FROM PUBLIC SPACE TO COMMON LAND

Heterotopia and The Projection of Power Relations on Urban Squares

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Master Thesis Spring 2019 Direction: Urban Challenges

Architecture and Planning Beyond Sustainability, MPDSD Chalmers University of Technology Gothenburg, Sweden.



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Architecture and Planning Beyond Sustainability, MPDSD Chalmers University of Technology Gothenburg, Sweden. To my brother, for helping me in more ways than he knows. To my friends and my tutors, for all the help and support. To Greece, for being my constant inspiration and always in my mind.

Ultimately, to the hope of a better world...

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INTRODUCTION

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From public space to common land_

ABSTRACT

From the ancient agora to the contemporary Occupy Movement urban squares have been incubators of political, cultural and everyday activities. Traditionally, their 'successful' design was measured by the amenities provided for their users and by their aesthetics; representing both the 'Zeitgeist' of an era and the prosperity of the community they were made for. However, today's complex urban reality of diverse populations, privatisation of land and virtual community networking does not only affect the liveability of squares, but also contributes to an extreme perception of them as either places of neglection -where the marginalized and the 'unwanted' find a space to hide or fight for their right to the city; or as mere consumption fields/ Instagram backgrounds for tourists... But then, again what kind of typology and design can reactivate the notion of citizenship among groups of different cultural backgrounds and social status? And how can these people reach common land and coexist with their very 'different' neighbors in the long run?

The aim of this project is to investigate the minimum infrastructure needed in public space, in order to foster procedures of democracy, inclusion and integration among diverse social groups. The study case, Victoria Square in Athens, was chosen for two reasons: on one hand, for becoming synonymous with the 2015 migrant crisis that overwhelmed Greece and European South; on the other for the intriguing condition that shaped the built environment of this central area; laying somewhere between formal and informal- private initiatives, vague and partly implemented state legislations and the lack of master planning.

Synergies and coalitions are necessary under such circumstances. The profound number of occupied spaces, grassroot initiatives, and NGO's that actively engage around the area strongly indicate that. The site of the square aims to be equipped/designed in order to provide for these initiatives to meet and work together in solidarity.

Site visit and interaction with users of the square and members of the initiatives provided a better understanding of the complex network of power and social relations of the area and formed the basis of the proposed uses and program.

key words: public space, placemaking, governance, community, coexistence







THE TRIGGER for this thesis was the experience of Victoria square as an impromptu 'emergency camp' in Athens, Greece (2015 - 2016), when the E.U. Migrant Crisis escalated. The revised Dublin Regulation (2013) left thousands of African and Asian asylum-seekers trapped to European South (Greece, Italy, Hungary) in a condition of uncertainty (Park, 2015). Poor infrastructure, lack of organization and 'imprisonment' at hot-spots in the periphery, away from city centers was `one side of the coin`of 'welcoming' that was provided by the state. The other was the spontaneous occupation of public spaces and abandoned proprieties within the urban fabric. It is the fight for space and for the right to the city that this thesis is going to explore.



pic.2: Urban Public Space in Layers

Diagram (by the author) depicting the layers that form public space. Inspired by D. Pettas' theoretic work "The production of space under conflict conditions" (2016).

Note: all vector images are retrieved from "The Noun Project"

AIM & RELEVANCE

The **PURPOSE** of this thesis is to explore urban detailing as a tool towards the promotion of social inclusion within the context of economic and humanitarian crisis of Athens, Greece. The complexity of challenges that contemporary city-centers of European South face (extreme weather conditions, unregulated migration flows, management of an aging population, non-sustainable building stock, economic recession) often lead to public spaces of neglect, vandalism and `ghettoisation`. Conflicts over public space and manifestation of power often lead to occupation/ appropriation and use by specific societal groups, while others are excluded (Pettas, 2016)...

The discourse over power relations and governance of public space is keen among urban and radical geography studies (Pettas, 2017). When this discourse is linked to "commoning practices", a field of possibilities emerges **TOWARDS THE FORMATION OF NEW URBAN TY-POLOGIES**, self- governance and community management (Stavrides, 2016).

It seems quite naive to claim that a mere architectural proposal or the production of a new urban typology will provide reconciliation among diverse and often conflicting societal groups -moreover to safeguard cohesion and coexistence in public space. Nevertheless, rather than proposing a renewal that is based on aesthetics and aims for consumption (Sorkin, 1992), this thesis will try to provide a 'common place' for dialogue, collaboration and interaction of a range of actors.

Through the case study of Victoria Square the question of **HOW DOES PUBLIC SPACE 'GET' THE ABILITY TO SHAPE POWER RELA-TIONS** (that are entailed within) and be shaped by them will be researched. Symbolic and everyday patterns (pic. 2) of the square's users will be explored and the results will form evidence and inspire the design proposal.

pic.3: Diagram _ Research Questions

Based on the Layers of Urban Public Space (page 10) this diagram (by the author) forms a relational map of research questions that could form the spine of this thesis.



RESEARCH QUESTION(S)

WHAT KIND OF URBAN TYPOLOGY CAN REACTIVATE THE NOTION OF CITIZENSHIP AMONG GROUPS OF DIFFERENT CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS AND SOCIAL STATUS?

_subquestions:

How are power and social relations affected by physical space and how do they affect it?

How power relations become physical/tangible on urban space?

How can urban detailing work towards community engagement processes?



pic.5: Delimitation diagram (by the author)





WHAT : POWER & SOCIAL RELATIONS ON PUBLIC SPACE

HOW : Through traces of 'symbolic' and everyday life patterns on SQUARES

WHERE : Study case from the EUROPEAN SOUTH

«·····
RESEARCH



pic.6: Work Process. Collage made at an early stage of the project (by the author)

WHAT : INFRASTRUCTURE

Note: all vector images are from "The Noun Project"

· · · · · •

HOW : According to the needs deriving from analysis (different case scenarios)

.

WHERE : Victoria Square, Athens Greece

DESIGN

_Heterotopia & the projection of power relations on urban squares

pic.7: Diagram _ Placemaking Method

Steps towards fostering placemaking processes. Diagram (by the author) inspired by European Placemaking instructions.



Note: Original logo avail. at: https://placemakers.nl/en/

The approach is anchored on **RESEARCH FOR**

DESIGN and based on the notions of community, engagement and trust building.

HISTORIC and **ON-SITE RESEARCH** along with **QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF STATISTICS** will play a key role in the understanding of the complexity and the dynamics of the urban fabric of Victoria Square, a neoclassic square of the city center of Athens.

METHODOLOGY

1. HISTORIC RESEARCH

QUALITATIVE: Historic research for the broader area around Victoria Square will be conducted in an attempt to understand the context of the site and the connection between symbolic construction (identity) and everyday life patterns on the square.

2. STUDY OF HUMAN INTERACTION (& SOCIAL VIEWS)

Site visit and direct observation of the patterns of social behavior at and around the square will be documented -with an emphasis on **DAY- VS-NIGHT** "occupation" of public space by different societal groups.

a) **INTERVIEWS** will be conducted with different actors/users that have a strong presence on site, such as residents, local merchants and activists. A **QUESTIONNAIRE** will be formed concerning both the everyday practices of the users of the square and their engagement with other urban actors.

b) The data collected along with **PHOTOGRAPHS** will be used towards the formation of mental and **CHARACTER MAPS**. The objective is to visualize the connection between power, governance and occupation/use of public space.

3. STATISTICS

QUANTITATIVE: Further statistics such as average income, age and ownership state will be taken into consideration for the further understanding of the area and the context.

The results of the analysis will be then used as a guide for the re-design of the square.

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR MULTIPLE USES

" A place that is there while it is not. A place that exists only through the acts of its users "

(Foucault & Miscowiec, 1986, p.3)



pic.8: Conceptual Illustrations of the Design Proposal (p. 22-23) (revised after the final seminar)

These illustrations (by the author) were produced at an early stage of the process, suggesting the initial concept, language and strategies for the design proposal.





THEORETIC BACKGROUND _ evolution of public space



pic.9: Urban Matrix _ Evolution of Public

This diagram (by the author) is the synopsis of the theoretic background of this thesis. The qualities assigned to 'public', the theoretic discourse and the most representative paradigms of different eras form the timeline of the evolution of this notion.



TOPIA (social & physical) —	•	•
Plato's Ideal City	T. More	T. Cambanella
(428 - 347 B.C.)	(1478 - 1535 A.D.)	(1613 - 1614 A.D.)



pic.10: Diagram _ Utopia_Heterotopia_Topos

Diagram (by the author). Inspired by Foucault's heterotopia; laying between reality and imaginary it is both isolated and connected to others, it's a threshold of possibilities.



I. INTRO

The theoretic research started with a brief exploration of the notion of `public` (space) in Western World along times and civilizations (pic.9). The end of the 1960's was identified as a critical moment, where -after two World Wars and the end of an era of ~Isms/ Utopias- Foucault introduced for the first time the notion of Heterotopia, to his 1967's lecture "Of Other Spaces".

II. OF OTHER SPACES

There, he claimed that 20th Century's understanding of space was "taking the form of relations among different sites" -referring to Bachelard's work and the qualitative methods of phenomenologists in understanding the world surrounding them.

" We live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another" (Foucault & Miscowiec, 1986, p.3)

He described utopias as "the mental representation of non-existent spaces of a perfect, idealized society". After that he introduced heterotopias:

"But among all these sites, I am interested in certain ones that have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invent the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect. These spaces, as it were, which are linked with all the others, which however contradict all the other sites, are of two main types." (Foucault & Miscowiec, 1986, p.3)

"[...] real places—places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society— which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias" (Foucault & Miscowiec, 1986, p.4)

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This diagram was formed (by the author) after reading Henry Urbach's 1998 article "Writing Architectural Heterotopia". It is about theoreticians and architects 'interpretation of heterotopic qualities/ characteristics into physical & architectural attributes & language from the 1970's to the end of the 1990's.



III. UNDERSTANDING HETEROTOPIA

After that, Foucault described the six principles of heterotopia, which, among others, are:

No.3) "The heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible" (Foucault & Miscowiec, 1986, p.6)

No.5) "Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable. In general, the heterotopic site is not freely accessible like a public place. Either the entry is compulsory, as in the case of entering a barracks or a prison, or else the individual has to submit to rites and purifications" (Foucault & Miscowiec, 1986, p.7)

No.6) " [...] their role is to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned [...] Or else, on the contrary, their role is to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled" (Foucault & Miscowiec, 1986, p.8)

The notion of heterotopia is reinterpreted in 2005's conference paper "It's about Heterotopia as a Real Different Space, Stupid!" as "a condition, an unstable relation between antagonistic and radically incompatible processes" capable to describe today's juxtapositional and diverse metropolitan 'problematic'neighborhoods as "those real, different spaces, where the nomadic, deterritorializing lifestyle has taken firm root and functions for real", while the cruel, harsh conditions that their inhabitants face imply that behind the fascinating veil of the exotic and multicultural, lurks a dark system of oppression and discipline.

"Michel Foucault's concept of 'heterotopia' has animated architectural discussions for more than a decade, yet **ITS MEANING HAS REMAINED SLIP-PERY**, and its utility limited. In the course of translating heterotopia into architectural theory, **KEY ELEMENTS** of Foucault's concept **HAVE BEEN LEFT OFF**, particularly **ITS MORE CONTINGENT AND POLITICAL ASPECTS**. By reviewing some of these discussions of architectural heterotopia, we can follow the many turns taken by heterotopia in recent debates. Then we shall find ourselves in a better position to reassess the potential of heterotopia as a tool of architectural analysis." (pic.11) (Urbach, 1998).



pic.12: Reference/ Study Case: Karlplatz square as a heterotopic space (image produced by the author, based on the analysis of Maicher, 2010)

EXPLORING

PHYSICALITIES



IV. CHARACTERISTICS OF HETEROTOPIC SPACE

Heterotopia will be used as a tool of architectural analysis for the case study of Victoria Square, Athens. The complex network of social and power relations of the actors/ users of the square will be examined and mapped in order to identify the conditions that create the current explosive, heterogenous condition and inspire the design proposal.

pic.13: Characteristics of Heterotopic Space (by the author)





pic.14 & 15: Urban Plans for the City of Athens (by the author)

The initial plan of Athens (1832) was made by S. Kleanthis and Ed. Schaubert (Kallivretakis, -). It was however not implemented, since the amount of expropriated space needed for the erection of public buildings, plazas and boulevards led to protests and a revision in 1834 by Leo von Klenze (Kallivretakis, -).


THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW CAPITAL

I. INTRO

The first urban plan of Athens as the new capital of Greece was formed in 1832 (pic.14). Although implemented with alterations and rearrangement of uses - serving mostly private feasibilities and less "the common good"- the initial design intended both on a physical and a symbolic level to create a new identity/branding of Athens; solidifying its place on the map of the western/ civilized world while erasing its eastern past (pic.15).

Despite the fact that these first blueprints could not alone impose specific forms of spatial division (Karidis, 2015), they could not but play an important role to the shaping of the character and social stratification of the central districts.

pic.16: The realized plan of 1837 (by the author)



The final revision of the city plan of Athens after von Gaertner's reposition of the Royal Palace (Kallivretakis, -).



pic.17: Diagram (by the author) - The city of Athens in 1848

MOMMSEN, A. Original held and digitised by the British Library. Copied from Flickr. avail. at: http://www.sgtogias.com/images/8/85/1848-Athens.jpg

II. FROM GREENLANDS TO THE OFFICIAL CITY PLAN



From the very beginning of Athens' coronation as capital the demand for domestic extension northern was clear, with the informal settlement of Exarchia appearing on the margin of the official city plan (pic.17). The erection of the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA) in 1869 would set early the ground for the development/ exploitation of the surrounding lands (pic.18 & 19) -the majority of which were greenlands and vineyards that belonged to rich landowners and patrons of the diaspora (pic.20). Although Victoria square was constructed in 1872 -right after the official extension of the city's plan to this district- the true change to the character of the area would not come before the 1920's (Karanikas et. al., 1992).

pic. 18 & 19: Diagram & Maps - Addition of Districts to the official City Planning

The diagram above (by the author) marks the dates that the districts around Victoria Sq. were added to the plan of the city. The maps below depict the expansion in 1888 & 1896.



Scanned from large map provided with the 1896 Guide Joanne -- "Athènes et ses environs", Hachette & Cie. avail. on: https://www.flickr.com/photos/athens_greece/7094730671

pic.20: City Layers (by the author)

The bottom layer was extracted from D. Reimer's map "Athen mit Umgebung" and shows the actual condition of the areas around Victoria Sq. in 1881. The upper layers are diagrams showcasing land uses (middle) & 1888's official city's grid (upper).



III. ABSENCE OF STATE REGULATIONS & PRIVATE INITIATIVES

The 1930's is an important historical decade for Greece, that had also consequences on the evolution of the city (Philippides, 2005). Height restrictions were introduced for the first time after the regime of emergency that followed the Asia Minor Catastrophe (Karanikas et. al., 1992). The obligatory exchange of populations between Greece and the Ottoman Empire doubled the residents of the capital and social/ multi - storey housing was introduced as a response to the challenges that informal migrant settlements were pausing (Philippides, 2005). The population boom and the cheap labor hands of the newcomers had a huge economic and cultural impact and the years that followed were decades of general `prosperity' and industrial bloom (Mandilara, 2011).

pic.21 & 22: Distribution of refugee settlements after 1922 in the Attica region

Impromptu camps of tents and sheds were hosting refugees up to a decade before the first social housing blocks were erected. All the settlements were placed in the periphery of the city centre, so that they would not disturb the good society that resided there.



photos from: D. Philippides.

avail. at: https://www.greekarchitects.gr/gr/αρχιτεκτονικες-ματιες/η-πολεοδομία-στην-ελλάδα-id65

It is crucial to note is that the development of the contemporary greek cities was not an organized, 'top-down' process but the state would rather act as a 'mediator' -generating hasty regulations and supporting fragmented, large-scale private initiatives of urban sprawl instead of financing, developing and implementing long term urban plans (Philippides, 2005).

pic.23: From Neoclassicism to Eclecticism: Shift in building types in the beginning of the 20^{th} Century

Before 1900 buildings were either ground-floor (lower class) or one (rarely two) floors high (for the upper classes). There was still a backyard but it was not as important as it used to be the previous decades. Major construction materials are stone & wood.



UP UNTIL 1900:

1900 - 1930:

IV. INTERWAR: FROM NEOCLASSICISM TO MODERNISM. _A SHIFT OF FORMS, MATERIALITY AND OWNERSHIP REGIME.

Regarding the built stock, the neoclassic and eclectic architectural styles of former periods were gradually replaced by apartment buildings of high quality and apparent influence of the Modern/ Bauhaus Movement (pic. 23-25). New materials and techniques changed the forms and the organization of the buildings. However, despite the innovative, revolutionary design, the `a priori´ bourgeois social stratification of the residents, remained the same until the 1950's.

pic.24: Typology in the Interwar

As structures grow taller every floor is designed as a separate housing unit with its own, autonomous entrance. The ownership is held by a single author who rents the properties for profit. Voluminous concrete structures become dominant during that period. Morphological expression is usually limited to the front facade. Since regulations regarding the allowable percentage of built/unbuilt area of the plot are vague, backyards and lawns are getting "shrunk".



pic.25: Legislations, Ownership and Dominant Use

The first official state regulations considering maximum heights of buildings were introduced in 1917, while general building regulations and horizontal property regulations were introduced in 1929. The charts below (by the author) depict use and ownership of buildings from 1919 to 1931 (retrieved from Hellenic Statistic Authority, ELSTAT).



Note: available at http://www.statistics.gr/en/home/

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pic.26: Map of the building stock of the 1930's at the district (by the author)

Clear geometric volumes, bay windows (erkers) and quality structures, initially intended for the privileged, bourgeois residents of the neighbourhood



V. THE CONSTRUCTION BOOM OF THE CITY CENTER & THE FORESHADOW OF AN UPCOMING CRISIS.

After the 1950's the internal migration of previously rural populations to the capital led to a new housing 'crisis' that was tackled through the statute of 'antiparochi': this uniquely Greek arrangement/ amendment allowed the provision of a plot to a contractor or a manufacturer in exchange for the acquisition of one or more apartments of the newly erected building. In that way everyone was winning; the state by being freed from the 'burden' of urban and social planning, the contractors by avoiding the increased land values and the landowners by obtaining brand-new properties without the need to plan or spend money (Vrychea & Golemis, 1998).

But this was a short-term win... In the long run, the central core of the city was overly densified with a relatively poor building stock in terms of structure, morphology and organization (Karanikas et. al., 1992). The intensive speculation over land and the commercialization of residential space in the central areas of Athens progressively led the upper-middle classes to a flea towards the northern and southeast coastal suburbs.

	Socioprofessional demographics					
T (D: 1	sen. executives		wage workers		sum (%)	
Type of Residential Area	1971	1991	1971	1991	1971	1991
High class/ Suburbs	10.0	30.2	5.6	5.3	6.7	15.0
Middle class/ Suburbs	15.2	19.4	13.8	14.3	15.9	18.6
Working class/ Suburbs	12.5	22.9	59.0	59.9	41.4	42.6
Municipality of Athens	62.2	27.4	21.6	28.5	35.4	23.6

pic.28 & 29 : Socio-demographic diagrams (by the author)

retrieved from athenssocioatlas.gr, statistics avail. at: https://panorama.statistics.gr/



pic.30: Map of Refugee and Migrant Squat Population in Athens, Greece (2017)



Map: Refugee and Migrant Squat Population in Athens

pic.31: Demographics of Squat Migrant Population in the City Center of Athens, Greece (2017)

Demographics of Squat Population

Total Reported Squat Population:	2,114
Estimated Overall Capacity*:	2,140
Average Length of Stay:	8 months
Reported Countries of Origin in Squ	uats:





655 children 31% of population

*As reported by key informants on site. This figure excludes Ambelokipoi, where the overall capacity was unknown.

REACH Resource Center

avail. at: http://www.reachresourcecentre.info/system/files/resource-documents/reach_grc_factsheet_athens_squat_population_january_2017.pdf

VI. A STORY OF DEGRADATION AND ABANDONMENT. _A NARRATION OF 'GHETTOISATION'

The voluntary flea of the upper and upper-middle classes to the suburbs created a `void´ of residents and an abundance of available units (Karanikas et. al., 1992), that were initially "filled" with indigenous lower-middle and working classes and progressively (after the Soviet Union Resolution) with immigrants from the Former Soviet Republics, Africa and the Middle East (Mantzoufas, 2017). The area, while becoming multicultural and more diverse, still preserved some of the former glow of its bourgeois past and was considered to be a safe and ´descent´central district. It was not until 2012, when the closure of both the metro station and the nearby central park (Pedion Areos) that the square was stripped out of its centrality and dynamic flows. Shadow city activities dominating at night created a sense of `unsafety` and a reputation of decay (Onisenko, 2015).

	Exarchia			Victoria		
Demographics						
# of Squats		6			1	
Squat Population	1,199			400		
Capacity	1,239			500		
Average Length of Stay (months)	7			7		
Origins						
Main Reported Countries of	Syria	68%		Syria	25%	
Origin in Squats	Afghanistan	19%	H	Afghanistan	25%	
	Iran	4%	1	Iran	15%	
	Iraq	4%	1	Pakistan	13%	
	Pakistan	3%	1	Iraq	10%	
	Unknown	2%	Ē.	Unknown	12%	
Primary Languages Spoken in Squats	Arabic	69%		Arabic	30%	
	Farsi	12%		Dari	25%	
	Kurmanji	9%		Farsi	15%	
	French	6%	1	French	13%	-
	Dari	4%	1	Urdu	12%	
				Kurmanji	5%	
Children						
# of Children	348				152	
% of Children	29			38		
Gender of Children	Female: 50%	6	Male: 50%	Female: 33%	6	Male: 67%
Ages of Accompanied Children in Squats	NA				-14 years: 17 % -17 years: 40 %	
Status of Children	41% accompanied 1% separated 58% unknown			87% accompanied 13% unaccompanied		

pic.32: Refugee and Migrant Squat Population in Victoria, Athens, Greece (2017)

REACH Resource Center

avail. at: http://www.reachresourcecentre.info/system/files/resource-documents/reach_grc_factsheet_athens_squat_population_january_2017.pdf



VII. THE AREA TODAY. _EXTERNAL FORCES & CHALLENGES

While the damage was partly fixed when those two opened their gates two years later, the final shot to the reputation of the area was given in 2015, when the square became a hot spot for the hundreds of immigrants that fled from Syria and Afghanistan (pic. 30-32).

The dominant speech and the press were devided, unable to decide whether Victoria was the place of the new revolution of the multitudes, or the junkyard left behind the virtualization of production relations.

Up until today, Victoria remains a highly controversial/ problematic central neighborhood, synonymous to antagonistic and radically incompatible processes. Laying between a glorious past and an uncertain future, the neighborhood strives for inclusion and coherence. The abundance of bottom-up initiatives and NGOs that actively engage around (pic. 33) it is indicative of the need for change and social justice. The network of social and power relations of diverse actors and its relation to physical and design aspects will be extensively explored in the chapters that follow.

Pictures of the everyday activities taking place on the square. (retrieved from flickr.com)

"Bananas & Oranges ... !" Athens, Greece, 25 March 2017



Copyright Christos Theodorou avail. at: https://www.flickr.com/photos/c_theodorou/32823009714/

"Migrants in Victoria Square" Athens, Greece, 05 March 2016



Copyright Lefteris Partsalis, Caritas Switzerland avail. at: https://www.flickr.com/photos/ caritas_ch/25606836805/

"GREECE-REFUGEES-CRISIS The entrance of the Suburban railway station of Victoria Square" Athens, Greece, 30 September 2015



Copyright X-Andra Photography avail. at: https://www.flickr.com/photos/x-andra/21658032949/

pic.35: Victoria Square within the Urban Fabric

Diagram (by the author) showing the interconnection of Victoria square with the rest of the public spaces (squares, urban parks) of the city center of Athens.



National Technical University







VIII. A BRIEF TIMELINE OF VICTORIA SQUARE





ASSESSMENT OF TODAY'S CONDITION

ON-SITE VISIT & OBSERVATION MAPS, MAPTIONNAIRE (PARTICIPATORY) ANALYSIS, INTERACTION WITH USERS OF THE SQUARE AND STAKEHOLDERS CLAIMING SPACE ON THE SQUARE

+ 55

pic.37: Flyer: The Challenge of 10 (by the author)

This is a flyer that was produced and brought on site as a tool to start dialogue with the users of the square and understand their needs and desires. Inspired by "The power of 10- Project for Public Spaces".



more info avail. at: https://www.pps.org/article/the-power-of-10

OBSERVATION & ASSESSMENT TOOLS

I. INTRO

In order to be able to assess today's condition of the square a study trip was conducted in March 2019 to the site and the outcome was threefold:

- site observation and mapping of the users patterns on the square (pic. 45-48).

- interaction with the users of the square through a game called "My Victoria _ The Challenge of 10" (pic.37).

- a research of the users views and opinions regarding the condition of the square (what I like/ what I don't like/ what I would change/ what is missing) through the development of a maptionnaire tool (interactive geodata questionnaire). This was conducted in collaboration with Victoria Square project, an artistic-oriented NGO that engages to the area, trying to strengthen the bonds between the residents of the area and the newcomers (pic.38).

II. MY VICTORIA _ THE CHALLENGE OF 10

This game was inspired by the tools of assessment for 'successful'public spaces and urban squares. Although the initial intention was for the flyer to become the icebreaker that would initiate dialogue between the author and the users of the square, the result was not as fulfilling as expected. Few people engaged, mostly elderly sitting on the benches next to the Metro Station on the front part of the square. It was impossible to approach immigrants and especially immigrant women, who seemed unwilling to interact at all. The participants who engaged with the process would often get lost in their thoughts or narrations of the past. The results of these interactions were summed up and registered to the maptionnaire analysis tool, along with the answers of the other participants of the research.

pic.38: Results from Maptionnaire Analysis* & Statistics

This is the analytic excel document exported from maptionnaire, including all the answers of the participants. The questions/ categories were four: Places I like _ Places I don't like _ Places that are missing _ Places I would change

*The map created for the research can be accessed at: https://app.maptionnaire.com/sv/5681/

respondent						
				1		
(10.20)	buttonname	Why did you choose this area?	Why did you	u choose this area?If, other, please specify use:		
woman (18-30)	Place I would change	It really needs improvement.	Its not clean	and not accessible.		
man (50+)	Place I would change	Feels unsafe		hing to do there, the kiosk closed and the restaurant next to it is never open		
woman (30-50)	Place I would change	Feels unsafe	something m	nust be done there. the square is dirtier and people don't seat there		
woman (50+)	Place I would change	Feels unsafe		ning to do there and feels unsafe		
woman (30-50)	Place I would change	It really needs improvement.		nces and the green areas are not accessible		
woman (18-30)	Place I would change			ly 'open' space of the square and everything happens here .should be bigger or better de		
woman (18-30)	Place I would change	It really needs improvement.		nces. we have so little green areas and still they aren't accessible		
woman (18-30)	Place I would change	Feels unsafe	something sh	hould be done there, it's the less used space of the square		
respondent	buttonname	What location is this?		Why do you like this location?If other reason, please specify:		
woman (18-30)	Places I like	the statue		it's symbolic of the square		
woman (30-50)	Places I like			there is a lot of green and you can sit even at summer		
woman (30-50) woman (30-50)	Place I don't like	greenery trash dump		there is a lot of green and you can sit even at summer		
woman (30-50) woman (18-30)	Place I don't like	on the side of Aristotelous St.				
		on the side of Aristoteious St.				
woman (18-30)	Place that is missing	That has been all		1		
woman (18-30)	Places I like	Elpidos Street		i can see acropolis		
man (50+)	Places I like	benches across Victoria Station		i like to watch people passing by, really busy during the day		
woman (30-50)	Place I don't like	neoclassic building				
woman (30-50)	Place I don't like	fences around the greenery				
woman (30-50)	Place I don't like	the 'down' side of the square				
man (50+)	Place that is missing					
man (50+)	Places I like	kiosk		newspapers hang around the kiosk and i can spend some time reading them and che		
man (50+)	Places I like	the front benches		it's safe to sit there		
man (50+)	Places I like	coffee shop		Me and my friends go there, it's a meeting place. Greeks and Albanians mostly go the		
man (50+)	Places I like	mini market		it's open until late and I can always buy something I forgot. He works mostly with Afg		
man (50+)	Place I don't like	the benches around the sculpture				
man (50+)	Place I don't like	coffee shop				
man (50+)	Place that is missing					
man (18-30)	Places I like	greenery		I like to stare at people, especially immigrants, spending time there. At summer they		
man (18-30)	Places I like	on the square		kids play often here, most of the times they just kick a ball, but its nice		
man (18-30)	Place that is missing					
woman (30-50)	Places I like	victoria station		it's the most vivid part of the square		
woman (30-50)	Places I like	flower shops		ever since i have been here i remember the flowers and the books right next to the s		
man (12-18)	Places I like	Elpidos Street		I like walking there and hanging around Victoria Square Project. Feels like home		
woman (30-50)	Place I don't like	the 'down' side of the square				
woman (30-50)	Place that is missing					
woman (50+)	Place I don't like	the 'down' side of the square				
man (12-18)	Places I like	the sculpture				
man (12-18)	Places I like	victoria station				
woman (30-50)	Places I like	the 'birdhouse'		i know that this place is not the cleanest, but it is like a hot-spot of the pigeons of the		
man (18-30)	Place that is missing			Tknow that this place is not the cleanest, but it is like a not spot of the pigeons of the		
man (50+)	Places I like	benches		I like watching other people passing by. And Immigrants. Talking on their phones god		
woman (18-30)	Place that is missing	Deficites		Tike watching other people passing by. And minigrants, raiking on their phones god		
woman (18-30) woman (18-30)	Places I like	the pedestrian road		i like the trees and the scale and the atmosphere, its cozy		
Woman (10-50)	Places I like	the pedestrian road		Tike the trees and the scale and the atmosphere, its cozy		







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B. FOCUS _ PLACES I LIKE

Notes/ Reflections:

It was easy for the majority of the participants to answer the question regarding the places they liked on the square. The sculpture, the greenery and the Metro Station's colorful subway were among the most popular answers. Some picked their favorite spots based on their former experiences and/or their longevity to the neighborhood. Some of the coffee and retail shops of the neighborhood were also mentioned as important, operating for decades to the area.

pic.39 (left) & 40: Map of the Comments of Maptionnaire analysis (by the author) and statistics



pic.41: Places I like _ Heatmap extracted from Maptionnaire Analysis



At night men trafficking LOUS ST.



31S SEPTEMVRIOU ST.



C. FOCUS _ PLACES I DON'T LIKE

Notes/ Reflections:

Participants were more hesitant to answer the question of what they didn't like of the square. Most of them seemed to dislike the back part for different reasons: there was not appropriate equipment (the benches were removed after the 2015 "migrant incident" and occupation of the square), the uses of the surrounding shops were hasty (implying third economy activities) and this part was a reputation for trafficking, prostitution and drug dealing at night. The majority of women mentioned feeling unsafe hanging around there or even crossing at night*.

pic.42 (left) & 43: Map of the Comments of Maptionnaire analysis (by the author) and statistics



pic.44: Places I don't like _ Heatmap extracted from Maptionnaire Analysis



* It's important to note here that the sample of the participants was not even, since the majority was either natives or immigrants that had already been integrated to the neighbourhood or to the communities engaging to the area.



pic.45-47: Diagrams (i-iii) of the distribution of users on the square.How different users and actors occupy space on the square throughout the day (made by the author, revised after the final seminar)



IV. OBSERVATION MAPS OF USERS 'PATTERNS ON THE SQUARE

- Tourists & Passers by ۲
- Immigrants & Refugees (2nd & 3rd Migration flow) mostly men, not integrated
 3rd Economy Activities

Heterotopia & the projection of power relations on urban squares



V. USER PATTERNS & ISLANDS OF ISOLATION

Notes/ Reflections:

This diagram was based on a 5-day observation of the square, mapping the users habits, interactions, occupation and use of space at different time-zones throughout the day. What was noted was the importance of the metro station, that literally transformed the front part of the square during the peak hours. The front part of the square remained busier and more dynamic throughout the day, having some hyper-local meeting places (coffee places, restaurants), while the back was less busy -with the majority of the users being foreigners sitting at the benches or at the greenery, forming groups of talking or listening to music of their own country. There was no interaction between groups of different ethnicities on the square, but rather suspicion when a 'stranger' would try to come closer and intrude their space. At the back of the square there were also men standing alone or in small groups, talking on the phone. There were few immigrant kids and almost no elderly sitting at the square.

Legend

O'O' DIVA

- Natives & Balkans, Eastern Europe, Roma (1st Migration flow) integrated
- Tourists & Passers by
- Immigrants & Refugees (2nd & 3rd Migration flow) mostly men, not integrated
- 3rd Economy Activities



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JUXTAPOSITION ON THE SQUARE I. NOTES & OBSERVATIONS

pic.49: Heterotopia on Victoria Square

Collage inspired by the on-site visit (study trip), that was made by the author in order to illustrate the juxtapositional uses and actors that claim space on the square.






pic.52: Diagram _ Fragmentation & Surveillance (by the author)

The square is divided into five areas where different actors dominate space and use it according to their needs (creating islands of isolation). Police surveillance is permanent on the front part of the square while Victoria Metro Station is open. Fences 'protecting' the greenery from stray dogs and homeless people/ drug addicts have become permanent while benches and additional infrastructure have been removed from the back part of the square (after 2015's transformation of the square to a hot-spot for immigrants).





pic.54 & 55 (right): Shift in the Governance of Public

The illustrations below (by the author) display the main actors that claim space on the square (pic. 55). In the concept they provide the 'seed' to-wards the formation of a community board (pic. 54). This board will progressively change the way that the square currently functions: from a regime of surveillance, mistrust and privatisation of public space towards the formation of a new, 'common' space where communities can meet, share and arrange activities and festivities of all kinds.







pic.56: Introducing a New System, Vision and Architectural Language on Square (by the author)

II. HOW CAN IT WORK?

Notes/ Reflections:

The exploration of the minimum infrastructure that is needed in public space, in order to foster procedures of democracy, inclusion and integration among diverse social groups was the main principal that formed the design proposal. At the same time self-governance, community empowerment and democratization of public space were qualities, without whom the design alone could not stand. In that sense, the participation of the actors and the communities that claim space to the square and to the area is vital for three reasons:

- for the shift of governance: from a regime of police surveillance on the square towards a self-governed space, that is managed by a community board of the neighborhood

- for the shift of notion: from a space that is obsessively "restored" to its initial neoclassic design -at which its current users (multicultural and marginalized, who do not reflect its glorious past) are recognized as the reason of the square 's misfunction- to a space whose physical elements and design do not connotate or target at a specific societal group

- for the shift of responsibility: regarding both the role of the architect and the role of the users.

The design proposal in other words tries to propose a sort of urban activism, where the design public spaces invites the user to take over, share and participate to their community.







III. WHAT IS KEPT:

THE GRID OF THE PRE-EXISTING DESIGN

Dominant characteristics of neoclassic design are axonometry and austere plan-grid, creating the sense of a two dimensional space. Though the former design of the square fails both physically and symbolically to identify and respond to the diverse needs of the inhabitants and the users of the square, the grid (5x5m) is preserved and will form the canvas of the intervention.

GREENERY & TREES

The importance of greenery and the need for more plantation was identified through the maptionnaire analysis and interaction with the users of the square.

THE SCULPTURE

The sculpture is considered iconic for the square and is preserved in place, at the centre of the square.

VICTORIA METRO STATION

The Metro station is considered protected since 2002. The architectural style is Art Deco and the walls are covered with green-blue tiles.





IV. WHAT IS ADDED:



WOODEN DECK (5X5M)

The intention is to create a system of square-shaped units that when assemblied can form islands/ platforms within the square or on the street (movable).These islands can expand horizontally or vertically according to the needs of the user -meaning that the square does not actually have strict borders but can be perceived as a loose space that enhances pedestrian flows and activities.



A grid is fixed on the ground where additional infrastructure (scaffolding) can be anchored. Possible scenarios will be further explored.





IV. WHAT IS ADDED:



Kiosks and containers can provide temporal space for storage, community activities and information spots, reviving the back part of the square.

BLUR PAVILION

This infrastructure is organic and tries to blend with the trees. During summer steam comes out of the beams and creates a pleasant micro-climate for the users of the squares and passers-by.

FRAMES

This was the initial idea from the beginning, to provide frames that imlpy/connotate uses, while waiting for the users of the square to take over, occupy, add or remove them.









pic.63: Exploring Scenarios & Spatialities (illustration made by the author)

AXONOMETRIC DRAWING SCALE: 1.200







pic.64: Exploded Diagram (by the author) _ The Layers of the Proposal

Initial scale of illustration 1:200

pic.65: The Grid: Anchored Beams & Possible Scenarios (illustration made by the author)





_EXHIBIT

_Heterotopia & the projection of power relations on urban squares



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TO SUM UP

To sum up, the purpose of this thesis was to explore design typologies within the spectrum of urban activism that could reactivate urban squares as political incubators and spaces of democracy, participation and citizenship.

The concept of heterotopia was used as the theoretic backbone and a tool for understanding today's condition of 'public' (spaces) in the so called 'problematic metropolitan districts'. Heterotopia was understood as a condition; a relation of antagonistic, radically incompatible processes -happening simultaneously at the same place. A highly dense urban fabric with few if any accessible spaces (as a result of years of speculation over the central land assets) and a multicultural and often temporary/ moving population of lower social stratification that lacks cohesion are the main challenges that these areas face. At the same time the complex network of social and power relations of their diverse groups and actors are projected onto public space and affect all of its layers: the identity (symbolic), the design (physical) and its uses (social).

The condition of those places was intiguing; appearing to be on one hand those real, different places functioning in parallel- and- out- of society's conventions and orders, while simultaneously implying a system of oppression, surveillance and discipline for their inhabitants (shadow city, illegal activities).

As a study case was chosen Victoria Square in Athens. The methodology (research for design) included historical/ urban analysis and a site visit, aiming at a deeper understanding of the area's development, its current condition and future needs. When put together, the results of the analysis and research revealed a juxtapositional condition on the square; its bourgeois, past identity (symbolic level) coming in contradiction to the current uses (cruising, drug dealing, trafficking) & users of the square (immigrants surveilled by the police, homeless, addicts). The design (physical level) of the square was a crucial aspect, palimpsesting to the initial neooclassic blueprints of the 19th Century -even after the 2015's transformation of the square as a hot-spot an a temporary shelter for refugees. This top-down 'restoration' process performed by the municipality of Athens was indicative of how physical space, design decisions and architectural styles/ language work towards the inclusion of some societal groups and the exclusion of others. The comments of the maptionnaire analysis participants are also

revealing when addressed critically^{*}; the main aspects that people pointed out as missing/ in need of change/ unlikeable were not associated with physical elements but rather with the activities that took place on specific parts of the square and the identity of their users.

The design proposal was thus threefold:

a) eliminating the former rigid design that could not be associated with the contemporary users of the square

b) introducing a new architectural language (a modular grid system and a system of frames) - associated with everyday & guerilla urbanism, community participation and self-governance/ appropriation of public space

c) being provocative of the multiple roles and responsibilities that the creators (architects and urban planners as professionals) and the users (people as citizens) of public space need to embrace for the creation of new, radical typologies that shift the notions of governance and participation on public spaces.

In that sense, the proposal aimed more to contribute to the discourse over urban activism and the role of the architect and less on solving specific problems of the site. The maptionnaire tool was also used for the author's spherical and critical understanding of the area, and rather as a participatory tool, the evidence of which -when extracted- would lead to some form of informed/ participatory design. The reason for that choice, was among others pragmatic, based on the tight schedule within which a thesis project is conducted.

In conclusion: This thesis used the heterotopic condition of contemporary central districts as a veil of immerse possibilities and a threshold of emerging utopias of future societies. Within this procedure, the author found herself often lost and devastated by the amount and the complexity of information and parameters that shaped today's urban reality. It would be naive to claim that a mere design proposal can provide democracy, accessibility and cohesion in public space. This project never aimed to claim that. The intention was not but the underlining of the political aspects and the social implications of urban planning and the need for a shift towards forms of urban activism.

* considering the fact that the majority of the participants were natives or immigrants that somehow managed to integrate to the area.

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PICTURES

picture#1

(left) Nur Photo (unknown). *Tourists Go Home. Refugees Welcome*. Original from Getty Images. (last accessed: 12/6/2019)_

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picture#14

The New Plan for the City of the Athens, designed by Kleanthis and Schaubert in 1833. Original from Archaeology of the City of Athens. (last accessed: 12/6/2019)_ avail. at: http://www.eie.gr/archaeologia/Gr/layout/images/09/zoom/LEO06.jpg

picture#15

The Klenze Plan for the City of the Athens (1834), a revised version of the Kleanthis-Schaubert plan. Original from Archaeology of the City of Athens. (last accessed: 12/6/2019)_

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picture#16

The final version of the Plan for the City of the Athens, after von Gaertner's intervention and the definite reposition of the Royal Palace. Original from Archaeology of the City of Athens. (last accessed: 12/6/2019)_

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picture#17

The final version of the Plan for the City of the Athens, after von Gaertner's intervention and the definite reposition of the Royal Palace. Extracted from Athenae Christianae (p. 183) by MOMMSEN, A. Original held and digitised by the British Library. Copied from Flickr.

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Martin Baldwin-Edwards (2013). *Plan d'Athènes 1888*. Scanned and adjusted for ageing problems, from the large map provided with the 1888 Guide Joanne -- *Athènes et ses environs*, Hachette & Cie. [replaced image with more accurate colour, 6 Apr. 2013; further replacement minimising scan defects, 29 July, 2013]. (last accessed: 12/6/2019)_ avail. at: https://www.flickr.com/photos/athens_greece/8620140236/

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Martin Baldwin-Edwards (2012). *Athens plan of 1896*. Scanned from large map provided with the 1896 Guide Joanne -- *Athènes et ses environs*, Hachette & Cie. (last accessed: 12/6/2019)

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picture#22

Distribution of refugee settlements after 1922 in the region of Attica (translated by the author). In Filippidis D article " Urban Planning in Greece", Greekarchitects. (last accessed: 12/6/2019)

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picture#24

Osten Residence, Athens, 1836. Extracted from Architectural Morphology. Athenian Neoclassicism of the middle 19th Century (translated by the author). (last accessed: 12/6/2019)_

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picture#24

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