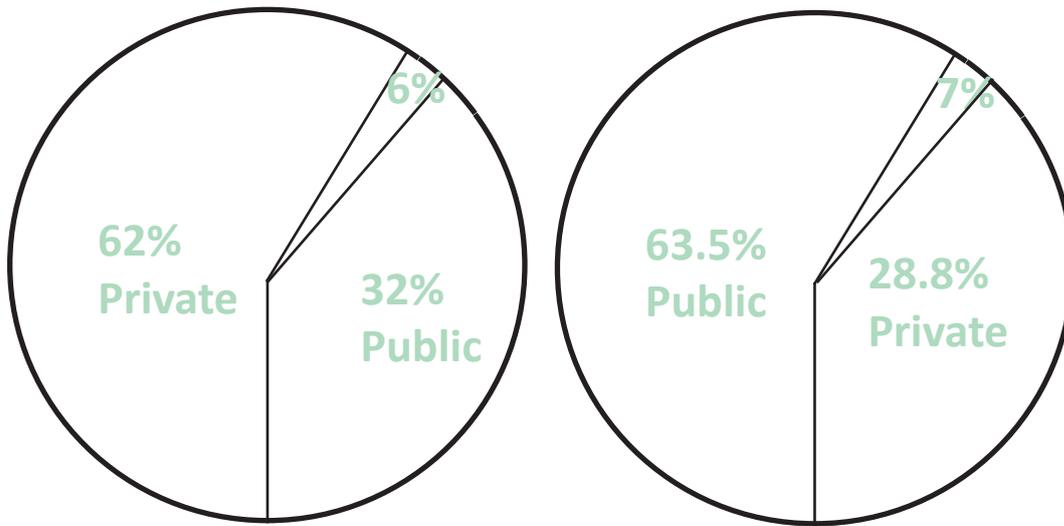


Fig. 2 Chart representing the % of private versus public hospitals // the % of the capacity of patients



Fig. 3 Graph representing the number of uninsured population

Indicatively, after a series of austerity measures, the public budget for hospitals declined by 26% between 2009 and 2011. In 2012, in an effort to achieve specific goals, the Greek Government overcame the demands set by the Troika for cuts in hospital operation and pharmaceutical costs. Furthermore, a Law was passed (4093/2012) that introduced an admission fee of €25 per patient to public hospitals from 2014 onwards and an additional €1 for each prescription drug that is issued. However, this fee was soon abolished due to the strong opposition of healthcare professionals²². According to data, 6.1 billion of the total national budget for 2011 was allocated to the Greek health system, as opposed to 4,4 billion in 2012 (30% reduction)²³. This affected the overall function of public health care, including hospitals, due to lack of adequate staff, drug shortages and other basic medical supplies (Karidis et al., 2011). In parallel, during the years of the crisis, unemployment rose rapidly to 27.3% According to the pre-existing legislation, the health system covers the unemployed for a maximum of two years. This resulted in an increasing percentage of uninsured population (Antonakakis and Collins, 2014c). “By 2013, the number of uninsured citizens was approximately 2.5 million”²⁴.

There are 97 hospitals in the region of Athens of which 40 are private. According to studies (2017), in the private sector the number of hospitals has been reduced by ~6%²⁵. The president of the Association of Clinics of Greece Grigoris Sarafianos stated that, from 2011 until 2017, approximately 35-40 clinics have closed due to lack of money flow²⁶ (Fig. 4, 5, 6, 7). On top of that, private clinics were no longer affordable for a large number of citizens who turned to public hospitals instead. Moreover, by 2015 there has been a further reduction and permanent closure of existing psychiatric hospitals as they were substituted by community mental health service networks²⁷. This, combined with the additional increase of refugees, led to a high demand in most hospitals. It is important to mention that a large part of the population was visiting private doctors rather than going to hospitals for primary healthcare. As the cuts in pensions and salaries increased however, this became more unaffordable and the demand in hospitals increased drastically.

²² Ibid, p.63

²³ Ibid, p.66

²⁴ Ibid, p.68

²⁵ Deloitte Consulting, *Healthcare in Greece: Overview and Trends June 2017 Report*

²⁶ http://medispin.blogspot.co.uk/2017/04/blog-post_752.html

²⁷ Fragoulis, V (2014) *A Comparative Study of Hospital Spending and Resources*, Athens University of Economics and Business, p. 19



Fig. 4 The Athens Polyclinic near Omonoia Square – one of the hospitals that shut down in 2013. It turned into a ghost building but reopened in 2017 as a Day Care Centre to decrease the workload of other hospitals.



Fig. 5 Patision General Hospital that also shut down. The building was then squatted by activists and became a shelter for refugees



Fig. 6 Protest against the closure of Agia Varvara hospital in Athens, 2013



Fig. 7 Closure of 1st IKA Hospital in Penteli, Athens, 2012

Hospitals	Public/Private - Public health care insufficiently developed
Funding	Public/Private
Insurance	NHS, health insurance funds (occupation-based), and private health insurance (95%–97% of the population)
Provider	Public/Private provider and health professionals
Challenges	over-centralization/ fragmentation, informal payments. Modernisation

Fig. 8 Characteristics of the Greek National Health System

During the first years of the crisis, unemployment followed a significant rise (Fig. 9). From 7.8% in 2008 to 10.3% in 2009 to 14.1% in 2010, to 20.9% in 2011, to 26.3% in 2012 and to 28% in 2013 (ELSTAT: 2013). Further to that, according to the statistics for 2010-2013, the number of registered unemployed increased from 653,552 in 2010 to 859,408 in 2013 with the long-term unemployed rising from 36% in 2010 to 49% in 2013. As a result, a significant increase of financial poverty (Fig. 10), social exclusion and even a deprivation of basic goods and services has been identified. While the percentage remained relatively stable for almost two decades until 2008 ranging between 19-21%, a significant rise in numbers is evident since 2009. In particular, the poverty rate increased from 19.7% in 2009, to reach 23.1% in 2012 (ELSTAT 2014). In numbers this roughly translates to 2,536,000 people in three years.

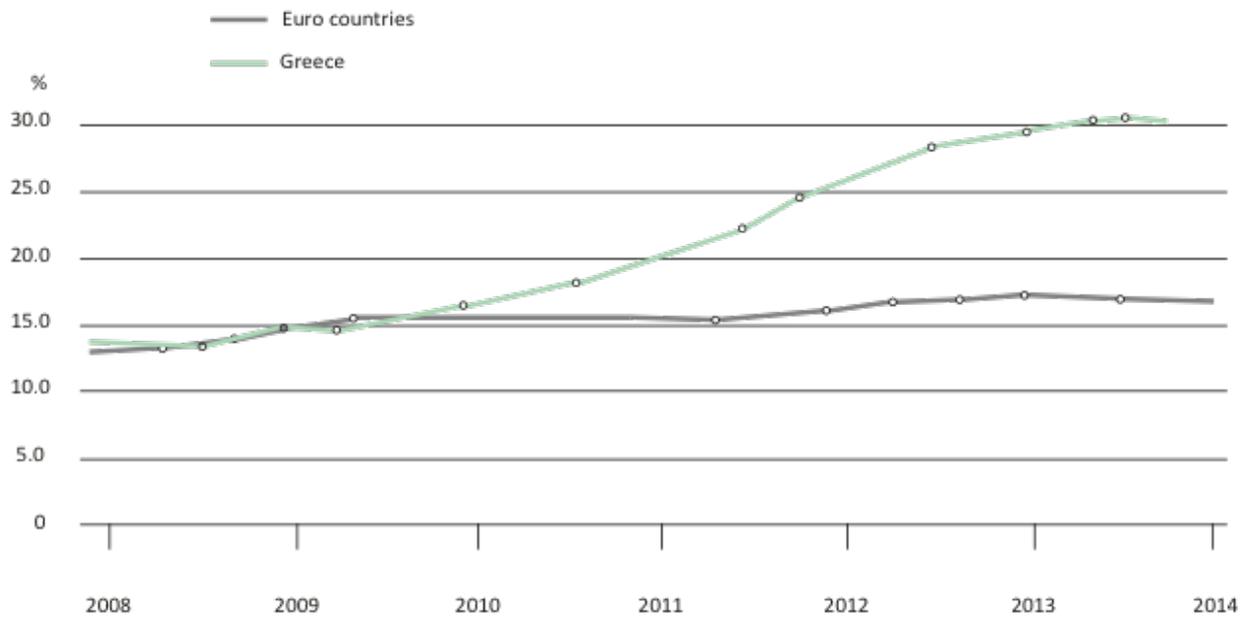


Fig. 9 Unemployment rates

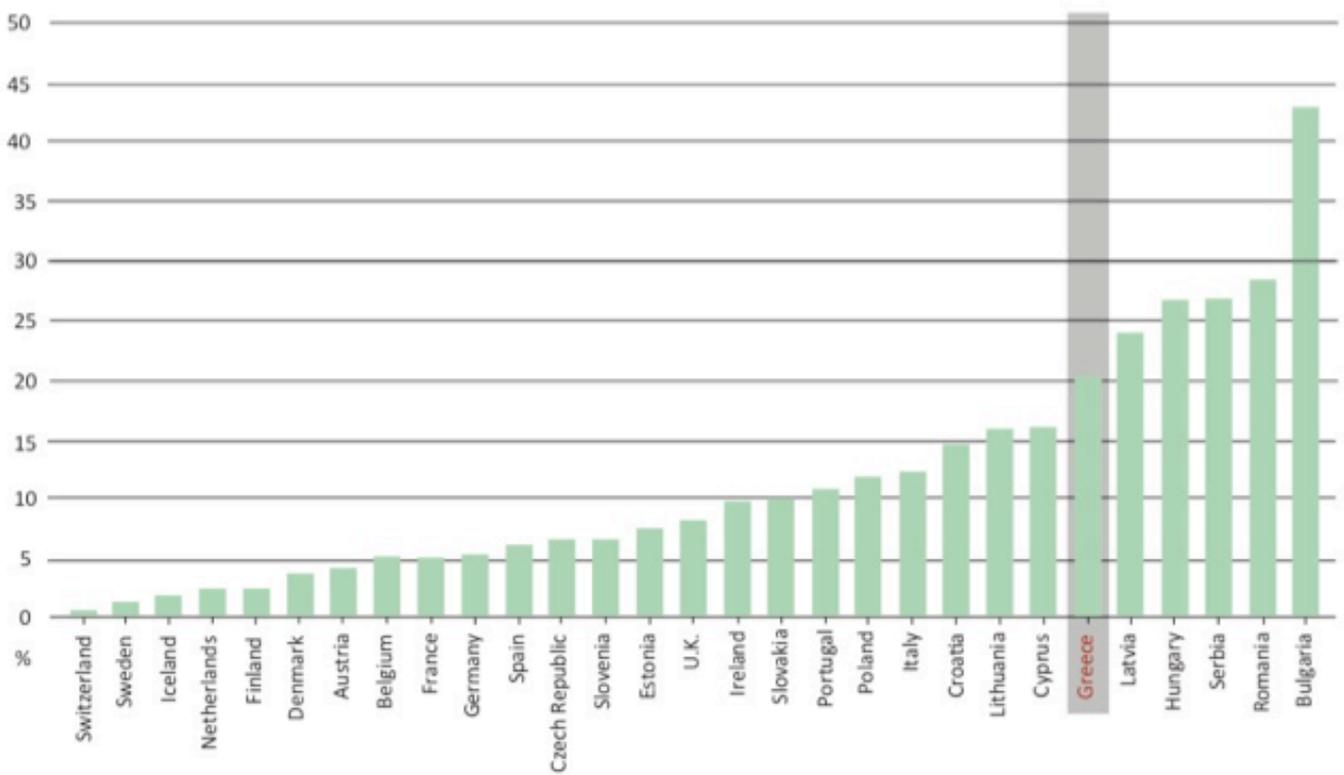


Fig. 10 Poverty Rates among European Countries

The rise of distributed social care

After the beginning of the crisis and the implementation of the austerity policies, the provision of social protection including benefits, health and childcare were cut significantly despite the fact that the need for those became greater than ever before (Matsaganis, 2013). Therefore, along with implemented austerity cuts to cover budget deficits, the withdrawal of public services intensified pressures on a wide number of households; middle class, low-income workers, public servants, small family business owners, single parents, people living on benefits and migrants. In identifying the financial consequences that emerged as a result of the crisis and their apparent effects on social care, it is also critical to consider the aspect of the enormous social mobilisation that these conditions triggered. Citizen-led initiatives sought to collectively tackle several issues associated with the profound socio-political turmoil. This led to an amplified inclination towards public engagement in the city and gave ground for initiatives of distributed social care to become consolidated.

These shifts in everyday life along with the political and economic instability challenged established frameworks, as people withdrew their commitment to social order and started looking at alternative spaces and ways of organising functions in the city. These spaces, starting with the Greek Indignados movement of the squares in 2011, marked a series of collective efforts to challenge social formations and provided alternatives to corrupted institutional structures, the collapse of the health care system and social services. These alternatives, led by autonomy and solidarity (Parker, Cheney, Fournier, & Land, 2014), were soon found in the form of occupied (public) spaces (Daskalaki, 2014), workers' collectives and cooperatives (Kokkinidis, 2015; Varkarolis, 2012), Local Collective Economy Systems and social clinics and pharmacies (Rakopoulos, 2016).

Architects Vaiou and Kalandides (2017) argue that the severe impact of the multi-faceted crisis on people's lives has encouraged citizens to participate in actions that require "new or alternative uses of urban space". They examine how different possibilities and rights are enacted in such situations of deprivation, and also whether these practices "reconfigure public space and shape notions of belonging, which ultimately (re)define urban citizenship". As basic needs such as income, social services, pensions, benefits and healthcare are not guaranteed; the authors see austerity policies as so-called 'solutions' that have resulted in a diminished form of social citizenship. They conclude that informal social care has contributed in redefining the role of citizenship and the different uses of spaces in the city.



Fig. 11 Free Mobile laundry and haircut



Fig. 12 Soup kitchen "O Allos Anthropos" (The other human) in Monastiraki Square



Fig. 13 Map of Athens

Day Centre/ Cultural Centre

City Plaza Hotel Refugee Accommodation Centre Squat, 78 Acharnon Street
Refugee Accommodation Squat, 1 Sourmeli Street, Athens
Oniro Hotel Refugee Accommodation Squat, 57 Spyridonos Trikoupi Street
Refugee Accommodation Squat, 17 Spyridonos Trikoupi Street
5th Lyceum of Athens High School Refugee Accommodation Squat, 13 Oktaviou Street

Healthcare

Voluntary Social Clinic of Peristeri, 92 Kanari Street
Municipal Social Dental Clinic Agia Varvara, 2 Serifou Street
Social Clinic-Pharmacy of Piraeus, 44 Zosimadon Street
Pharmacy-Clinic Solidarity of Patissia, 60 Taigetou Street
Athens Community Polyclinic and Pharmacy (ACP&P), 2 Iktinou Street
Social Cardiology Clinic of Athens, 2-6 Peloponnissou Street
Social Clinic-Pharmacy of Byron, 12 Ellispontou Street
Social Clinic-Pharmacy in New Smyrna Solidarity, 67 Amisou Street
Metropolitan Community Clinic at Elliniko
Social Clinic of Argyroupolis-Elliniko, 36 Vouliagmenis Avenue

Food/Clothing

The Other Human Social Kitchen at Iroon Square – street based
The Other Human Social Kitchen Headquarters, 55 Plateon Street
The Other Human Social Kitchen – street based
Oloi mazi Boroume, Monastiraki Square – street based

1.3 Informal uses

At this point, it has become more evident that the cuts in public funding and the effects imposed on social care services have triggered the need for a range of informal solutions. This informality seems to be relating to the fact that a sudden lack of infrastructure occurred. Therefore, this brings to the surface the matter of how austerity is directly linked to scarcity. Looking into this in the book *The Design of Scarcity*, scarcity is described as “a condition that is shaping many of our environmental, economic and political futures”²⁸. The authors highlight the consequences of the emergence of recent politics of austerity and examine ways by which this can affect architecture but also design disciplines as a whole. Examples of these consequences relate to the imposition of certain pre-defined constraints. However, according to the authors, constraints have always been a part of the design process and a familiar aspect for designers. This is fundamentally the beginning of every project, whether the constraints relate to the materiality, the size, the regulations, the budget etc. Therefore, it could be assumed that it is within the standard requirements for the architectural profession to be able to deal with and address similar issues and constraints. This will be further addressed in the following chapters where the architectural characteristics of redistributed social care are introduced.

When it comes to architecture and the urban environment, in *The Design of Scarcity* it is explained that, at the early decades of the last century, architects were confronting the task of designing under conditions of financial shortage ‘and so produce a collective language out of societies’ confrontation with scarcity. More specifically, urbanists were challenged to work around the politics of distribution, while architects explored minimal dwelling and designers explored a new functional objectivity in their designs’²⁹. As the authors argue, Architecture -highly determined by capital- is reflecting the present conditions of austerity. Adding to that, the building frenzy and overproduction period before 2008 is considered to have led to a race, pushing towards more desirable buildings. This has also been the case in Athens, especially before and after the 2004 Olympic Games when big scale urban infrastructure was formulated and executed at a very fast pace without necessarily taking long-term uses into account. Here, the authors argue that austerity is introduced as an unavoidable necessity in order to regain economic stability. “Austerity is the mechanism by which swathes of currently non-commodified or semi-commodified economies (such as publicly-owned

²⁸ Klein, M., Goodbun, J., Rumpfhuber, A., Till, J. (2015) *The Design of Scarcity*. Strelka Press, p. 7.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 11

health, housing and education, or indeed entire countries such as Greece) are opened up to processes of commodification³⁰. Indeed, public services seem to be unable to stabilise.

A large body of scholarship suggests that moments of crisis provide an opportunity for critique and social transformation. At the present time, Europe has been led to uncertainty that relates to both economic instability and mass immigration. Greece, in particular, has faced the consequences of its vulnerability as its position in the European Union has previously been questioned³¹. Until today, the population has been facing harsh austerity measures. Whilst these factors are currently still evident, the consequences that prevail are relevant to the wider European context. As a result, Greece is not an isolated case but it is greatly influenced by the wider socio-political context.

When it comes to crisis, Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) noted that it translates in the fact that “the old is dying and the new can not be born”³². Drawing from this, the city in crisis becomes a place that is challenged to face an unfortunate legacy. The continuous “state of emergency” it finds itself in brought new socio-spatial conditions and enclosures. At the same time, the city in crisis became a place of conflict and alternative models of social organisation of welfare. Various groups of citizens started dealing with issues, in public space and, thus, exposing them. In this process, their relationship with their surrounding urban environment became intertwined as they both consist and are consisted of public space.

The persistence of this condition in Athens intensified its effects and increased social exclusion. In a metropolis of 3.8 million people, 305,000 Greek and 209,000 foreign nationals faced the risks of poverty and social exclusion as defined by Eurostat³³. With the implementation of austerity policies, the provision of social care protection including benefits, health and education were cut significantly. The consequences on everyday life, the 1,5 million unemployed, the collapse of public welfare and the constant wage and pension decreases led to the highlighted role of bottom-up initiatives in the provision of social care. Groups of citizens addressed those radical changes in spaces of the city: From collective appropriations against privatisation; testing the line between private and public, to localised occupations and satisfaction of basic needs, citizens re-appropriated space addressing socio-political specificities. Soup kitchens, night shelters, social pharmacies, social groceries, open schools, mobile clinics, platforms for the exchange of goods and distribution of clothes, mobile

³⁰ Klein, M., Goodbun, J., Rumpfhuber, A., Till, J. (2015) *The Design of Scarcity*. Strelka Press, p. 32

³¹ The Greek referendum was held in July 2015

³² Selections from the Prison Notebooks, 1971

³³ Arapoglou, Gounis (2014)

launderettes, homeless inclusion initiatives and social work have come to provide services in central public spaces. For the homeless, temporary shelters became the prevalent form of accommodation. These include both shelters for the general homeless population, as well as shelters for specific target groups of women, children, and refugees.

The introduction of a top-down 'emergency' model of welfare would not adequately assist the rising numbers of citizens in need. As a result, short-term solutions increased a sense of fragmentation. Amongst other things, the state of emergency of the city also highlighted the general lack of housing provision schemes. Social housing was not a solid provision in Greece, as the family would often act as a facilitator to compensate for housing needs of family members. In this setting, Day Centres were initially introduced to assist patients with no access to healthcare, but gradually played a fundamental role in responding to the general social support of the most deprived members of the society. Addressing these issues, Arapoglou and Gounis (2014) highlight the implications of gaps in existing provisions for the future of social inclusion policies in Greece and also the need for regulatory changes to support alternative models of housing and care. Policies of the Ministry of Public Order do not benefit from the experience of social inclusion and housing initiatives with the assistance of European funding. In this context, many NGOs are often found struggling to safeguard basic human rights in a context where austerity policies "set barriers to accessing public services"³⁴.

Street-based services

As the financial crisis deepened, Greece experienced changes in its state functions and reconfigurations of the public sector. As a result, this has greatly affected the state's intervention in the organisation of the built environment. Due to lack of public funding, a range of activities is now mainly street-based, scattered across Athens. This has provided an alternative way of using space, compensating for the lack of provision of basic services. In a country of financial and social crisis such as Greece, distributed social care could be thought of as a form of radical response to the contested social framework. As this framework faced collapse during austerity measures and citizens were led to bottom-up solutions in the form of community assemblies, soup kitchens, solidarity medical clinics, occupied parks and cultural hubs, the uses and politics of public space became contested by these new modes. At the same time, new private institutions emerged filling the gap, as the state was unable to provide adequate subsidy or adequately support the existing public institutions. As a response to the suffering public sector, in some cases private interest intervened and also contributed into a more competitive consolidation of public goods.

³⁴ Arapoglou, V.P. Gounis, K. (2014) *Caring for the Homeless and the Poor in Greece: Implications for the Future of Social Protection and Social Inclusion*, University of Crete

Adaptability of public space

The study of the adaptability of public space to better support functions such as social care is analysed by James Holston. Holston outlines the notion of insurgent space of citizenship (2007), stating that the prevalent type of citizenship practiced in today's democracies is universally inclusive and strongly non-egalitarian in distributing rights and in sealing socio-economic differences. He adds that particular forms of popular mobilization and community struggles seem to have created new possibilities for transformative politics by bringing forward the ambiguities and antagonisms of social life. Therefore, these described community struggles are found in what Holston calls insurgent space of citizenship. This identification comes in parallel with the context of the study.

In addition to this characterisation, McLaren and Agyeman (2015) advocate on the importance of sharing as a basic trait for survival in modern cities. Among others, they comment on the case of the Christiania district in Copenhagen and its alternative currency and collective self-governance. They discuss the action of political movements in spaces of the city and draw from examples of resistance such as the Indignados, the Occupy movement and Tahrir Square. French philosopher Rancière also re-theorises community as a polemical distribution of modes of being and 'occupations' in a space of possibilities' (2006). Irazábal (2008) argues that short-lived events in urban public space can have a lasting impact and a transformational effect on cities and thus constitute spaces of insurgent citizenship, while Miraftab (2004) calls for the recognition of the improvised, invented spaces of citizenship. Taking these notions into consideration, the focus of this inquiry is becoming more strongly shaped around the need to address the significance of how public space could be adapted or re-designed to better support distributed social care in Athens.

Furthermore, on the topic of uses of public space for a variety of civic purposes, in his study of *Insurgent Public Space* Jeffrey Hou (2014) draws from a variety of critical viewpoints to interpret acts and events of occupation in the urban environment; Laguerre's (1994) arguments regarding 'urban informality' as a site of power in relation to external discipline and control, and Crawford's (2008) understanding of 'everyday spaces' as a zone of social transition that carries the potential for new arrangements. Hou outlines contemporary boundaries, commenting on new forms of public space ownership, commodification and control. The emerging challenge, according to Hou, is 'to think and to act in novel ways in support of a more diverse, just and democratic public space' (page 12). However, while Hou discusses the global scope of this matter, the case studies he explores are mostly located in North America and East Asia. Perhaps the study of areas of Southern Europe, and

Greece in particular, which present recent examples of bottom-up mobilisations and a renegotiated socio-political setting, could add towards a more diverse analysis and outcomes.

Concepts of civic action in cities are apparent in activities instigated by The Centre for Urban Pedagogy (CUP)³⁵ in New York. CUP is a nonprofit organisation, which utilises design and artistic techniques to encourage civic engagement through projects that attempt to decode urban and planning policy. Through collaborations with artists and designers, CUP produces practical tools, organises interactive workshops and prints publications and posters to facilitate the understanding of people affected by such policies. Some examples include a 'Guide to Welfare in NYC' and 'Welcome to Health Care!' publications, as well as 'Engage to Change' slide deck that works as a tool to encourage participation. Although CUP's initiatives have an impact on the community through visual engagement and design tools, they do not provide an outcome of spatial modification and impact. Also, they do not reflect the demands and particularities of a city such as Athens, which needs fundamental strategies.

Experimental architects at Raumlabor³⁶ Berlin produce temporary designs as urban prototypes in an attempt to transform the urban landscape. Their approach is a critique on planning policies and an effort towards re-adjusting them. In many cases, their structures and small-scale interventions consisting of waste and recycled materials. As their work is located between architecture and public art, most projects are based on events, performances and collaborations with experts and citizens. Practices such as this one suggest that there is a variety of viewpoints and methods that allow for experimentation with informal, temporary solutions for various purposes in public space. In the following chapter, urban spaces where temporary interventions are hosted in Athens will be further explored.

³⁵ <http://welcometocup.org>

³⁶ <http://raumlabor.net/ka-no-what-now/>

Chapter 2

Extended Literature Review

The informality of distributed social care in public space: The Athens context



Fig. 14 Police notice announcing the closure of the National Garden ahead of the protests that take place in nearby Syntagma Square

The term public signifies the world itself, in so far as it is common to all of us and distinguished from our privately owned place in it. It is related to the human artifact, the fabrication of human hands, as well as to affairs, which go on among those who inhabit the man-made world³⁷.

- Hannah Arendt

Architecture, which draws in tangible forms the boundary between the private and the public, is therefore a major component of political order, which leaves indelible marks upon the civil society whose space it defines³⁸.

- Roger Scruton

³⁷ Glazer, N., & Lilla, M. (1987). *Public Face of Architecture: Civic Culture and Public Spaces*. New York, NY: Free Press, p.7

³⁸ Scruton, R. (2002) *Public Space and the Classical Vernacular*, p. 15

2.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the specificities of Athenian urban space and the appearance of distributed social care. Emphasis is given on spatial shifts of the post-austerity period and their distribution and incorporation within the urban environment. The different typologies that are found in Athens and their characteristics are described in order to then highlight the significance, role and challenges for urban space during periods of austerity. The analysis also contributes towards an understanding of the role of the common spaces of the city and the impact of the distributed social care that emerged during the recent years, upon previously existing typologies. Specific examples of instrumental Athenian public spaces and their uses through the last decades seek to indicate how social care became associated with the notion of spatial distribution.

As outlined in Chapter 1, the operational definition of distributed social care is twofold: it concerns both the site and the production/occupation of space itself. Therefore, the architecture of distributed social care is defined by the location it operates in and the form it takes according to the materiality, equipment or temporary structure it deploys. Richard Rogers asserts that architects develop designs (...) 'analysing context, considering social, physical and cultural impacts'³⁹. The context / site and the social and physical elements that architecture is concerned with, form the area of focus for this study. Having this as a point of departure, when looking at Heynen's critique of *Architecture and Modernity* (2000) we see that Norberg-Schulz distinguishes four modes of dwelling: natural dwelling (the way in which the settlement embeds itself in the landscape), collective dwelling (embodied in urban space), public dwelling (as seen in public buildings and institutions), and finally private dwelling (living in a house)⁴⁰. 'Architecture's task is the materialization of the world in which we dwell' (P.19). Revisiting Heynen's analysis, more interesting in this respect is the thought that that public spaces are not 'sharply defined entities'⁴¹. Referring to Giedion's writings, Heynen discussed how architecture should not be limited to the design of buildings but become more 'comprehensive by focusing on the whole environment'.⁴²

³⁹ Rogers, R. (2017). *A place for all people: life, architecture and the fair society*. Edinburgh: Canongate Books

⁴⁰ Heynen, H. (2000). *Architecture and Modernity: A critique*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, p.21

⁴¹ Ibid, p.36

⁴² Ibid, p.38

Athens in crisis

Athens is a city that has for long been globally identified as a site of resistance⁴³. It might be worth delving a bit further into the specific conditions that prevailed around the crisis. In their book *Athens: The City at War*, Brekke, Filippidis and Vradis argue that what the politics of austerity have pushed for, and may have eventually succeeded in bringing about, is the breakdown of a key social bond. The atomization of the individual. At the current point in time, each stands not with, but against all ; every single entity is faced up against the whole⁴⁴. It could be argued however that this assumption is quite ambiguous. On many instances over the last ten years into the crisis, it has been quite obvious that precisely because of these conditions of drastic change, citizens have joint forces and initiated bottom-up responses to this general scarcity that is portrayed in their public lives. Distributed social care could be considered to be a part of these responses and examples of this will be explored later in the thesis. The authors then move on to comment that the event of crisis “(in its ostensibly metaphysically distant and abstract occurrence) may be described and articulated through space, through the tangible mark it leaves upon these seemingly mundane spaces of our cohabitation and coexistence: public spaces”⁴⁵. Here, attention is drawn to the role of public space in this context. These elements of cohabitation and coexistence are precisely the ones that identify public space as a place where social issues are manifested.

As it has been mentioned previously, the 1,5 million unemployed, the collapse of public welfare and the constant wage and pension decreases have led to the highlighted role of bottom-up actions in the provision of social care. Groups of citizens addressed those radical changes in spaces of the city. As localised occupations for the cover of basic needs, citizens turned to public space: Soup kitchens temporarily ‘changed’ squares into places for communal eating, night shelters, social pharmacies, social groceries, open schools, mobile clinics dealing with uninsured citizens and shut down hospitals, platforms for the exchange of goods and distribution of clothes, mobile laundrettes, and social work came to provide services in public spaces.

⁴³ Brekke, Filippidis, Vradis, p. 109

⁴⁴ Ibid, p.115

⁴⁵ Ibid, p.116



Fig. 15 Map of social clinics in Athens

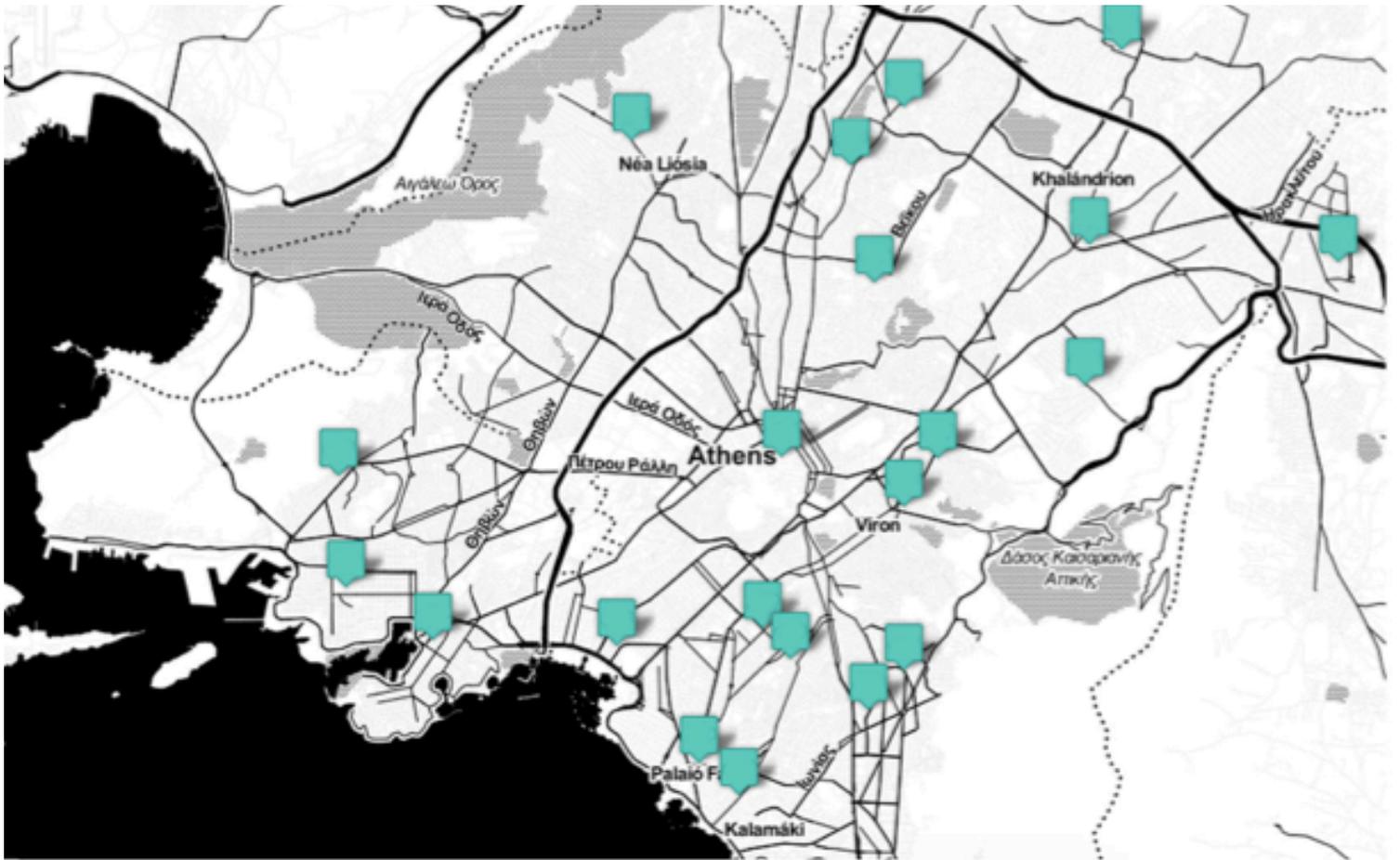


Fig. 16 Map of initiatives concerned with basic goods provision in Athens



Fig. 17 Map of social kitchens and food provision initiatives in Athens

Although these maps show a clear demarkation of specific locations where specific services are provided, they do not depict the current vast range of street-based social care in Athens. The reasons and parameters for this will be later explored and assessed in this chapter as well as in chapter 3 where a variety of street-based distributed social care is presented to uncover another additional layer of distributed social care.

The city as a common space

Following the aforementioned theories, cities could be seen as settings where the organisation of social life and the needs of the population are being formed and addressed. The different social functions are articulated differently depending on the specificities of the urban landscape they occupy, which also creates different dynamics in the everyday of urban life (Comas d'Argemir, 2016). It is important to acknowledge that the distribution of social care has emerged in parallel with the concept of "common spaces" and the rise of the commons - as described by Greek architect and professor at the National Technical University of Athens, Stavros Stavrides (2014) - which are set up through the various types of spatially experienced processes. This seems to suggest that through temporary and informal arrangements social care and common spaces simultaneously emerged during the recession. Gerometta, Haussermann and Longo indicate that under certain conditions, the civil society could be a valuable contributor towards more cohesive cities. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the end of the first decade of the 21st century was marked by the emergence of the on-going global financial crisis. Now, a decade later, this financial crisis has spread into other aspects of life in cities. It has transformed into a multifaceted crisis with social and spatial impacts, "where European cities exhibit dramatic rising levels of social exclusion"⁴⁶. At a very fast pace, it turned into a crisis of the public sector and the welfare state (Hemerijck and Vandenbroucke, 2012).

Due to all the economic, political and social transformations that cities have faced, it could be suggested that a crisis within social care is greater and more visible within the space of the city. In Greece, the memoranda and the continuing austerity policies have established new norms. A new class of homeless population has been formed by those who lost their property as a result of loans or other debts, the young unemployed who cannot afford a house and have moved back with their families, as well as those who lost their jobs prior to retirement. An estimated number of more than 20,000 citizens have lived in the streets or in informal housing, with many more at risk. Surprisingly, it was only recently that the homeless in Greece became recognised as a "Special - Vulnerable Social Group" needing specific social protection (Law N.4052/12).

⁴⁶ Triantafyllopoulou, E. Poullos, D. Sayas, J. (2015). *Social innovation in an era of socio-spatial transformations: Choosing between responsibility and solidarity*

A process of change in the urban geography of Athens has been observed⁴⁷, as urban policies intensified economic inequality, social exclusion and socio-spatial segregation (Maloutas et al., 2012). It could be interpreted that Athens is an exceptional case compared to the rest of the country. Athens therefore gradually transformed from a – relatively - coherent socially mixed urban system to a fragmented one (Chatzikonstantinou et al., 2011) and although the demand for a more effective social protection program was higher, the provision of support and social care was not applied accordingly, exposing its extremely slow reflexes. Ever since the eruption of the social instability, ‘borders’ have been created within the central areas of Athens and streets have turned into invisible boundaries between the neighbourhoods where the phenomena of social conflict, increased racist behaviour and insecurity have been manifested. It is these spaces that have become the main setting for the narratives of the crisis (Poulios et al, 2013).

2.2 The setting - Urban Space of Athens

Sadri (2018) draws attention to the changes in the role and responsibilities of architects and urban designers, in parallel to the neo-liberalization and globalization. Emphasising on the recent boom of market-led motivations, he argued, “architecture (...) is losing its public, national and social role”⁴⁸. The main motivation of architectural and urban practices in this era has shifted from attempts at creating spaces with high-use value in the public interest, towards production for private interests. Sadri tried to remark the alternative movements of our era as the only hope for reclaiming and redefining architecture not as a close profession but as an open, responsive, humanitarian and non-anthropocentric field of knowledge and skills. He explains that “architecture and planning have created architectural and urban activism and remade the political agenda for architecture and urbanism by establishing diverse initiatives against inequalities and violations of human rights”. On many occasions, conflicts in cities take the form of a struggle for space, as an exercise of citizenship.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Sadri, H. (2018). *Neo-liberalism and the Architecture of the Post Professional Era*, The Urban Book Series. Springer International Publishing



Fig. 17 Map of social kitchens and food provision initiatives in Athens

Mark Francis (1989: 149)⁴⁹ writes, "Public space is the common ground where civility and our collective sense of what may be called 'publicness' are developed and expressed." Fraser (1990)⁵⁰ argues that, as a public sphere, public space is an arena of citizen discourse and association. Furthermore, I. M. Young (2002)⁵¹ sees public space in a city as accessible to everyone and thus reflecting and embodying the diversity in the city. At this point and given these theories, it is worth seeing how public space is perceived in Athens.

Looking back in history, Greece has a significant tradition of multilayered public spaces reflecting democratic values. According to P. Zucker, the ancient Greek Agora was an initial integrated type of "square" where the public outdoor space is the primary element that directs the organisation of the built space around it. In ancient times, public life was experienced around the Acropolis (religious space), which was opposite Areopagus Hill (political space) where decisions were taken. "The Agora was laid out deliberately to serve as a market, as a place of assembly and as a festival place"⁵². Later, when the modern Greek State was formed in 1829, the palace of the new King Otto (reign 1833-1863) was built further away from the Acropolis and queen Amalia built her own private gardens behind the palace for her private use⁵³. Later on however and following upheavals and demonstrations, the gardens became public property.

In Athens, squares connect the city's major streets and they are surrounded by public buildings. According to Terzopoulos (2001) the dominance of the center of Athens as a space that concentrates the majority of civil activity came as a result of its social structure and symbolic history. However, he claims that one critical issue is the proportion of open public spaces in relation to the population and the size of the city, as well as their distribution. At this point, it should be addressed that squares are often a preferred site for the positioning of distributed social care. This lack of open public spaces addressed by Terzopoulos might be explaining why the majority of functions in Athens – including distributed social care – are gathered in a small number of specific central spaces.

⁴⁹ Francis, M. (1989) 'Control as a Dimension of Public Space Quality', in Altman, I., and Zube, E. H.(eds.) *Public Places and Spaces*, New York: Plenum Press

⁵⁰ Fraser, N. (1990) 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy', *Social Text*, 25/26: 56-80

⁵¹ Young, I. M. (2002) 'The Ideal of Community and the Politics of Difference', in Bridge, G. and Watson, S. (eds.) *The Blackwell City Reader*, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing

⁵² Terzoglou, J. (2001) *A Study of the Development, Characteristics and Uses of Open Public Spaces in Athens From 1940 to 2000*, p. 15

⁵³ The citizens later gathered to claim the Palace Gardens as a public space. In addition, the design of the palace and the position of the central square in front of it seemed to be a natural space of gathering, celebration, protest and major events in the history of the city.

Most urban design competitions for the regeneration of the centre of Athens remain under the jurisdiction of central government, with the Municipality of Athens restricted to implementation and consultation roles⁵⁴. The Ministry of Environment and Energy is responsible for most of the city's street maintenance (central state). Avenues and parks are under the responsibility of the Region of Attica (regional state) and public space, squares and the majority of streets fall within the jurisdiction of local government⁵⁵. Moreover, the Ministry of Culture (central state) undertakes cultural regeneration projects to highlight the historic past of the city, with a focus on tourism. Planning is a predominantly centralized matter, as legislative power is mainly gathered in the hands of the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change. The Municipality of Athens has limited (executive) planning jurisdiction⁵⁶. Moreover, this suggests about the ownership of the streets that they have jurisdiction but not planning jurisdiction.

Georgia Alexandri describes the Greek planning system as a “spasmodic system in which politically networked social groups and the elite are able to change the planning framework and impose their own rhythms upon space production”⁵⁷. This provides a valuable insight for the understanding of the policy-making scene in Athens and in Greece. It is perhaps taking us a step closer in understanding, not only the conditions under which the financial crisis was formulated, but also some of the reasons why the recovery has proven to be difficult. Further to the above, the Greek planning system is also described as a never-ending process of creation of barely implemented plans, addressing urban issues in fragmented ways (Tsoulouvis, 1996; Hadjimichalis, 2014)⁵⁸. Platon Issaias also highlights the informality of the Greek city, as a result of what appears to be a “spontaneous” urban typology. Nevertheless, Issaias explains that this condition evolved through the years as a result of a sporadic and fragmented construction pattern in a unifying building style – dominated by the “*polykatoikia*” building⁵⁹. On a different note, could this notion of informality and spontaneous perception of urban space have acted as a starting base and a fertile ground for more constructive experimentation with urban design processes for the formulation of the architecture of distributed social care?

⁵⁴ Alexandri, G. Planning Gentrification and the Absent State in Athens. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, page 40

⁵⁵ Ibid, page 41

⁵⁶ Alexandri, G. Planning Gentrification and the Absent State in Athens. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, page 45

⁵⁷ Ibid, page 36

⁵⁸ Laws L. 567/D/1979 addressing the ‘designation of the traditional part of the city of Athens’ and the Athens Master Plan (L. 1515/1985) and the General Urban Plan of Athens (L. 80/D/88) (Ministry of Environment, Planning and Public Works, 1979; 1985; 1988)

⁵⁹ Issaias, P. (2016). *On Conflict, Generic and the Informal: the Greek Case*. Accessed at : http://thecityasaproject.org/wpcontent/themes/themasterplan_tma_v1.4/tma/images/pdf/issaias_greek_case.pdf

2.3 Uses and functions before 2008



-  Kotzia Square
-  Omonia Square
-  Varvakios Square
-  Monastiraki Square
-  Syntagma Square

Fig. 19 Map of the centre of Athens showing the location of squares that will be discussed

Syntagma Square

In central Athens, Syntagma Square is a typical example of a site of constant transformations but also has a stable and repeated role of being the core of the city centre. It is a site where people gather upon all motives: celebrations, demonstrations etc. Although regulations on the permission for the temporary occupation of public spaces do apply, there have been several occasions where the square or part of it have been occupied for a variety of purposes with no permission whatsoever. Syntagma was completely regenerated in 1896, and then again in 1990. Between 1990 and 2004, it was redeveloped another three times, turning into a construction site every few years⁶⁰. In daily practice, after the changes of the 1990s few people would sit or stand in Syntagma within the fenced enclosures of its two coffee shops. Until the late 1990s pedestrians crossed the roads to and from the square, but since the Syntagma Metro Station was built in the square, pedestrians primarily use the Metro SA's underground complex in order to reach or leave the square. Other socio-spatial changes in the Syntagma area included the dedication of neighboring Ermou Street to pedestrian use and its further distinction into one of the main commercial streets of the capital. Aside from being an area for shops and businesses, Syntagma had typically been a stop along the route protest marches took because of the presence of the parliament building—the symbolic center of political power in Greece. Various events of resistance and protest have occurred in the space of the square. An example is also the burning of Syntagma's Christmas tree during the December 2008 revolt⁶¹. The centrality of Syntagma for the major anti-austerity movement in the summer of 2011 marked a crucial, generalized transition in the political consciousness of Athenians (Dalakoglou 2011a).

Omonoia was the central transportation hub of Athens until the construction of the Athens Metro, which established Syntagma as the core of the new network in the late 1990s⁶². Omonoia is in fact a roundabout with highways leading toward almost every direction of the urban complex. Until recently, various public services such as courthouses were located there, and this was the heart of Athens' commercial center, with numerous shops, central hotels, and businesses. Besides its formal functions, in the 1990s and particularly in the 2000s Omonoia was increasingly connected with a number of marginalised activities and outcasts. The cheaper hotels along the square became the dwellings of migrants or poor people, homelessness became more visible, and some of the most stigmatized pre-existing activities in the area expanded. The same urban block hosted posh bars,

⁶⁰ Dalakoglou, D. The Movement and the "Movement" of Syntagma Square, page 1

⁶¹ Dalakoglou, D. The Crisis before "The Crisis": Violence and Urban Neoliberalization in Athens. *Social Justice* Vol. 39, No. 1, p. 28

⁶² *Ibid*, p. 29

undocumented migrants' quarters, abandoned shops etc. After December 2008 police measures included new steel fencing in front of the parliament building during the Syntagma Square movement (2011). Since the outbreak of the 2010 crisis, neo-Nazi groups have also been active in Athens. The rise of the extreme Right after the outbreak of the crisis has been maintained (Dalakoglou 2012, 2013) with the anarchists and migrants being the main target of extremists.

The redevelopment projects of the squares Varvakios (which will be further analysed as a location of a case study in Chapter 3) and Kotzia constitute revealing examples of the fragmentary public space renewal projects of the 1980s, directly related to the intention of the municipality to solve the parking problem in the city centre by creating a number of parking garages under unbuilt lots and squares. Varvakeios Square, opposite to Athens Municipal Market, was constructed at the end of the 1980s, in the form of a multi-level public space, which contains underground parking, ground-floor shops (vegetable market) and an elevated square-park on the roof. Before the Olympic Games, the open spaces were redesigned, mainly introducing new green spaces as well as recreational and cultural uses⁶³. However, the redevelopment of the square was soon proved to be problematic and a new upgrading project has been recently launched focusing on the overall regeneration of the Municipal Market area. The present form of Kotzia Square is the result of two independent urban projects: the construction of the underground parking (1994-96) and the redevelopment of the square (1998-2000), the implementation of which was eventually included in the wider regeneration program of the historical centre of Athens. The integration of the archaeological findings in the northeast corner of the square that came to light between 1985-88, the treatment of the square as a whole entity and its simple layout in terms of urban equipment, gave the square the characteristics of a space of passage, movement and sitting of the passers-by, enabling it at the same time to be used for social, commercial, political and other events.

The character of the Kotzia and Varvakios squares gained significance with the decision to redevelop the Omonoia and Monastiraki squares, in the framework of the Unification of the Archaeological Sites of Athens program⁶⁴. Omonoia Square was redeveloped within the collaboration framework of several public agents (the former Ministry of Environment, Planning and Public Works, ATTIKO METRO SA, Unification of the Archaeological Sites of Athens SA (EAHA S.A.), former General Secretariat for Public Works and Athens Urban Transport Organisation) to upgrade the historic

⁶³ Avdelidi, K., Vitopoulou, A., Gemenetzi, G., Gortsos, K., Vlastou, F., Massou, E. (2017). *Issues on urban design of public space: social and spatial identifications in the case of 4 central squares in Athens*. National Centre for Social Research, Athens

⁶⁴ Ibid.

centre of the city. The present form of the square resulted from the implementation of the architectural competition proclaimed by EAHA SA in 1998, in view of the Olympic Games. The redevelopment of Monastiraki Square was initiated by the Ministry of Culture and the former Ministry of Environment, Planning and Public Works and completed by EAHA SA. The square was completed in 2008 and its design resulted from the realisation of the first prize in the architectural competition proclaimed by EAHA SA in 1998, after significant modifications caused by the metro construction works. The key redevelopment elements of this vital and busy public space and meeting point, which also encourages spontaneous performances and events are: “the lowering of the square level in relation to the commercial busy axis of Ermou Street; the creation of a single, flat, multi-coloured mosaic surface that symbolises the continuous flow of pedestrians; the integration and enhancement of the historical ruins and archaeological findings that came to light during the construction of the metro”.

The above discussion on a selection of squares of central Athens sets the scene for the description of case studies that will be analysed in Chapter 3. Squares appear to be one public space typology that is often, and mostly, preferred as a site of action for distributed social care.

2.4 Uses and functions since the Greek crisis in 2008

The financial crisis of recent years, the intense social reaction, the gradual removal of certain functions from the city center (ministries, courts, etc.), the lack of an adequate immigration policy and the fragmented confrontation of social problems (the homeless, drug users etc.) led to a rapid degradation of the city centre of Athens. The paradox is that during the ‘crisis’, the Ministry of Citizen Protection is active in ‘deprived’ central areas - the same areas designated for regeneration by the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change.

Financial hardship is accused for the depreciation of public space but in such circumstances, the state is called to give the example of caring for public space, treating it as a point from which the ability to start a new relationship with the citizens can emerge. Along with the aesthetic upgrading of public space, distributed social care could give an opportunity for a more active role of architecture in the society - even though it seems that architecture has been eliminated from the current scene as architects often find themselves struggling for work. Closed shops, businesses and abandoned spaces consisted the new materiality and context enclosing the urban landscape in Athens. The footprint of these modern ruins in everyday life raises social questions and also factors that

challenge architecture as a profession with a specific skill set. It is very significant that, as early in the crisis as 2011, the National Technical Chamber of Greece / Department of Central Macedonia, in collaboration with the School of Architecture of the National Technical University of Athens and the Architecture Departments of all Polytechnic Schools of the country, organised the 1st Conference entitled "*Public Space ... being seeked*"⁶⁵. This could justify the early stages of a period of questioning from within the architecture and urban design professions. It became an undoubtable fact that the 'aesthetics' but mostly the healthy use and function of public space were far from being a first priority. Two years later, in 2013, The University of Thessaly Department of Architecture organised a conference titled "Changes and redefinitions of space in Greek crisis". The aim here was to uncover spatial and connotative transformations reflected on urban space. Concern over public space began early on. This could be an implication of the way by which the society is reflected on the space of the city, both due to psychological as well as material downgrading.

In many cases during this period, private firms undertook construction work, while since 2007 the state has increasingly privatised public assets such as the national highway network. A typical example is the founding of organizations such as the Hellenic Tourist Real Estate SA (2000) and the Olympic Real Estate SA (2002). Although both were state owned, legally they were private companies functioning according to corporate terms. In 2011 they were unified and now have the right to use, manage, and administrate some of the country's most expensive real estate including seafront properties, small islands, peninsulas, the old Athens airport, archaeological sites, museums, stadiums and sport facilities, marinas, ski centers, casinos, etc. Altogether, the two original corporations and the Public Properties Company SA, which replaced them, signify the transfer of state-owned property into private forms. Additionally, the Greek state has decided to liquidate its assets, selling real estate for very low prices in the name of the debt to IMF and ECB⁶⁶.

Since the 2010s, the crisis has led to an intensified neglect of the city centre. Yet, an increasing number of regeneration competitions have been launched using terms such as "re-use", "re-think", and "re-launch". It is in times of crisis that capital is invited to restructure the built environment without the impediment of planning restrictions. Against the backdrop of a fragmented planning

⁶⁵http://portal.tee.gr/portal/page/portal/teetkm/DRASTHRIOTHTES/EKDHLVSEIS/EKDHLWSEIS_2010_2013/DHMOSIOS_XWROS_ANAZHTEITAI

⁶⁶ The Crisis before "The Crisis": Violence and Urban Neoliberalization in Athens. Dimitris Dalakoglou Social Justice Vol. 39, No. 1, p. 27

system, in a state that is highly tolerant to speculation, private initiatives are portrayed as the only way to revitalize the local economy⁶⁷.

An exchange of functions

The “aganaktismeni” (Indignant citizens) movement of Syntagma Square in Athens followed quickly on the steps of movements in Egypt and Spain. In May 2011 tents were erected and daily rallies of thousands of citizens started taking place in the square. General Strikes on June 15 and June 28-29 were the high points of this social movement, with thousands concentrated at the square and clashing with the police in their effort to protest against the new austerity measures introduced during those days by the parliament, located on Syntagma (see Hotspots issue “Beyond the Greek Crisis”). The Syntagma movement emerged from a complex process that deserves more extensive discussion that would shed light on tactics for future actions, as well as the crisis itself. In this limited context, however, it is worth observing a series of more specific linguistic and historical peculiarities regarding that movement. In the USA and the UK the term “occupy” or “occupy movement”⁶⁸ were used to describe the analogous long-term occupations of open-air public spaces. Indeed, many drew direct links between all of these movements. Nevertheless, the Syntagma occupation was not named “Occupy Athens”. The direct references at the time were the movement of Tahrir in Cairo and Puerta del Sol in Madrid⁶⁹. Emphasizing on the global character of this effect, the Greek urban geographer Lila Leontidou chooses the word *piazza* rather than *square* when referring to Syntagma “in order to denote the open and the nodal centre of material and virtual communication rather than an enclosed square and its defined landscape”.

The emergence of new and renewed spaces in Athens went hand in hand with the descent of a proportion of the city center into decay. Marginalised social groups, such as undocumented refugees, started to replace the middle class as the latter began to move out of some central Athenian neighborhoods (Maloutas 2007, 2004; Kandylis, Maloutas, and Sayas 2012; Arapoglou and Sayas 2009). Some urban sites became emblematic of the “decaying” central Athenian materiality. One such site is Omonoia Square and its surrounding areas. In contrast with the idea of piazza as an open and arena as suggested by Lila Leontidou, the central Athens neighborhood of Exarcheia looks much more similar to an enclosed square, specifically framed inside the city plan and crossed or inhabited by a wide multiplicity of political and cultural identities. An example of reuse as a result of

⁶⁷ Alexandri, G. Planning Gentrification and the Absent State in Athens. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, page 47

⁶⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Occupy_London

⁶⁹ Dalakoglou, D. The Movement and the “Movement” of Syntagma Square, page 2

citizens initiative in this area is that of an empty parking lot that turned into the occupied Navarinou Park where cars were replaced by trees and community activities.

Urban development

'In Greece, the most important target of dispossession is public land when (a) there exists unauthorised and illegal occupation, building on and use of public areas; (b) when transactions of public land take place under terms and fees that cause loss to citizens; when public land, building, infrastructures and services are privatised and (d) when institutions are altered or formed to facilitate the trespassing, privatisation or selling off of public land.' (Hatzimichalis, p. 174) For Hatzimichalis (2013, p. 176) "grabbings" of public land and public space take place at multiple scales: from the large areas used for extraction and illegal quarries, tourist real estate with golf courses and the infringement of seashores, all the way to the illegal woodland clearing for cultivation, the thousands of illegal constructions, the occupation of squares and pedestrian streets by restaurant and café tables and chairs, or the extension of our garden wall at the neighbor's expense. What has been noticed is the devaluation of land. The Greek state is selling public land for low prices. For example, Chinese capital targets the ports and transportation hubs. At the same time, many properties are owned by the church. Further to that, as the crisis is spatially expanding in areas of Athens, iconic buildings by star-architects are being introduced: big shopping malls, motorways, urban lofts, cultural centres, marinas etc.

Addressing the distinction between private and public in the book *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt mentions that, according to Aristotle, the house was the realm where people satisfy their physical needs - survival and reproduction. On the contrary, the city - 'polis' consisted the sphere of freedom, where men gather in public to resolve political issues through debate. The household and political realm have both existed since antiquity, both in spatial and ideological terms. But, as Arendt explains, the additional layer of the social realm that exists in the modern age is neither private nor public⁷⁰.

In more recent approaches the work of Richard Sennett *The Tyranny of Intimacy* is a very characteristic example of this notion. Sennett believes in the significance of a public-private distinction and is concerned for the gradual setback of the public sphere towards an increasingly

⁷⁰ Arendt, H. (1998) *The Human Condition*, The University of Chicago. page 28

developing private world of individuals. By studying the general decline of public space, the author argues that the pursuit of privacy in modern societies takes the form of a 'tyranny' of the individual, where the sense of collectivity disappears due to the pressures of the every-day and the understanding of the notion of the private from the perspective of personal emotions and selfish individualism. The decline of public space and public life have been a predominant theme of exploration. In *The Fall of Public Man*, Sennet (1992/1978) argues that public life has become a matter of formal obligation in modern times. More importantly, the private and personal have taken over the public and impersonal, as society became less interested in public matters and more driven by private interests and personal desires.

It seems clear that the public/private discourse has been extensively analysed and discussed by philosophers, lawyers, political scientists, feminists, anthropologists, historians, economists and architects. In the course of this analysis, the distinction is proving to be complex and ambiguous and can not be understood as a simple dichotomy. It is rather about a division that requires and implies a wide range of positions and further discrimination, and which will can remain open to new theoretical definitions, under the constant effects of social change and political controversy.

For Arrendt, privacy used to be related to the "maintenance of life"⁷¹ and then became a shelter for the intimate. Explaining this she concludes that privacy is the opposite of the social sphere (page 38). The human needs to be seen and be heard are associated with the public and the presence of others. As such, if private is the opposite, it implies that it is characterised by the absence of other individuals. Therefore, the term private and public are intertwined. According to Arrendt, "the most elementary meaning of the two realms indicates that there are things that need to be hidden and others that need to be displayed publicly if they are to exist at all"⁷². Drawing from that, all activities that take place in the public realm have a purpose and ambition to become exposed and accepted by society. Antonio Negri advocates towards the resistance of the private/public dichotomy.

With homeless numbers rising, as well as inefficiency of welfare provision and infrastructure, it is not a surprise that we saw cases where people in Athens have used the streets as an improvised makeshift private space. Human survival needs such as sleeping or washing are strictly associated with private life. So, could we assume that someone sleeping on a bench or using the pavement as an alternative lavatory is turning public space into a version of his own bedroom? As Michel Fais

⁷¹ Ibid, Page 28

⁷² Ibid, p.73

states in his photographic album *The City on its Knees* (2006) “We become hosts in the public”, exposing our private actions outside into general view. In present Athens, this does not only concern those deprived of their homes and shelter. The suffocating pressure, lack of hope and passivity in the society can lead people towards an abnormally relaxed reaction, indulging into adopting certain behaviours as if it is of minor significance. As if the situation is so bad already that, any motive to care about what behaviour in public space should be, diminishes. In the historical neighborhood of Neapoli for example at the centre of the city, with the Law School of the University of Athens only a few roads away, a general decay of urban space became visible.

Public space facilitates encounters and it is crucial to the development of socio-spatial transformations. Cupers (2005, p.734) raises the point that public space can be envisaged as a palimpsest of historical layers, some of which have disappeared while others remain active. For Harvey (2003, p.940), the right to the city should not be merely ‘ a right of access to what the property speculators and planners define, but an active right to make the city different (...)’.

Civic engagement in the space of the city

In her book *Ordinary places, extraordinary events: Citizenship, Democracy, and Public Space in Latin America*, urban designer Clara Irazábal (2008) sets public space in the centre of citizenship and politics. The author advocates that cities in Latin America are a characteristic example where public spaces have played a crucial role in socio-political specificities. It is argued that attention here is shifted from the everyday narratives in cities to the “extraordinary uses and meanings of those spaces”(p. 2). Many of the case studies mentioned here are concerning societies that have been democratised relatively recently, and had a history of dictatorship. These conditions deprived citizens of their right to gather in public spaces and even private space was not entirely safe. The mode of practice, the triggers and aims of groups of citizens like the ones that have been described so far could raise questions regarding the relationship between austerity and the displacement of privacy in people’s lives.

As Irazábal explains, physical "public spaces embody the tensions between cultural diversity and social integration, and are crucial to the expression and resolution of complex socio-spatial transformations in cities around the globe"⁷³. It would be intriguing for the same authors to focus their attention on more ordinary activities in more mundane spaces, further enriching the

⁷³ Irazábal (2008, p.23)

understanding of the uses of outdoor spaces by citizens around the world. It is of course true that mobilisations and demonstrations in public space do not always lead to radical transformations. Addressing the notion of citizenship, the author argues that people perform citizenship through “their participation in the conception, construction and management of the city and through the negotiations of the use of public space”. Further to that, the concept of insurgent urbanism and insurgent citizenship introduced by Holston (1995) is addressed, in comparison with the nature of the case studies analysed.

Miraftab (2004) distinguishes citizen actions in public space into two categories “the ‘Invited’ spaces - the ones occupied by grassroots and NGO’s that are legitimised by funds and government interventions and the ‘Invented’ spaces which are also occupied by grassroots and collective action, but directly confront the authorities. The former act towards providing those in need with support and the latter hope for a larger change and resistance” (Miraftab, 2004 , p.1). Of course, including this spatial layer in the definition of citizenship, reveals aspects that may have been previously excluded. Doreen Massey (2004) describes a form of spatially expressed citizenship that is based on continuous negotiation. Miraftab (2004, p.211) also argues that there is a demand for a ‘planning practice that relies not merely on the high commands of the state but on situated practices of citizens’.

Edward Soja (1996) calls the measurable material space the ‘First space’, linking it to Lefebvre’s (1974) *perceived space*. Secondly, there is the ‘Second space’ or Lefebvre’s *conceived space*. This refers to the imaginary space of mental constructions ‘made up of projections into the empirical world from conceived or imagined geographies’ (Soja 1996, 79). And thirdly, there is the ‘Third space’, which is ‘a space of extraordinary openness and a place of critical exchange’ (Soja 1996, 5). Lefebvre calls it the *lived space*, which is the significant spatial moment of activity, lived experience and the ‘spatialisation’ (Shields 1999) of social life. Spatiality offers critical hints of the production of space itself. Christian Schmid (2008, 28) mentions precisely that ‘space “in itself ” can never serve as an epistemological starting position. Space does not exist “in itself ”; it is produced’.

Additionally, Jonathan Raban affirms the need to reawaken the inhabitant to the space of the city”(1974: 2)⁷⁴. His interpretation of the city as a living organism is considered crucial for the direction of this thesis. He claims that a city can be divided into two parts: the ‘hard city’ that one

⁷⁴ Raban, J. (1974) *Soft City*. London: The Harvill Press.

can map through roads, buildings and public spaces and the 'soft city' of inhabitants, multiple belongings and imagining desires. According to Raban's terminology, the process of softening urban space is the extent to which the 'soft city' informs and eventually remaps the 'hard city'.

Focusing on the relationship between citizens and urban public space, attention is drawn to Gabriel Duarte (2005) who addressed the physical qualities of the interactions and activity of citizens in the city. He explained that 'Public space is changed by the material presence of the bodies, which become concrete architectural-urban entities in their spatial configuration'. This perspective is also fundamental for the research as it can facilitate an approach on the impact of civic engagement in urban transformations. For Athens in particular, architect Aristide Antonas explains that, "today, at its current state, Athens cannot be seen as a typical city but as an exemplary urban case. In that sense, Greek architects are not so much concerned with what is being built, but with the complex transformations that the city is experiencing"⁷⁵

These effects have been studied as part of the "Urban Transformations" network at the University of Oxford. The project *The Urban Politics and Governance of Social Innovation in Austerity is currently taking place (2016-2019)*. It is a comparative research between the cities of Athens, Berlin and Newcastle, aiming to "identify the roles of alternative finance, grassroots mobilisation and community provisioning in meeting the needs of their citizens as traditional forms of authority are disrupted and competition for public services increases"⁷⁶. The project has been triggered by the emerging need to explore the implications of austerity on urban politics. Since the effects of austerity in the selected cities are ongoing, the findings are expected to provide new evidence. To enable the research, local practitioners, activists and policy makers are brought together. In Athens specifically, the project focuses on six different field sites: Galatsi Resistance and Solidarity Movement/ Without Middlemen, Solidarity Clinic of Athens (KIFA), Mesopotamia/ Moschato Citizens Movement, MKIE/ Metropolitan Community Clinic at Helliniko, Solidarity Piraeus and UrbanDig Project⁷⁷.

Prior to that, the Urban Transformations network has completed research on the project *Collaborative Governance under Austerity: An Eight-Case Comparative Study (2015-2017)*⁷⁸. The

⁷⁵ <http://antonas.blogspot.co.uk/search?updated-max=2010-12-24T09:49:00-08:00&max-results=15&reverse-paginate=true>

⁷⁶ <http://www.urbantransformations.ox.ac.uk/project/the-urban-politics-governance-austerity/>

⁷⁷ <http://community.dur.ac.uk/pursi/about/field-sites/field-sites-athens/>

⁷⁸ <http://www.urbantransformations.ox.ac.uk/project/collaborative-governance-under-austerity-an-eight-case-comparative-study/>

focus here was to highlight the significance of the collaboration with active citizens and voluntary bodies in times of austerity. The challenge for governments under these circumstances is to enable public services to deal with increasing cuts and the demanding expectations of the citizens for public services. However, it is identified that collaboration –between the government and businesses for example - can also lead to exclusion and marginalisation. In order to examine such issues, the project aimed to reveal specificities and changes of “the urban condition in and after austerity”, reflecting on the role of citizens.

Under this research agenda, Dr. Ioannis Chorianopoulos and Dr. Nayia Tselepi (2017) explore the impact of austerity on the civil society in the paper *Austerity and Grassroots Mobilisation in Athens: the Emergence of an Urban Governance Divide?*⁷⁹ The authors here approach the issue from a Gramscian perspective. They identify that a long lasting recession of this scale triggers the mobilisation of the civil society led by welfare needs. As it is mentioned by the authors, “more than 2.500 initiatives have emerged” across Greece and with a more intense presence in Athens⁸⁰. This information is derived from a group of volunteers called *Omicron Project* who are attempting to map these initiatives.

The notion of informality is portrayed as a key feature of these initiatives, deriving from the lack of a legal status in most cases. Volunteerism is another common feature and it is operated by means of online platforms, which inform the public about the needs of initiatives (Volunteer4Greece, Solidarity4all). As such, informality is contradicting formal institutions and their absence or actions. Of course, the common drive for all initiatives is their position against austerity. The combination of informality and voluntarism forms an effort to produce “self-managed spaces of encounters amongst citizens, that avoid hierarchies.”

There have been cases where distributed social care initiatives have made use of resources provided by the municipality of Athens to promote their objectives. “One Stop”⁸¹ is the case of two NGOs which, together with two informal social solidarity networks and a number of individuals, gather twice a week in a municipal building offering hot food and a variety of services (legal advice, medical

⁷⁹ <http://www.urbantransformations.ox.ac.uk/blog/2017/austerity-and-grassroots-mobilization-in-athens-the-emergence-of-an-urban-governance-divide/>

⁸⁰ <http://www.urbantransformations.ox.ac.uk/blog/2017/austerity-and-grassroots-mobilization-in-athens-the-emergence-of-an-urban-governance-divide/>

⁸¹ <https://www.greecevol.info/orgs.list.php?ID=148>

care, laundry, haircut, showers, playing with children etc.). “One stop” is operating through the online platform “synAthina”⁸² which was created by the municipality of Athens to facilitating unofficial groups and citizen initiatives to become exposed and known to the public. However, groups involved in this platform, are not willing to become further associated with the municipal administration. SynAthina will be further discussed in Chapter 3.

Political and economic crises challenged established frameworks, as people withdrew their commitment to social order and started creating alternative spaces in search of new ways of organizing their life in the city. These spaces, starting with the Greek Indignados movement of the squares in 2011, marked a series of collective efforts to challenge prefigurative social formations and provided alternatives to corrupted institutional structures, the increasing privatization of public spaces, the collapse of the health care system and social services. These alternatives, guided by autonomy, solidarity and responsibility (Parker, Cheney, Fournier, & Land, 2014), are found in the form of occupied (public) spaces (Daskalaki, 2014), workers’ collectives and cooperatives (Kokkinidis, 2015; Varkarolis, 2012), Local Exchange Trade Systems (Gritzias & Kavoulakos, 2016) and social clinics and pharmacies (Rakopoulos, 2016). Many neighbourhood assemblies like Lampidona or the Kafenio at the Academia Platonos Park which will be analysed in Chapter 3, promote self-organisation and the constitution of a ‘common space’ as a means of coming together and developing alternative ways of coming together in their neighbourhood. The participants/activists take responsibility for the (often occupied or rented) spaces, and bring together people. Such neighbourhood assemblies also collect and distribute food and provide services like education or health.

According to Jane Jacobs “Whenever and wherever societies have flourished and prospered rather than stagnated and decayed, creative and workable cities have been at the core of the phenomenon. Decaying cities, declining economies, and mounting social troubles travel together. The combination is not coincidental.” Jacobs suggested that buildings, streets and neighborhoods function as dynamic organisms, changing in response to how people interact with them. According to this idea, cities depend on a diversity of residences, businesses, and people of different ages using areas at different times of day, to create community vitality. She saw cities as being “organic, spontaneous, and untidy,” and views the intermingling of city uses and users as crucial to economic and urban development. Architect Nikos Anastasopoulos⁸³ claims that there is evidence and phenomena of increased spatial and social pathogenesis in Athens. In some cases, manifested violations and their effects become normalised. Nevertheless, the source we could draw optimism from, are the citizen-

⁸² <http://www.synathina.gr/en/>

⁸³ <http://www.arch.ntua.gr/en/node/115>

led initiatives concerned with public space. To mention a few that operate in Athens: *Guerilla Gardeners*, *Transition Initiatives*, *Rebar*, *Atenistas*, *Local Athens*, *Urban Void*, *UrbanDig Project*, *Nomadic Architecture* and many more. Approaching these from an architectural perspective, it is interesting to see how they address spatial qualities and functions. In the majority of those initiatives, if not in all of them, group members include architects. It is clear that the profession is seeking to deploy alternative methods and areas of action.

According to architect Stavros Stavrides, in many cases direct confrontation with existing policies of public space is attempted. It happens that in times of crisis, authorities appear as guarantors of peace and security in public space. So this rapidly converts the authorities to some kind of control mechanism. In distinction to this kind of publicness there has been a production of a different type of space. What he calls common space. Open communities that emerged through Syntagma square occupation and citizen-led practices produced common spaces through the process of having newcomers joining them. As a result, they are spaces in the making. New forms of urban citizenship emerge – in confrontation with the existing ones. Common spaces are not adopting only one use and one form. An example of activities that take place in such spaces is the practice of artists or doctors who volunteer at social clinics. Architect Dina Vaiou mentions that urban citizenship is a big debate: in the city level you should have lots of kinds of rights – access to education, health, public space, safety. Stavrides further addresses the fact that the real estate market in Greece is almost destroyed. This could form one condition that may describe the spatiality of the crisis. This greatly affects the middle class, not only the poor. The immigrants are pushed even further out or to neighbourhoods that are formed like ghettos. Homelessness of this scale is a new phenomenon in Greece. These changes in Athens are very visible and intervene in the spatial setting. Public space is used by more people than it used to be. People who spend a large part of their everyday life in public space. It is not only used more but also in inventive ways. It also becomes contested because of that by racist and also solidarity behaviours. Public space has become a battleground and the focus of many interventions by the state and the municipality but also by citizens. Most of the people counting on their salaries for survival cannot predict their future as the market collapsed. Stavrides reminds that the greek society used to live in public space and express their collective experience in public space. The comparison to the effects post-crisis definitely show a cultural change.

Chapter 3

Distributed social care case studies

This chapter is looking at a number of case studies the researcher interacted with during fieldwork, all of which are solely or partially concerned with social care and are based in Athens. It will describe each of the case studies and it will look for commonalities and differences in order to propose an operational taxonomy against which these case studies can be critically considered. It will be focusing on a demonstration of data and visual material derived from participation in a workshop, observation and research on online news platforms. This includes primary data and a design project as part of the workshop *Transforming the (Re)Public*,⁸⁴ discussions with architects and members of community assemblies, and empirical data. Emphasis will be given on case study initiatives to include social kitchens, residents committees and social groceries in an attempt to highlight their drives, organisation and architectural characteristics. Each of the case studies will contribute towards an understanding of their relationship with their location within the city and their spatial requirements. The selection of the specific initiatives is an outcome of the fieldwork undertaken and they consist characteristic examples, each concerned with a variety of social care activities, but with a distinct organisation model.

3.1 Spatial manifestations of distributed social care

In the previous chapters, certain functions in the city of Athens that have either changed or been affected during the post-crisis period were discussed. The manifestation of these consequences in the urban environment is revealing links between the social and the spatial spheres. Circumstances are constantly evolving, following the various shifts in the financial conditions and the political scene. During the early years of the crisis for example, the decay caused by the numerous abandoned and deserted buildings and businesses in central Athens had a spatial impact on the urban environment and its narratives. These sudden voids in the city however provided more free space for alternative functions that could potentially become transferred to new locations. One such example that has often emerged as an opportunity in recent years is tourism. As a result, areas that were once considered to be the financial hubs of the city have seen their profile changing due to the recycling of 'voids' for different purposes. Perhaps this is a particular moment in time when we can step back and reflect on the visible short-term effects of the crisis.

Today, local assemblies and groups may have shown signs of decay and occasional lack of consistency, but we can still observe their evolution and the continuous creation of new social and

⁸⁴ <http://transformingtherepublic.urbantranscripts.org>

cultural hubs, alternative economies and other activities. The main aim of these initiatives is to create spaces where the local community can search for various means of “survival”, fostering expression and creativity at the same time. Some of them focus on creating new forms of organising the unemployed at a local level, others mainly on upgrading the quality of living, dealing with cultural and social issues. NGOs, as well as programs of “community service” by the EU, also aim to fill the gap of the collapsed social care services.

After participation in a workshop, fieldwork, observation in the streets of Athens and further research using online sources, the chapter will focus on distributed social care examples providing:

- *health care*
- *food provision*
- *shelter*
- *learning support/ teaching and cultural activities*

Distributed social care providers fall in the following categories:

- NGOs / Non Profit organisations
- Public /semi-public organisations (institutional support)
- Private initiative
- Local initiatives / autonomous assemblies

Re-addressing the commons

“The reinvention of the commons needs space and time for sharing; it needs continual and sustained commoning, that is the production of social processes to reinvent, maintain and reproduce the commons. It also needs specific agencies and the contribution of active subjects – agents – to instigate and carefully engineer these processes. Architects and designers could be such agents”⁸⁵ (Hardt and Negri, 2004). “Sustaining and designing commons is a challenge for architects and designers today: designing as commoning, designing for sharing, designing collectively in such a way that design is not perceived as a privilege and a commodity anymore; designing in a way that does not segregate and exclude, but rather assembles, socialises, and eventually politicises”. Perhaps we could borrow from the fundamental concepts that revolve around the idea of the commons and which were also formulated in parallel with the emergence of distributed social care, in order to

⁸⁵ Hardt, M. and Negri, A, (2004). *Multitude: Guerre et democratie a l’age de l’empire*. Paris: La Decouverte, p. 9-10

tackle the issue of the responsibilities of the architectural profession. Are these social changes leading architects into new paths of practice?

In *Insurgent Public Space*, Jeffrey Hou (2014) addresses Laguerre's (1994) 'urban informality' as a site of power. He claims that instances of self-made urban spaces, reclaimed and appropriated sites, temporary events, as well as informal gathering places produced by predominantly marginalized communities and excluded individuals, have provided new expressions for the collective realms in the contemporary city. These insurgent public spaces challenge the conventional notion of what we consider public but also the traditional making of space.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, central urban spaces such as squares, markets, streets and urban parks have been locations of civic life providing opportunities for gathering, developing social relations, recreation, entertainment, as well as protests and demonstrations. Hou explains that, "as civic architecture, urban open spaces become collective expressions of a city"⁸⁶. Henaff and Strong (2001:35)⁸⁷ also note that public space "designates an ensemble of social connections, political institutions, and judicial practices." Brill (1989: 8)⁸⁸ states that public space comes to represent the public sphere and public life. Early into the crisis and austerity measures, solidarity came to confront the multiplying demand for basic needs such as food, health care and shelter. In 2016, 3 million people had difficulties accessing health care as an outcome of the crisis and austerity. An extensive movement of solidarity clinics and community pharmacies took action. Evlampidoua and Kogevinas (2017) recorded 92 active solidarity clinics in autonomous collective functioning, providing free services with funding and donations from non-governmental sources. The largest of those clinics examined "more than 500 uninsured or partly insured patients per month and covered a wide range of clinical and preventive services"⁸⁹.

As it was previously mentioned in Chapter 1, a new law was introduced in 2016 providing access to health care for the uninsured population. Until then, the uninsured were covered by the national health system only for emergencies. The acute effects of the austerity measures on the access to healthcare and the health of the population proved to be alarming. Remarkably, they resulted in the

⁸⁶ Hou, J. (2010) *Insurgent Public Space*. New York: Routledge p. 2

⁸⁷ Henaff, M. and Strong, T.B. (eds.) (2001) *Public Space and Democracy*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

⁸⁸ Brill, M. (1989) 'Transformation, Nostalgia, and Illusion in Public Life and Public Space', in Altman, Irwin and Zube, Ervin H. (eds.) *Public Places and Spaces*, New York: Plenum Press

⁸⁹ Evlampidoua, I. Kogevinas, M. (2017). *Solidarity outpatient clinics in Greece: a survey of a massive social movement*. Elsevier, S.L.U.

spontaneous development of solidarity. The solidarity clinics were later characterised as a social movement also posing a wider strong political character, although they were not formally connected to political parties or institutions. Before the crisis, some big Greek NGOs (Médecins Sans Frontières, PRAKSIS⁹⁰, Médecins du Monde) provided primary care services primarily to migrants and uninsured people in the cities of Athens and Thessaloniki. After 2009, NGO PRAKSIS has introduced infrastructure such as the Athens Polyclinic, Day Centre for the Homeless, “Stegi” shelter for asylum seekers⁹¹ as well as regular social work on the streets. In addition, the City of Athens (state funded) initiated the Homeless Foundation KYADA.⁹² It is impressive however to also address the numerous neighbourhood initiatives that have spread across Athens, either initiated individually or collectively. These attempted to respond to the malfunction of the social care and healthcare systems, but also to the wider changes and effects on their local community.

Distributed social care could be perceived as a type of resistance against the effects of severe public spending cuts. In the paper *Organizing Solidarity Initiatives: A Socio-spatial Conceptualization of Resistance*, Daskalaki and Kokkinidis examine the role of solidarity mobilisations, the material and immaterial production of resources and the significance of mobility in their development. They draw from the *Indignados* in Spain, the Arab uprisings and the protests in Athens, advocating that it is also through collective spaces and socio spatial reconfiguration that new modes emerge. Accordingly, the authors suggest that resistance spaces lie within an extensive system of fixed/mobile socio-spatial events. Hence, rather than understanding resistance spaces as static, they highlight the various interconnections and flows across space and time. Distributed social care does not lead to isolated incidents of resistance, but as a whole they are a combination of collective/individual efforts towards social and spatial impacts. Although most of the activities of organised groups remain localized within fixed spaces and areas, their actions are interconnected with social interactions that take place in a much larger spatial scale. “Resistance is a collective and spatially performed act of creation, a continuous reconfiguration of socio-spatial relations that can bring about new forms of agency and transform the ways we work and organise”⁹³.

⁹⁰ <https://www.praksis.gr/en/>

⁹¹ <https://eeagrants.org/project-portal/project/GR05-0003>

⁹² <https://www.cityofathens.gr/en/node/7511>

⁹³ Daskalaki, M. & Kokkinidis, G. (2017).

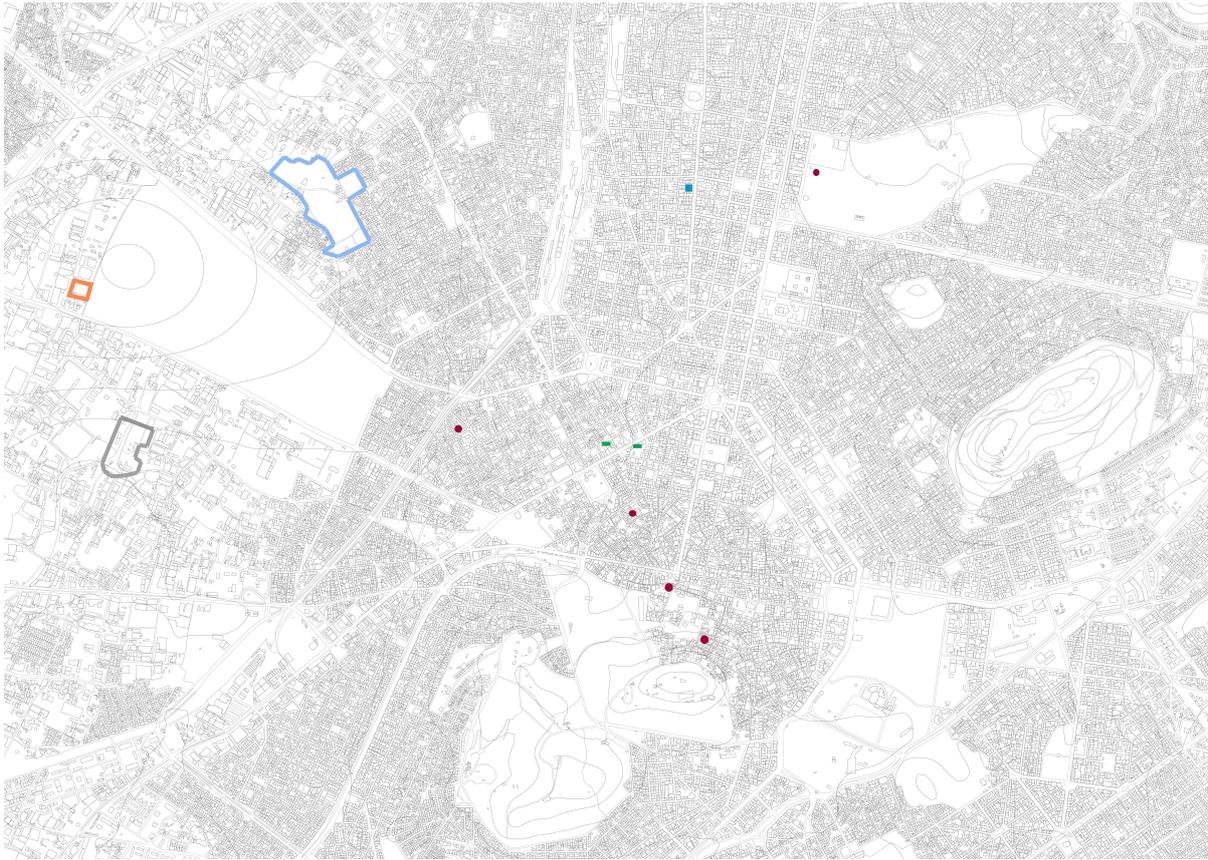


Fig. 20 Locations of case studies

- “Kafenio” at Academy of Plato, residents committee
- “Souzy Tros” initiative
- Eleonas refugee camp
- O Allos Anthropos Social Kitchen
- Day Centres for the homeless
- Athens Polyclinic - PRAKSIS NGO

3.2 Workshop in Athens: *Akadimia Platonos Residents Committee* – community engagement

Transforming the (Re)Public Workshop organised by Urban Transcripts, 19-26 November 2017

Unit: Common Goods – Common Benefits

The following section focuses on a brief description of the socio-spatial characteristics of an area of Athens – Academia Platonos Park and the surrounding neighbourhood, as explored during participation at the workshop in Athens in November 2017.

Academia Platonos is a neighbourhood located northwest of the city centre of Athens, in close proximity to Omonia Square. It is named after Plato's Academy, which was there between 377BC and 529AD. The archaeological ruins of the Academy are located inside the Park. Interestingly enough, until the 19th century, the area simply consisted of small gardens, orchards and olive trees. It became part of the city masterplan in 1887 and 1893 serving as one of the major industrial zones of the city with both large and smaller scale factories and warehouses. The inhabitants were mainly working class at the time. In 1929, the Park was included in the new city masterplan, while in 1978 – after the fall of dictatorship – it was officially recognised as a protected green area. Between the 50s and 70s, there was a major housing transformation in Academia Platonos and the surrounding areas of Kolonos, Sepolia, Metaksourgio with the widespread construction of 'polykatoikia' – the multi-storey residential buildings – making the area appear densely populated.

Today, the population of the neighbourhood is ranging between 10.000 and 15.000. Its inhabitants are mostly of Greek origin while the rest of the population consists of migrant groups (Albanian, Pakistani, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Romania). After the 2000s migrants from Middle East and African countries have inhabited the neighbourhood while an increasing number of young people were relocated there during the last decade, coming from the nearby, gentrified area of Metaksourgio where the rents are not affordable.



Fig. 21 Locating Akadimia Platonos Park and residents committee headquarters in Athens

Low rents have turned Academia Platonos into a desirable housing area as it remains in close proximity to the city centre. Additionally, social reasons are another factor that has affected relocation in the neighbourhood. Many natives who grew up in the area but left later on have now returned to their family homes for financial reasons. According to their narratives, before the 1990's the neighbourhood was peaceful and the park was a safe place. Today, older people in particular mentioned they are afraid to walk in the streets in the evenings and don't use the park after sunset. Although some residents express feelings of fear against diversity, others, especially the ones active in local initiatives, enjoy social interaction with residents of various socio-ethnic backgrounds.

In 2002, during the preparation for the Olympic Games, the then government announced the construction of the future Museum of the City of Athens in Academia Platonos Park, at 1/3 of its total area. After this, businesses and investors from Greece and abroad showed interest in the area. In 2008 at the start of the financial crisis, the first discussion for investment was held for the selling of the nearby 55.000 square metre former Mouzakis factory⁹⁴ in order for a shopping mall to be constructed. Apparently, in May 2017, the current government agreed to the selling of the property and the construction of the Academy Gardens Mall by the developer company AKTUME LTD. This led to opposition and reaction from local residents, local authorities, a number of politicians as well as the Association of Archaeologists, architects and urban planners. In particular, the Academia Platonos residents committee has been strongly against the construction of the Mall, arguing that it will destroy local small retail businesses and increase house prices. In their manifesto, which they published online this summer, they also state that the park is a public and common space used by all. They also highlighted the effects this would impose on citizen-led initiatives such as soup kitchens, festivals and sports activities that take place inside the park. This has stimulated an increased use of the park as an open public space by locals.

The residents' association committee of Academia Platonos was established in 2008 as a civil nonprofit organisation. Along with other local committees, they put forward demands relating to the built environment and its improvement. They promote self-organisation and the constitution of a 'common space' as a place to gather and develop alternative ways of coming together in their neighbourhood. Like in other assemblies, the participants/activists take responsibility for the (often occupied or rented) spaces, and bring together people – not only from the local neighbourhood, but a wider group of those supporting their goals. Neighbourhood assemblies such as this one also collect and distribute food and provide services like education or health for those who need it. As

⁹⁴ <http://www.ekathimerini.com/161984/article/ekathimerini/business/work-to-start-on-academy-gardens>

many people become involved, the potential arises for a re-configuration of public space that may turn into the common space of a new public sphere, as Harvey (2012) argues.

Especially after 2010 and implementation of austerity measures, the residents' association formed solidarity groups that are dealing with everyday needs such as food and clothing, auxiliary classes for students, social groceries and their own seed growing activities. Since their activity expanded, they found a space to rent where their meetings can be hosted. It is called "Kafenio" and it is opposite a gate of the Academia Platonos Park, which is the public space the area took its name from. It is the location where Plato established his Academy in ancient Athens. The Kafenio engages with social matters concerning the area and its inhabitants and hosts soup kitchens, classes, workshops and meetings of activists. It promotes the need for solidarity, environmental development and human relations. The Platonas initiative organises language classes, traditional dancing classes, while every Sunday they offer free Greek language classes for the migrant population. These initiatives have formed a network of relationships and social bond between active members and advocate their ideas concerning the area. New initiatives are constantly emerging and are organised in public spaces of the neighbourhood and mainly inside the park.



Fig. 22 The park at the time of Plato's Academy and its archaeological ruins today

Initiatives such as the Sunday's migrant's school promote solidarity and cater for the needs of the deprived population. By means of food and clothing distribution, the provision of supporting classes, dancing events and collective cooking and eating, there is an exchange of ideas, skills and hopes. The park and the Kafenio have become a meeting point for open discussions and instigation of new citizen-led actions. For the residents, the preservation of the architectural and archaeological heritage of the Academia Platonos area as well as of the green space are of great significance. They oppose any construction inside Plato's park and raise awareness against the destruction of the green spaces.

In most areas of Athens, open public space is limited. As a result, Academia Platonos park is an exemplary case where local initiatives and activists encourage the use of the park by diverse social groups. As the area mainly consists of deprived households affected by the crisis, the use of the park as a public space is the only affordable opportunity for social interaction. The aim during the workshop was to re-imagine future scenarios for Academia Platonos Park from a local perspective. Through design, writing and performance, the existing site was counteracted by the perception of local stakeholders and residents. Watson (2006: 7) argues, "public space is always in some sense, in a state of emergence, never complete and always contested." Mitchell (2003: 5) further argues that struggle "is the only way that the right to public space can be maintained and only way that social justice can be advanced." To him, it is through the actions and purposeful occupation of a space that it becomes public.

The interior space of the 'Kafenio' at Academia Platonos is used for assembly meetings and other activities. A member of the committee mentioned in a discussion that the wall that faces the direction of the park is painted green to emphasise their perception of the 'Kafenio' as a natural extension of the park and the public activities it hosts.

Some of the activities organised by the committee in the kafenio and in the park are:

- A Nomadic Kitchen
- A Seed Bank
- Seminars and classes
- Screenings
- Alternative economy



Fig. 23 Reviving ancient traditions in Academia Platonos Park, 2014

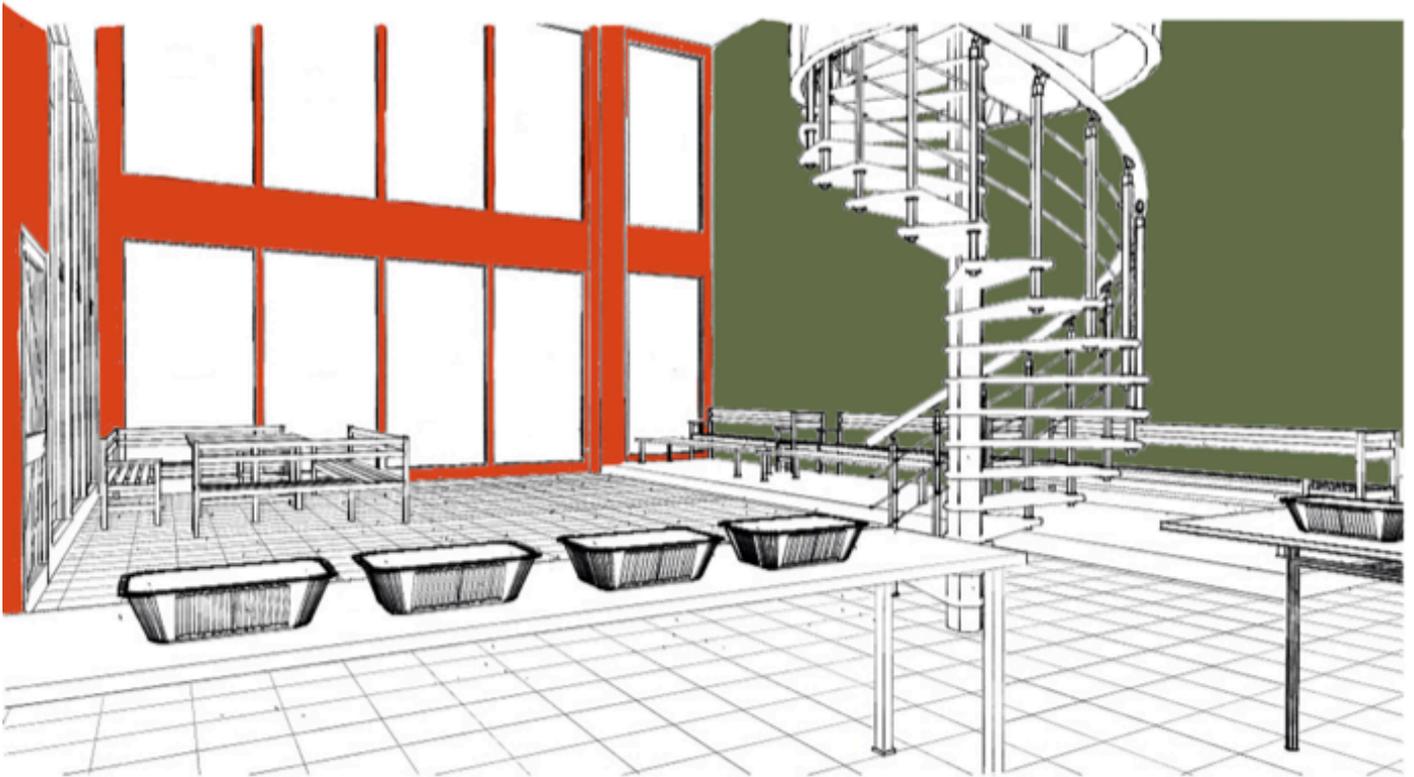


Fig. 24 Drawing of the Interior of Kafenio

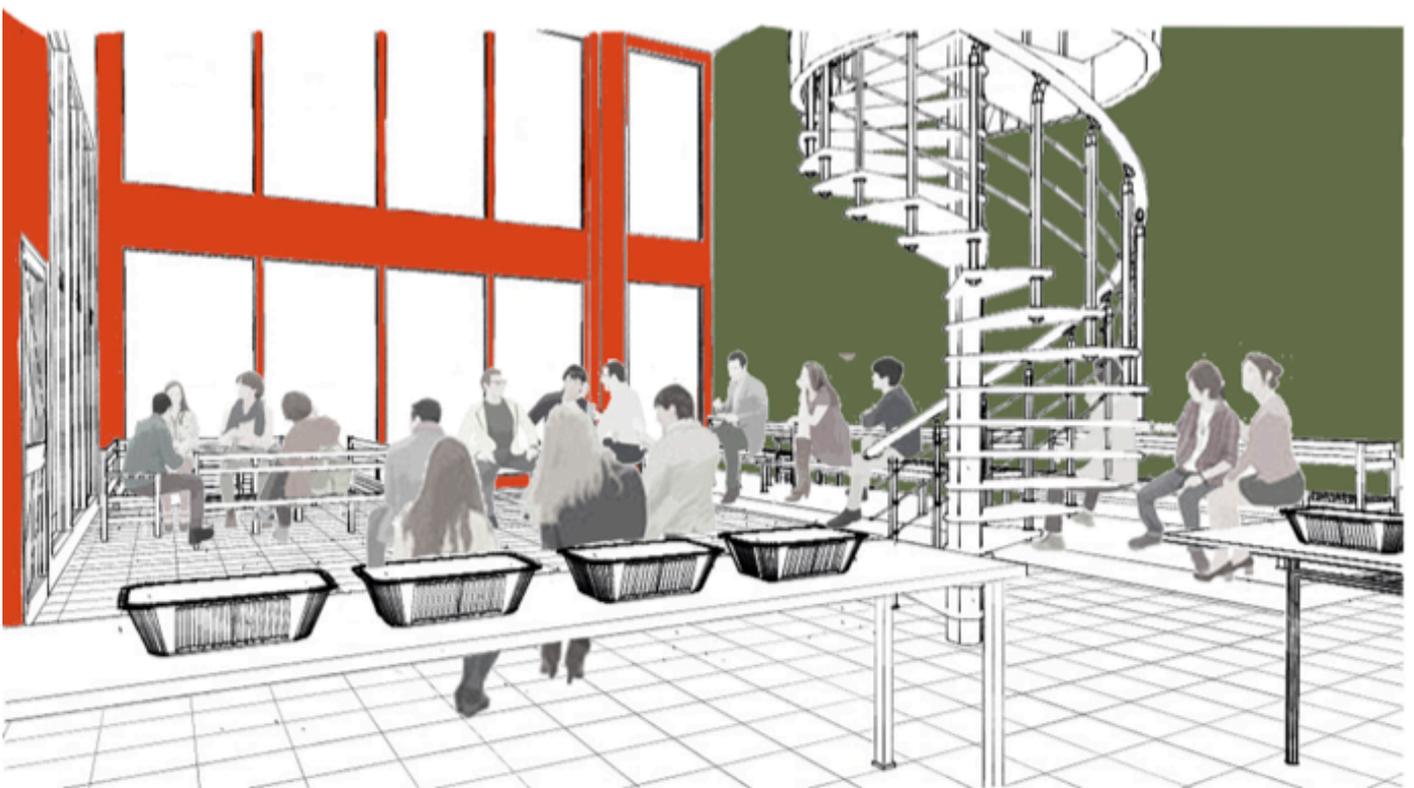


Fig. 25 Drawing of the interior of Kafenio during an assembly meeting



We attended a public meeting organised by our Unit and hosted in Kafenio of Academia Platonos. We observed participatory design processes. Our conclusion is that local actors should have the right to influence their own lives; it is fundamental to involve them in the design process.



**Co-Design
Akademia
Group**

**5.12.2017
Kafenio
meeting**

Fig. 26 Participation at a residents' committee assembly meeting during the workshop in Athens

Since November 2017 and the end of the *Transforming the (Re)Public* workshop, participation has continued, as part of an active network of people who communicate through a mailing list, discussing issues that concern the activity of the residents and the local community. The main target is to promote and inform people globally about the Akademia Platonos Park and the challenges it is facing. The following is a text that has been written collectively to be shared across countries and raise awareness:

“The Archaeological Site

Plato’s Academy is a place of great symbolic significance worldwide: in 387 BC, one of the oldest universities in the world and a cradle of Western civilization was founded here. In this area North-West of the ancient City of Athens, on the banks of Kifissos river and among several places of worship, a gymnasium and a sacred olive grove dedicated to the goddess Athena, Plato established his famous school.

Rediscovered in 1929 through excavation, today Plato’s Academy is an Archaeological Park in the western boundary of the Athens city centre, forming the symbolic core of the neighborhood known by the same name. Furthermore, Plato’s Academy is an “industrial archaeological” site with many abandoned factories and workshops, some of which are of great architectural interest.

The public park and the neighborhood

The archaeological site at Plato’s Academy forms part of a public garden and is a reference point for the whole surrounding area. Plato’s Academy is a dynamic neighborhood of contemporary Athens where new cultural values are shaped and an area where urban commons are produced and cultivated in these “years of crisis” and many efforts related to social, political and economic positive innovation have been created and developed. New ways of cultural production and cooperative, social and solidarity economy processes emerge from the daily life of the neighborhood.

The public park is a precious ‘green island’ of local and city-wide importance for Athens, where the percentage of green areas is very low (7%, vs. the 24% European cities average). As such, it is an essential point of reference for the local residents: A space that allows the development of relationships among the local community, where many leisure, sports, and cultural activities take place. Together all these characteristics make up a polymorphic urban fabric and a unique place

where the ancient past is intermeshed with the more recent one and with the vibrant present, a palimpsest of its archaeological, cultural, natural, industrial and social landscapes.

A shopping mall of any kind, let alone of the size and disrespectful disposition of a project naming itself "Academy Gardens", is utterly incompatible in this context and has to be revoked! Conversely, we believe that the neighborhood possesses the qualities needed for all of us to seek a better quality of life, better, healthier and more vibrant community lives we are in need of.

Help us to preserve our historical cultural heritage and our neighborhood!
Sign this petition, save Plato's Academy!⁹⁵

In March 2018, a workshop titled "Global Urbanism after the Ground: Athens after the Financial Crisis" will take place organised by the Centre for Metropolitan Studies in TU Berlin. As part of this workshop, a walking exercise will begin from the Kafenio outside the park. There is an increased interest in the area with many diverse activities regularly organised, but we also see an increasing interest in the area from researchers, anthropologists and architects.



Fig. 27 Newspaper article announcing the decision of planning approval for the construction of the 22,000m² shopping mall (April 2018)

⁹⁵ text written by Akademia Platonos awareness group

Although similar expressions of citizenship in public space might not seem radical in terms of tools and methods, it is clear that many of the outcomes would not have been possible without extensive local interest and grassroots initiatives. For example, in the Mount Baker neighborhood of Seattle, gardeners and community activists joined to defend a well-used community garden from being sold by the city for private real estate development. Teaming up with open space advocates they petitioned for the City Council to pass a policy that requires the city to compensate sale of park property with an equivalent amount of open space in the same neighborhood. “How do these instances of insurgency challenge the conventional understanding of making public space? How are these spaces and activities redefining and expanding the roles, functions and meanings of the public and the production of space?”⁹⁶ These actions, despite their nature, defy what Sorkin (1992) characterises as the “end of public space.”

3.3 Souzy Tros – workshops – talks – activities

- Victoria Square Project

Located in the neighbourhood of Kypseli in central Athens, Victoria Square became a campsite for refugees who arrived in Athens in 2015 and gradually turned into an “urban symbol”⁹⁷ associated with the so-called refugee crisis. It soon became a challenging ground for experimentation and cultural exchange. As part of the Documenta14 exhibition ⁹⁸that took place in Athens from April until July 2017, artist Rick Lowe chose the Square as the location for his *Victoria Square Project*. His aim was to encourage cultural exchange, involving the local community and the municipality, and establish an appreciation towards diversity.

An empty storefront, 13 Elpidos Street, in a short walking distance from the square was chosen as the headquarters for *Victoria Square Project*. With the changing profile of the area being already evident, this could become a point of study. It is interesting to see how this, once upper-class neighbourhood, has changed through the decades. The pedestrianized street provides the opportunity for many actions to take place outside.

⁹⁶ Hou, J. (2010) *Insurgent Public Space*. New York: Routledge p. 2

⁹⁷ <http://grahamfoundation.org/grantees/5583-victoria-square-project>

⁹⁸ <https://www.documenta14.de/en/>

Despite the fact that Documenta14 is now over the project is still running and considered to be vital for the local community. It is an ongoing “social sculpture”⁹⁹, as described by the organising team. The continued activities have a social and educational focus, aiming to change the profile of the area and encourage a well-informed community that is committed to the development of the square. As part of this process, critical cartography¹⁰⁰ workshops have been planned to take place in March 2018. This approach incorporates elements of history, senses, explorations and complex interpretations that begin with the observations of individuals.

“Rick Lowe described Victoria Square Project as a case of determination. No longer supported by Documenta, the Project tries to seek financial aid from the Greek Municipality. Though a fruitless attempt in most cases, it does remind the Council of VSP’s value, particularly at a time when many of the NGOs within the city are being closed. Lowe hopes to maintain it for this reason, teaming up with local organisations to provide activities and a place of refuge.”¹⁰¹

In an effort to further discover the aims, motives and the activities that are taking place in VSP post-Documenta, contacting artist and Professor Maria Papadimitriou was the next step. Papadimitriou was Lowe’s collaborator on this project and continues her work there towards its maintenance.

-Souzy Tros

⁹⁹ Translated from <http://www.arch.uth.gr/uploads/pages/1640/files/ElpidosMappingGR.pdf>

¹⁰⁰ “Critical cartography challenges academic cartography by linking geographic knowledge with power, and thus is political. Contemporary critical cartography rose to prominence in the 1990s.” J. Crampton J. Krygier, *An Introduction to Critical Cartography*

¹⁰¹ <http://oxfordstudent.com/2017/09/23/post-documenta-14-happens-next/>



Fig. 28 Souzy Tros

Before getting involved in *Victoria Square Project* Maria Papadimitriou, who is a Professor at the Architecture Department, University of Thessaly, had started running her own project. The outdoor art-canteen "Souzy Tros", previously mentioned in the first chapter, was initiated through the re-appropriation of a 19th-century building. It is located in the area of Votanikos in Athens (30 meters away from Eleonas metro station), one of the most suffering districts of the industrial center of the city. The architectural elements of the space consist of three small rooms with a central courtyard that functioned as a common space for social encounters and practices of solidarity and unity. Due to the deteriorating financial conditions in Greece, the business that occupied the structure was shut and the building was abandoned for years. In September 2011 Papadimitriou decided to give life to the abandoned industrial area, creating the outdoor art-canteen "Souzy Tros". The name is inspired from a scene of the famous Greek film *The Parisian* (1969), in which the terrified client of a seamstress claims to be on a diet to fit in her new dress, and in fact she is growing fatter and fatter. The adoption of the popular film quote "Suzy, you eat ... and you lie" is seen here as a critique to the Greek state's refusal to cope with the current economic crisis.

The intention with this initiative was to revive aspects of the history of the space, both as an environment and as a center for material / psychological "rehabilitation". A kind of postmodern marginal space was formed from materials found accidentally and processed, while the canteen serves as an example of how to give life to abandoned buildings. By organizing cultural events, preparing and offering simple food and experiencing new forms of coexistence, through social exchange, the aim was to strengthen human values based on solidarity, communication and collective imagination. Soon Papadimitriou realised that in addition to the many commercial shops on the main street near "Souzy Tros", there was also a residential block of eighteen small houses. So she knocked on every door, both in the residential and the commercial sector, and introduced herself to the tenants in order to develop a local network and to present her ideas on how she would like to develop the space. This door-to-door encounter allowed her to form an idea of the situation and living conditions of the residents and to detect whether they would be open to accept the project in their small community or whether they would have additional ideas themselves on what activities should take place. She immediately started working on the arrangement of the space and the organisation of activities. With help from the neighbors, Papadimitriou started repairing the space, and they soon showed a sense of responsibility and co-ownership, identifying themselves as collaborators of the project. The external appearance of the space reflects the social condition and spatial decay of the city, but not far from the concept of the Athenian courtyard as it has been portrayed in old films.



Fig. 29 Locating Souzy Tros in central Athens

Souzy Tros proposes alternative forms of civic participation, focusing on the goals, ideas, behaviors, habits and daily activities of the local community, through collaborations with wider groups of artists, activists, architects, directors, anthropologists etc. All actions attempt to explore participatory forms of practice that question our perception of diversity. So far, various activities have been organised, but occasionally the space also opens on Sundays for coffee and talks, mainly because the large open-air bazaar takes place nearby and there is some movement. Each organised event currently attracts around 250-350 people. All activities are collective and relate to particular themes, current events or with the needs of our collective everyday life. They derive from collaborations with a range of practitioners, local and international, interdisciplinary groups and immigrant communities, emphasising the importance of gathering around a table to share food and explore new perspectives of collectivity, and of urban life.

A long-term participatory project, Souzy Tros provides the locals with collective inspiration, open to guests from different professional fields. Regular participants include local residents (many of whom are immigrants, who are under great pressure from far right fanatics), artists, students. The purpose is to encourage constructive dialogue as an alternative to violent protests. As an interdisciplinary and symbiotic place that promotes cooperation and exchange, the ambition is that the space will continue to evolve and redefine itself through the actions it hosts.

After contacting Maria Papadimitriou, the potential opportunity to be invited to run a week-long project at Souzy Tros was positively discussed. The idea would be that a topic is proposed to run workshops, talks and activities, invite guests and use it as a testing ground and collaboration opportunity. The day to day process will involve opening Souzy Tros myself every morning, preparing food with members and sit together around the table with guests to do different activities. This will be a useful experience and at the same time a valuable source of information and data to process at a later stage and which could inform the workshop and further research. For example, occupying Souzy Tros for one week will bring different outcomes than organising an hour-long activity. Also, more technical matters such as the operation and layout of the space would play a critical role in the study.



Fig. 30 Open space



Fig. 31 The courtyard is visible and accessed from the main street

The role of food provision

Each organised activity at Souzy Tros is accompanied by the preparation and sharing of food. Cheap food such as trahanas¹⁰² is being cooked and served, initiating collective activities. Soon, there was a massive response from people. Anyone can come, passers-by, locals, foreigners, researchers, students, old people etc. anyone who is interested in participating.

At present, Souzy Tros is going through its second phase as Papadimitriou calls it. Initially, Souzy Tros was collaborating with individuals. Now it has grown bigger and also collaborates with communities. It has become concerned with the creation of a skate park in collaboration with groups from Greece and abroad: “Kassandra”¹⁰³ from Athens and “Pane Per Poveri” (translation: Bread for the Poor) from Italy. The process involves working together with children from the nearby Eleonas Camp. The idea revolves around activating a public space and inviting anyone to join in. This is to emphasise the fact that people are ‘going public’ because they seek to create bonds as a solution and a means by which they could cope with the situation.

The case of Akademia Platonos park residents committee operates actively, triggered by the defence of the park. If we compared it to “Souzy Tros” in terms of operation, some differences arise. Activities at Souzy Tros are purely public in terms of target group of visitors and theme of activities that take place. While a general theme is provided every time, people come and eat, interact and then get involved in activities with no particular goal of a wider impact. The aim is the process and the experience that will derive. As Dr. Maria Papadimitriou mentions, “at the beginning they have no idea what they are doing, but then they come up with a description for it”¹⁰⁴. Also, the space is fixed and consists a point of reference. The Kafenio at Akademia Platonos is also the main point of reference but it is also directly associated with the park across the road in spatial terms and in terms of purpose.

¹⁰² Trahanas is a cheap, healthy dish that contains cracked wheat and fermented milk.

¹⁰³ <http://kassandras.org/projects>

¹⁰⁴ In conversation with Maria Papadimitriou, 25/02/18

3.4 O Allos Anthropos (The Other Human) – Social Kitchen

The Operational Food & Basic Materials Assistance Program 2014-2020 / TEBA is implemented by the Region Of Attica for the provision of food. At the same time, new collective kitchens appear every year in Athens¹⁰⁵. Almost every local initiative organizes collective meals once or twice a week, after other gatherings. But there are also several initiatives and assemblies that are dedicated to providing food to those in need on a more regular basis. We could assume that these, along with pilot programs by the Municipalities or by the Periphery of Attica in cooperation with local non-profit organizations, are the dominant strategies for replacing the gap in social care.

Kostas Polychronopoulos, a man who lost his job at the beginning of the crisis, saw two kids fighting for leftover food at the market and he felt alarmed. Although himself unemployed, he went straight back to his house and prepared a few sandwiches to take back and distribute them to those who couldn't afford a meal. Initially, nobody was brave enough to pick up a sandwich but when Polychronopoulos himself got hungry started eating, people joined him. He believes that this is because they preferred eating *with* him rather than *from* him. It was not an act of charity or philanthropy. It was a type of social contribution and inclusion.

Social Kitchen O Allos Athropos:

Daily Procedure: At 12pm the food preparation begins – ex. peel potatoes, chop onions – then the equipment and food containers are transported with a car to every location.

Who: They feed 60 to 300 people everyday.

Why: Those people don't want to search for their food at soup kitchens organised by the church. For them, it is a matter of dignity.

Where: Different public spaces every day. To Polychronopoulos, food is a means of communication. Eating with others is a social action.

¹⁰⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/regional-innovation-monitor/policy-document/regional-operational-programme-attiki-2014-2020>



Fig. 32 Some of the equipment used daily

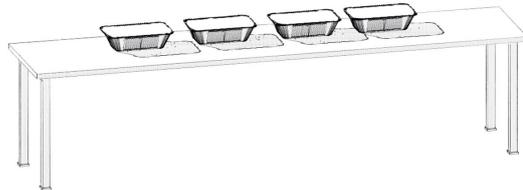
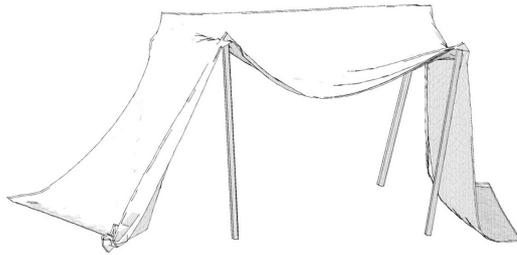
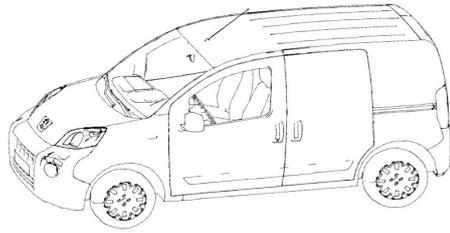


Fig. 33

Transporting the equipment: Car, trolley, table, food containers, table,

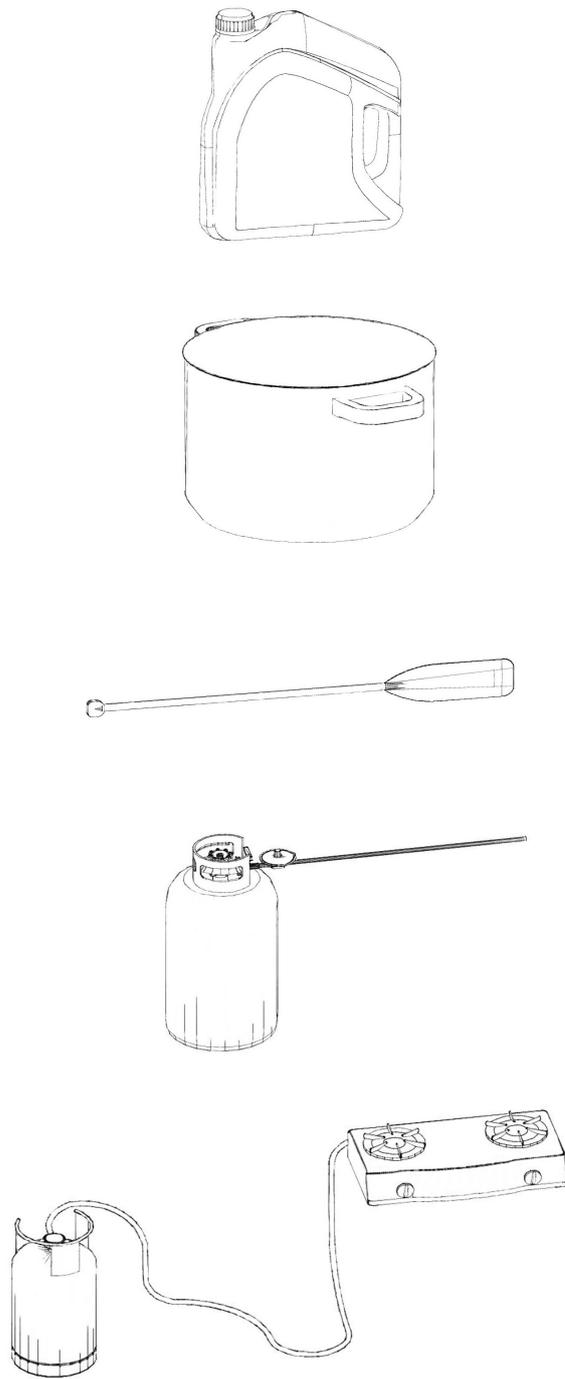


Fig. 34

Equipment: gas bottle, water, casserole



Fig. 35
O Allos Anthropos at Monastiraki Square

Homeless people get a portion of food from the social kitchen every day, the kitchen is open to all and the food is descreately prepared with respect. The daily life of a person living on the street is not easy. Primarily because they live at the borders of the social fabric. They are deprived of the basic good – to be able to wake up in the morning, get out of your bed, have a shower and wear clean clothes. All of a sudden, they lose their personal space and privacy. The space where they were able to think, to have conversations that would remain private.

The storage space currently used by the Other Human as headquarters to store the equipment was abandoned by the previous owner and it was later offered to Kostas. In total, there are 12 social kitchens in Greece with a lot of action in the centre of Athens and wherever there is a need. Communication and information regarding the daily timetable and locations is updated through a website. In addition to the kitchen, they also run a social home at the headquarters where homeless people can go to have breakfast, a shower, wash their clothes and bring their children after school to study. O Allos Anthropos doesn't have a legal form. The only donation it receives is that of food from people who want to help and get involved. Occasionally, they confront problems with the police and also NGOs. There have been cases when petrol money was not enough and they could not drive to locations, cases when they run out of basic ingredients such as olive oil or simply did not have enough volunteers. Many of those involved in the initiative think of solidarity not only as aid but also as resistance.

As it is entirely depending on donations, the social kitchen is frequently confronting financial problems. In June 2018, it was forced to leave its previous headquarters and look for a new space to rent in order to be able to store their equipment and food, and also as a gathering and showering space for the homeless. The space was found, however they were asked to pay 6 months rent in advance. Many parallel actions were organised to support the effort to collect money or goods. An example are a series of free yoga classes – the only request for participants is to offer any of the following:

- Food, spices, honey, coffee, condensed milk
- Kitchen paper, napkins, plastic cutlery, disposable food containers, foil, gloves
- Gas
- Water container

3.5 SynAthina

The SynAthina shelter is located opposite the Varvakios Market in central Athens and it occupies an indoor space of 30m² provided by the municipality of Athens. It also occupies a larger outdoor space where most activities of social care character take place. The SynAthina space is available to civil society, ie informal groups or organizations. Each group needs to fill in a request in order to book the dates and times they want to use the site. The Municipality of Athens proposed the occupation of the abandoned municipal pavilion of Varvakios Square in order to create an openly accessible space for hosting non-profit cultural, social and humanitarian actions. A project team of architects was set up on a voluntary basis to undertake the necessary renovations. The project was then realised by construction companies, with the complete donation of construction materials. According to the Municipality of Athens, since the beginning of its operation, the exterior space and the pavilion of SynAthina have hosted a total of 3100 actions (first aid, laundry, hygiene, haircuts, hot food, activities for children and legal advice) carried out by 378 different groups of citizens and institutions in cooperation with 111 supporters¹⁰⁶.

¹⁰⁶ <https://placeidentity.gr/2018/08/29/anoichti-epistoli-gia-stegi-synathina/>

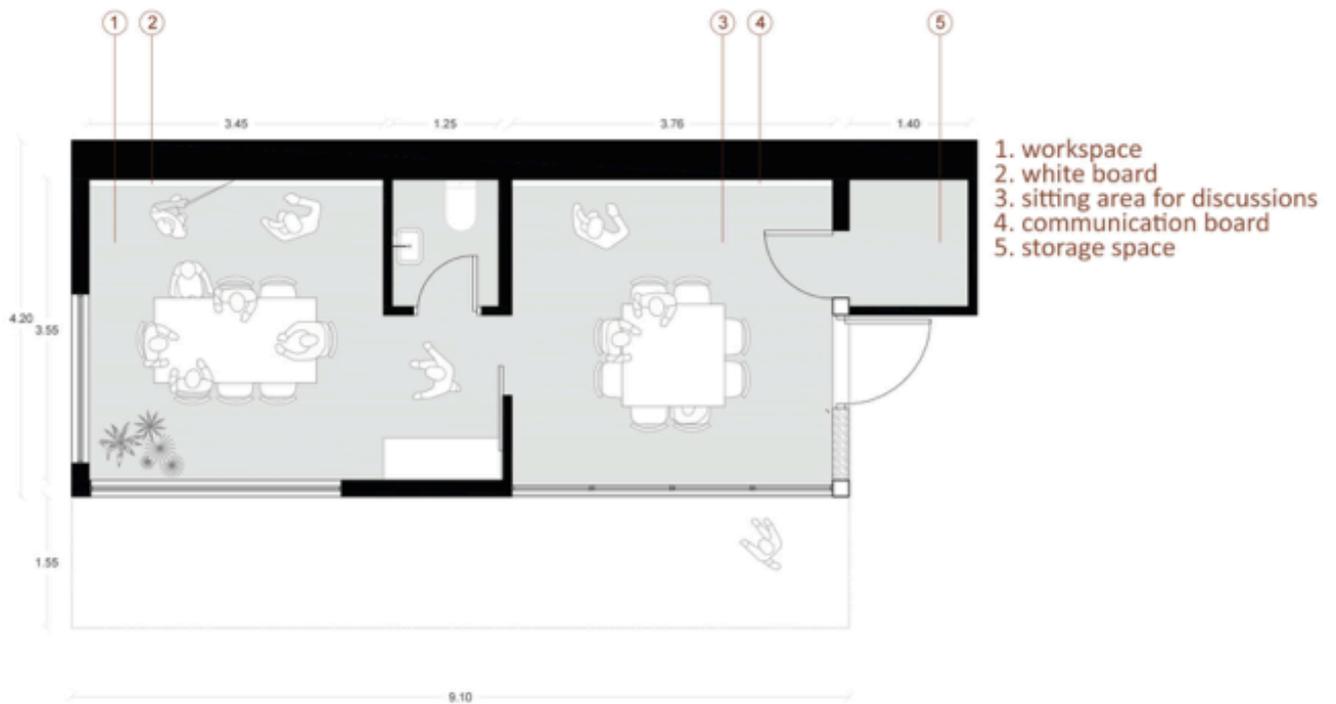


Fig. 36

Floor Plan of the space used by SynAthina initiative of the Municipality of Athens.



Fig. 37

The exterior space which consists part of the Varvakios square and has been provided by the municipality for groups of SynAthina who need to carry out actions in exterior spaces.



Fig. 38 The location of SynAthina within the commercial triangle of central Athens



Fig. 39

A site plan that shows the location of SynAthina and the allocated space of Varvakios Square

3.6 Discussion

Through the exploration of the above case studies, certain comparative characteristics emerge and consist evidence for the formation of typological categories. The described social care initiatives offer services that cover basic needs and in some cases engage upon cultural and political activism.

Types of activities they undertake are in the form of:

- Social Solidarity Economy
- Solidarity Medical services
- Social Kitchens
- Solidarity Schools
- Awareness-raising, Political and Cultural Activism

The case studies described in this chapter demonstrate a variety of characteristics, triggers, organisation model and architecture. Each of the case studies contributes towards an understanding of the specificities of their location within the city and their spatial requirements. They consist characteristic examples, each concerned with a variety of social care activities, but with a distinct organisation model, target group and mode of practice. These are further explored in more detailed in Chapter 4.

Food distribution - a social activity

Another common characteristic is food provision. While O Allos Anthropos is primarily concerned with the distribution of food at different locations on a daily basis, Souzy Tros and “Kafenio” at the Academy of Plato park incorporate food preparation and eating collectively as a means of connectedness, an opportunity to trigger social encounters and initiate events and discussions. The residents committee at the kafenio are additionally actively associated with social and political matters that concern their neighbourhood and collectively defend the neighbouring public spaces. Souzy Tros, located in a short distance from the refugee camp at Eleonas, started as an individual initiative and acts as a flexible and transformable space that can be used by everyone, without a specific theme of action. In the next chapter, a comparative analysis of the case studies takes place, taking into account external factors that may affect them on a spatial level.

Chapter 4

Comparative analysis and synthesis

In this chapter, a comparative analysis and critique of the case studies takes place, focusing on their common characteristics and spatial requirements. This contributes towards informing realisations on what the architecture of distributed social care looks like and the nature of its supportive infrastructure. The findings are then discussed against recent related events that took place in Athens since July 2018.

The timing of the consolidation of distributed social care

In order to understand the conditions that led to the distribution of social care in Athens it was necessary to first examine certain chronological events through a variety of studies. As stated in the WHO report of "The Financial Crisis and Global Health" (January 2009)¹⁰⁷, in circumstances when the household income is under pressure, the demand for public services is increasing. Indeed, since the outbreak of the crisis, the national health system of Greece had to cope with an increased demand for public health services, while as it was demonstrated in the thesis, funding has been decreased dramatically. This underpins the conclusion that the crisis affected the function of the public health system, while the financial condition of the citizens has a significant impact on health indicators and general access to healthcare services.

The consequences in the organisation and service provision of hospitals are also numerous. There has been a high increase in the number and type of patients seeking care and, as a result, the national health system struggled to cope efficiently at a time when it was more necessary. It appears that the financial crisis played a significant role in the emergence of the distributed social care model. The majority of the case studies identified in the thesis began their action at the time between the first and second Memorandum (Economic Adjustment Program) in 2010 and 2012 respectively. It is therefore logical to assume that there is a correlation between the emergence of this distribution during the early years of the crisis. It has also been evident that the need for and action of distributed social care has remained until today.

¹⁰⁷ http://www.who.int/topics/financial_crisis/financialcrisis_report_200902.pdf

4.1 Analysis of distributed social care case studies

The categories of distributed social care

The primary data collected during the fieldwork identified that the discussed re-distributed social care services fall into three main spatial categories; (1) citizen-led (2) municipally funded and (3) private initiatives. This derives from the interpretation of the organisation and formation of each separate case. More specifically, the Kafenio at the Academy of Plato park is a collective economy formed by the residents of the neighbourhood with the goal to address local issues collectively. Although the original drivers for the formation of this residents assembly were not directly linked to the financial crisis, the social issues that gradually emerged had a catalytic influence on the development of their aims. On the other hand, Souzy Tros was instigated through private initiative of an individual academic/researcher in a space that was privately owned by them. Prior to that, it had been an abandoned plot for years as it could not be sold or rented after the eruption of the crisis. Uniquely, the Other Human / O Allos Anthropos social kitchen was initiated by an individual who lost his job during the crisis with the aim to address the issue of homelessness and deprivation of basic needs around collective eating in different locations of the city. All actions of this initiative are fully based on donations and on volunteers while it does not have a legal form. SynAthina is a case of a municipally funded operation. In this way, it allows for different distributed social care groups to have a mutual base in Varvakios Square. For this purpose, the municipality of Athens also provided a small abandoned structure that is situated in the square. Some initiatives that share this space such as mobile laundrettes for the homeless are donated by private bodies while others are organised by both NGOs and independent groups of citizens.

Architecture of distributed social care

The examined case studies of distributed forms of social care comprise of certain consistent spatial elements:

(1) equipment that is usually transferred with a private car or a donated vehicle and is assembled and disassembled on the location where services are being provided. The equipment varies according to the type of provision that each distributed social care initiative responds to (healthcare, food provision, care for the homeless etc.)

(2) temporary or permanent structure. In cases where distributed social care initiatives perform as satellites of building-based headquarters, this doesn't seem to be contradicting with their purpose

and identity of being publicly exposed and accessible. By reappearing in specific public spaces, temporary events such as the ones of social care provision in the urban environment could be operating as elements of its architecture. In effect, objects and equipment take on architectural significance.

(3) materiality. Revisiting the definition of the architecture of distributed social care, it seeks to address the significance of the site/location of social care and to draw attention to the materiality and equipment that formulate distributed social care. The term also implied that this architecture can be temporary, informal and portable, produced by the people involved, their devices, relationships and public space itself as a setting.

Enclosed Spaces prove to be necessary

Through the description of case studies in Chapter 3, it has been discovered that a common characteristic of all the case studies is that they occupy enclosed spaces for storage or organisational purposes, despite the fact that their main action takes place outdoors. The enclosed space is provided/funded in different ways, while its role is of a different level of significance for each case. For the Academy of Plato Park residents' committee, the space of the Kafenio gathers all assembly meetings and discussions but also becomes the space that enables the accumulation and practice of the collective economy model. This is enforced by its small kitchen that prepares hot food everyday for extremely low prices, which allows the financial reinforcement of the missions of the group and its activities in the park. Above all, the Kafenio consists a point of reference not only for its members who gather over food and drink, but also for everyone interested in supporting the ideas they advocate for. For Souzy Tros, the enclosed space adjacent to the plot belongs to the individual initiator. In this case, the distinct purposes and the role of the indoor and outdoor spaces seem to be more vague. Certainly, the enclosed area acts as a mediator and preparatory space. It appears to be providing a minimal shelter that compliments and serves the exterior. However, it is made very clear by the initiator that all the impacts, aims and processes the initiative delves into and advocates for, are relying on the accessibility and openness provided by the outside space and its proximity to the street and the passersby.

When it comes to O Allos Anthropos social kitchen, the headquarters are used to store food, goods and equipment and for access to resources such as water. On some occasions, but not on a regular basis due to the scarcity in funds, the space also provided some basic support for homeless and deprived people. The space is a rented flat in central Athens, fully funded from donations of

volunteers (mainly members of the general public) complying with the self-financed way adopted by this initiative. It is worth mentioning that O Allos Anthropos very frequently deals with the ultimatum of not being able to pay the rent and face the risk of losing this privilege.

SynAthina, on the other hand makes use of a small, independent, single storey structure that facilitates social care groups predominantly by means of water and electricity. The structure belongs to the municipality and having being abandoned for years, it was renovated for the purposes of the SynAthina initiative. It is located at the edge of the Varvakios Square, leaving the space of the square unobstructed for the conduction of distributed social care. It can be therefore concluded that the specific examples are mobile/outdoor-based initiatives but with an enclosed base/headquarters. This however does not appear to be affecting their goal, identity or the impact of the services they provide. The main focus remains the temporary occupation of public spaces for the distribution of services. In light of this evidence, questions are being raised regarding the ability of public spaces to support the needs of distributed social care.

To conclude, the analysis of the spatial characteristics of distributed social care, highlights common characteristics of the case studies and also validates the original hypothesis that they provide services in outdoor spaces. The type of space used in each care varies: For the residents committee, it is the Academy of Plato Park. For Souzy Tros it is the courtyard open to and accessed from the street. For o Allos Anthropos it is a wide number of scattered locations in the city - mainly Squares. Finally, for SynAthina it is the space of Varvakios Square. One of the key findings and a common characteristic of the case studies is that, apart from the public spaces where most of their action takes place, they also occupy enclosed spaces for storage or organisational purposes. These enclosed spaces are mostly located in direct proximity to the outdoor locations where the distributed social care is being provided. This brings to light the assumption that, even though the profile of these initiatives is associated with an informal nature, they still depend on certain necessary resources. When it comes to materiality and equipment, it was evidenced that it consists the main physical element that characterises each initiative, but varies depending on the type of provision.

Locations of distributed social care

Since emphasis in this thesis is placed upon the urban environment, the study focused on attributes that relate to the spatial presence of the case studies in spaces of the city. As it was discovered through the analysis, a large number of distributed social care takes place in open spaces of the city

such as squares and streets. This could be related to: a) the Athenian tradition of using public spaces as places of gathering and social activity. These are sites that can be strongly associated with the society and claimed by the community. B) the fact that, by being located in public space, they allow visibility and accessibility by everyone. C) the fact that, in cases where social work is offered for the homeless and vulnerable in the streets, volunteers need to be able to seek and engage with people. Even though a number of distributed social care is supported by charitable organisations or private initiative, their position and operation in what is understood as public community space shows that they are still seen as part of civil society. Through the case study analysis, it therefore became evident that examples of distributed social care are based in a variety of spaces; abandoned plots, courtyards, public spaces (streets and squares) and municipal infrastructure.

A characteristic example that portrays the effects of locating distributed social care in public space is that of *O Allos Anthropos*. Although the social kitchen is nomadic, it still has a base/headquarters in the city centre. Everyday, when the volunteers set the table on the square, the street, the Metro exit or in front of a bus stop, they claim it as a social space of collective cooking and eating. The simple and informal equipment of a table, one big casserole, food containers, gas, water and a crowd of people, distinguishes each space of activity that appears to be challenging the pre-existing urban norms. Consisting of an informally consolidated spatial condition, it becomes assembled and disassembled in urban space in a non-planned and predetermined way. This occurs every time *O Allos Anthropos* kitchen migrates from square to square over the course of a week, setting up a new distributed space, which has no obvious base and can only be identified by its equipment. Subsequently, it is not based on specific existing infrastructure. In some cases it is however utilising features such as benches, the shade of trees, steps, bus stop shelters. Each space is left intact.

Types of social care that are not being provided for in the distributed street-based model

At this point, it is crucial to revisit the early definition of social care in Greece as it was outlined in Chapter 1. Being part of the social protection system along with healthcare and social security, social care is understood as the provision of support to the most disadvantaged or vulnerable who are also in economic hardship (Moukanou, 2009); families and children, young people, the older population, people with disabilities, people with mental health problems and other vulnerable groups of the population that are found at the risk of social exclusion. Although the majority of the representative target groups of the population described here can indeed benefit from distributed social care, it becomes evident that the case studies examined in this study only address certain elements of what

is defined as social care. For example, there has not been very specific or adequate distributed social care provision addressing the needs of disabled people or those with mental health problems. Perhaps this relates to the high degree of specialisation that would be needed from volunteers. It can also be assumed that these groups might not have easy access to the street-based social care.

Adaptability and responsiveness of distributed social care to other types of disruption:

Distributed social care and the catastrophic fire of July 2018 in the outskirts of Athens

On the 23rd of July 2018, a catastrophic fire started at the area of Mati in the eastern outskirts of Athens. 97 people were killed, 200 injured and hospitalised and 1,500 homes were damaged in the fire with many of those getting completely destroyed. The municipality has been providing temporary shelter so far while a large number of people affected are in great need of support: first aid, psychological support and primary healthcare. Additionally, chronic patients needed medical support and the elderly needed immediate primary healthcare. The social kitchen O Allos Anthropos (The Other Human), has been active in the location offering 1200 portions of food daily. In this case, a large number of the volunteers that helped with the preparation of food were locals and people who lost their homes in the fire. The large amount of food donations, but also of drugs, for the victims of the fire even led to an oversupply. It seems that the need for social contribution and solidarity has been cultivated to a large extent over the years amongst groups of people who became more easily mobilised in responding to emergencies and hardship (i.e. financial crisis, fire victims). In the particular case of the fires during the summer of 2018, it seemed that voluntary mobilisation for the provision of social care was very fast and efficient. This can relate to the fact that it pre-existed and was already active and distributed on a regular basis in different locations. It could be assumed that by being a mobile initiative, O Allos Anthropos has a high level of responsiveness to different crises.

In Athens it is evident that, in many cases, collective action can go against social desperation. The various individual and collective initiatives emerged as a representative example of a political and social thinking. This involves the renegotiation of urban open space towards the restoration of a more extroverted citizen behaviour. Admittedly, the fast pace of constant change that has marked the country since 2008 makes Athens a challenging field of study. In this moment in time, with the rise of global political conflicts, the effects of capitalism and the increasing demands for the performance of cities, matters concerning the space of the city such as this one become more urgent.

On a regular, weekly, temporary basis

Examples of a temporary occupation of public spaces in Greece on a weekly basis, are the open public markets that take place on main streets of each neighbourhood throughout the country. A Legislation presented in Article 46. (Government Gazette, 2014) outlines all the requirements that need to be fulfilled for their function. Some of these requirements include: the position of the market on a paved public space, access to water, cleaning services provided by the municipal authority, regulations for display tables and appropriate tents, refrigerators and power generators where needed. After the closure of the public market each day, every seller is given one hour to dismantle their display tables, gather the remaining products and collect all trash from their allocated space in plastic bags.[93] Of course, every seller needs to obtain a licence in order to participate and sell goods in the public market and then be allocated a specific spot. Tents and umbrellas that are used to protect the displayed products are dismantled and stored in Municipal storage facilities or belong to the vendors in which case they are responsible to remove them from the site themselves. This type of Public markets in squares and streets have a long tradition in Greece and can be found in all Athenian neighbourhoods.

Looking at public markets and the requirements for their presence in public space, attention is drawn to Article 39, which outlines the conditions for the permission of the occupation of public space for trade purposes. The fee required for the permit is calculated according to the total number of days per year for which a particular space is used and can be paid in installments. This applies for all vendors selling products such as nuts, donuts etc on the streets. It could be worth exploring how distributed social care initiatives could use a similar operation model as the one adopted by open public markets. Since the markets take place in a different public space every day of the week in all neighbourhoods of Athens, the legislation that encompasses this model of temporary yet allocated presence in public space could perhaps be adopted for distributed social care purposes. Having identified the nature of supportive infrastructure, further possibilities for its embedding within public space will then be explored.

4.2 Shortfall in Provisions

This section seeks to suggest ways by which public spaces of Athens could be adapted to better support the presence of distributed social care. Drawing from the analysis that took place up to this point, the nature of supportive infrastructure and the need for it to become embedded within public

space will be considered. Further to that, the extent to which the distributed social care facilities rely upon and leverage public space is assessed, along with the shortfalls in practical resources.

Emerging propositions as an outcome of this thesis relate to the current demands that public spaces are challenged to respond to. Following the outline of the requirements and characteristics found among the described case studies, it became evident that a set of basic prerequisites could prove to be instrumental for all of them. It is therefore suggested that the common resources that could be permanently available for access by distributed social care in public spaces of Athens are: a) electricity b) water c) storage and d) internet access.

a) Electricity

Being a recurrent necessity for most of the case studies, especially in the case of food distribution, a permanently available source of electricity in public spaces could potentially benefit towards the elimination of additional spatial requirements for some initiatives. It would also potentially enable more target groups of the population in need of social care to be covered by distributed social care.

b) Water

Also a recurrent and basic necessity in the case of soup kitchens, food preparation, washing and hygiene - a permanently available source of water in public spaces could potentially benefit towards the elimination of additional spatial requirements for some initiatives. In a scenario where a source of water provision is permanently accessible in central public spaces, perhaps the municipality should be controlling the access so that it is only available to distributed social care groups and not the population at large as that would potentially cause problems such as overconsumption and uneven distribution for social care purposes.

c) Storage / public locker spaces

It could also be suggested that, following a classification of the measurable common characteristics (materiality and equipment) of distributed social care, a mechanism could be devised to allow for the permanent storage of equipment in each location where distributed social care operates. This could potentially lead towards the elimination of additional storage space requirements. In the analysis of case studies we saw that all of them use building-based spaces for storage or preparation. Perhaps a combined, common, adaptable equipment storage mechanism either permanently built or dismantled could enable even more groups of distributed social care to operate more freely and to diminish the daily concern of where/who/when that the search for donations is imposing.

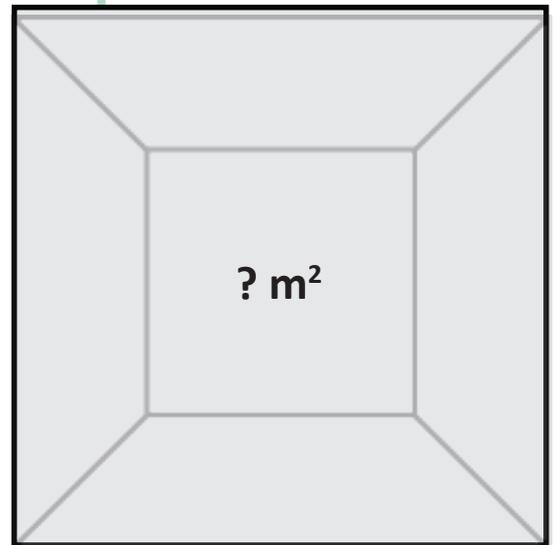
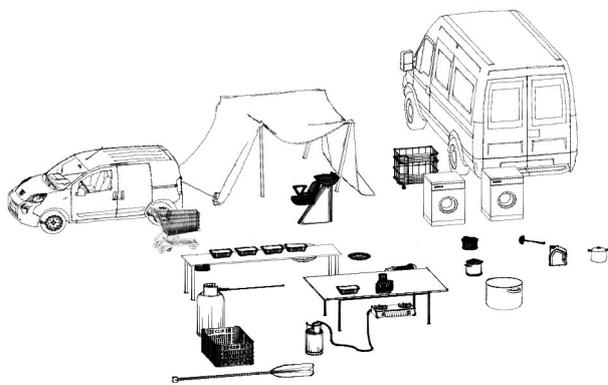


Fig. 40 Diagram to demonstrate the process of calculating the volume of equipment



Fig. 41 Comparing the scale - Varvakios Square and the total equipment

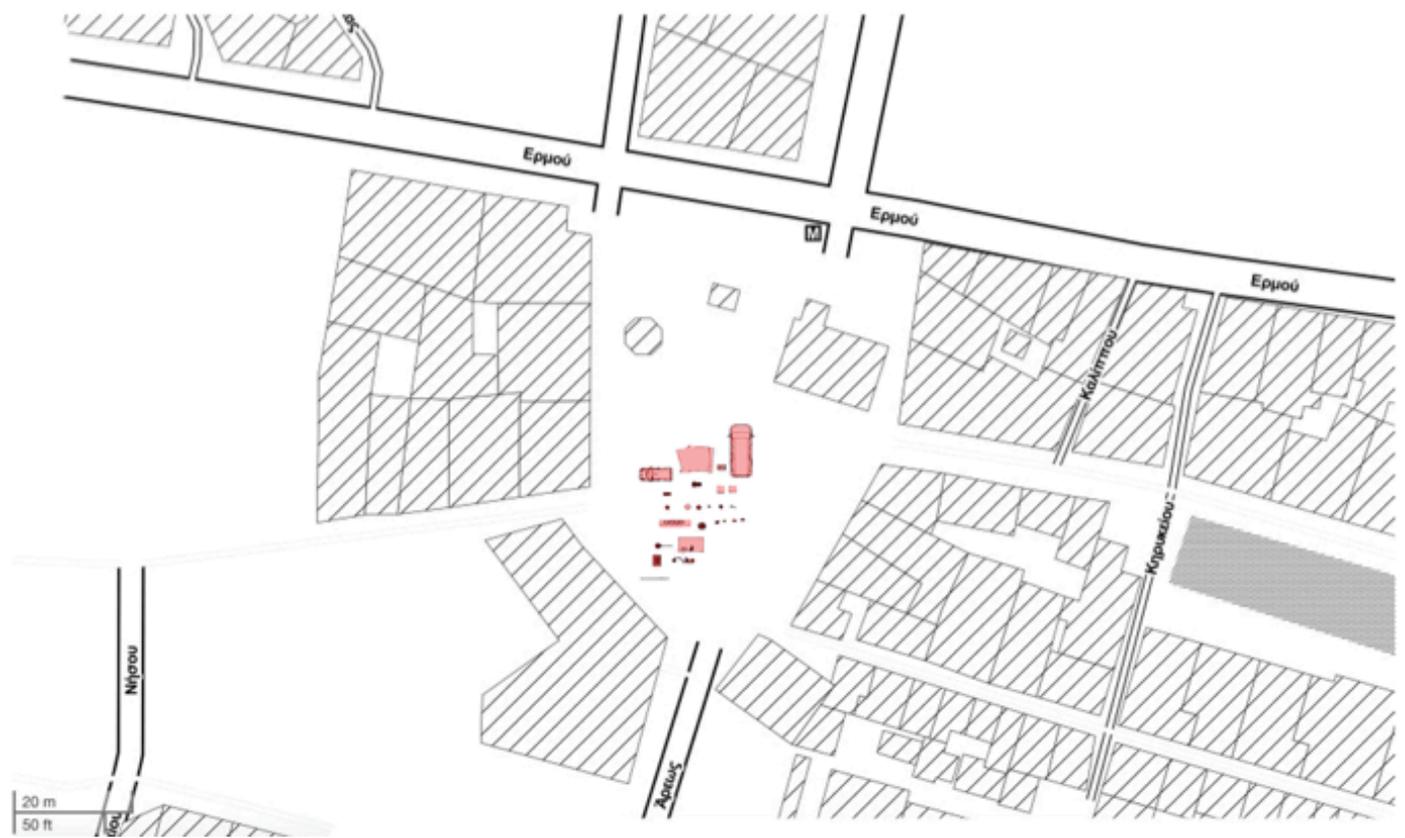


Fig. 42 Comparing the scale - Monastiraki Square and the total equipment

d) Internet access

Free Internet access could be very beneficial, particularly in the case of models of distributed social care that deal with healthcare consultation, first aid, social work, etc. Internet access could result in daily, on-site live schedule updates through bottom up means, and even in the online upload of citizens' individual prescriptions to ease the visits to distributed social care points and enable them to keep a track of their records.

The above provisions could be found in the form of portable or fixed interventions in public space. On a larger scale, they could even form the base for possible discrete insertions of basic provisions in public spaces such as squares, parks or street junctions. Another point of view could argue that, given these demands, a new type of public space that is urgently needed in Athens is a water-based square model for example. In order to consolidate the availability of these provisions in public spaces of Athens, electricity, water, storage and Internet access could be incorporated as features into the requirements that all public spaces should fulfill.

Embedding Infrastructure

Article 19 of the "General Building and Planning Regulations" outlines regulations regarding structures in public spaces[91]. Shelters, lavatories, kiosks, tents, playgrounds and benches are all acceptable features for public spaces while the landscaping can be enhanced with the addition of fountains, flower beds and plant supports. The works for these structures and installations are executed by the municipality or with the permission of the local municipal or community council, other public or private bodies, legal entities and individuals. The Ministry of Environment, Planning and Public Works categorises the above structures or installations for which no building permit is required. The construction of temporary structures for exhibitions, celebrations and other types of events is granted with the permission of the municipal or community council, which also determines their duration. The Ministry of Environment, Planning and Public Works is responsible for carrying out procedures in order to check the health and safety conditions and to also determine whether they achieve aesthetic coherence. In public spaces, the installation of monuments and works of art as well as small public transport booths is also permitted, as long as they do not interfere with pedestrian routes and vehicles. In retrospect it could be argued that, along with the previously mentioned features and structures that are already outlined in Article 19 of the General Building and Planning Regulations, more necessary provisions in public spaces of Athens as these spaces have been challenged to adapt and host complex and multileveled functions over the last decade.

4.3 Appraisal of the risks of distributed social care

Health and safety considerations for public space and public hygiene

It is necessary to also consider types of possible consequences that the temporary use of public spaces by distributed social care may bring to the surface. As it was previously mentioned, in many cases the redistribution of street-based social care is associated with temporary materiality and structure. This allows for the goals, accessibility and street-based identity of initiatives to remain faithful to their original vision. On the other hand, could this have a negative impact by becoming potentially threatening in some cases?

In August 2018¹⁰⁸, the Municipality of Athens announced that it will stop the current function of the SynAthina space, preventing its use by groups such as “One Stop” that provided regular support to vulnerable citizens. The Municipality addressed the need to transfer those groups concerned with social care and food provision to different locations elsewhere in the city. The reason behind this is that it is now preferred to encourage the emergence of more cultural initiatives instead. This would be in alignment with the general vision for the redevelopment and upgrading of the area of central Athens where Varvakios Square and SynAthina are located. “One Stop” used to take place twice a week, every Wednesday and Sunday at the space of SynAthina since 2016. The purpose of this initiative is to provide first aid, laundry, hygiene, haircuts, hot food, activities for children and legal advice for anyone in need. As an outcome of the Municipality’s decision, One Stop will now have to stop providing these services at the particular space by the 9th of September 2018. The Municipality also asserts that the SynAthina shelter was chosen to become merged into a European Program that mainly focuses on ways by which refugees and migrants can integrate into society.

It seems that in some cases, the distributed social care services that were consolidated during the crisis are either fading or replaced by new ones. In 2013 the municipality of Athens held three soup kitchens a day at the Reception and Solidarity Center (KYADA), but today only one. At the same time, members of “One Stop” complain that the SynAthina shelter has no water since 01/08/2018 and that roof lights have collapsed (Lifo magazine)¹⁰⁹. It should be noted that, like many other initiatives, One Stop only uses the enclosed space of SynAthina for access to water and electricity, while the main social care services (laundry, hygiene, haircuts, hot food) are being provided in the space of the

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.lifo.gr/now/greece/204940/o-dimos-athinaion-stamata-na-parexei-ti-stegi-toy-synathina-se-omades-poy-organonoy-syssitia> (in Greek)

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

Varvakios square outside. Deputy Mayor of Civil Society, Amalia Zepou, has mentioned that the municipality does not wish to completely stop the action of those groups, but to transfer them to a different location. She explained that, with the daily presence of soup kitchens and other services in the square, there is a tremendous difficulty in keeping the whole area and the Varvakios Square clean. It is claimed that, due to the public health and general hygiene issues, the municipality needs to perform regular disinfections in the area. The other aspect that seems to concern the Municipality is that the area is incorporated in regeneration plans due to its central position within the commercial triangle of Athens. As mentioned above, the main role and identity of SynAthina will also change over the next three years. In this respect, the Municipality wishes to encourage more cultural activities that are more in line with the general development plans for the area. “Place Identity”¹¹⁰, a non-profit civil society with a legal status that supports actions for urban regeneration and political innovation by developing a network of informal groups of citizens, is opposing this decision. They have recently published an open call (29/08/2018)¹¹¹ asking for a resolution towards the various consequences arising after the decision of the municipal authorities to exclude social care initiatives from the SynAthina shelter.

The municipality has previously expressed a vision for the creation of a network of similar spaces to that of SynAthina, that would be scattered in order to serve the whole city at a more local level. At the same time however, that vision of creating a network of similar spaces like SynAthina has remained unresolved. “Place Identity” argue that this is despite the \$ 1,000,000 grant that the Municipality of Athens received in 2014 for submitting a proposal to the European contest “Mayors Challenge” that was organised by the Bloomberg Philanthropies Foundation¹¹², in order to further develop the activities of the SynAthina Network. On the Municipality’s website, SynAthina is described as a self-managed space. However, it seems that this could be changing direction for funding purposes.

It therefore emerged that it is crucial to consider how these initiatives are funded. Through the analysis of case studies in the previous chapter it became obvious that distributed social care is financially depending on volunteers, donations, private and public funding. If it was to become more integrated into Athenian public spaces, consolidated funding structures would be necessary. This is because public funding seems to be under pressure for changes in direction as it happened with the case of SynAthina. Is public funding then advantageous or does it become more susceptible to

¹¹⁰ <https://placeidentity.gr/stegi-synathina/>

¹¹¹ <https://placeidentity.gr/stegi-synathina/>

¹¹² <https://www.innovationunit.org/projects/european-mayors-challenge/>

external factors? On top of that it could be argued that, by redistributing social care, some structures become temporary and informal but also potentially threatening as they do not satisfy planning or health and safety requirements.

-Problematic identity and future of distributed social care

Distributed social care was initiated during the general social mobilisations, as an immediate and temporary solution to address the rising numbers of citizens in need and the inadequacy of the suffering social care in Greece. In effect, while the distributed social care initiatives proved necessary and provided essential and valuable support, they do to some extent legitimise the situation or even sustain it and prolong resolutions. This implies their problematic identity or, at least, their problematic positioning within Athens. It is therefore a challenging task to form an appraisal regarding the effects of their continuous presence in public space and how they might evolve in a long-term basis. Whilst the thesis suggests that public space could be perceived as both social space and a space where social care is also provided through thoughtful redesign, it also acknowledges the negative effects of a potential 'permanence' in presence and effect. In this respect, perhaps it would be more functionable if, given the fact that it still prevails, distributed social care was spread across the city rather than gathered in a few spaces of central Athens. This would be more likely to prevent its negative impact on other core functions of central areas.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

5.1. Introduction

This study has examined the architecture of distributed social care that has emerged in Athens since the beginning of the 2008 financial crisis. A wide range of literature has been discussed in the first two chapters, followed by primary data and case studies examination in chapter 3 and their comparative analysis in chapter 4.

The literature review evidenced the extent to which the financial crisis and austerity measures proved to contribute towards: (1) severe cuts in funding for social services causing a collateral impact on healthcare budgets. This in turn resulted in hospital closures or their inadequate function; (2) a profound rise in unemployment encompassing a large number of the population experiencing lack of public health insurance, and; (3) an increase in homelessness and the numbers of people accessing distributed social care. The literature review also identified that the distributed social care facilities are citizen rather than government led. The study also highlighted some of the challenges which derived with the emergence of distributed social care. For example, how the closure of social care provision within local communities resulted in a centralisation of distributed social care facilities, with many of the initiatives migrating closer to the centre of Athens. By implication, where the social care initiatives were located reflects a shift in the balance of resources to local communities, and an intensification of social care users in fewer, more concentrated locations.

The study considered:

- the different types of distributed social care in Athens (from not-for-profit to private)
- the locations of distributed social care in Athens
- the architecture of distributed social care in Athens.
- the shortfall in supportive infrastructure offered by the streets and public spaces in which the distributed social care is situated, and how this could be addressed.
- a short, critical appraisal of the detrimental aspects of distributed social care, including an analysis of whether such initiatives serve to legitimise the impacts of austerity or perpetuate the problem.

5.2 Findings

The principle findings are summarised as headings within the following section:

1. Not all distributed social care in not-for-profit citizen-led: the austerity driven cuts have also enabled private initiatives to profit from a gap in services

The primary data collected during the fieldwork identified that the discussed distributed social care services fall into three distinct spatial categories; (1) citizen-led, (2) municipally funded and (3) private initiative.

2. Spatial requirements of distributed social care share some common architectural characteristics.

- Enclosed spaces that are used for storage or organisational purposes.
- Equipment that is usually transferred with a vehicle or other means and is assembled and disassembled on location. The equipment varies according to the type of provision.
- Temporary structure for cases where distributed social care performs as a satellite of building-based headquarters.
- A Materiality that is formulated from the participants and the activities they instigate.

3. There is a centralisation of distributed social care provision in Athens

Upon examining the different locations of the case studies through mappings, it became evident that the majority is situated in central spaces of the city. This is not surprising, as centralisation enables accessibility. Evidence showed that distributed social care is also found in the suburbs and the periphery of Athens, although there it is more likely to be addressing localised needs of the community.

4. There is a shortfall in practical resources for distributed social care in streets and public spaces of Athens

Electricity, water, storage and Internet are being suggested to become incorporated in the design of public spaces. This could perhaps lead enclosed spaces to become unnecessary for distributed social care providers.

5. Distributed social care may be contributing to legitimise and perpetuate the impacts of austerity, also affecting health and safety in public spaces

Through an appraisal of the detrimental aspects of distributed social care it was discussed that distributed social care could perhaps be extrapolating the condition by reflecting the decline of social care.

The Municipality of Athens has raised the issue of contamination in public spaces where distributed social care -such as soup kitchens, mobile laundrettes and first aid- take place. For this reason, regular disinfections have been required. On top of that, seeing as the architecture of distributed social care mostly consists of makeshift elements, they are unlikely to comply with any health and safety precautions and could even potentially contribute to uncomfortable environments for the users of those spaces as a whole.

5.3 The implications of the study

The study reveals the extent to which the obligations of Athens's streets and public spaces have expanded. When these realisations are also compared against the reality of increased imposed demands by the IMF for the privatisation of greek state-owned assets and infrastructure, it becomes necessary to address the vulnerability of public space against possible 'threats' and the consequences on its social nature. In this respect, the perseverance of distributed social care and the possibility for it to obtain more permanent spatial properties through the adaptation and thoughtful re-design of public space, could indeed either support or exacerbate the situation. However, and seeing as the need for them still remains, the thesis suggests that a discrete insertion of basic resources to address the identified shortfall in provision would be more preferable as opposed to more drastic and radical design changes. It could also be suggested that these basic resources could be used in a controlled way, perhaps on allocated slots to prevent overuse and a balance between other functions that take place in each location. Lastly, it has been understood that distributed social care facilities predominantly rely upon the spaces they are located in, mainly in terms of benefiting from accessibility and exposure.

This thesis addressed the identified gap in knowledge by providing an insight into what the architecture of distributed social care consists of. Through an examination of the cause and effects

of this distribution and the link to the financial crisis, it contributed towards an understanding of the conditions that led to the rise of distributed social care. It also considered different emerged categories of distributed social care and whether these are as public as pre-existing social care facilities. The thesis also speculated on the future of distributed social care in public spaces of Athens and identified the nature of their supportive infrastructure, as well as their shortfalls, considering ways by which they could become embedded within public space. In investigating the social issues addressed in this thesis and their spatial reflections, it became apparent that their impact is not static, but multilayered and shifting. Closely following events as they unfold and from within, led to realisations regarding new demands for public space. In a context that has drawn global attention such as Athens, this highlighted the tendency towards composing more flexible and informal solutions. The orientation of this thesis, its aspirations and outcomes are marked by its architectural focus and approach to the subject. They do not consist an absolute appraisal of all the layers and events that it engaged with, but offer a focused examination from a spatial perspective. In fact, this phenomenon is far more complex. It is determined by what was there before, what was changed and how this continues to affect the city. In this respect, architecture tools alone may not be able to offer a solution to these current issues and thus a more unconventional approach might be required instead. This could be further examined through design-led research, on a PhD by design level, to respond to the conditions that could facilitate the re-design of public space for public provisions.

As crisis, austerity and their implications do not consist an isolated Athenian phenomenon, further research could also propose comparative studies of the behaviour of different societies from around the world that are also experiencing forms of crisis of a similar or other nature. Perhaps it would also be interesting to assess this theme in parallel with studies of societies in crisis completed by researchers of other disciplines in order to discover the differences in approach and conclusions. For Athens, considerations of sociologically complex factors such as the changes in the social stratification of the society, the consequences on the ever-weakened middle class and the brain drain of recent years, could add another layer to the implications of this study.

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