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**The Politics of Public Space and the Emergence of
the Commons in Contemporary Athens**

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Signed Declaration

I, Orsalia Dimitriou declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

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To Athens,

'City that burns, flower that blossoms'

(unknown, graffiti Athens, 2008)

Abstract

This thesis investigates the public spaces of the contemporary city of Athens within a democratic political framework, analysing the urban space as 'produced' (Lefebvre,1991) by material practices of representation and everyday practices of appropriation, rather than as a fixed physical entity. The timeframe of this research coincides with radical changes in the sites that are the subject of the key studies, as the urban riots of December 2008 shattered the solidified and unequal relationship between state and society, introducing new public actors and spaces, such as the commons, while the indignants movement in 2011 questioned the statutory definition of public sphere and the incumbent democratic model.

In order to respond to the challenges of this highly shifting research field, focused in the main statutory square of Syntagma, the notorious main square of Exarcheia and Navarinou Park, and in order to explore the emerging commons and the elusive, informal and heterogeneous civic practices, this project adopts a visual ethnographic perspective. The research material is edited in two separate short films that are intended at the same time as methodological tools, as justification and records of this research, and as creative filmic works and means of advocacy and as such are an intrinsic part of this project.

The core argument and key finding of this thesis is the conjoining of the terms commons and public, spatially, notionally and politically that signals their reciprocal influence and constitution and herein lies a dramatic departure from those urban and social theories in which public space in contemporary democratic society is regarded as inherently bound up with the notion of the state. When analysed in regards to the democratic political model, their convergence constitutes a shared field of practices that enriches the public sphere and can lead to a deepening of democratisation processes.

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Introduction

Discussions about the significance and meaning of public space have been coming to the forefront of academic debate with a certain urgency during recent years, following the increasing number of popular movements that have taken place internationally in public spaces, such as the Arab spring, the indignant movement in Spain and the global occupy movements, but also a number of movements and riots connected to appropriation or defence of the public spaces. Statutory or small scale public spaces, such as Tahir square in Cairo or Gezi square in Istanbul, have become synonymous with political struggles highlighting the importance of this category of urban space and the connection of the actual space with wider social, political and financial issues. At the same time, the violence and conflicts that accompanied the overwhelming majority of the movements were also indicative of the contradictory meanings attaching to the concept of the “public” and the urgency of its redefinition.

The topic of this research is the production of public space in the city of Athens in Greece¹, referring to the production of urban space as the material construction of socio-political relationships². This thesis seeks to contribute to

¹ The contemporary Greek state would be considered as a European democratic state, nevertheless in the framework of this thesis both the European and the Democratic conditions are to be re-examined. The reason for needing to re-examine use of the adjective “European” arises from idiosyncratic conditions obtaining in 1934 at the time of the creation of the Greek state, formerly part of the Ottoman Empire. The term democratic raises questions concerning variable and contrasting notions of democracy.

² I will be using Lefebvre’s (1974/1991) analysis of space as perceived, conceived, lived and produced by material practices of representation and everyday practices of appropriation. Lived space is understood as the everyday space of conflict, innovation, change, decay, embodied in quotidian practices of residents.

the existing scholarship by examining, questioning and reassessing the relationship between democratic public space and the state, as this relationship is always based on a hierarchical structure in decision making. It attempts to do so by introducing the notion of commons which is a system of regulation that enables common governance in horizontal basis. The key studies of this thesis are a number of public spaces in the city of Athens in Greece where the solidified unequal relationship of state and society, a key factor in the historical formation of public space, was shattered by urban riots that took place between 2008 and 2011. During this period new forms of public spaces and new claims for public and political participation were introduced. The conjoining of the terms public and commons as they collide on the key studies signals their reciprocal influence and constitution and herein lies a dramatic departure from those urban and social theories in which public spaces in contemporary democratic society are regarded as intrinsically bound up with the notion of the state.

In the Greek context, the literature on public space follows two strands that this thesis aims to bring together. In works preceding 2008, public space is synonymous with the strategic plans of the state and is formulated independently from the claims and actions of its everyday users. On the other hand, as the literature on the city's urban movements increases, it seems that the accent shifts from the "independence" of space to its "irrelevance". More specifically, the empowering and corrosive characteristics, the organizational novelties and the practices of everyday resistance against state authority come to be celebrated to such an extent that the physical space itself might appear to become the mere setting. However, the relationship between space and practices is bidirectional, and the space's characteristics cannot be ignored. Furthermore, even if the intention of the urban movements is to resist and deny state authority, the soil in which they operate is never completely independent

from the state.³ In seeking to bring together those strands this thesis aims to re-establish the connection between structure, syntax and morphology of space in relation to social structure that was for long overlooked in the Greek context.

This thesis focuses on the contemporary city of Athens and covers a period of practice-based research between 2006 and 2012, while it encompasses a bibliographical research on the city's Modern period, in order to trace the origin of the contemporary idiosyncrasies of urban space. The period of my primary research coincided with major changes in the Greek economy and society that were coupled, as in the case of the aforementioned global examples, with significant and often violent events, riots and movements in the city's public spaces. More specifically I am referring to the urban riots that took place in Athens in December of 2008 and the indignant movement in Syntagma square during the summer months of 2011. These two dates are used in the frame of this research to describe temporal events and ruptures, but also mark the starting points of longer periods that are characterised by changes in urban culture and social relationships. Those ruptures and changes have influenced the course of the research and mark shifts and refinements both in the theoretical framework and the methodology as the initial theoretical notions and strategies were altered, renegotiated and ultimately "enriched" by new developments. For this reason I have aimed wherever possible to follow a chronological structure that tracks those shifts, accentuating thereby the theoretical challenges presented by changing events as they occurred and the developmental and responsive nature of the research.

The theoretical foundation of this thesis is established in the first chapter. The notion of public space is viewed as being intertwined with the concepts of the public sphere and the ideals and representations of the 'Public', with public space being considered as the spatial manifestation of the public sphere and the ultimate and rightful place of the Public. Those ideal notions of

³ This relationship will be closely examined on the second chapter. Effectively, the space where urban social movements operate is in most cases public, and therefore under ownership by the state, or surrounded by state property such as the streets, or dependent on state resources (electricity, water, etc).

public space are challenged by a number of theorists who claim that public space is far from ideal and undisputed but continually contested and necessarily ambiguous. The decision to present the theoretical debate as divided between ideals and conflicting realities of public space sprang from the initial field observation that took place before 2008: an observed differentiation between the production of statutory and neighbourhood public spaces, between ideals expressed by the official state discourses and conflicts, exclusions and struggles taking place in the actual public spaces and ultimately an observed polarisation between the Greek state and society. Through the course of the research, it became evident that in addition to the dichotomy between the ideal uncontested spaces, represented in the municipality's urban plans, and the reality of the public spaces there was also a political dichotomy inherent in the democratic model. This dichotomy, not readily apparent before 2008, was becoming increasingly visible in contestations about the meaning of participation in public, and reflected contrasting democratic ideals. In addition, as state-based interpretations and proclamations of democracy came increasingly to be contested after 2008, some of the social urban movements advanced from their initially reactive character towards collective creation and to inaugurating radical changes to urban space and everyday life. The desire for a different political model gave birth to new collective spaces and practices, based on non-hierarchical modes of organization that in the framework of this thesis would be described as commons.

The second chapter recounts the urban history of Modern Athens, in relation to significant socio-political factors. More specifically, it defines the idiosyncratic position of Greece in terms of contemporary urban theory, the hierarchies operating in the production of urban space, the designated public spaces in particular, and the distinctive characteristics of the relationship between the Greek state and Greek society. My aim is to show how the production of public space historically mirrored the relationship between state and body politic and to demonstrate that the formation and proliferation of urban social movements and the emergence of commons are not the norm but a novelty in contemporary Greece. The outline of urban history covers a period from the creation of Athens as the capital of the Modern Greek state in 1834 up

until December 2008, when the perceived balances and hierarchies start once more to change.

In order to describe the urban landscape, characterised by the battle between repression by authority and the forces of expression active in everyday practices, De Certeau (1984) outlines a distinction between strategies and tactics. For him strategies are employed by organizational power structures, such as the state or municipality⁴, or by those working within them, to define and ultimately control a "proper", univocal and stable place, by rational organisation and panoptic practice. Tactics, on the other hand, are used by those who are subjugated and are actions, devices, and procedures people use every day on the micro level in order to subvert the disciplining powers. Tactics and strategies depend on and reflect different spatiotemporal conditions; strategies are a triumph of space over time while tactics are deployed within the space of the other, worming their way into the territory of that which they seek to subvert, and are by nature opportunistic and reliant on time. Similarly, and based on the findings of the first and second chapters, I will claim that the Athenian public spaces are defined both by the stable strategic plans of the state and the municipality as embodied in the city plans and official urbanized space, and by the tactics of a changing 'public', exploiting opportunities and gaps left open by the plan, and evading "urbanistic systematicity" (De Certeau 1984, p 105). The question that permeates the third chapter is, how to grasp these elusive and improvisational tactics? In addition, how to grasp tactics within a constantly and rapidly moving field, defined by a shifting urban culture, as was the case in post 2008 Athens? Based on theories of visual ethnography and personal observations, this chapter sets out the methodological principles particular to this research. More specifically it explores the intrinsic relationship between video practice and research, emphasising, with reference to critical turning points, the challenges and findings that relationship brings forth. The visual research material is edited in two separate short films revolving around the events of December of 2008 and the indignant movement

⁴ Also by the corporation or the proprietor, a scientific enterprise or the scientist (De Certeau 1984)

in 2011 and their relation to public space. The films' narration, constructed through the voices of different space users, aims to depict the polyphony and non-hierarchical approach that characterises those new spaces and practices.

The fourth chapter focuses on the key studies which are three public spaces at the centre of Athens, drawing both from theory and practice, both histories and personal observations. It develops in a chronological sequence starting with Syntagma square, as the statutory public space, and moving to neighbourhood public space of Exarcheia. Similarly to the second chapter, I have extended my research historically to include the areas' modern period since I believe that their current socio-political character developed from foundations laid down in the modern period. In the third part of this chapter I move to commoning practices in Exarcheia (using also references to other urban commons that were created in the city at the same period), returning to Syntagma square in order to describe commoning practices that took place in the indignants movement in 2011. This structure attempts to reveal the emergence and most importantly the circulation of urban practices in public spaces. Furthermore it aims to bring together the theories, strategic state plans and the user's tactics as observed in the public spaces of Athens, seeking to understand the production of public space as a representation of Greece's political model and Greek society.

Lastly, the discussion that closes this thesis aims to accentuate and summarise the findings of this research. What do the idiosyncrasies of Athenian public space signify in the current period of radical changes? How does the emergence of commons influence the public? Do commons annul and relegate the importance of the idea of the public or they are an indication of the necessity of its reform? Finally, this chapter concludes with the contribution of this research to contemporary literature and opens up future avenues for research.

Chapter One: On Public and Commons

1.1 The public

1.1.1 Space of encounter, sociability, visibility and acknowledgement.

'Public space is the product of competing ideas about what constitutes that space – order and control or free, and perhaps dangerous, interaction – and who constitutes "the public".'

(Mitchell, 1995, p115)

Public space and the public sphere have been the topic of theory and research of many writers, producing an extensive literature. Although not the same, the notions of the public sphere and the public space are entangled, with public space being considered as the spatial representation of the public sphere. Public spaces have for long been considered as highly significant for cities and their inhabitants since they are viewed as places of interaction and contact among people, as a place where social networks and associations are built and where community life can flourish (Jacobs, 1992). Public space reflects the relationship between the individual and society. It is there, according to Simmel (1984) where the urban mentality is revealed, characterised by distance and reservation, yet also by a complexity of relationships and situations. In addition, public space is a terrain of public expression of social psychology and citizenship, and therefore it can be considered as a representation of models of civil society. Public space has been discussed as a place of visibility of difference and therefore a space providing public recognition of differences. As a result, public space is a place of encounter between strangers, random or not, and a place for sociability, association and interaction which has the potential of challenging stereotypes (Sennett, 1977) and a place where everyday multiculturalisms and cosmopolitan citizenship may develop (Young, 1990).

As such, public space is, by definition, a place that 'the public' can use

and refer to. A space where the public can be without having to pay a monetary price, where all of the members of 'the public' can socialise with everybody else, can make themselves visible and represent their existence as a part of society. 'The public' is the one that has the right of use of public space, as long as it conforms to existing social norms and laws. It is therefore a luxurious place and a place of power; it offers visibility, acknowledgement of one's being, social and cultural networks, and the rights of the public, a visible manifestation of diversity and heterogeneity placed together (Amin, 2006).

1.1.2 Realities of public space. Exclusions and conflicts

However, this ideal picture of public spaces, as open, social, deliberative and interactive has been significantly challenged by revealing inherent injustices and discriminations that also shape all notions of 'public' and support Lefebvre's ideas about social production and power relations (Lefebvre, 1991). Who comprises 'the public' becomes a highly contested issue among social groups. Similarly to the history of human and cultural rights, the right to be part of 'the public' has evolved through history, social and political struggles.

Public spheres and spaces are not neutral and idealised notions of them do not account for power and status differences and inequalities that shape the dynamics of those forming the public (Fraser, 1999). Access to the public sphere is not equally available to all for reasons of power or on institutional grounds (Fraser, 1999). Sennett (1977) has described how different groups avoid encounters in public space or are socially constrained in using them. Similarly, privatisation of the public realm, gentrification and increased surveillance also impact on who is going to or is allowed to use public spaces (Deutsche, 1991). On other occasions public space tends to be dominated by groups whose community might be strengthened but it often simultaneously excludes others (Koutrolykou, 2008). Regarding its ability to promote interaction and fruitful encounters, it is often the case that such contact remains superficial, especially when they are not accompanied by other elements. The

boundary crossing that public space might entail can be negative as much as it can be positive depending on how it is achieved, and produce more fear and anxiety than familiarity (Sennett, 1977). Furthermore, being a socio-political construction, public space is often perceived by minority groups as threatening or excluding.

The liberal notion of the public also assumes that public space is something perceived and used similarly by members of all different groups. While this might be the case for some forms of public spaces, as some studies have shown, the use of public space differs depending on user groups and spatial definitions. (Sharpe *et al*, 2000).

Holston (1999) writes that 'if the city is in this sense an arena for Rousseauian self-creation of new citizens, it is also a war zone for this very reason: the dominant classes meet the advances of these new citizens with new strategies of segregation, privatisation and fortification' (1999, p52). According to him, those new strategies as well as the process of consumption are contributing to the present decline of public space (Holston, 1999). Nowadays, more and more public spaces become privatised, with their owners making additional regulations over who constitutes the public and how public spaces are used. The increased popularity of control technologies (such as surveillance) further proliferate exclusions in the name of safety and crime control and negate important aspects of 'publicness'. Coupled with fear (real or perceived) and consumption, these transformations 'interiorize' the public element of social relations (Holston, 1999). Moreover, the overwhelming power of consumption has transformed many public spaces into places that one visits only if one wants to consume what is on offer. Bauman (2001) identifies those spaces as 'public but not civil': 'spaces for organized movement, organized consumption and organized entertainment are characterised by a "redundancy of interaction", lack of friction, togetherness and any deeper reason to communicate' (p27). Mitchell (2003) calls them 'festive spaces' (p138) -such as festival marketplaces, gentrified historic districts and malls. Festive public space encourages consumptions while maintaining order, surveillance and

control over the behaviour of the public⁵.

Deutsche (1991) comments that popular initiatives 'for the public' often entail further exclusions. She proceeds even further stating that rather than a real category, the definition of the public, like the definition of the city, is an ideological artefact; a contested and fragmented terrain and a discursive formation susceptible to appropriation by the most diverse and ideological interest (Deutsche, 1996). Mitchell (2003) also claims that the problems of more and more public spaces are 'being produced for us not by us' through privatization and the commodification of space 'modelled not on an ethic of interaction but an ethic of seamless, individuated movement and circulation: public interaction based on the model of commodity and capital flows' (p11) . Effectively such appropriations of space disadvantage certain groups over others creating an uneven geography of spaces (Harvey, 2008). For Harvey (2008) poverty and everyday survival struggle based on inequalities created by the neoliberal ethic are threatening ideals of urban identity, citizenship and belonging, which are fundamental characteristics of public space. For him 'even the idea that the city might function as a collective body politic, a site within and from which progressive social movements might emanate, appears implausible' (p33).

However, the point of this discussion is neither to paint a dreary picture of public spaces nor to diminish their importance; rather it is to illustrate the contested character of any 'public' and challenge naïve assumptions of neutrality in their use and 'naturalness' in their formation. Challenging these assumptions is important in the frame of this thesis since quite often they are the key point of initiatives in redevelopment and design of public spaces and in shaping political agendas based on the rights of the public. The public space is neither a space that exists 'naturally' in the society nor a space that it is created and granted by the authority to the citizens. It is a mouldable space that it is created by actions and forces by the authority, by included social groups and by

⁵ Festive spaces are similar in this sense (of surveillance and control) with the dead public spaces that resulted from contemporary urban planning. Festive public spaces are often a response to dead public spaces (Mitchell, 2003).

excluded social groups. The public space is therefore necessarily ambiguous, combining aspects of its ideal manifestations and the problematic, conflicting manifestations, its inclusions and its exclusions. It contains idealizations of stability but is simultaneously defined by its instability. It is a combination of who does the authorities consider as the public and also a result of struggles among social groups for sharing 'publicity'. This publicity turns claims and struggles public and therefore visible, since they are brought to the public domain and attention. Mitchell (2003) argues that the definition of the 'public' is a constant struggle between top-down policies and bottom-up claims for the public.

1.2. Political models and the public sphere

Public space is a political space as a terrain for the expression of political actions and struggles and a political notion – since it is dependent on the notion of the citizen and the notion of public sphere. Who constitutes the public sphere has been a topic of political philosophy for a long time (Arendt, 1961; Habermas, 1989). As the spatial interpretation of the public sphere, public space is a political space where everyone can be and articulate its political being and citizenship. According to Fraser 'the following characteristics can be distinguished as political aspects and connotations of the public: public space relates to the state, it is communal; it is accessible for everyone; something that affects everyone; a common good or common interest' (Fraser 1999, p120). Usually, the 'public' is recognised as the part of society who has civic rights and obligations, is involved in civic life, in other words the body of citizens. Defining the citizen and therefore the legitimate user of public space as well as the allowed uses of the space differs significantly according to the definition given by each political system (e.g. fascism, democracy, communism, etc). Yet, it is also possible that those differences occur even within the frame of the same political system and within the borders of the same country.

As will be shown later through the examination of a number of Athenian

public spaces (and also as a large number of international movements in public spaces have shown) the recent contestations in public and the contestations for the right to participate in the public and to express in public, are indirectly or directly contesting political participation and the political model⁶ on which the notion of public is dependent.⁷

Increasingly after December 2008 and culminating in the summer of 2011, the answer of the Greek state to the different political actions and movements in public spaces via its regulatory apparatus - the police - but also the accompanying official discourse - political statements and mainstream media - rendered visible that there is a discrepancy between what the state perceives as participation in public and what a large percentage of the public perceives as their right. Both parts are operating in what they recognize as a democratic framework but each one is attributing different characteristics to it and sets different boundaries. Furthermore a number of public spaces that were created as a result of those conflicts, one of which is part of the key studies, are based on models of democracy that are different from the ones upon which the statutory public spaces were based.

Using a number of theorists who are identifying contrasting notions of democracy, each one defined by different ways of political participation, I will attempt to provide a framework for examining the relationship between the democratic political model, the public sphere and political participation. By attributing the notion of incumbent democracy to the official state discourse and the notion of critical democracy to the emerging public and its movements and its spaces I will attempt to examine the aims and claims of each side and the characteristics of the produced public spaces within the democratic model, and to question whether the contestation of the existing participatory framework of democratic political procedures set by the state challenges and redefines the notion of public.

⁶ Greece is constitutionally defined as a Parliamentary Democracy since 1974.

⁷ Either through reaction and rejection as in the case of demonstrations, skirmishes and riots or by the creation of new urban spaces and practices.

1.2.1 Contrasting notions of democracy and political participation

‘Trying to understand democracy is like reaching into a black plastic bag. You can feel a large object, but accurate description is difficult because the shape is extremely complex [...] the object concealed within the plastic bag is thus strangely elongated, for it has two bulbous and tangible lobes’ (Blaug, 2002, p104).

There is historically a fundamental dichotomy in how we perceive democracy and participation in democratic procedures. It is possible that democracy is not one continuous project which reaches up to the state and down to the grassroots and the public, but it might entail reciprocally exclusive political projects. Fagence (1977) writes that democracy and participation fit the common mould of the social and political sciences with their clutter of discrepancies between theory and practice, and between aspiration and implementation. Such discrepancies seem to pervade not only the theoretical body of literature (Blaug 2002) but also the institutionalised expressions of democracy, whether ‘the liberal variety of the “free world” or of the socialist expression of communistic republics, or of the strange hybrids characteristic for the developing nations in the “third world”’ (Fagence, 1977, p20).

Democracy in contemporary liberal conception follows schismatic definitions. Schumpeter (1943), whose theory of ‘competitive democracy’ or ‘democratic elitism’, is for many an accurate description of what passes for democracy in contemporary western nations (Blaug & Schwarzmantel, 2001), defines it as an institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote. His focus on democracy as a decision-making method and his emphasis on ‘democratic self-control’ gives great autonomy to leaders, claiming that once the voters have elected an individual, the political action is his business and not theirs. Blaug and Schwarzmantel call

Schumpeter's theory 'a far cry from the ideas of popular sovereignty and active citizenship' (2001, p4).

Antipodal of Schumpeter's elitist approach is Habermas' notion of deliberative democracy based on an expanded public sphere as the space where the ongoing constitution of democratic culture occurs through rational-critical debate between equal citizens (Habermas, 1992). Habermas' core elements of democratic theory are: a developed public sphere, which is produced and maintained in a civil society by means of a discursively constituted consensus; constitutionally grounded legal procedures; and finally, an established democratic culture, based on widely known and accepted norms (Segre, 2011). The public in this ideal democracy is created to respond to moments of crisis or abuses of political offices and gather in order to revise and 'reinvent' political power and authority (Loehwing & Motter, 2009). Based on the democratic definition of Habermas, Loehwing and Motter (2009) approach the question of democracy in terms of how it can result from civic rhetorical action, rather than how a democratic institutional arrangement can better accommodate the demands of more individual and group interests and they distinguish between a problem solving model of democracy and a democracy as culture-generating paradigm.

Chantal Mouffe (2000) uses the concept of 'agonistic pluralism' to present a new way to think about democracy that is different both from liberal consociational and deliberative theories of democracy. For Mouffe liberalism's main principle is an availability of a universal consensus based on reason. Accordingly, the typical liberal understanding of pluralism dictates that the many perspectives and values, when put together, constitute a harmonious and non-conflicting ensemble (Mouffe, 2005). What democratic theories based on rational consensus fail to acknowledge is its hegemonic nature and the ineradicability of antagonism⁸. To think politically according to Mouffe 'it is

⁸ Mouffe distinguishes between antagonism and agonism as antagonism is the relation in which the two conflicting sides are enemies who do not share any common ground while in agonism the conflicting parties recognise the legitimacy of their opponents, although acknowledging that there is no rational solution to their conflict (Mouffe, 2005).

necessary to abandon the dream of final reconciliation and to discard the idea of the public as a space oriented towards consensus'(2005, p809).The perspective of 'agonistic pluralism' reveals as illusory the belief that a fully achieved democracy could ever be instantiated, and it keeps the democratic contestation alive. Consequently the democratic process should always allow for the possibility that conflict may appear and to provide an arena where differences can be confronted (Laclau & Mouffe, 1998). This arena is a commonly shared symbolic space where the conflicting parts are mutually recognized as legitimate adversaries and not enemies. Based on democratic politics of pluralistic agonism the 'res publica' is envisaged as a multiplicity of public spaces of agonistic confrontation (Mouffe, 2005).

Jane Mansbridge (1980) also defines two distinct types of democracy, the unitary and the adversary. Unitary democracy is based on the assumption of common interests between its participants. Founded on the norms of friendship, unitary democracies understand equality in terms of 'equal status' or 'equal respect'. The decisions are negotiated on a face-to-face interaction and the decision rule is consensus. On the contrary, adversary democracy is more suitable to accommodate conflicting interests. It is based on the assumption of equal protection of interests and the decision rule is the majority rule counted in secret ballot. Though the two types of democracy are defined by contrasting characteristics, Mansbridge concludes that unitary democracy is 'more suitable to small-size and relatively homogeneous communities' (p282) and that unitary and adversary democratic values can coexist and be used in defining methods of polity in different sized communities; a citizen can therefore participate in a polity by voting anonymously, and in another one by participating in face-to-face negotiations and discussions. Regarding democratic participation, Mansbridge observes that different views of how participation should be institutionalised clearly emerge when one considers the kinds of problems faced by grassroots associations in their efforts to be democratic. Such associations must empower their participants, and at the same time provide for good and quick decision-making.

A different side than Mansbridge's distinct but possibly symbiotic

relationship of unitary and adversary democracy is expressed by Richard Blaug (2002), who distinguishes two diverse and mutually incompatible political projects that he calls 'incumbent' democracy and 'critical' democracy. Examining why the efforts of deepening democracy - in order to expand from the state and reach the local, the civic and the grassroots - is failing, Blaug has concluded that the reason lies in the critical difference of the definition and therefore of the aims of democracy that each side is referring to and tries to achieve, and the lack of communication between the parts. Those two competing discourses lie in distinct social and political locations and are differently located within the structures of power. Incumbent democracy is a view of democracy coming from the centre of such structures and critical democracy from the periphery; in the first case democracy appears as a set of institutions to be respected, protected and improved, and in the second, democracy becomes a method of challenging those institutions (Blaug, 2002).

Equivalently, the principles of participation in incumbent and critical political projects, according to Blaug's definitions, vary greatly. Participation in incumbent democracy is largely characterised by voting, by normalized interaction within structured groups and by orderly civic involvement. The strength of incumbent democracy lies in its effectiveness which is achieved through institutions. Critical democracy, on the contrary, seeks to empower politically excluded voices and challenge existing institutions without necessarily seeking to occupy the sovereign position. Participation is direct, unmediated and horizontally structured with minimal institutional arrangements and decision making preceded by open argumentation and debate. Blaug writes that 'With participation seen as good in itself, democracy becomes an experience' (2002, p106).

1.2.2 Political framework and the production of public space; the *good* public and the *active* public

Consequently, the definition of the public varies greatly according to the

different variations of the same political model, democracy. Each variation of the model influences what is allowed in public and what are the public rights, obligations and duties and whether the public should have an active or passive, immediate or institutionalized, judgmental or uncritical position (in a literal and a metaphorical sense) in decision making and in regards to authority. It seems though that in most modern western democracies, there was, at least until recently, a decline of public participation in political processes with the public's engagement with the state and public affairs kept to the minimum and interventions limited in the main to voting in public elections (Crick, 2002). Skinner (1989)⁹ believes that the relationship between government and the governed as defined in liberal theories is ironic. In such relationship

‘the only way to maximize freedom must be to minimize the extent to which public demands can legitimately be made on our private lives [...] We might find ourselves reflecting in particular whether the distinction we have inherited between the public and the private is the one that we ought to be upholding or seeking to revise’ (Skinner 1989, p690).

Crick (2002) states that modern democracies because of the very scale of the political and legal institutions suggest to demand *the good citizen* more than *the active citizen* since ‘the relatively smooth working and security of democratic institutions can actually smother an active democratic spirit by appearing to diminish its need’ (2002, p113)

While the reduction of public participation in political process was a fact also in Greece, for reasons that will be explained in the second chapter - and this was indeed to a very large extent mirrored in the city's public spaces - the demands for a widening of political participation increased after the shock of the 2008 riots. A large number of the Greek public motivated both by their desire to challenge, negate, alter or negotiate a democratic system that was no longer perceived as smooth-working or providing social security, participated in numerous demonstrations, riots, clashes, skirmishes, protests, public

⁹ Skinner (1989) believes that liberalism has steadily led to the decline of political participation.

debates, neighbourhood public assemblies, and started increasingly engaging with social urban movements. And while demonstrations are a common phenomenon in the Greece, the proliferation of urban social movements was indeed a novelty that changed the geography of the city.

Trying to situate the acts in Greek public spaces and the formations of new public spaces within a democratic framework, one experiences a feeling of bewilderment like searching into Blaug's black plastic bag, as both a large number of the public and the state define the bulbous and complex object of democracy differently. As I will show later, we can roughly (as there are numerous in-between variations) distinguish at this point the two dominant democratic tendencies between incumbent and direct democracy. The Greek state stands for incumbent democracy and advocates the principle of the *good citizen*, and on the other side, the urban movements, at least the ones that will be examined in this thesis, are in accordance with Crick's 'active democratic spirit', represent the *active citizen* and organize their practices and spaces in the model of direct democracy. In regards to the notion of public, these models of citizenship might translate as the *good public* and the *active public*. Spatially this difference might manifest in public spaces produced by the state, where the public's role is to use them and modify their use indirectly, through voting, and public spaces produced actively and directly by the public. Of course this differentiation it is not always sharp, and as a closer examination of the case studies will show it is possible that antagonistic and incompatible notions of democracy get expressed in the same space and at the same time.

Understanding the plurality of urban movements and contestations in public spaces as public expressions of different democratic notions within the framework of the same political model and not anti-democratic as they are often presented in the mainstream media or characterised by politicians offers a different perspective that allows for dialogue and negotiation between the dissenting public and the state. Secondly, acknowledging the political connotations of a project, a space or a practice and understanding the political model in which is based, is necessary in regards to the evaluation of their characteristics, for example a critique on a guerrilla gardening project is

different if the aim is the political emancipation of the space's users or if it is the aesthetic value of the garden or the amount of the agricultural production. And thirdly, as this thesis will seek to prove, maintaining the visibility of public claims and contestations, rather than jeopardising democratization processes, actually supports them. As these differences materialise in urban space they are challenging and redefining the notion of public, within the same system, the same city, the same country, and at the same time.

Lastly, as a result of the described political contestations, after 2008 the city of Athens experienced a mushrooming of urban movements that went beyond simple rejection of existing order and confrontation with it, to the 'creation of a bottom-up city through everyday praxis in order to contest capitalist practices that target everyday life' (Petropoulou, 2010, p223). Resulting from those urban movements is the formation of a new type of 'public' spaces that were claimed or re-claimed by the state or the market and whose organization was based on values of critical democracy. Their processes of maintenance, organization, networking, communication and management differ from the statutory public spaces and their characteristics are completely idiosyncratic since almost every term attributed to them: municipal, squatted or autonomous, is contradictory. Furthermore, their users are declaring the space's independence from the state, which renders the application of the term public, and therefore 'of the state', problematic. As this thesis seeks to prove, those spaces, whose characteristics will be studied in detail in the fourth chapter, could be more coherently and fruitfully described as commons.

1.3. The commons

1.3.1 Commons and enclosures

The commons is a new use of an old word, meaning 'what we share' and referring to a wealth of assets that are collectively owned or shared between or among populations (Bollier, 2002). During the Roman times *res communes* is distinguished as one of three categories of property: *res privatae*, which

consisted of things capable of being possessed by an individual or family, *res publicæ*, which consisted of things built and set aside for public use by the state, such as public buildings and roads and *res communes*, which consisted of natural things, used by all, such as the air, water and wild animals (Berry, 2005). Systems of common rights were the norm in most premodern communities in Europe (e.g. in first century German tribes or Alpine grazing fields in Switzerland) and in societies from Central America to South Asia (Patel, 2009; Hyde, 2010).¹⁰

In England under the doctrine of *res communes*, the king could not grant exclusive rights of access to a common resource, rendering the commons as the poorest people's life-support system that has traditionally provided food, fuel, water, and medicinal plants for those who used it (Patel, 2009). The enclosure of commons is first known as a process that took place in sixteen to eighteenth century England as a physical enclosure¹¹ of common land by the landed nobility in order to use the land for wool production (Linebaugh, 2008) and by the mid-19th century, common right had been extinguished throughout England and the bulk of the commons converted to private land (Hyde, 2010).

The idea of the commons has been declining since at least the eighteenth century (Walljasper, 2010) and started emerging fairly recently in diverse disciplines such as political economy, sociology, law and media. An 'anti-commons' model though was for decades a highly influential model for policy making advocating privatization or nationalization of the commons. Hardin's¹² article in *Science Journal* in 1968 '*The tragedy of the commons*' illustrates a

¹⁰ Hyde (2010) writes that the English commons were not simply the land but the land plus the rights, customs, social relations and institutions that organized and preserved its communal uses. 'The physical commons –the fields and woods and so forth are like a theatre within which the life of the community is enacted and made evident' (Hyde, 2010, p31).

¹¹ For Marx (1867) the process of expropriation and dispossession of commoners taking place by separating people from their means of production is the process that creates the precondition of capitalist development and is referred as 'primitive accumulation'.

¹² Hardin was an ecologist concerned with the general problem of the overpopulation and the use of earth's limited resources by a continuously increasing number of users.

dilemma arising from the situation in which multiple individuals, in his example herders, acting independently and rationally consulting their own best interest, will ultimately deplete their common recourse. This depletion and therefore the tragedy of the commons, is inevitable in a society that believes in the freedom of commons. Free access and unrestricted demand for a finite common resource will inevitably lead to over-exploitation of the recourse and degradation of the environment. Hardin proposes that the tragedy can be prevented by either more government regulation or privatizing the commons property: 'if ruin is to be avoided in a crowded world, people must be responsive to a coercive force outside their individual psyches, a "Leviathan" to use Hobbes's term' (Hardin 1978, p314).

Ciriacy-Wantrup & Bishop (1975) have criticised Hardin's work as failing to distinguish between common property and open access resources. They state that:

'We are not free to use the concept "common property resources" or "commons" under conditions where no institutional arrangements exist. Common property is not "everybody's property" [...]. To describe unowned resource (res nullius) as common property (res communes), as many economists have done for years (...) is a self-contradiction.' (1975: 714).

Ostrom (1991) has also criticized Hardin's model as based on the inability of a group to communicate and manage collectively their resource. Ostrom offers a well documented and sustained alternative to the dipole solutions of privatization or state control of the common resources, based on self-management by a local community. She suggests that the tragedy of the commons may not be as difficult to solve as Hardin implies, since locals have often come up with solutions to the commons problem themselves; when the commons is taken over by non-locals, those solutions can no longer be used. Handing control of local areas to national and international regulators can create further problems that are overseen in the applications of his model. Those can be the amount of time, money and effort that should be spent by a central regulator to obtain knowledge about the local system/resource so

extensively as to allow it to design the rules of its governance adequately or the problems that might arise regarding the implementation of the rules and the monitoring of impostors of the rules when the agent that monitors/regulates is external and not set by the community. Both Ostrom's (1991) and Ciriacy-Wantrup & Bishop's (1975) definitions of the commons are valuable in defending the self-management of a resource against privatisation or nationalization yet they are both bound to the notions of property and the materiality of resources and cannot describe commons of immaterial and boundless nature, such as the ones that I will describe shortly.

For De Angelis (2010) the resource-based definition of the commons¹³ is too limited as it lacks the social relations that define the commons and reduces the value of the commoners' struggle. According to him conceptualising the commons involves three things at the same time: a common pool of resources (understood as non-commodified means of fulfilling people's need), a community to sustain them, and commoning as a verb, which is the social process that creates and reproduces the commons. Indeed recently the term common that has extended from elements of the environment and material resources -the atmosphere, forests, fisheries, oil fields or grazing lands- to shared social creations, scientific research, word languages, creative works, the airwaves, the internet, Wikipedia, information, life commons (e.g. the human genome) (Hardt & Negri, 2009; Walljasper, 2010) is marking a shift from the place/ materiality of the commons towards process that shapes it. Peter Linebaugh (2008) stresses the point that the commons is an activity rather than just a material resource and David Bollier (2010) defines the term as a social dynamic: 'A commons arises whenever a given community decides it wishes to manage a resource in a collective manner, with special regard for equitable access, use and sustainability. It is a social form that has long lived in the shadows of our market culture, and now is on the rise'.

This shift towards both the immateriality of the resource and the process of commoning is not only a definitional refinement of the term commons but denotes the realities and threats of new types of enclosures. Federici (2011)

¹³ As defined by Hardin (1968).

names the 'new enclosures' as one important reason for bringing the 'apparently archaic idea' of the commons to the centre of political discussion in contemporary social movements. For her the commons and their possible enclosures have made visible a world of communal properties and relations that many had believed to be extinct or had not valued until threatened with privatization but also new forms of social cooperation that are constantly being produced, including in new areas of life as for example, the internet. Jodi Dean (2012) is differentiating between the commons and the common in order to denote and grasp forms of enclosures and exploitation specific to communicative capitalism and 'immaterial labour', characteristics of contemporary capitalism (Casarino, 2008, Dean 2012); where the commons is finite and characterised by scarcity while in contrast the common is infinite and characterised by surplus. 'The common thus designates and takes the place of human labour power, now reconceived in the broadest possible terms of the potential of creativity, thought, knowledge and communication as themselves always plural, open and productive' (Dean, 2012, p134). Similarly, Michael Hardt (2010) uses the notion of common to draw out the specificity of the neoliberal assault on the people. For Hardt neoliberalism is more than a policy entailing the privatization of public property and services. It is 'a seizure of what is common- knowledge, languages, images and affects' (Hardt, 2010, p136). Hyde (2010) proceeds even further in terms of immateriality in describing a type of commons yet unimagined, unknown, un-designed and unspoken which is in danger as it might depend on non enclosed resources in order to come to light.

It is then fair to claim that commons are continuously defined, re-defined and re-imagined almost simultaneously with their imminent enclosure and the usurpation of the resource in which they are centred: commons as land, commons as material resources, commons as immaterial resources and commons of things yet to come.

1.3.2 Material, immaterial and symbolical enclosures of public space in Athens

The discussion about the urban commons and commoning in Athens came to the forefront after December 2008 and materialised into actual spaces after 2009. The commons appeared as practices related to the imminent enclosures of a common resource, the city's public spaces.¹⁴ The public spaces of Athens had been diminishing for many decades now. For a number of reasons though, which we will explain later, there was not until recently substantial social resistance directed to preventing the deterioration of the quality and quantity of public spaces, due partly to a lack of awareness or interest.¹⁵ Yet, increasingly after 2008 the extent of the depletion of the common resource and the threat of imminent enclosures became evident and a matter of concern for a large number of the public.¹⁶ Coupled with numerous other changes in the Greek society¹⁷, the city's public spaces shifted from the periphery of urban discourses to the main terrain where the 'right to the city' was exercised. This shift brought awareness at the way the public space was produced and perceived, moving from a public good that it is granted from the state to the citizens to a common good that could possibly be produced by the citizens. The public spaces' enclosure drew attention to the different aspects of value of the resource in material, immaterial and symbolical level. The first, material consideration concerned the enclosure of the actual land as the remaining open spaces in the city centre were increasingly treated by the state as land assets

¹⁴ Either by defending, or safeguarding the common use of the public spaces, or creating a new one, or by raising awareness of an imminent enclosure that has not yet happened.

¹⁵ As well as weak social bonds and a disbelief or inexperience in achieving goals by collective action.

¹⁶ For practical reasons such as the decrease of space but also for reasons related to the increased awareness of the association of the 'right to the city' and political rights and the increase of social associations that got intensified after December 2008.

¹⁷ Such as the proliferation of social movements and the increasing awareness that the state cannot safeguard the city's public spaces.

ready for exploitation either by selling them or by granting them in their entirety or partially, for commercial use, therefore jeopardising the spaces common use. The second level, the resources' immaterial value reflected the relationships, knowledge and networks produced in public space as well as the political emancipation of the citizens. Towards this dimension the state position¹⁸ is antithetic: it ignores it or devalues it when the space is about to be sold to an investor, characterising the space as empty or decaying, but has an increasing tendency to repress any bottom-up, emancipating and dissenting political voices that might spring from the same space. The intangibility of public space can also be connected to its legislative definition. Kourti (2011) claims the physical public space should conceptually be treated like other intangible public goods since it cannot be divided, similarly to other material public goods such as a building or a plot of land that are defined by clear ownership boundaries, without destroying its common use and common access, that lie in the core of its legislative definition.¹⁹ The third dimension concerns the symbolic and the imaginary potentials of the public space and the collective possibilities that we cannot yet imagine or that have not yet taken place. While the second and third dimension seem infinite and impossible to enclose, they are not, since they are dependent on the materiality of the public space, which is finite. Similarly then to Federici's(2011) previous comment the imminent enclosures of the public space brought the idea of the commons to the centre of political discussion and 'made visible a world of communal properties and relations that many had believed to be extinct or had not valued until threatened with enclosure, privatisation or extinction'. Consequently the imminent enclosures brought forth the notion of the public as commons in the Athenian context.

¹⁸ The State's position will be examined in detail in the second and the fourth chapter.

¹⁹ This aspect of the immaterial value of the resource also brings forth possible weaknesses of Ostrom's (1991) and Ciriacy Wantrup's(1975)definition of commons as they are restricted to material resources defined by property rights.

1.3.3 The Athenian commons

The practices of commoning that initially took form as a temporal system of regulation that enabled common governance of a resource, thereby drawing attention to the resource's value, gave shape after 2009 to new spaces whose characteristics (which I will describe and evaluate in more detail on the fourth chapter) deviated from the model of statutory public spaces. They are spaces created, managed and regulated by their users so as to assert their independence from the state. Contrary to public spaces that are provided by state or municipal authority to the public under specific conditions that ultimately affirm the authority's legitimacy; the commons are created in order to question this legitimacy. They are also distanced from the market and strictly non-commercial. Furthermore they are not private spaces, controlled and used by a limited group of people excluding all others or defined by property borders and access control, but are open to the public. In addition, the management of the space is based on the models of critical and direct democracy and done in egalitarian base through open assemblies and consensual decision-making.²⁰ The last is a characteristic of the specific commons in question and is not intrinsic to the notion of the commons as (in regards to the definition of the commons) the possibility of the formation of hierarchies within the system of common governance, or the regulation by a group of users, or a community is not excluded²¹.

The creation of the specific Athenian commons is based on a desire to question the authority, as previously stated, by questioning the way the authority produces and regulates the space, in a way which is mediated and hierarchical. Similarly the structure of the assemblies that regulate the space is

²⁰ Later on, during the indignants movement in Syntagma in 2011, the decision making in the assembly due to its large size was done by voting. The striking majority of the assemblies in commons operate on consensual decision making.

²¹ There are many contradictions in regards to the commons' distance from capitalism and property as well as in regards to the use of the term 'community' that would be discussed further on the thesis.

both a response to the practicalities of space management but mainly motivated by the desire to implement a different political model based on an equal and unmediated decision making.

Yet, despite the commoners' intention to distance and differentiate their spaces both from the market and the state, the spatial realities of the commons prove that this distance cannot be absolute. In regards to the market and capitalism Stavrides and de Angelis (2010) claim that the commons are constantly created and part of capitalistic relationships .O'Lory calls their boundaries against capitalism 'anything but foolproof' as they will 'inevitably depend on capitalist commodity production and exchange for their survival (except if there are primitivist communes)' (O'Lory, 2013) as for example most Athenian commons depend to some extent on monetary exchanges for their resources (plants, tools, etc) as hard as the commoners try to avoid it. Additionally the Athenian commons depend to some extent on public resources such as water or electricity. Also, the land where they are based is public property, and though is not managed by the state it belongs to it. Their character is public, in a sense that they are not squats or closed spaces but part of the city's open spaces. Lastly the police, a state mechanism, test their control abilities on the same ground. Consequently, the distance from the state might be intended in the commons, but it is not completely achievable.

1.3.4 Public as commons and commons as public

Interestingly in Greek legislation the terms public and common are tightly linked. Kourti (2011) has studied extensively all main legislative frameworks in Greece- planning legislation and the civil, criminal and municipal codes- and has concluded that the term public space does not appear in official institutional and legal terminology as such. Instead it is described by its ownership status and the terms of its use; under the terms 'of common use' and 'for common benefit'²² that denote something that is not private, but instead

²² In Greek legislation under the terms «κοινόχρηστο» and «κοινωφελές».

subject to the various classes of public use. For Kourti (2011) the principal of availability to common use and thus accessibility of public space is a more important factor than the conditions of ownership in relation to private-public split and thus to political substance of public space.

Public spaces and commons coexist in the Athenian context. Their main differences are that public space is institutionalised, hierarchically managed, ordered according to the model of incumbent democracy and typically refers to national scale, while commons are horizontally managed, mostly localised and implemented on the model of critical democracy. On the other hand the terms converge spatially, legislatively and notionally. Public space is increasingly considered by the public as a common resource, that belongs to all, can be managed and taken care of by all, and less as 'of the state'; thus one could talk about the 'public as commons'.

One could talk also about 'commons as public', since the commons in question are also public spaces. This does not only denote the spatial reality of Athenian commons but also constitutes a further refinement of the term commons, one which emphasises both the possibilities of creating new commons and the danger of another possible enclosure, an enclosure from within. De Angelis (2010) writes that not only enclosures happen all the time, but also there is constant commoning, a social praxis of the commoners that might defend a common and also produce a common through commoning. This calls for a further refinement of the term as the enclosure of a common, material or immaterial might also come from within, from the commoners themselves. Stavrides (2010) emphasises the difference between commons as community and commons as public space. Commons as community is based on an entity of a mainly homogeneous group of similarly minded people affirming their commonalities. This entails the danger of people defining themselves as commoners by excluding others from their milieu, from their own privileged commons and creating in that way a closed community and an enclosure of the commons²³. On the contrary, conceptualizing commons on the basis of the

²³ Stavrides (2012a) further writes that communities create common space under conditions decided on by communities and open to anyone: 'The use, maintenance, and creation

public does not focus on similarities but on the very differences between people. Commons as public space is an actual or virtual space where strangers and different people or groups with diverging forms of life can meet on a purposefully instituted common ground and necessarily entails aspects of continuous negotiation and contest.

The terms public and commons constitute the theoretical focus of this research. Their conjoining, as they collide on the key studies it is a dramatic departure from urban and social theories in which public space in contemporary democratic society is regarded as intrinsically bound with the notion of the state. Secondly it denotes the necessity of maintaining the resource of public space as a common good and keeping commoning processes open to the public. Lastly, as this thesis will seek to prove their reciprocal influence and constitution it is a critical tool for studying the processes of democratisation as they formalise in urban ground.

1.4 Public space and the city.

1.4.1 Politics and the urban space: contextualisation of political action

Cities are indispensable spaces for exercising politics. The etymology of the word "politics" comes from the Greek word 'polis' meaning state or city. While politics is not solely an urban reality, the urban is considered a dynamic political terrain. This is not only in terms of the city hosting political and administrative institutions but an actual space where politics are spatially, socially and metaphorically manifested. Harvey (2012) writes that the term 'city' is deeply embedded in the pursuit of political meaning:

of common space does not simply mirror the community. The community is formed, developed, and reproduced through practices focused on common space[...]the community is developed through commoning'.

'the city of God, the city on a hill, the relationship between city and citizenship-the city as an object of utopian desire, as a distinctive place of belonging within a perpetually shifting spatio-temporal order all give it a political meaning that mobilizes a crucial political imaginary"(Harvey, 2013, pxvii).

Urban studies, according to Deutsche, explore the concrete mechanisms by which power relationships are perpetuated in spatial forms and identify the precise terms of spatial domination and resistance. (Deutsche, 1996).

In many respects, cities are terrains where differences – as well as similarities - are played out and where thousands or millions of individuals live in close proximity to each other, often fighting for the same or similar resources. As such, cities are simultaneously laboratories for governing 'living together' and the places of its contestation. In this process, the spatial dimension bears particular significance since, as Lefebvre (1991) has pointed out, space is not merely a geographic definition but it is socially produced and reproduced embodying a vast range of power relations. For Stavrides (2010) urban space is the locus of everyday life, of social reproduction on one side, but also the locus of practices of self-differentiation, of personal and collective resistance, of 'molecular spatialities of otherness'. Similarly accent to the spatial element of urban public spaces as locus of the particular is drawn by Lehtovuori (2010). He claims that opposite of the conflicts of the fordism era that were largely played out along institutionalised lines, with organized actors and clearly definable antagonistic positions, now urban struggles are fragmented, particular, differentiated and embedded in a specific site or spatial structure. McCann (2002) writes that in almost every case within the multitude of forms of urban politics 'the politics is not only conditioned by the urban context in which is situated but its situatedness in urban space also contributes to the continual production and reproduction of the city'(p77).

Urban space performs a multiple political role; it is the location and the setting of politics and conflicts, the space of events, of different times

(civic/social and State) and rhythms²⁴ (Lefebvre, 1996), of meanings, metaphors, poetic and mythic experiences (De Certeau, 1984), the place of the city's production and reproduction (McCann 2002, De Angelis and Stavrides 2010) and also the place of possible political resistances²⁵ (Lefebvre, 1996; Harvey 2012). It is simultaneously the place of politics and a political claim (Stavrides 2010).

The city is an oeuvre- a work in which all citizens should participate. The right to participate in and appropriate²⁶ the urban space are social and collective rights that for Lefebvre are implied in the 'right to the city'. Yet increasingly the oeuvre is alienated by a dominant class and sets of economic interests and the spaces of the modern city are produced for the citizens rather than by the citizens²⁷. Denying or impeding this 'superior form of rights' consequently leads to a deprivation of important civil and political rights such as 'the right to freedom, to individualization in socialization, to habitat and to inhabit' (Lefebvre, 1996, p 174).

The revival of the Lefebvrian 'right to the city' expressed in numerous urban social movements over the last decade (Harvey, 2012) highlighted the relation between urban space and political rights and the relation between the claims for social justice and practices of spatial appropriation. The movements expressed the increasing desire of the city's inhabitants to participate actively and collectively in

²⁴ Lefebvre differentiates between the rhythm of 'the self' (towards private life, the presence, the self, silent and conscious forms) and rhythm of 'the other' (rhythm of activities turned outwards, towards the public, rhythms of representation) (Lefebvre, 1996, p235).

²⁵ Urban space for Lefebvre is composed of heterotopias, liminal social urban practices of possibility, foundational for the defining of revolutionary trajectories, in tension with isotopy, the accomplished and rationalized spatial order of capitalism and the state, as well as with utopia as an expressive desire (Lefebvre, 2003).

²⁶ For Lefebvre this participation and appropriation of the oeuvre are clearly distinct from the right to property (Lefebvre, 1996, p 174).

²⁷ Purcell (2002) has demonstrated that those who have the right to the city as intended by Lefebvre are better termed as inhabitants of the city, rather than the citizens. Purcell claims that Lefebvre fuses the notion of citizens with that of denizen/inhabitant as the term 'citizenship' has been hegemonically associated with membership in a national political community.

the oeuvre.

1.4.2 Urban space and global social movements

The importance of urban space as a major terrain of politics has been highlighted by the numerous urban movements that took place in the period 2008-2011: The Arab Spring, the Spanish Indignados, the 'Occupy' movement worldwide as well as important urban social movements that arose across Central and South America and Asia. Erupting with the start of the global financial crisis, they have gained momentum in 2011 to such an extent that this year has been characterized 'the year of revolutions'²⁸.

These urban revolts were geographically dispersed and very diverse in terms of culture, social composition and the nature of the political system in which they operated. They were also met with different levels of repression from the authorities. Gerbaudo (2012) writes that their claims were more national than global and therefore necessarily reflecting the specificity of their national cultures. He believes, however, that despite those differences, the urban movements of this specific period shared remarkable elements of commonality and similar cultural traits which allow us to see them as part of a common protest wave (Gerbaudo, 2012). These similarities include the movements' majoritarian character, the formation of public assemblies, sit-ins and occupation camps, the use of social media for mobilization and diffusion and the choice of a central public space as a space of contention.

Indeed the global urban movements of the period have appealed to wide social strata incorporating social groups unaccustomed to those particular forms of protest (demonstrations, riots, occupations, etc). Gerbaudo (2012), who has studied the Occupy Wall Street movement, the Egyptian revolution, the Indignados in Spain and to a lesser extent the events at Syntagma square and

²⁸ TIME magazine in its *Person of the year* issue of 2011.

the Occupy movement in London, writes that the popular²⁹ and majoritarian character of these movements is perfectly condensed in the slogan of the Occupy Wall Street 'we are the 99%'. This was reflected not only in the discourse and imaginary of each movement but also in the diversity of their constituency (Gerbaudo, 2012). Such popular diffusion has constituted a shared common ground among movement participants and sympathizers, a feeling of belonging to the same 99% and to a similar era, sharing a similar context, subjected to similar injustices and aiming at common goals. The goals could be summarized as a quest for justice, equality, and democratic sharing of political power, resources and wealth³⁰. Similarly to a shared definition of the majority, there was also a shared definition of the 1% constituted by corrupt and dictatorial politics enmeshed with a global financial elite.

Purcell (2014) mentions that in order to understand the contemporary struggles for democratization, a quest pursued by most movements, one has to comprehend the current global context where these processes are taking place. He describes the current global context as predominantly urban, regulated by capitalist social relations of production that have extended to almost all parts of the globe, and dominated by a neoliberal common sense that has replaced Keynesian and social-democratic thinking. Yet this context is also shaped significantly 'by recurrent manifestations of popular power, in the form of both intense eruptions and everyday struggles by people to collectively liberate themselves from the various structures that contain them' (Purcell, 2014, p3). Mason (2012), who as a journalist has covered many of the movements, revolutions, civil wars and internet-based revolts that 'kicked off' (p2) in 2009-2011, writes that these apparently disparate, worldwide upheavals, should not be seen in isolation as there are 'common social roots of the new unrest' that can be summarized in three big social changes: in the demographics of revolt, in technology and in human behaviour itself. He also observes a flowering of collective action in defence of democracy and a resurgence of the struggles of

²⁹ Gerbaudo is using here Laclau's definition for 'popular : movements which appeal to the 'people' (Laclau 2005, cited in Gerbaudo, 2012, p10).

³⁰ According to Harvey (2012) the common demand of various oppositional moments should be focused on greater democratic control over the production and use of surplus wealth.

the poor and oppressed but also a relation of the movements with the expanded power of the individual: 'a surge in desire for individual freedom and a change in human consciousness about what freedom means' (Mason, 2012, p3).

Harvey (2012) believes that it is worth asking the question whether the urban manifestations of all these diverse movements are other than plain side effects of global cosmopolitan and even human aspirations that have nothing specifically to do with the particularities of urban life. He believes that there is something about the urban processes and the urban experience and the qualities of urban life under capitalism that 'in itself, has the potential to ground anticapitalist struggles' (p179). He writes that the injustices and forms of exploitation are nowadays mainly felt in the living space, the space of the city, rather than in the factory- the traditional space of the proletariat and the centre of class struggle according to Marx. For Harvey (2012) the right to the city is a political class-based demand and therefore urban social movements always have a class content even when they are primarily articulated in terms of rights, citizenship and the travails of social reproduction. The urban, he writes, is the subject of utopian thinking, the centre of capital accumulation but also an incubator of revolutionary ideas, ideals, and movements. In other words, the struggles within and over the qualities and prospects of urban living, perceived by *the 99%* as not desirable, have the potential to challenge the dominant political and economic powers of capital along with its hegemonic ideological practices and its powerful grasp upon political subjectivities and they should be seen as fundamental to anti-capitalist politics (Harvey, 2012).

The relation between the recent urban movements, highlighted by different authors (cf Harvey 2012; Merrifield, 2013; Purcell, 2013) was aided and accelerated by the use of popular social media as means of collective action (Mason, 2012; Gerbaudo, 2012). As movements were 'kicking off' all over the world, their connective network was expanding: participants shared on social media their experiences, means, techniques, frustrations, practical knowledge such as ways to avoid police brutality, ways to set up an infirmary, to organize a

protest camp, to start a new movement in a new city,³¹ as well as ways of practicing participatory democracy but also visions, legacies and dreams. The proliferation and connectivity of the movements is indicating an expansive common ground, a shared belief between the participants that there is a commonality between their different goals and valuable lessons that could be learned by the tactics, the means of mobilization and contention of a different movement, although it was taking place in a different city, country or even continent and beyond each separate movement's geographical boundaries. Merrifield (2013) writes that the city is the critical zone in which a new social protest is unfolding, yet the dissenters' aspirations are transcending the city's scale both physically and philosophically. He believes that the critical question that one should be asking the revolutionary crowd, beyond a specific urban context,³² is how they form, where they draw their energies from, what kind of spaces they occur in and what kind of new spaces they produce.

The urban, the living space and its representational social core – the public space – are then important sites of political action, radical and even revolutionary acts. The urban struggle could be taking place in a specific public space in a particular city but it is also a shared global experience. This thesis focuses on the city of Athens, a space of national and geographical peculiarities, and a specific context,³³ yet it should not be read as an isolated individual example, but in relation to the wider urban global struggles for social justice and quest for real and direct democratic distribution of political rights and wealth. Within this wider framework, this thesis examines the actual site characteristics and the re-engineering of the territorial organization, and

³¹ The Greek Indignants started their protests after Spanish indignados in Puerta del Sol provocatively asked on social media whether the Greek people are fast asleep (Ida, personal communication, 2012).

³² Merrifield (2013) believes that the definition of the city, as intended by the Lefebvrian *right to the city*, is hard to define: it might refer to the right to the metropolitan region, to the whole urban agglomeration or just the right to the city's downtown.

³³ According to Harvey (2012) the study of the actual site characteristics and the physical and social re-engineering and territorial organization of the sites is a weapon in political struggles. He believes that 'In the same way that, in military operations, the choice and shaping of the terrain of action plays an important role in determining who wins, so it is with popular protests and political movements in urban settings' (p. 117).

further asks what are the tactics, visions and legacies created in new spaces that are being produced in the Athenian urban context.

1.4.3 A focus on public space

Mitchell (2003) writes that the right to the city - as used by Lefebvre - is dependent upon public space, and that battles over public space reflect struggles for a just and democratic polity. Public space is for him 'the space of justice' (p235), where the right to the city is struggled over and where it is implemented and represented. Indeed the majority of urban social movements are taking place in public spaces, either by production or appropriation. Public spaces are indispensable elements of the notion of the city. For Lefebvre the cities are necessarily *public*, as places of heterogeneity, of social interaction and exchange with people who are necessarily different, as opposed to the *idiocy*, meaning the privacy, isolation and homogeneity of rural life (Merrifield 2002, Mitchell 2003). Espuche (1999) writes that public space has not been the space in negative of dwellings, but the space in positive of the city. Public spaces, he claims, are unificatory and symbolic, efficient representatives —through the intermediary of space— of the city as a whole. Without them, it would not be possible to speak of the city as such. For Lehtovuori (2010) public urban space is the key of the coming-together of different contradictory and conflictual actors, practices, agendas and influences, the 'soul' the city and breeding ground of its urban character (p1) . Moreover, without denying the virtues of social spaces generated online, some forms of communication like physical and verbal contact, being and feeling things together, seeing and touching, can only take place in actual public space (Espuche, 1999). Mitchell (2003) asserts that 'new' public virtual spaces have enhanced publicity for certain causes but have not supplanted the important of physical occupations and negotiations on public space. Gerbaudo (2012) makes similar points with regards to recent 'movements of the squares', noting how social media are used to choreograph people's assembly in physical space. He argues that activists' use of social media does not fit with the image of a 'cyberspace' detached from physical reality but is instead used as part of

a project of re-appropriation of public space (Gerbaudo, 2012). In a similar vein, Kavada (2010) suggests that while the internet can be used for flexible and decentralized coordination, face-to-face communication in physical meetings is necessary for the development of trust and a sense of collective identity among participants in collective action.

1.4.4 Space production and spatial analysis

The relation of urban space and political meaning is highly influenced by the way space is perceived and analyzed. Approaches to spatial analysis are multiple and almost innumerable, depending from the personal angle of the approach, interest and discipline. Moreover, the perception of space is far from static, objective or neutral but on the contrary temporal and relational³⁴ (Massey, 2005). Lehtovuovi (2010) writes that he was surprised to find that the entry 'space' was not even contained in dictionaries of planning and architecture³⁵ and a similar lacking of a well-founded and relevant theory of space in the disciplines of architecture, urban design and planning³⁶. He believes that this lack reveals a main problem in architecture and planning's conception of space which is that space is conceived of as something separate both from the meaning people give to it and the actual uses and practices taking place 'in space'; more than 'a visualisable stage-set, not as a socially rich entity or realm, even less a process' (p6). As I will claim later, this approach is typical of much of the Greek literature on public space, especially that preceding 2008. In trying to overcome the problems to which Lehtovuovi is pointing, namely space's objectification³⁷ and its disassociation from social meaning and time, I

³⁴ Massey (2005) believes that the conceptual proposition of 'thinking space relationally' poses challenges also in the realm of the political.

³⁵ Lehtovuovi refers here to *Oxford Dictionary of Architecture* by J.S.Curl (Oxford University Press, 1999).

³⁶ Architecture, urban design and planning are disciplines that are predominantly spatial.

³⁷ Lehtovuovi (2010) writes that the objectification of space happens 'so that architects can

will primarily use Lefebvre's understanding of space (that includes both the social and temporal parameters) as perceived, conceived, and lived (Lefebvre, 1991). As perceived space Lefebvre refers to the relatively objective, concrete space people encounter in their environment. Conceived space refers to mental constructions of space, creative ideas about and representations of space. Lived space is the complex combination of perceived and conceived space and represents a person's actual experience of space in everyday life. Lived space is not just a passive stage on which social life unfolds, but it represents a constitutive element of social life (Lefebvre 1991, p39). Those distinctions³⁸ are also used by de Certeau (1984) in order to describe the proper, univocal and stable place, produced by rational organization and panoptic practice and the micro level of every day practices that contain the social relations and lived space.

Those approaches do not suggest a spatial analysis through separate, homogeneous and superimposed levels such as the planned, the social, the metaphorical etc. On the contrary each of those 'levels' merges and influences the other. Time³⁹ is an element that permeates and disturbs the homogeneity of the space. As Massey argues: 'space is not a surface' (1999b, p37) and 'for there to be time, there must be space' (1999b, p33). Space is the product of interrelations; the sphere of coexisting heterogeneity and multiplicity; always under construction and always in a process of becoming. This approach opens space/spatiality up to politics in a new way: in order to consider space as socially crafted (as the contemporaneous co-existence of others) and time as open to the future, space should be conceptually bound with time⁴⁰ (Massey,

claim that space has a 'will' with themselves as its priests and oracles' (p5).

³⁸ As well as the practices of appropriation and representation.

³⁹ For Lefebvre (1996[1985]) time is intrinsic to space: space is the locus of different times and rhythms and its conceptualization is always specific, in a society, site and moment in time. And for de Certeau (1984), the fugitive element of time is ceaselessly reduced to the normality of an observable and readable system by scientific writing, leading to the specialisation of scientific discourse (p18), ignoring the 'other' spatialities and temporalities of everyday practices.

⁴⁰ For example the notion of 'the nation-state' (like any society or culture) is for Massey (1999,a) a *spatio-temporal event*. (p23), as opposed to dominant isomorphism that homogenises

1999b, 2005). Mouffe (Hirsch & Miessen, 2012), who agrees with the approach of Massey, further accentuates the importance of understanding the striated dimension of space, as against its homogeneity. This understanding allows the political (that she also calls hegemonic) struggle to take place in all these interconnected spatial levels (as micro-political, macro-political, geo-political) without favouring or ignoring the importance and potential of struggles at other levels.

Foucault also points out that the space is not homogeneous and empty, but heterogeneous and imbued with qualities and relations:

‘We live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another. Of course one might attempt to describe these different sites by looking for the set of relations by which a given site can be defined....via the cluster of relations that allows them to be defined... via its network of relations.’ (Foucault, 1967; 1986, p23).

Jameson (1996) considers the use and context to be so important for the political meaning attributed to a space that he concludes that architectural form is essentially inert per se. Jameson is not neglecting the relevance of certain physical characteristics in influencing the use and hence meaning of a building or space but is recognizing the underlying neutrality of form against other more significant external factors.

Similarly in the framework of this thesis, the urban space of Athens will be considered as a heterogeneous space, imbued with relations and produced both by material practices of representation and everyday practices of appropriation. Furthermore, the video practice that is in the core of this research will allow relating space with time, an important element of history, eventuality and lived experience.

1.4.5 Squares as public spaces. The city of Athens as a key study

The public spaces on which this thesis focuses are squares, to be more precise two squares and one guerrilla park whose idiosyncratic characteristics and uses constitute it as a hybrid between a square and a park.

Post-modern responses to previous urban theory, which proclaimed the social coherence of cities, have led to a – by now long-established - reevaluation of the urban, historical, social and cultural role of the square (Rossi, 1984; Lynch, 1990; Kostof, 1992; Jacobs, 1992, Charter for the New Urbanism, 1999). Contemporary urban theories and practices use the square as a means to maintain or revitalize the ‘civility’, the local distinctiveness and the cultural identity of the city and to reinvigorate its public functions (CABE, 2011). Moreover, squares are registered as an urban element whose spatial characteristics and arrangement create a definable environment. They are easily appropriable by their users, they lay out an adequate field for social actions, and are significant visual elements aiding the perception of space and assisting orientation in the city. Certainly the above mentioned are attributes that the space of the square should ideally have and the role that it should ideally play in the urban tissue. In practice, as with every other urban space and public space, the squares of Athens have anything but ideal attributes, spanning from indifferent and neglected to exclusive or negative.

The choice of squares as the key studies of a thesis that seeks to interpret the relationship between urban space and politics might seem obvious after the recent global political movements that reactivated the political, civic and urban importance of the squares. Yet it is interesting to observe that when this research started in 2006 the public square was a rather relegated topic in Greek urban discourses.

Clearly public spaces are not solely the squares. In the Greek context the streets are those urban elements that are traditionally imbued with political meaning as the locus of frequent demonstrations and skirmishes. In comparison

to the element of the streets the square brings forth the possibility of a less ephemeral presence and contrasts gathering with encounter. In Greece, the square, rural or urban, has a long tradition of gathering, social expression and political activities. In Athens, although the square as an urban element was never in decay, in terms of usage, it was only recently incorporated as a necessary aspect of urban and architectural discourses.⁴¹ The imperative of reconsidering the importance of the squares as an urban element draws from two sides. The first one, as we have mentioned before, comes from the attention drawn to the squares because of the recent political events and movements. The second is a practical factor, the increasing scarcity of open air public spaces in the densely populated city centre (Aravantinos and Kosmaki, 1988). This scarcity, based in the idiosyncrasy, legislative and executive, of the formation of built space in Athens, was observed a long time ago. For a plethora of reasons that will be analysed further in the thesis, there was until recently little concern for solving the problem, on the part both of the authority and of the citizens⁴². From the side of authority the reasons were political and financial, as is evident for example in the state's tolerance of illegal building practices and private land speculation at the expense of public spaces. These practices fuelled a profitable building sector that did not require state financial investment. From the side of citizens the absence of evident concern for public spaces was due to lack of information regarding possible actions and solutions, lack of civil collectivities and basically (and not so unreasonably) lack of belief that modifications in the urban environment can be achieved in any other way than personalized cliental political relationships with the authority (Galati, 2009), something that changed after 2008.

An interesting reason for focusing on Athenian public space is that from a philosophical and symbolical point of view the city of Athens it is considered the place of birth of the notions of politics, citizenship, democracy and public

⁴¹ The square was missing from the urban and architectural discourse because of peculiarities in Greek urban reality combined with an unconcern for the square in international modernist movements.

⁴² Urban movements start proliferating after 2009.

space⁴³, which are key points in this thesis. With no intention to claim that there is a direct and indisputable link between the ancient and the contemporary city, since the historical, political and social conditions are different, it may still be observed that many connections with ancient Athens survive in contemporary urban spaces. There is the evidence given by topology ⁴⁴(Melambianaki, 2006), by the historical traces that persist in the city's rhythms (Lefebvre, 1996), or by the myths embedded in monuments, buildings, and places (Terzoglou 2001)⁴⁵. Probably the strongest connection between the Athenian polis of fourth century B.C and the contemporary city lies in the customary view that contemporary Greeks are linked directly to 'their ancient ancestors' ⁴⁶(Campbell and Sherrard,

⁴³ The space of the ancient Greek agora is considered one of the first public spaces of democratic deliberation.

⁴⁴ This includes the city's location and layout, the topography, natural landscape, urban fabric and monuments. The issue is controversial to some extent, since the city went through radical transformation after the Second World War. Karydis (1991) believes that the transformation was so strong that it erased all elements of historic memory and overturned older social divisions/configurations of space. Melambianaki (2006) though, in her extensive study about the squares of Athens proves that contemporary spaces are preserving urban and/or geomorphologic factors that already existed in the same place since antiquity.

⁴⁵ Terzoglou (drawing from Plato's Timaios and Derrida) summarises the characteristics of public spaces as the space plus the whole set of meanings related to it; the 'reason' and the 'myth'.

⁴⁶This belief, according to Cambell and Sherrard (1968), was a myth and the product of a small group of Byzantine intellectuals in fifteenth century, cut in birth by Turkish occupation, and transplanted back in Greece by philhellenes, Greek intellectuals and western politicians in the 18th century. Concerning the direct racial lineage of contemporary Greeks to the ancient Greeks they write ': 'after the conquest of Greece by Alexander the great and the subsequent emigration of the native population to the new and prosperous centers of Hellenistic world in Egypt and Asia; after the devastations of roman conquest, which included the destruction of Corinth and the bloodthirsty massacre of the Athenians; after the ravages of the Teutonic Herules in the 3rd century , and the Goths of Alaric in the fourth, after the murderous mass invasions of Slavs and their subsequent settlement chiefly in the 6 and 7th centuries; and after finally , further mass invasions, this time by the Albanians, in the 14th century : after all this , and much more, these present inhabitants of the 15th century mainland were of a multi-racial stock to which the contribution of the ancient Hellenes can only be modest'(p139).

1968). However insecure the basis of this claim, and however much or little the contemporary Greek population actually believes in it, the important fact is that it is considered one of the cornerstones of the Modern Greek state, incorporated in the formation of national identity, perpetuated in contemporary educational methods ⁴⁷(Legg and Roberts, 1997) and vastly used both by the statutory and also by populist⁴⁸political discourses.

Athens is then an interesting subject of study, both by virtue of contemporary events, such as occupations, but also through its strong connections, both actual and symbolic, with the ancient polis and therefore the idea of politics (as interrelation between urban space and its method of governance) and democracy. Yet, as this thesis focuses on contemporary Athens I will not attempt to investigate its ancient past. For the framework of this thesis I will be going back only as far as 1834 and the beginning of the city's modern period in order to enquire into the relationship between the state and the citizens, and the influence of this relationship on the urban environment. Therefore the background framework will include the modern and contemporary period of the city, and ancient Athens only insofar as it is a rhetorical point of reference, sometimes invoked, never entirely forgotten.

1.5 Existing bibliography on Greek public spaces

In the bibliography of Athenian architecture, urban design and public spaces, 'Athens' predominantly means 'Ancient Athens'. Even when Greek authors write about the history of public space, for example Simeon in his study

⁴⁷ Legg and Roberts (1997) write that the statal institutions controlled the direction and management of education and closely tied the notion of Greek identity to a pristine ideal on Hellenic culture and a cultivated language.

⁴⁸ The recent popularity of neo-nazi discourses, that evoke the links with ancient Greece, shows the permeability and plausibility of this belief.

The public space of the city (2010), Athens is mentioned only in antiquity⁴⁹. There is quite an extensive bibliography concerning the urban history of the city of Athens, which includes the use of public spaces during different chronological periods (e.g byzantine period, Turkish occupation, etc) and specifically Athens as the new capital of the Modern Greek state, mainly through the analysis of first master plans of the city, which I will be using for my background chapter. However, there is a scarcity of material concerning contemporary Greek urban public spaces, the particular focus of this thesis, especially in works preceding 2008. Moreover, though squares and public spaces might be mentioned in literature, there are relatively few works which focus on specific public spaces, among those that do being *Ta palaia anaktora (The Old Palace) 1987-2000*, by Demenegi-Viriraki (2003), and *Syntagma square, the truth about the renovation*, by Giatrakos (1995). Athenian public spaces rarely appear as a distinct spatial model, or as a network of spaces sharing common attributes. Also, and this poses a methodological problem for this thesis, though there is sufficient material on Syntagma square, since it is a statutory space and part of the historical centre, there is little material on Exarcheia square, and other public spaces of Exarcheia despite the fact that, since the 1980s, it holds an important social and political role in the wider metropolitan area.

Aravantinos and Kosmaki in *Public Open Spaces in the City* (1988) provide interesting material on the subject of organization and composition of open space networks and green spaces and their connection with the built and the natural environment. More precisely they analyze the importance of open and green spaces of the city in terms of environmental, psychological and physiological benefits, the typology of the above mentioned spaces and the historic development of the typology in Europe and information about the

⁴⁹ Symeon (2010) follows a linear narration that characterises largely the history of European architecture: ancient Greek polis, Hellenistic, gothic, medieval, renaissance and baroque city while for the contemporary history of public space the author chooses Rome, Paris and London. In this narration Greece as a location opens the discourse of public spaces with the ancient agora and it is never mentioned again.

design of open spaces and the area requirements of open and green spaces in the city. Aravantinos and Kosmaki (1988) also point out that public spaces are considered by the relevant authorities in the urban sector mostly as elements of occasional beautification of a city area despite the active interest of many teams of inhabitants or associations and despite the fact that the organization and composition of a sufficient network of urban spaces and green spaces has been for many years an important issue for the Greek urban centres. The difficulty in developing a policy of expansion and protection of urban and suburban natural environment and open spaces is due in part to idiosyncratic urban conditions in Greece such as the extensive land fragmentation and the fact that the urban land was for many years the main field of capital investment combined with the impossibility of implementation of urban regulations.

Though the work of Aravantinos and Kosmaki (1988) outlines the basic elements of urban legislation concerning the open and public spaces of Greek cities and, interestingly, points out the faults of this legislative system, is clear that public spaces are for the authors mainly the green spaces, parks, leisure spaces and open spaces. Without denying that public spaces are also open/unbuilt spaces and can incorporate green areas, this is not all that they are, and the very fact that it is necessary to stress this obvious truth reflects the intellectual influence of the Modern movement. For the modernists (Charter of Athens, 1942), the intention of civic design was to create green zones and free spaces whose functions are registered as circulation or recreation, connected with the green areas, play grounds and parks. This conception was adopted by the urban sector of the Municipality of Athens after 1950 (Polyzos, 1985) and surprisingly remains current in contemporary urban policies, where, technically, public space is akin to open space (Chrisafi, 2008) .

A second critical point in this work is that the authors' approach is based on environmental determinism. As defined by Karydis (1991) 'environmental determinism' describes a belief that there is a strictly defined correspondence between the type, the characteristics and the function of an urban organization and the type of social relationships that are defined among the people who comprise this urban unit. This means that it is possible to create 'healthy' social

relations or to restore the 'distorted' ones if the urban unit (a new city or a redevelopment of an existing area) is defined by some distinct characteristics, such as the size of population, the density, the area or the forms of organization of the built environment. Similarly for Aravantinos and Kosmaki (1988) if the hectare target of green spaces is met in a city, then the social benefits for the citizens are. The characteristics of public spaces are thus reduced to the sole factor of their area coverage.

A fairly recent approach to the subject of public spaces is Melambianaki's (2006) *The squares of Athens 1834-1945*. This work represents a significant point in Greek bibliography primarily because this is the first time that the subject of squares has been specifically and coherently addressed. It is also quite important that the author is currently the director of the public spaces sector in the Municipality of Athens because this indicates an official initiative in redefining and differentiating parks, public gardens, unbuilt spaces and squares.

Melambianaki has gathered information about all the squares contained within the geographical borders of the municipality of Athens. The research is separated in three chronological periods. For each period she presents the historical framework, the social, financial, political and cultural data and investigates existing urban conditions such as the city's infrastructures and legislative frame, the new urban proposals and debates on city planning and on squares. This material is followed by a study of all existing named squares in of every period that are separated in central and periphery squares. Specifically for each square she presents the uses, the users, the surrounding buildings, the square's area, the urban equipment, the configuration and the design.

Melambianaki seeks to establish the common characteristics that define the squares, but concludes that there is no such definition or unity. This conclusion is based on the analysis of the spatial characteristics of the examined squares and the definition of the square in urban legislation and it does not include any quality, or attribute that is not visually concretized and or that extends beyond the actual usage or spatial construction of the squares (such as the symbolical meaning of a place). The squares are classified only according to

their geographical vicinity (the centre or the periphery of the city) or according to the date of their incorporation on the city plan.

Both in Melambianaki (2006) and in Aravantinos and Kosmaki (1988) the term public space is used to describe different spaces like squares, parks, streets, and unbuilt areas, whose common characteristic is that they are not private. This vagueness of the term public space is repeated in the majority of works concerning urban space, and in Regeneration Plans of urban areas, where public space means, simply, non-private space. Correspondingly, in the majority of studies concerning Greek public spaces, the notion of public coincides with the purely legal notion of citizen, whereas in reality, and as this thesis will show, it is a wider category, grounded in experience and evident in action and participative interaction.

Lastly, in most of the works preceding 2008, the formation of public space is synonymous with the strategic plans of the state and is formulated independently from the claims and actions of its everyday users. Terzoglou (2001) for example, in his work *A study of the development, characteristics and uses of open public spaces in Athens from 1940 to 2000*, writes extensively about the different uses and users of different open spaces yet the open spaces as he actually conceives them appear as mere stages for stereotypical uses and the production of public space is orchestrated solely by the state.

However, the point of this discussion is not to diminish the importance of the aforementioned works, especially since this thesis draws important information from them, but rather to point out the challenges and the difficulties that this research faces and how it aims to contribute to existing knowledge. It hardly needs emphasising that the subject is urgent and topical, a fact that is reflected in the increase in literature relating to public spaces, in which factors of political functioning and social change become a focus of discussion.

Recently, with the proliferation of urban movements, Greek public space has become, in effect, new field of research, investigated in relation to ecological issues (Belavilas & Vatavali, 2009; Gianniris, 2012) transportation (Alikari, 2011; Perperidou, et al., 2008) , immigration (Koronaïou, 2006) and gender

issues (Lada, 2009) . After the riots of December 2008 the city's public spaces (though mainly the streets and not the squares) started appearing as active parts of urban life and important factors affecting urban revolt and uprising (Dalakoglou & Vradis, 2011; Makrygianni & Tsavdaroglou, 2011). Similarly, after the movement of indignants in 2011, there have been a number of articles specifically on Syntagma square mainly examined through the disciplines of anthropology, sociology and political sciences (Petropoulou, 2010; Panourgia, 2011; Dalakoglou, 2013). However, research examining the public spaces of the city as a distinct socio-spatial category, from the perspective of urban design and architecture, is lagging behind⁵⁰. The first Greek conference specifically focusing on public space took place as recently as 2011, to which I contributed a joint paper (Dimitriou & Koutrolykou, 2011). Given that the conference was organized by the Technical chamber of Greece, in collaboration with the two main architectural schools in Greece, the National Technical University of Athens, and the Artistoteleio University of Thessaloniki, in other words organized by the main official bodies responsible for educating and qualifying spatial practitioners (architects, civil engineers, structural engineers, etc) one might say that the topic of public spaces is emerging fairly recently, and belatedly, in the Greek context.

To summarise, the literature on Greek public space follows three strands that this thesis aims to bring together. At one extreme, public space is considered synonymous with the strategic plans of the state and is a space that is formulated independently from the claims and actions of its everyday users. In the middle there are sources that correlate the social and spatial characteristics of urban space but do not specifically focus at the public spaces and the squares but examine the wider urban fabric. At the other extreme, as the literature on the city's urban movements increases, it seems that the accent shifts from the 'independence' of space to its 'irrelevance'. By this I mean that that the empowering and dynamic factors, the organizational novelties and the practices of everyday resistance against the state authority, are celebrated to such an extent that the physical space itself might appear to become a

⁵⁰ With the exception of the work of Stavrides that I am using extensively in this thesis.

secondary topic, or even the mere setting. However, the relationship between space and practices is bidirectional and the space's characteristics cannot be ignored. In seeking to bring together those strands this thesis aims to re-establish the connection between structure, syntax and morphology of space in relation to social structure that has long been overlooked in the Greek context.

1.6 Contribution to knowledge

The thesis will challenge a number of assumptions present both in the statutory urban discourses and in the existing literature on Athenian public spaces. The first is that public space is a natural part of the urban fabric and is a space provided, designed, assigned and maintained by the state, in other words produced and offered by the state to its citizens. Similarly, the contribution of the citizens to the production of public space who are regarded as mere users of that space is considered either as arising from personalised claims to the authority⁵¹ or as an indirect result of representation through the voting system.

Secondly I will aim to challenge notions of the democratic public space as an uncontested and stable place, resulting from the equation of the notion of public with the notion of the *good* citizen. The thesis will attempt to prove that public space is instead a malleable space that is constantly contested and created by actions and forces both of the authority and of social groups and therefore necessarily ambiguous, combining aspects of its ideal manifestations and the problematic, conflicting manifestations, its inclusions and its exclusions. It also contains idealizations of stability but is simultaneously defined by its instability. Moreover the instability and the constantly negotiated characteristics of the public space and the public sphere might be intrinsic characteristics of democratisation processes.

⁵¹ As it will be further explained on the next chapter, personalised claims refer to the possibility of requesting a personal favour from a politician or civil servant, even in expense of established city plans, because of the maintenance of patron-client relations at a political level in contemporary Greece.

I will attempt to answer those challenges by introducing the notion of the commons in order to describe hierarchical practices and counter-hegemonic discourses that materialise parallel to the hierarchical state practices and by testing the conjoining of the notions of public and commons as they collide in my key studies. I believe that their reciprocal influence constitutes a new and exciting field of investigation that departs from urban and social theories for which public space in contemporary democratic society is intrinsically bound up with the notion of the state. Furthermore, their reciprocity will reveal the extent and the limitations of each one of the theoretical notions separately and will indicate areas that require critical re-examination but also fascinating areas, notions and spaces of intersection.

In order to explore this new field I will juxtapose official discourses and histories with unofficial and at times illegal or guerrilla practices, and take into account aspects of public spaces that have until now been overlooked. In my interdisciplinary approach I will be using theoretical sources from the fields of urban design, architecture, geography, sociology, political science and history, while, in parallel, I will also draw material from non academic sources such as literature, films, songs and rumours in an attempt to include metaphorical and symbolical attributes of contemporary Athenian space. Moreover, the use of digital video will be at the core of my research as a method that has allowed me to trace, depict and analyse contemporary characteristics of the space and the society that have not yet solidified in theoretical writings and also 'negative' findings such as the users and uses that are not present, the users that are excluded and evicted and the intentions and claims on the spaces that are not necessarily visible or materialized.

Most importantly, and in addition to creating an archive of practices, uses and users, the use of video has allowed for a direct experience and investigation in the fieldwork aspect of the project. Lehtuouori (2010) calls his methodological effort to compile physical space, its use and his personal, singular moments of invention observation, introspection and experiences an *experiential approach to the production of public urban space*. In a similar way, by using the experiential, immersive, and reflective practice of visual

ethnography I will aim to address in a novel and dialectical way the relation between material, discursive and experienced space, and this thesis is a testimony of the creative collision of theories, spaces, practices and personal experiences.

Chapter 2: Public space in Greece

This chapter sets out the historical and cultural background for this research. It recounts the urban history of Athens, the capital of the Greek state since 1834, in relation to significant socio-political factors, in order to reveal the models that have governed the production of urban space. In Greece, as I intend to show, these models were idiosyncratic reflections of contemporary and past social, political and economical realities. Furthermore, the historical analysis will reveal aspects of the relation between the Greek state and Greek society, in administrative, legislative, executive and symbolical terms, a relation which is definitive in the constitution of public sphere.

I will describe significant characteristics of urban space, the organization of institutions and processes underlying urban political, social and economic relations, showing the linkage of urban centres with one another and with the larger political system, society and the economy. The concept of space will serve as the thread linking these areas of enquiry, on the premise that the occupancy of space - acquiring and controlling space - provides a means of access to social and economic power⁵². Space then takes on a social meaning. I will investigate the link between the use of space and its current spatial form and structure, considering the factors and forces that account for the particular structures of urban space, for example demography and land use, as well as the reasons and

⁵² here I follow the methodology proposed by Andranovich and Riposa (1993).

conditions that these patterns change⁵³. I will draw information from different levels of analysis, perceiving the urban area as a mosaic pattern in which neighbourhood, region and the national systems of cities intersect.

The spatial configuration of the squares in Athens is historically linked to the policies, regional and urban, of the state and the municipality. Yet, as this chapter will aim to reveal, for numerous historic and social reasons, there has never been a full implementation of any legislated master plan, since the creation of modern Athens. The result is a mix of indented plans and their sporadic and partial implementations, as the intentions meet actual Athenian (geographic and social) conditions. The Athenian public spaces and their idiosyncrasies will provide the specific context in which theories of the relation between space and political action, presented in the first chapter, may be tested.

2.1. Greece in contemporary urban theory.

At this point it is essential to make some observations on the position of Greek reality in terms of contemporary urban theory and practice. According to a large number of researchers, Greek urban reality (and also Greek reality by itself) constitutes a serious methodological/theoretical problem (Karydis, 1991; Leondidou, 1981, 2003; Aravantinos, 1998). Geopolitically, Greece is located at the crossroads of three continents; it is a part of the Balkan Peninsula, it belongs to the EU and NATO, and it is situated in the centre of the Mediterranean- a region of contact between north and south. The process of urbanization in Greece has resulted in political, social, and economic changes; at the same time these have influenced the process of urbanization and each one of these factors can be classified differently. Depending upon the purpose of the classifier, Greece can be classified as European, Mediterranean, Southeastern or Balkan. Legg and Roberts (1993) observe that the country occupies a position both geographically and culturally on the borderland between Western Europe and

⁵³ Andranovich and Riposa (1993).

non-western world. They note that Greece, due to Ottoman Occupation, missed the defining experiences of what has come to be known as Western civilization: the Renaissance, the Enlightenment and their contribution to the reformation and development of secular states and civil societies. According to them, to some extent, the classification of Greece as part of Western Europe is an artefact of Cold War politics.

‘Greece because it was not a soviet satellite like its neighbours in the southern part of Europe, was identified with “the west” in postwar period.[...] More recently, the military interlude of the late 1960s and early 1970s cast doubt on the contemporary classification of Greece as “European“. In fact [...] Greece looked more like the Latin American states, many of which had also gained political independence in the early nineteenth century but remained relatively underdeveloped in economic terms’ (Legg and Roberts, 1993).

Emmanuel (1981) and Leondidou (1981) both agree with this analysis and have sought to confirm it by investigating land speculation and urban land allocations for the working class in Athens.

Greece is placed at the periphery of the global capitalist system, but that does not necessarily situate the country as lagging behind the developed post-industrial countries of Europe in terms of spatial development, and trying to catch up. The assumption that the urban structures of Greece are incomplete compared to the structures/models of other countries, which Greece is supposedly trying to follow is not justified (Karydis, 1991). A quite different situation obtains, and a different model is in place. In Greece there are not ‘new cities’ and the interventions in urban centres did not reach a large enough scale to radically alter, over a short period of time, the structure of the city, unlike urban interventions in west European countries after the Second World War. Some of the basic components of the Greek urban reality like the practice of ‘antiparohi’⁵⁴ in the city centre or illegal building practices on the borders of

⁵⁴ Antiparohi is a constituted practice that allows the land owner to exchange his/her plot with a percentage of ownership of the new building (quid pro quo). During the 1970 the percentage

cities are against precisely legislated western European practice, and constitute a Greek idiosyncrasy. In contrast to Britain and other north-European countries, there is no general and systematic state or private intervention in the organization and regulation of the built environment. Further on this subject Leondidou (2003) writes that the Anglo-centric definitional linkage between urbanization and industrialization, crystallized in modernity, is especially inadequate for understanding Mediterranean development dynamics which have been based on culture and memory of strong urban identities since antiquity, rather than industrial capitalism.

On the other hand it is true that the prototypes for Greek urbanization and for the creation of public spaces, as we will see further in the thesis, were found in Western European and American theories and models (Neoclassicism, Garden Cities, Modernism, etc) (Mirkovic 2012, Kaukoulou,1990; Mantouvalou,1988). Mirkovic(2012) proceeds even further claiming that the modern urban history of Athens should be examined not as a capital of an emerging European nation, but as a colonial city, where the imagination of the colonizers interacted with the needs of subaltern population. For Mirkovic(2012) Greece was not an independent state after the liberation in 1833 but a dependent Kingdom, protectorate of the Great Powers of Europe and colony of Bavaria and as such 'had a destiny to be, at least in part, also an invented tradition of the much more powerful European bourgeoisie'(p157) .

The political models applied in the formation of the Modern Greek state were similarly drawn from West Europe, and were mainly English, French and German in origin (Kaloudis, 2002; Campbell and Sherrard , 1968). Contemporary Greek politics and policies - especially policies concerning social coherence, urban environment, and public spaces - are partly idiosyncratic but nevertheless refer directly and try to align with norms of the European Union. From the late 90s onward, Greece, together with the other countries of the European south, have come to form a group that is differentiated from the rest

reached up to sixty per cent of the new construction. Practically with 'antiparohi' a single family house could turn, without any further investment by the owner, to 4-7 apartments in a block of flats.

of European Union. 'Southern Europe', which includes 'Southeastern Europe' is not merely a geographical term but also connotes the less developed part of the European union (Kolliopoulos & Veremis, 2010). Especially after the Eurozone crisis in 2009, Portugal, Greece, Italy and Spain have come to be labelled as 'laggard countries' as opposed to the 'developed countries' of the north⁵⁵, a characterization that refers not only to their troubled economies but implies differences in the implementation of the same financial, environmental and urban policies. This classification of the European South as 'lagged' is arguably believed to be due not only to systemic weaknesses in political and administrative institutions, but also to the phenomenon of 'Mediterranean syndrome', which stands for 'a political culture that emphasises the personalised goals and is characterised by lack of social perception for the environmental values and a restricted respect of public space'⁵⁶(Dousi, 2002).

The point of this discussion is not to investigate precisely where Greece is situated, geographically, politically, socially, culturally and institutionally. In framing the methodological/theoretical problem of analyzing the Greek reality, I intend to interpret the individuality and distinctiveness of this urban reality not by contradicting to some other reality of a European or Balkan or Latin country but rather by seeking to define its own logic and coherence. In the context of this thesis Greece will not be examined as a particular deviation from the stereotype of a European country. If we agree to situate Greece primarily in Europe, this is not because there is, or ought to be, any way to measure the 'Europeanness' of any state, but because the majority of Greeks identify themselves as Europeans⁵⁷ and the contemporary statutory political discourse

⁵⁵ Even referred derogatorily as PIGS, an acronym formed from the countries' capitals.

⁵⁶ Dousi(2002) dismisses the argument, as more recent studies prove that the problems of applications of the European union environmental policies are not springing from the "Mediterranean syndrome", but from the interrelation between external European and internal factors such as problems of coordination between national authorities during the processes of implementation, the interpretations and technical applications and the lack of monitoring mechanisms in EU (Dousi, 2002).

⁵⁷ Fetherstone(2014) writes that few nations have experienced "Europe" with such intensity, reacted with so much "angst" and witnessed effects of such consequences as Greece, from the

defines the country as such.

2.2 The state and the society

'The State which dominates a (Mediterranean) city and its territory is both weak and violent. It always vacillates between democracy and tyranny. [...] In its interventions in the life of the city it finds itself at its heart but this heart beats in a way both violent and intermittent.' (Lefebvre 1996 p232)

A distinctive characteristic of contemporary Greece is the preponderant relation of state authority to civil society. Due to incomplete modernization during the process of state creation, the centrality of the state's role in defining the Greek nation and the maintenance of patron-client relations at a political level, among other reasons, the state has grown disproportionately in relation to civil society.

Due to Ottoman occupation, Greece, as already noted, missed the Renaissance, the Reformation and development of the secular state. The notion of 'modernity', meaning a centralized bureaucratic state and ostensibly modern political institutions espoused by the 'modernizers', was imposed over Greek traditional culture in 19th century and was based on imported West European models, rather than having been developed locally. In the process of creating an identity the new state attempted to impose a Hellenic ideal as some synthesis of East and West that would ultimately transcend both (Legg and Roberts, 1997). Tsoukalas (2002) writes that national culture and identity were dematerialized and defined on an imaginary ideological level. The dichotomy between materiality and spirituality plays a prominent role in the discourse of national identity in Greece, as it often is in countries undergoing incomplete or late

establishment of the new state in 1832 to the sovereign debt crisis of 2010. According to him 'Europe' 'Europeanness' and 'European' have been important themes in the history of modern Greece and have served as a key reference points in questions of identity, progress, capability, legitimization and strategic interest.

modernization.

‘The result is an identity that precedes human organization. [...]Greekness is not a common sociocultural ‘project’ and does not stem from the need to organize a national community in rational ways. It is instead an individual quality stemming from something that preceded, and transcends, the person, the community, and the material world’.(Tsoukalas, 2002, p98)

This particular process of formation, then, has consequences for citizens’ attitudes toward institutional commitment, authority and participation. Tsoukalas (2002) maintains that Greeks see themselves as “Greek” only when pursuing individual (and family) goals, beating the system, outsmarting opponents, and so on -and not when they are pursuing collective goals. Therefore, all forms of social behaviour are normatively relativized under this idea of Greekness, destroying all distinctions between the public and the private, the state and civil society, and undermining all institutional traditions. Legg and Roberts (1997) also write that Greek rational individualism and thus Greek political identity are actually the manifestation of an intense conscious free-rider orientation to social action.

For Psomas (1978) there is an evident polarization in the political behaviour of Greek citizens that is attributable to the polarization of the Greek nation-state into a cultural nation of undoubted eminence, on the one hand, and a weak inefficient political state. The responsibility for the polarization lies with a multitude of forces which have been at work throughout the history of modern Greece such as the setting up of an artificial Greek statecraft in the 1830s composed entirely from imported ‘bits and pieces’(p211); the poor performance of state apparatus and administration in bridging up the gap between the levels of expectation and attainment, both at the level of national aspirations and individual needs; and the interaction of the state and the nation with the international system through foreign intervention (that has resulted in

a perceived undermining of the country's sovereignty⁵⁸), as well as emigration. The latter has incrementally increased the differentiation between the nation and the state, by transplacing a large number of the members of the nation from within the state frontiers to other countries; furthermore, it has served as a safety valve for the benefit of the status quo and the traditional society, and in particular against collective reaction to the incapacity of the state. The Greek citizen (during the decades of the massive emigration) could not, as a rule, look to the state for help and comfort, but was traditionally conditioned to chose 'exit' (withdrawal) to 'voice' (protest) and seek solutions to his problems at the level of the individual and the family rather than at the communal. Psomas (1978) believes that, most importantly, the state has inexcusably neglected the cultivation of a positive orientation towards itself through formal education and the political socialization of its citizens, instead focusing almost exclusively on the nation and the family⁵⁹ at the expense of the state, resulting in a clear-cut ideological divorce between national patriotism and loyalty to the state.

The fact that the ethnic basis for Greek identity remained so ambiguous and de-materialized left free scope for the definition and direction of the new state. The Greek state thus emerged in a virtual vacuum and then set about its state- and nation- building enterprise, grounding it mainly in a centralized bureaucratic state. This means primarily that the development of civil society and the expansion of local autonomies have lagged severely behind the emergence of state institutions. The unbalanced relationship of state and society favoured centralization over diffuse decision making, and entailed, consequently, an overwhelming state role in regulating business and moderating social action.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ This relation between foreign intervention and undermining of sovereignty is described also by Kaloudis(2002).

⁵⁹ The structure of the Greek family could be characterized as traditionally patriarchal and yet 'child-centred', expressed in prolonged family dependence and parental financial support and co-habiting until a late age (Zacharia, 2011).

⁶⁰ Legg and Roberts write that the way Greeks view the State is like a vulture with teats: "On the one hand, the Greek state is viewed as predatory in that it extracts resources and compliance in

As a result of this unbalanced relationship between society and the state but also between abstract patriotism and civic obligations is the fact that the majority of citizens succumb to political cynicism⁶¹ and politics is characterized by a very sharp sense of competitive exclusion. The central authority in Greece has long pursued such a strategy of control, so that the only instrument for mobilization seems to reside within the ambit of the state and the state institutions so that politics seems to become merely the scramble to gain control of that state apparatus. This does not mean that Greek society is politically inactive; it means, though, that there is a general scepticism towards the representation of social constituencies in the state and in the effectiveness of civil participation and representation in the Greek parliamentary system. This scepticism was implicitly expressed in the riots of 2008 and explicitly

often irascible ways. On the other hand, the state is also viewed as the institution responsible for security, opportunity and nearly everything else. The state is the institution responsible for extracting economic surplus through taxation and then allocating it and reallocating it through public expenditures. Consequently the state -at least the parties controlling it- have promoted a broad range of economic rights and expectations among Greek citizens. At the same time -and to some degree with political encouragement- the state apparatus is distrusted, thus legitimizing profiteering, speculation and tax evasion.” (Legg and Roberts, 1997, p91).

⁶¹ Kaloudis (2002) offers another reason for the Greeks political cynicism arguing that is created by the relationship of Greek national calamities and foreign interventionism:

“furthermore, foreign interference played a crucial role regarding calamities such as the ‘ethnikos dihasmos’, the ‘ethniki catastrophe’, the civil war and even the military dictatorship of 1967-1974. Because of this bitter and humiliating experiences many Greeks considered much of their modern history as “unkind” , and developed a mindset that was defensive, resistant to change, and conducive to blaming the external environment for many of the problems confronting them” (Kaloudis,2002, p123). The foreign interference in Greece’s politics starts with the country’s dependence in foreign capital in the form of a series of loans as it is known the inability of the Greek state to settle the external debt led to the bankruptcy of the state in 1893 and the imposition of a International financial control , which de facto and de jure defined the relations of dependence of Greece from the industrially developed countries of the west ‘Nikolinakos, M. Studies on Greek Capitalism (Μελετες πανω στον Ελληνικό καπιταλισμό) ‘ Νεα Συνορα, Αθηνα 1976, quoted in Karidis 1991, p50. Karydis (1991) writes that the huge loans and the granted impotence of the Greek state to repay are part of the imperialistic politics of Western Europe in order to gain financial and political control in the area of the Balkans.

during the indignant movement in 2011 where a million of participants demanded political structural changes that would enable them to participate directly in democratic political processes.

Essentially, these movements, and primarily the riots of December 2008, initiated a rupture in the established relationship between the state and the citizens who chose to 'voice' their discontent rather than to 'exit'. For many of the participants rioting was the only way to make their claims heard and to manifest their presence, in protest against unrepresentative and structurally deficient established governance. Zacharia (2011) writes that the acting out of the youth during the riots could be attributed to the frustration caused by the state, the elder generation and capital because they failed to protect and care for the society's most vulnerable strata (such as the lower class, immigrants, etc) on the eve of a severe economic crisis, and allowing a superficially functioning system -- whose primary concern is compliance with rules, customs and conventions- to penetrate every aspect of social life. Most essentially the initial oppositional and insurrectionary 'voicing' matured into a process of contracting new and meaningful social relationships, seeking collaboration, collective action and political socialization outside the traditional ambit of the family and the nation, and effectively envisaging a different way of relating to (or unrelating from) the state .

Defining the public, civil society, and the relationship between both and the state, between the citizens and authority, are central concerns of the thesis. The public is shaped both from above, by authority and top-down policies, and by social struggles and bottom-up claims. In Greece, the definition of public according to the state holds a disproportionate significance as against civil claims for publicness. Nevertheless, and while it is perhaps too early to draw conclusions about the characteristics of contemporary and emerging Greek society as we are still in the midst of transformations, there are undeniable signs of change, as indicated from the proliferation of social movements and the increase in social action and solidarity. The analysis of public spaces that follows will reveal simultaneously the dynamic course of Greek society as productive of urbanization processes, the politics and the claims of a centralized

and over-inflated state, and the changing characteristics of the relationship between society and state.

2.3. Spatial configuration and design of Public spaces in Athens.

The affinity of the Modern Greek state for centralization of authority is rendered obvious in the city of Athens. Athens, little more than a large village when the Greek state was established in 1834, was resuscitated in order to play the role of the cultural and intellectual centre of Greek world, and assumed dominance politically.⁶² (Campbell and Sherrard, 1968; Legg and Roberts, 1997). A centralized prefectural system transferred all resources to Athens and kept decision-making authority there as well. (Loukakis, 1985)

At a symbolic, political, administrative and cultural level, Athens represents the head of the country and the state (and for a short period even the capital of a resuscitated Byzantine empire, according to the Great Idea). Therefore, according to the state, statutory public spaces should be representative not only of the city/municipality and the citizens, but also of the city as head of the state, the state itself and the citizens of the Greek nation.

⁶² Greece is dominated, even paralyzed, by the influence and attraction of its capital city, which is at once political, commercial, and demographic. More than half of Greece's urban population lives in Athens. Apart from the inevitable consequences of the city's position as the seat of government, the central organization of the civil service requires that administrative decisions on relatively unimportant questions are all made in Athens. To deal with this business 33.5 per cent of the country's civil servants work in the capital. Banking, shipping and insurance institutions have their administrative headquarters in the city. Further, 59.3 percent of industrial firms employing more than 100 workpeople are established there, and more than half the industrial workers of the country live in the city. In the professions this crushing superiority is equally evident, 85% of the country's medical specialist work in Athens; which has more than half the hospital beds in Greece; 70% of the students with higher education work there. The predominance of Athens over the rest of Greece is such that with the exception of Thessalonica, which in the Northern provinces duplicates in many respects the role and characteristics of Athens, the cultural and industrial life of other provincial towns in Greece is relatively stagnant and derivative (Campbell and Sherrard, 1968).

But apart for the relatively recent revival of the city of Athens as a capital of the modern Greek state and the need for public spaces that expressed this new condition, one should mention that this procedure of urbanization did not take place on a tabula rasa⁶³. On the contrary the city maintained a plenitude of layers of its past, sometimes more and sometimes less legible in its contemporary form. The idiomorphic topographic and historic elements that define the Athenian landscape were to a degree preserved and incorporated in the new urban formations.

The ancient network of streets is to large extent preserved in the network of the new capital. The streets are not only preserved as linear axes that connect two points of the city but also as a number of functional and semantic characteristics of the places and the axes cross and connect. The squares, largely related to the axes in Athens, are therefore places that by their position and function preserve urban and/or geomorphologic factors that already existed in the same place and link the long past and present of the city (Melambianaki, 2006).

2.3.1. Athens in 19th century

2.3.1.1 Creating Athens as the capital of the Greek state. Allocating the public spaces

The modern history of Athenian public spaces and of the decisions regarding their spatial configuration, location, shape and the allocation of

⁶³ Contrary to this, Mirkovic(2012) writes that for the Bavarian rulers, Athens was considered tabula rasa where the only considerable layer was the ancient ruins , showing an unbalanced interest for the ancient heritage against the current local population. As a letter from a Greek to a newspaper of the era explains: "It is true that many of the so-called foreigners often go by my village and I have had the opportunity to get to know them and talk with them. But what do you want me to learn, my friend, from these odd gentlemen who, when you ask them about the people, they examine the piles of stone, and when you talk to them about the living, they want information about the dead?" Letter signed "The Old man from Dalamanara," Athena 2:112 (13 May 1833). Also quoted in Bastea, 2000, p128.

functions starts with the creation of the first city plans of Athens as the capital of the Greek state newly liberated from Ottoman rule. The urban plans - designed from 1833 and throughout the 19th Century -and their spatial applications represent the existing socio-political relations of the era, which were decisive factors for the creation of the Greek state and Greek national identity⁶⁴, as well as the aspirations of the new governing class.

Athens, at the time a town of modest size built around the foot of the Acropolis, ruined by the liberation struggle against the Ottomans, was declared the new capital of the liberated Greek state in 1834. The Greek state might have been liberated, yet it was far from been independent as its rulers were set in place by Great Britain, France and Russia which were the Great Powers at the time. At the London Conference in 1832, the Great Powers decided to nominate the seventeen year old Bavarian Prince Otto of the ruling House of Wittelsbach as king of Greece who ascended the throne while still a minor. His government was initially run by a three-man regency council made up of Bavarian court officials, and therefore his decisions in the first years of his rule were controlled by his father Ludwig I, King of Bavaria through the regents (Mc Grew, 1992).

The decision of the first King of Greece to move the capital from Nafplio⁶⁵to Athens was made for a number of reasons. Firstly, it was because of its ancient history and glory as the place where the democracy was born⁶⁶.

⁶⁴ The Modern Greek national identity is emphasized as being constructed by many scholars, a construction built predominantly on European and Classical identity while suppressing of Byzantine and Ottoman cultural traditions (Mirkovic 2012).

⁶⁵ Nafplio was made the official capital of Greece in 1829 by Ioannis Kapodistrias, who was the first head of state of newly-liberated Greece. After his assassination by his political opponents in Nafplio on October the 9th in 1831 a period of anarchy followed which lasted until the arrival of King Otto and the establishment of the new Kingdom of Greece. Nafplio remained the capital of the kingdom until 1834, when King Otto decided to proclaim Athens to be the new capital (Mc Grew, 1992).

⁶⁶ This symbolism was rather more important for the German rulers than the local Greeks, based on the prominent European intellectual fashion of philhellenism, that the king's father Ludwig I was arduously supporting, and the ideal of Greece as a German utopia, the spiritual homeland of the Teutonic race (Mirkovic, 2012).

Secondly, it was due to the fact that Athens was not inhabited by a defined ruling upper class, as it was the case of Nafplio. This meant that the ample rural space around the settlement of three hundred houses and rubble heaps⁶⁷ could be inexpensively purchased and used as a white canvas for the new governors to design a capital representing the new constellation of power (Vergopoulos, 1975).

Already from 1833 a large-scale speculation takes place in the city: the departing Turks sell the land to wealthy Greek ex-pats working as merchants, bankers, etc., who are returning from abroad, with the reasonable expectation of the proclamation of Athens as the capital. In just five months, almost all of Attica is sold to individuals without any control retained by the Greek government⁶⁸(Vergopoulos, 1975). This reveals that one of the chronic problems of the city of Athens, the lack of public land in order to house public spaces, utilities and uses, and the consequent inability of the state to re-compensate the land owners and implement any large scale urban plans, was created even before the foundation of the modern city.

The first city plan of Athens by the commissioned architects Stamatis Kleantes and Edward Schaubert, both students of Karl Schinkel in Berlin⁶⁹, reflected the principles of 19th century Romantic Neo-Classicism that was the

⁶⁷ Upon his arrival to Athens in 1833, during the first visit by Otto, Georg Maurer, a member of the Regency noted: "Athens, which before the War of Liberation number around 3.000 houses, now has not even 300. The others have turned into a shapeless heap of rocks" (Maurer quoted in Kallivretakis, 1994). Another visitor, Thomas Abbet-Grasset observed in October 1834: "There is no longer an Athens. In the place of this beautiful democracy today there spreads a shabby small town, black from smoke, a silent guardian of dead monuments, with narrow and irregular pathways" (Abbet-Grasset quoted in Kallivretakis, 1994).

⁶⁸ Even though it has been prevented by the Greek State, the big land ownership was introduced in Attica under the protection of Roman - German Legislation, as the Greek Capitalists, after having bought the "rights" on the Turkish estates "tsiflikia" when the later retired from Attica, obtained from the Greek State a series of legislative acts recognizing their complete ownership (Vergopoulos, 1975).

⁶⁹ The fact that the monarch came from Bavarian aristocracy has had an obvious bearing on the choice of German and German-educated architects.

popular style in Europe at that period. The romantic perception of City Planning is connected with the notions of Nation, Law, State and Government, notions of a new bourgeois consciousness, that find their symbolic expression in the Burg, the New City (Kallivretakis, 1994). As Tsiomis notes, this new city must be a rationalistic city-machine, functioning without impediments and expressing the myth of total control and total planning. It ought to be a city which functions effectively and which is simultaneously a city-centre, the capital of a state—that is, the centre of power, as well as the symbolic centre, the very heart of the nation-state (Tsiomis, 1984).

One easily can imagine the first cartographers and planners surveying the openings surrounding the little village of Athens, envisaging the new city as a set of plans, and the possibility of practicing the threefold operation that, according to de Certeau (1984), defines urbanistic discourse. The first operation is to producing a 'proper' space by rational organization and repression of all 'physical, mental and political pollutions that would compromise it' (p94); the second, to replace the tactics of 'indeterminable and stubborn resistances offered by traditions' by univocal scientific strategies (as they are dictated by modern state fashions that circulate in Europe at the same time based on the principles of enlightenment); and third, to create 'a universal and anonymous subject which is the city itself' so that it 'gradually becomes possible to attribute to it, as to its political model, Hobbes's state, all the functions and predicates that were previously scattered and assigned to many different real subjects-groups, associations or individuals.' De Certeau writes that the 'city', like a proper name, thus provides a way of conceiving and constructing space on the basis of a finite number of stable, isolatable and interconnected properties. The concept city is for him 'the machinery and the hero of modernity' (p95).

De Certeau (1984) describes the transition from the earliest maps, which denoted itineraries, operations, habitats and actions (which made possible the conception of a geographical plan at the first place) towards a scientific, totalising, abstract representation of space disengaged from human and social itineraries (p121). One can say that the first plans of Athens, based initially in

the archaeological surveys and some geographic landmarks represent this abstract space, in a location that the new authorities selected carefully, remote from the busy urban centres of the era, and conveniently 'empty'. The public spaces as allocated nodal points in the crossings of the neoclassical boulevards summarize western planning ideas, the envisaged model for the new citizen of the Greek state, as distanced as possible from local practices. The local Athenian has rather more ottoman habits, goes to cafes and trades in the traditional market, leads a gender segregated daily routine rather than promenading in the neoclassical space that is envisaged for him.

The Kleanthis - Shaubert plan was a neoclassical symmetrical, monumental composition based on a thorough survey, conducted in 1833. According to Karidis (1991) it kept certain elements of the existing old town such as functions of specific locations and routes⁷⁰, aiming at the same time at a specific localization of socio-political relationships. The basic layout of the city plan was a triangle whose three vertices marked the administrative centre, the market centre and the cultural centre, following the axes of existing routes.

The Kleanthis- Shaubert plan was never implemented because, after the first lines were laid down, Athenian landowners became aware of the fact that there was a severe impact on their properties and interests. For this reason they reacted aggressively, and their protests, aided by the inability of an economically weak state to carry out the necessary extensive expropriations, brought the plan's implementation to a halt (Koumantaropoulou & Michaelides, 1994).

In 1834, Leo von Klenze, architect of Ludwig I of Bavaria undertook the task of revising the Kleanthis-Shaubert plan, acting as a royal adviser. Klenze maintained the basic axes set by Kleanthis-Shaubert, but made modifications in order to avoid confrontations with the landowners caused by the first plan (Terzoglou 2001). Finally, he proposed the transfer of the Royal Palace, and

⁷⁰ For example, it was proposed that the city should expand towards the north side of Acropolis, since the existing town was on that side, that the traditional market should remain to be a central point in the new urban plan, and that the routes of entry to the old town should be incorporated in the design (Karydis, 1991).

thus of the city's entire administrative centre, from Omonia Square to the upper reaches of Keramikos, where wealthy expatriates had purchased large plots (Karydis, 1991).

The Klenze Plan was approved on the 18th of September 1834 and its realization started later that year, on the 1st of December. His proposed amendments encountered difficulties in implementation⁷¹, however, though they were not rejected. Further plans followed.

At the same period a third plan was created by K.F. Schinkel in 1834 proposing to allocate the palace in Acropolis - a strong symbolic gesture that would merge the heart of German political control in Greece (the palace of the German king) with the heart of ancient Greek culture- but was rejected by Ludwig of Bavaria himself (Kallivretakis, 1994). According to Mirkovic (2012) the debates following the differing proposals presented by Schinkel, who was the court architect of Prussia (as well as his disciples Kleanthes and Schaubert), and Klenze, who was the court architect of Bavaria, were not limited to architectural disputes, but also reflected the larger political conflict as to who would lead the struggle for German unification. Mirkovic's comment reveals not only the dominance of German architects, imposing a neo-classical *tabula rasa*, but also the subordination to German political power of a young, small and dependent Kingdom.

Different minor revisions⁷² of the existing plan continued taking place throughout the 19th Century. The main layout of Modern Athens as it was actually built was a haphazard mix of both the Kleanthes-Schaubert plan and Klenze's plan merged with numerous modifications. What remained of the initial plan were the position of the main streets that form a triangle that still defines the boundaries of the 'historic centre' of the

⁷¹ Kallivretakis (1994) writes that in order to open the new roads of Aioulou, Ermou and Athinas, the demolition works met the opposition of residents, to whom the government had not provided new plots of land in some other location, as had been agreed to. The police assistance was employed in order to continue the work that was repeatedly halted.

⁷² For example the Hansen-Schaubert revision, approved in 1836 that was reducing the area allocated to the archaeological sites of Athens.

contemporary city and the coexistence of old and new city (Papageorgiou-Venetas, 1996). The limited number of land expropriations that took place from 1835 to 1842 was particularly harmful for the poorer residents of Athens (Petropoulou, 2008). According to Karidis (1991) the modifications of the plans are of interest principally because they reveal the relation between of the changes of functions and land uses of the master plan with the with interests in farm land of politically powerful groups. The plans, in their mixed, partial and complex implementation, underlie the geography of Athens as an archaeological and historical record of power relations.

2.3.1.2 Athens in late 19th century. Establishment of socio economic conditions.

In 1860 Athens was divided into eastern and western regions: the eastern part of the city was composed of residences belonging to the upper class citizens, surrounding the King's palace that was finally located in Syntagma square while the manufactures and the working class residences were situated in the western part along the first industrial units in Piraeus Avenue (Biris, 1966). 'Spontaneous' self-built settlements, such as the Anafiotika neighbourhood, located just under the Acropolis, appeared in Athens at the same period. These settlements primarily housed craftsmen from the rest of the country working on building the luxurious neoclassical buildings that the rich Greek Diaspora donated to the Greek state, such as the University, the Polytechnic School, the National Library and the Academy of Athens etc (Petropoulou, 2008). Those social divisions were not accidental but arose directly from spatial modifications dictated by different city plans, which represented the aspirations and politics of the ruling class (Karydis, 1991).

Throughout this period, characterized by individual and small corrective urban interventions, the main public areas of the centre (squares, gardens-groves, roads) came into being, mostly served by remarkable buildings (Kotzia Zappeio, Syntagma, Omonia). The squares, gardens, and outdoor entertainment

centres such as Zappeio took on life, and came to be integrated into the everyday life of the city (Scaltsa 1983). Each of the social groups had its favourite public spaces. Syntagma square and the broader area of Zappeion assumed a European and Upper class character. Amalias avenue, planted with pepper trees, was the most favoured street for the middle class. During this period all the commercial and social life of Athens evolved, within the triangle defined by Stadiou, Ermou and Eolou street. The lower Classes were gathering in the ruins of the temple of Olympian Zeus, Municipal Theater square (nowadays Kotzia square), Independence square (Metaxourgiou), Heroes' square (Psiri) and Lavriou square and Omonia square (Terzoglou 2000). Syntagma and Omonia square were the busiest squares of the capital, and differed completely in character. Omonia square⁷³ became the people's square, used by the lower classes, farmers and visitors from the countryside. According to contemporary newspapers, Omonia was loved by the hoi polloi while Syntagma was the meeting point for the upper classes. According to Scaltsa (1983) Public Spaces during this period were 'Theatrical Spaces' where people gathered to observe the appearance and behaviour of the upper classes, be entertained, and informed on all new events: social and political.

By the 1880 Greece was going through a period of slow reconstruction during which Athens grew steadily and came to be economically and politically dominant over other Greek cities. The majority of the first public services and institutions were located there, and it absorbed almost all foreign investment (Petropoulou 2008). The establishment of banks in 1881 and the entry of foreign capital in 1889 launched a new period of major public works. From 1880 to 1910,⁷⁴ technological progress alongside infrastructure development contributed to Athens' further growth and the beginning of its industrialisation.

⁷³ Also a newly formed square and the first choice for the palace's location according to Kleanthis-Shaubert plan.

⁷⁴ Georg Ludwig von Maurer, a member of the regency council during the minority of Otto I, stated in one of his first visits to Athens in 1833 that "All the Greeks have to do in order to be what they used to be, is to mimic the Germans" (Von Maurer, qtd in Marcovic, 2012).

As a consequence, the importance of other already existing industrial cities⁷⁵ declined significantly (Travlos, 1960: 1993).

The first public spaces of modern Athens, as envisioned and depicted at the first urban plans of the 19th century and as they were actually constructed are indicative of the relationship between the hierarchies of the production of built space and the hierarchies of political control. At the top of this hierarchical structure stands the King as head of the Kingdom, and his appointed group of architect and engineers envisaging and guiding the planning, and under them the local social background, composed of natives and Diaspora, which is also stratified (and again those with political power are those with powers to modify the urban space). On top are the wealthy Diaspora and wealthy Greek families that manage through land speculation to halt the urban plans and who also later (1843), together with Greek generals of the revolution gain part of the political control by participating in the Greek Assembly⁷⁶.

At the bottom are the poorest strata of the population, composed of the few natives of Athens and the newcomer workers and craftsmen and who are further harmed by the few land expropriations. They participate in the production of urban space by constructing informal settlements and by inhabiting and animating the city's public spaces. Yet their restricted political power does not allow them to have an influence in regards to the design of statutory public spaces.

Secondly, this part of the historical analysis underlines the importance of the symbolic value allocated in public spaces, assigned by their position, vision lines, surrounding monuments, and uses. Envisaged to represent the Greek

⁷⁵ i.e. cities like Ermoupoli, Patras, Volos and Thessaloniki.

⁷⁶ The political regime of Greece was initially absolute monarchy and constitutional monarchy after 1843, yet the Greek assembly held significantly less political power than the king supported by the Great Powers and Germany. Indicative of this is that while Athens has been equipped with a grandiose palace and various luxurious buildings, the representative assembly (consisting of the house of representatives and the Senate) met in the small brick building in the old Ottoman part of the town that the Greeks ironically called "the Shanty" (η Παράγκα). The building of the representative assembly was not built till 1871 (Mirkovic 2012).

state and the Greek national identity, primarily as envisaged by the Europeans and the German rulers and less by the locals, and yet as idiosyncratically inhabited by Greeks.

Lastly, the history of the production of public spaces in the early years of modern Athens history reveals what would remain the greatest hindrance to such public works in the decades to come: the Greek state's chronic lack of money (and the lack of independent sources of finance), and its failure, partly in consequence, to implement any urban plans coherently.

2.3.2. Athens in the 20th century

2.3.2.1 Constitution of urban legislation 1934-1960.

“In our Attica horizon, the urban plans are appearing like the shooting stars, a flare, a luminous orbit and immediately after comes the eternal peace of our sky and the most eternal peace of our archives' pigeonholes” (V. Tsagris ,1918, cited in Polyzos, 1985, p41).

Between 1864 and 1923 a huge expansion of the city took place; it grew tenfold. The years 1914-1923 may be seen as a period of ambitious vision and far reaching measures (Polyzos, 1998). During these years, the fate of the capital was associated with the Great Idea⁷⁷. Athens was an important centre for a nation feeling the consequences of the Balkan wars and the defeat in Asia Minor. The proposals by T. Mawson (1914-1918) stated, for the first time, the urgent need to divide the city into functional zones. At the same time, a series of discussions on the future of Athens has started, in association with the

⁷⁷ Literally translated as the "great idea" or "grand idea," the Megale Idea implies the goal of reestablishing a Greek state that encompasses all ethnic Greeks. “Such a Greece would be territorially larger than the Greek state of today, but would be smaller than the Greek world of classical times.[..] One of the unsettled aspects of the Megale Idea and the goals of Greek nationalism has been uncertainty about what is properly considered Greek, and why” (Sowards, 1997).

formation of the Highest Technical Council.

As things turned out, however, new peripheral areas were incorporated in the city plan without this having any programmatic basis. Their incorporation was based solely on the logic of maximization of land profit owned by private individuals. The old streets were maintained and the areas between them were divided in blocks. The blocks were further divided by small and narrow streets in order to ensure that smaller plots within the blocks had lengthy enough façades, in order to be build-able⁷⁸. There was no characterisation of land usage except rare exceptions. The plans of the new areas were executed without any overall control and intervention by the relevant authorities. (Mantouvalou, 1988)

According to Aravantinos and Kosmaki (1988) the squares that were created by those ad-hoc processes were scarce and small in size as they were mainly resulting from simply widening of crossroads. The actual position of the majority of squares depended mainly on older urban public uses and elements of the landscape, urban or rural. Such are openings in front of old churches, widening of streets, existing landmarks, bridges, ancient ruins, railroads, or geographical prominences such as hilltops, streams etc. The rest of the squares were the outcome of the non vertical sectioning of two roads. This type of sectioning created irregularly shaped plots that could not be built⁷⁹, and which therefore were not profitable for the land owners.

After 1920 the expansion of city was less explosive. The procedure of incorporation of new areas in the city plan followed more or less the same pattern as in the previous period. It took in older geographical and urban formations, or gave legal status to slum areas and areas of illegal building on the

⁷⁸ According to the Greek planning legislation, a plot is suitable for building depending on the length of the façade and the percentage created by dividing the length of the façade with the depth of the plot, among other factors. A plot without long enough façade on the street is not buildable. The division of the large blocks to smaller plots with the use of streets aimed to create smaller buildable plots, favouring micro-proprietors rather than large land owners or organized large scale interventions.

⁷⁹ This is due to the inadequate façade- depth percentage of the plot, see previous footnote.

city fringes. State tolerance of semi-illegal appropriation of land by working class communities, but also by ruthless speculators became permanently established as methods of urban space production (Emmanuel, 1981).

As the city grew the number of squares increased and there were changes in the way they were configured. They were not exclusively the outcome of street junctions but could also occupy a whole block. This difference was due to a change in the body responsible for the squares, which was not any more unauthorised individuals but the urban sector of the Municipality of Athens.

The size and place of squares did not remain fixed even after they were configured in city plans but they were constantly altered. The squares were considered the expendable reserve stock of city spaces. They were reduced in size and even cancelled in many of the multiple city plan revisions that typically followed the original one. New public buildings that were not envisaged in the original city plans were built, sometimes occupying the space of a square. Melambianaki (2006) records that, at least until 1950, Athenians were mostly indifferent to these arbitrary decisions, and suggests that this was mainly due to the fact that a great percentage of the population profited directly or indirectly from these alternations to the city plan. Furthermore during this period the lack of public squares was not understood as a problem. In most of city areas there were still enough unbuilt outdoor spaces that could serve as public ones. The designation of a square in the area was for the majority of inhabitants a luxury commodity of even unnecessary beautification that could be sacrificed in order to satisfy other needs, like a school or a municipal building.

A new plan for Athens, drawn up in 1923 by the committee of Kaligas, was adopted only partially and was in any case very short-lived. A year after publication, it was abolished under pressure from citizens whose interests were threatened. A ruthless violation of the previously-established town plan continued, with illegal construction being tolerated by the state. For many researchers the constant violation, alteration and cancelling of planning legislation and visionary schemes established a lasting precedent (Karydis, 1991; Loukakis, 1985; Polyzos, 1985).

During 1950s the modern movement put a new focus on the question of public space, with a change in definition and priority, where the square loses its previous – if compromised – importance. The Charter of Athens (1942)⁸⁰ mentions the word ‘square’ only once and gives it a negative connotation; it is not one of the ‘organic elements of the city’. The proposal was to create free spaces devoted to circulation or recreation, connected with green areas, playgrounds and parks. The effect was that, while the urban sector of the Municipality continued to advance proposals for the creation of squares, emphasis was finally placed on the need for green spaces for health and recreational purposes.

In the period 1948-1961 the Greek capital started expanding explosively. At the same time a series of legislative measures in the mid 1950s shifted the construction of housing into the private sector and had the effect of increasing the speculative exploitation of urban land. Relevant measures included the raising of permitted building heights in the city centre, the creation of GOK (general building regulation), the legislative reinforcement of land property rights and financial provisions, for example relating to mortgages. As a result urban development in the capital became relegated to an ‘urbanism of the plot’, meaning that interventions in the infrastructure of an area did not follow a general plan but were decided at local level. This also aided illegal building activity and a continuously extensible expansion of the city plan. The density of the population of an area and the degree of land speculation depended on the ‘marketability’ of the area (Loukakis, 1997).

⁸⁰ Charter of Athens is the published result of the 1933 Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM) edited in 1942 by Le Corbusier. The Charter laid out a 95-point program for planning and construction of rational cities, addressing topics such as high-rise residential blocks, strict zoning, the separation of residential areas and transportation arteries, and the preservation of historic districts and buildings. The key underlying concept was the creation of independent zones for the four 'functions': living, working, recreation, and circulation. At this early stage the desire to re-shape cities and towns is clear. Out is the "chaotic" jumble of streets, shops, and houses which existed in European cities at the time; in is a zoned city, comprising of standardised dwellings and different areas for work, home, and leisure. The square, nodal point of the city's jumble is replaced by green zones.

To summarise, a chasm appears in this period - or perhaps a chasm that was always present in Greek reality gets even wider - as between legislative intentions and spatial application, owing to the presence of competing imperatives and social forces. While awareness of the positive attributes of common space, open air space and public space in the urban fabric increased among members of state institutions and committees, who represented decisions of the authority (state and municipal), it scarcely extended beyond these groups and the intellectual elite more generally. The broader public was not involved, as it had not been from the outset. Furthermore, landed, propertied, financial and commercial interests only strengthened their voice with the progress of time, compromising the implementation of urban plans.

2.3.2.2 Interventionism of the state in the organization of built space 1967-1974

During the period of military junta (1967-1974) a series of bills were enacted in order to increase state intervention in the organization of built space. These measures superseded the City Planning Bill of 1923 which according to Karydis constituted in effect a regulation of private utilization/profit of land asserting the principle that private property is an absolute and inviolable right, with no social extension (Karydis, 1991). The bill of 1923 was replaced by the bill A.N. 625/ 1968, which constituted an attempt to regulate building procedures in Greece. According to bill N.Δ 1262/1972 the design of space was centrally planned by the state and also followed a hierarchical structure: regional development plan, regulatory plan, spatial plan, and local development plan. The bill 947/1979 introduced for the first time the notions of general and specific land usage as well as setting out the obligations of all landowners in areas within the city limits requiring them to allocate a percentage of their plots for communal use while at the same time contributing financially towards the costs of basic infrastructure works. Before the enactment of this bill the landowners did not share any responsibility towards the state regarding communal facilities of their area. With this bill for the first

time the state was not any more limited to being a simple regulative factor of private actions in what concerned urban planning but had strong intervening rights (Karydis, 1991).

The intention of these laws was to put an end to uncontrollable private land speculation and to solve a number of urban problems by introducing a hierarchy in the control of space and by placing the state at the top of this pyramid.

2.3.2.3 Urban regulations after 1981. Urban discourses as political discourses.

In 1981 a significant political change occurred in Greece. After a long period of governance by right wing political parties the Hellenic Socialist Party (PASOK/ΠΑ.ΣΟ.Κ) won the elections. This marked, for a number of reasons, a new period for Greek politics and Greek society and it is called the era of 'Change' (Allagi / Αλλαγή); a term invented by PASOK that found its way to everyday language. While it is controversial whether there was an actual change, it is certain that Allagi was a period of resonant proclamation of changes towards a society of greater civic participation.

The urban regulations that were introduced during this period created a 'merging' of the political with the urban. These regulations, which were innovative at least in their original legislative form, constituted the basis of contemporary urban legislation. A milestone for the rationalization of urban space and the development of the city was the enactment of General Master Plan (Law 1337/83)⁸¹ that determined for the first time all urbanized areas of individual municipalities and defined the allowed land uses.

The political discourse of the Socialists promoted the transition from a prolonged right wing rule, which the new government accused of being responsible for social disorder and cultural regression, to a new era of social

⁸¹ amended and supplemented by the N 2508/97.

and cultural renaissance. Urban issues were presented as an extension or tools of this political discourse. Citizens who put their faith in the political changes proposed by the government should also be expected to have trusted the urban reforms. As indeed was the case, on the numerous occasions when the government sought social consensus for these reforms, it received the overwhelming support of society (Polyzos, 1985).

The wide and ambitious targets set by contemporary Greek urbanism would have been impossible to implement had they not been preceded by a reduction of the complicated social relations of the neo-Greek society to a simpler and more understandable model. This was achieved by political discourse. Mantouvalou and Mavridou (2001) believe that the petit-bourgeoisification of neo-Greek society could not be described by the “traditional” Marxist distinction between urban class and working class⁸². Therefore it was necessary to invent a new classification, namely a distinction between privileged and non-privileged. When it became clear that such a distinction would have a widespread effect, it was natural to extend it to the space of the city by defining privileged and non-privileged urban areas. This meant that any urban planning tool or any concept of urban design should be immediately accepted by the citizens under the condition that these tools or concepts had the power to equalize the treatment of privileged and non-privileged areas.

The notion of the ‘user’ of the area appears during the early 1980s in government proclamations of urban reforms and especially in programs of urban regeneration. The user was a term mobilized in order to hide social

⁸² Social political and economical factors between 1979-1983 led to the development of large urban low-middle class that was in the middle of a small industrial proletariat remaining in shanty towns (with tendency to become low-middle) and small non-monopolist urban class in self-ghettoized suburbs/ monopolistic upper class with loose connection in the city mainly living abroad. The middle-class urban population of Athens (most of them small proprietors) in its vast majority could not be described by the chasm between urban class and working class (Karidis, 1998). Furthermore, unlike in most western European states, the labour movement in Greece did not develop because of industrialization but because of a lack of industrialization (Legg and Roberts, 1997).

contrasts and differentiations, for example between property owners and tenants of a regenerated area. These differentiations, which would actually be the only criteria by which to measure the public benefit generated by an urban intervention, were eradicated. In that way the public interest, which is actually a term used extensively in the urban discourse of the period, became vague and generalized (Mantouvalou and Mavridou, 2001).

Karydis (1991) writes that the urban reforms after 1981 were from the beginning given a social and ideological weighting that was beyond their capability as tools of exercising socialist politics. This was verified in practice: when the political discourse weakened a few years later, the urban discourse also declined and was transformed into a set of complicated, technical and legislative arrangements of space, without making these arrangements conveyors of social and political advance. What was ignored during Allagi was that 'there cannot be radical changes in the organization system of the built environment unless there are changes in the social system, since the production of this environment is circumscribed within the social system in a continuous reproductive mode of the power of this system' (Karydis, 1991, p344).

In continuation of these urban reforms, the municipalities and communities, with the support of new legislative regulations and motivated by a spirit of 'populism' that defined the political ethos in the decade 1981-1991, undertook ambitious initiatives in the direction of urban regeneration. Because the central administration did not relinquish any of its power, and as the proposed configuration of space remained technically elaborate and inflexible in terms both of planning and design, these initiatives were never completed (Karydis, 1991).

2.3.2.4. Consensus, integration and public space as an investment asset, 1990- 2004

The decade between the mid 90s and the mid 00s was marked as an era of financial optimism for Greece. Indeed, during that period the country had one

of the highest economic growth rates in the entire European Union (albeit based on income generated by several kinds of European Funds). Greece appeared as a successfully integrated member of the EU and the country's main political and policy lines were characterized by an overall adherence to the directives set by the EU, OECD and NATO (Petropoulou, 2008). Those conditions fostered a growing optimism, boosted by the newly funded virtual economy of credit, the forthcoming Olympic Games, European Monetary Integration and Europeanization/modernisation projects (Dalakoglou, 2013). The increase in national GDP⁸³ parallel to the concurrent international tendencies of globalisation, expanding neoliberalism, and the increasing enthusiasm for capitalism (Dunham-Jones, 2013) mark respective changes in Greek society, the political landscape and, consequently, spatial politics.

Athens experienced a ferocious transformation into a 'consumer city', expressed in the everyday practices of its residents and in their physical surroundings (Chatzidakis, 2014). In regard to social changes, a strongly consumerist lifestyle came to dominate the daily life of Athenians, leading to social isolation, individualization and a consequent depreciation of public spaces. The newly acquired nouveau-riche style of Greek society and the unbridled consumerism found its outlet in shopping malls, entertainment multi-centres and 'villages' that appeared during that period in the Athenian suburbs and become the new spaces of gathering, largely replacing the squares and markets of the centre (Bisti, 2012). International retail chains entered the Greek market, leading to the economic 'death' of some of the smaller merchants, a process often aided by the urban renovation projects of the municipality⁸⁴ (Dalakoglou, 2013). Douzinas (2014) writes that after entering the euro, the country's modernizers have promoted consumption and hedonism as the principal means of connecting private interest with the public good.

⁸³ The national GDP increased from 36% in 1990 to 45% in 2000 (INURA, 2008).

⁸⁴ I am referring here to public works such as the reconstruction of Omonoia square, Ermou street etc. The small businesses were heavily impacted both during the reconstruction works (as they needed to close) and after because of the raise in rents and their inability to compete with large international retail chains (Dalakoglou 2013).

The general political ambience of the late 90s in Greece was characterised by an increasing faith of the population in the consolidation of the country's democratic institutions⁸⁵, (Kaloudis, 2002) a reduction of the differences between the political parties⁸⁶ and a deeper dependence of politics on clientalism (Petropoulou, 2008). In regards to spatial politics, Portaliou (2009) writes that the traditional political populism of the previous decades came to be displaced by modern neoliberalism. 'Development' and 'modernisation' were now the main political slogans of the government (Dalakoglou, 2013), a government formed interchangeably by the two main parties. The construction sector became once more in Greek history the "steam engine" of thriving Greek economic growth and the country was rebuilt en masse, gaining the name 'Construction Contractors Republic' (Dalakoglou, 2013).

The spatial manifestation of these changes on the urban fabric of Athens gets crystallised in different trends: primarily a tendency to treat urban (and public) space as a surplus economic value in order to make the Greek capital competitive against the large cities of Europe (Gianniris,2012) ; increased land speculation; the relative weakening of urban planning in favour of landmark architecture as part of the city's image making, the devaluation of free public spaces in favour of privately owned ones (e.g. the 'Megaro Mousikis', a privately owned cultural venue, that is expanding towards the adjacent public park, reducing the size of the later) and the extension of the city at its periphery (Petropoulou,2008).

These processes were consolidated and accelerated by the decision to hold the Olympic games of 2004 with the broad consent of the Greek

⁸⁵ Kaloudis (2002) writes that the Greeks believe that their past history has been 'unkind' 'difficult' (p ix) and characterised by instability that has taken Greece through various forms of dictatorship and democracy. But history has turned 'kind' again and 'the majority of Greeks are now strong supporters of democratic principles' and 'view their democracy as legitimate' (p83).

⁸⁶ The two parties of New Democracy and Panhellenic socialist Party (PASOK), dominated the Greek political scene from 1974 up to the recent elections of 2012, when Syriza Unionist Social Front (SYRIZA) surpassed PASOK.

population. Portaliou (2011) writes that the decision of hosting of the Olympics, promoted by EU, and international partners of Greece like NATO, was in allegiance with the processes of globalization. The Games functioned as a tool for strengthening the hegemony of Greek capital in the wider region of the Balkans and Turkey. This goal could be reached by extending the international role and prestige of Athens as a metropolis and as a place of international tourist destination and business interest, by projection of the comparative advantages of the city under the capitalist framework of the competition of cities, and by strengthening the construction industry through new investment opportunities and large-scale iconic architecture (Portaliou, 2011; Gianniris 2012).

Excluding the views toward Acropolis, the city of this period according to Chantzidakis (2014) resembles any other

‘European “future oriented” city: introducing some of the biggest shopping malls in Southeast Europe, iconic buildings by celebrity architects, bigger and wider motorways for ever-so-bigger and wider cars, new museums, urban lofts, retail parks, theme parks, and various new cafés, art spaces and multi-purpose buildings for an emerging and increasingly confident “creative class” ‘(p34).

Furthermore - despite efforts to regulate the Athens metropolitan area between 1989 and 1991, and despite numerous environmental reports, and in contradiction to the anti-sprawl theories that are influencing urban discourses of the same period (e.g. New Urbanism), and in defiance of the principle of sustainable development - the city of Athens sprawled uncontrollably for more than 40km (radius) in all directions. The reasons for this sprawling came from the desire for home ownership and for more spacious housing, combined with the increased purchasing power of the middle class and the facilitation of housing loans and most importantly with the relative ease of constructing housing and infrastructure (Petropoulou, 2008). Most of the infrastructural projects that facilitated the sprawl were combined with the ones planned for the Olympic Games. Indeed before 2004 the metropolitan area of Athens acquired a new airport, allegedly overpriced highways, stadiums, suburban

railway, etc and it absorbed the majority of Greece's budget, including funds from the 3rd EU Framework (Gianniris, 2008). Most of these projects either contradicted the Athens Master Plan (including the Olympic infrastructure), or they were subsequently integrated into it (e.g. the new airport) (Petropoulou, 2008). Moreover real estate speculation operated at odds with the necessary public works of regeneration, and instead of producing surplus in terms of social good and serving collective needs, it rather served powerful economic interests (Portaliou, 2008).

Effectively those policies resulted in real estate speculation; financial profits for a small elite, intensification of environmental problems⁸⁷ and socioeconomic segregation⁸⁸ (Portaliou, 2008). Furthermore, the Olympic Games have also led to the creation of 'exclusion zones' and 'procedures of

⁸⁷ The tendency of downgrading environmental issues as secondary or subsequent to development projects is evident from the previous decade. In 1985, the Ministry of Planning, Cities and Environment that was founded five years before was unified with the Ministry of Public Works in order to create the so called Ministry of Environment, Planning and Public Works (YPEHODE). Dousi (2002) claims that the basic missions of the new ministry which were the protection of the environment and public works, were not always achieved as the national priorities were (and are still) inclined more towards infrastructural public works-which indeed have more political interest. This claim is strengthened by the fact that a number of projects directed to the protection of the environment, such as the creation of green areas and parks or the creation of new landfill with environmental standards, were delayed or abandoned, something that did not happen to most show-case projects that were implemented (Petropoulou, 2008).

⁸⁸ Affluent middle upper class were leaving the city centre for the in the south and mainly north suburbs, while low middle and working class suburbs are on the east. The new immigrants occupied the gaps left at the city centre. The movement to the south was also supported by the fact that multinational companies were moving their headquarters away from the city centre choosing the easily accessible (by car) areas along the north-south axis defined by Kifissias Avenue (Bisti, 2012).

control'⁸⁹ that have resulted in an enclosed and tightly surveillance city⁹⁰ (Portaliou, 2011). Most importantly, the urban politics of this period caused a major change in the management of public land: public and collective land was transformed into a source of funding; under the heading of 'economic stakeholder in funded projects' it was appropriated following the privatization of public services model (Gianniris, 2008). The Olympic games provided a great opportunity to reinforce this tendency, marking the culmination of the 'boom' which largely benefited the banking and constructor sectors while the last remaining unbuilt public plots of greater Athens were built on in order to host the Games's infrastructure (Gianniris, 2012).

In summary, the spatial politics of the period that combine the dominance of a development ideology, connected with a consumerist mentality, anarchic regional planning and the large scale of public infrastructure works have had detrimental effect to the city as its remaining stock of green and public spaces were depleted, privatised and surveilled.

2.3.3. Athens in the 21th century

2.3.3.1 Crisis, privatisation and militarisation of space

The rapid accumulation of built and virtual capital of the nineties was quite soon followed by the economic bust. The Olympic games had promoted a positive image of the country, but they left a legacy of underused and rapidly decaying facilities, the cost of which contributed significantly to the debt mountain that finally caught up with Greece (Clogg, 2013). Combined with the global financial crisis of 2007-2008, in late 2009 it became clear that Greece had been living through a period of false prosperity and was in effect bankrupt (Lapavitsas & Politaki, 2014).

⁸⁹ In Greek: "ζώνες αποκλεισμού" and "διαδικασίες ελέγχου".

⁹⁰ An indication of the increase in surveillance are the thousand three hundred new police CCTV cameras were installed in the streets of Athens on the occasion of the Olympic Games (Vradis and Dalakoglou, 2011).

In 2010 the country fell into the embrace of the troika – the EU, the IMF and the European Central Bank - when the government agreed to the largest loan ever received by a single country (\$110 billion). The loan brought forth gigantic pressures from the troika for its replacement, resulting in severe austerity measures and leading to acceleration of the privatisation processes of state assets that had started in the 90s -including infrastructures, energy companies and important real estate, such as coastlines, natural reserves and areas of ecological importance that had been left ‘unexploited’, and cultural monuments, along with social services such as higher education and public health. The outcome was a reconfiguration of the notions of public and almost everything dependent on this notion: public good, public assets, public property and public space.

The ‘urgent’ conditions created by the financial crisis accentuated the depletion and privatisation of public spaces and public property, already initiated by the pre-Olympic Games procedures. According to Klampatsea (2013) the new legislative framework regarding the spatial, urban and regional planning introduced during the period 2010-2012 no longer safeguards the public interest in social terms. Primarily this reflects a change in official discourse in regard to the notion of ‘public benefit’, in that it no longer includes notions of social participation and environmental protection but is based on short-term financial outcomes (payment of the external debt taxes) and the promise of ‘financial growth’ that benefits a minute percentage of the public. Secondly, space itself (urban and regional) becomes a ‘surplus financial asset’ exploited for crisis management and, consequently, laws governing space have become crisis management tools. Furthermore, the designation of numerous ‘special’ zones, regions, cases, etc since 2003, permitting the exclusion of selected spaces from the established master plans, means an arbitrarily flexible urban space management, and procedures that actually ‘regularize’ the already produced space⁹¹.

⁹¹ For example according to the new law on “regional and master planning” a city’s master plan can be altered when a project is characterised of “national importance” or by projects and actions of national or European programs, or when “exceptional and unforeseen needs and new

The most blatant illustration of the current ambiguity of the notion of public (often to the point of alignment with private interest) is the creation of TAIPED, the Greek Asset Development Fund established in 2011 as a crisis management measurement. TAIPED has absorbed almost all Olympic properties (which were public before the Olympic games), ninety five percent of the Green Fund (fund for the protection of the environment, composed of all the taxes, levies and fines the state received for environmental protection and restoration) in less than a year after the fund's creation, and numerous key public assets including seashores, small islands and peninsulas, ministry and embassy buildings, the national power and water companies, motorways airports and ports, forests, cemeteries, rivers and lakes. TAIPED oversees the selling of all the public assets -that arbitrarily get transferred to the fund⁹²- to private investors under special terms that protect the investors' interests and under completely non-transparent procedures in both the selection of the investors and the terms of the sales. This sell-off has detrimental effects to the stock of public spaces and is limiting the ability of the state to compulsorily purchase property in order to accommodate public needs and to the state's ability to protect the natural environment.

2.3.3.2 The state and the municipality

The distribution of power and responsibilities (political, administrative and executive) between the Greek state and the municipalities has been unbalanced since the foundation of the Modern Greek state⁹³, favouring

data ' occur, meaning that in this case the urban design can be adjusted by decree to served entrepreneurship. Further proposed changes will allow for the national planning policy to be approved by the Cabinet and not by Parliamentary deliberation (Ministry of Administrative Reform and E-Governance, <http://www.opengov.gr/home/category/users/minenv>).

⁹² Arbitrarily in a sense that the decisions for their privatisation are not decided through parliamentary deliberation nor can be controlled by the municipalities but are based on internal decisions of the Fund's board.

⁹³ Let us not forget that Athens is founded as a centralized control city similarly to other post

significantly the former. Furthermore, the over-accumulation of institutions and services in Athens and the centralising of administrative institutions were important factors leading to severe deterioration of the Greek countryside and the paralysis of civil society in the cities. As we have seen earlier in the chapter there were efforts (mainly discursive but also legislative) to increase the administrative power of the local councils and municipalities during the 80s and the 90s. After 1998 and with the support of European funds the government implemented 'Kapodistrias plan' I, II and III. Those were schemes promoting the unification of villages and towns in larger administrative bodies. In theory all Kapodistrias plans aimed at decentralising institutions, ensuring homogeneous civil participation and promoting greater independence of the municipalities from the state (YPES, 1997). Yet simultaneously the plans abolished many local administrative positions and practically deprived smaller villages and communities from means of self-governance.

The Kallikratis plan (Law 3852/2010) was implemented in 2010 in continuation of the Kapodistrias plans, yet without any evaluation of the Kapodistrias outcomes (Gotsis, 2010); it forced further amalgamation of existing small municipalities into larger ones. Similarly to the previous plans it aimed at administrative efficiency and most importantly cost effectiveness, which was the main reason behind a new administrative reform, so soon after the (costly) research and implementation of the Kapodistrias plans. In effect, Kallikratis further reduced the political function of local authorities and their administrative power by significantly weakening the role of the last remaining local functionary of small communities, that of local councillor⁹⁴ and centralizing the power in large prefectures that did not allow for direct citizen participation⁹⁵. In combination with the reduction of the funds⁹⁶ allocated to

colonial urban models meaning to express the myth of total control and total planning (Tsiomis, 1984).

⁹⁴ The local councillor (Δημοτικός Σύμβουλος) is the only municipal functionary who is elected by local elections.

⁹⁵ Kallikratis is characterised as the "tombstone" of self-administration (Gotsis, 2010; Portaliou, 2010).

local authorities by 40%, this has made the municipalities unable to provide social services free or at low cost and ensure the provision and maintenance of public spaces and social infrastructure (Portaliou, 2010). Similarly to other legislative reforms (such as the ones in spatial, urban and regional planning described before), the administrative reform envisaged by “Kallikratis” exemplifies the contemporary policies of the state authority to impose stricter and more centralized control and to reduce public benefits in the name of public good⁹⁷.

The municipality of Athens, the richest and politically strongest municipality in Greece, is theoretically able to change and intervene in its own city plan, mainly at the level of urban design, but it is constantly subordinated to the state due to lack of independent municipal funding. In the city centre, the municipality of Athens has the responsibility for the design, maintenance, operation and administration of the squares. At the same time, it is almost always subject to the state⁹⁸(Chrisafi, 2008). Furthermore, increasingly after

⁹⁶ The centrally allocated funding (Κεντρικοί Αυτοτελείς Πόροι Κ.Α.Π.) and local funds from dues and other revenues cover the social benefits of crèches, schools, local clinics, culture, sports, services for the elderly, the homeless, people disabled, addicts etc. They also apply to the costs to the environment and ensure public spaces and social infrastructure (Portaliou, 2010).

⁹⁷ An interesting comment comes from Gotsis, member of the “Citizen’s Movement of Peloponnese that compares the Government to an accountant as constantly proclaims that ‘Kallikratis “will save time and almost a billion Euros”. For Gotsis, those views are not only merely technocratic, but dangerous for democracy: “Really what would happen, how democratic would it be, if people were told to reduce MPs at fifty (currently three hundred fifty) to also save a significant amount of money?” (Gotsis, 2010).

⁹⁸ Although the administrative and executive power of the municipality is diminishing the public associates more with the local authorities and less with the state in regards to any problems that might occur in the spaces. Chrisafi (2008) is writing that 60% of public space users in Athens think that the municipality is responsible for any problems occurring at their neighbourhoods’ public spaces (against 10% who thinks that nobody is responsible, 3% that thinks that other users are responsible and 15% that does not know who is responsible). Yet in 2008 only 1 in 80 people of those who complained about problems had raised the issue to the authorities. When asked why not they have complained, 51% of them responded that it was because of indifference, against 21% that answered because of lack of social interest.

the Olympic Games, Athens turned to extreme centralized growth, absorbing the lion's share both of the Greek budget and the income generated by European funds with correspondingly negative consequences for the growth of other Greek cities and to the neglect of the city's own sustainable development (Petropoulou 2010). And despite the proclaimed legislative, administrative and urban reforms, the centralism of the state and the over-accumulation of institutions in the capital is still a persistent political and spatial model.

2.3.3.3 New urban actors: Immigration.

Increased foreign immigration is a fairly new phenomenon for Athens. Since the 90s the relative economic and political stability of Greece compared to its neighbouring countries, and the fall of the Soviet Union and other communist regimes in the region attracted Central and Eastern European immigrants who were absorbed as cheap labour in construction, agricultural works and services⁹⁹ (tourism, care etc), especially in Athens (Arapoglou, 2005). More recently, the country has become one of entry and transit for hundreds of thousands of unauthorized immigrants from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, seeking entry into Europe and the border-less European union, and many analysts now believe that there are between 1 million and 1.3 million immigrants in Greece¹⁰⁰. Furthermore, the implementation of Dublin II Regulation (2003/343/CE) that is providing the relocation of unauthorized immigrants throughout Europe to the countries of their prime entry until their

⁹⁹ During the couple of decades preceding the financial crisis, specific characteristics of the Greek economy such as the large size of the informal, family-based economy and the seasonal nature of major industries such as tourism, agriculture, and construction; in combination with social characteristics such as the rejection of low-status and low-income jobs by the increasingly educated and financially stable young Greeks, have led many to have created demand for a flexible labour pool, independent of trade union practices and legislation (Kasimis, 2012).

¹⁰⁰ Making up as much as 10 percent of the population.

cases are adjudicated, has turned Greece into the 'storehouse' of illegal immigration to Europe (Kasimis,2012).Unfortunately , the recent crisis and the collapse of the Greek economy, especially the construction sector , stripped a large and increasing number of immigrants of their cheap-labour income, leaving few survival options available; unfortunately these include participating (and mostly being exploited) in illegal networks of drug dealing and trafficking that have been expanding in recent years and are now quite visible in the centre of Athens (Petropoulou, 2008). Since employment and income have shrunk for both the native-born and immigrant populations, the competition within and between the two has increased (Kasimis, 2012), raising tensions, xenophobia and fascism. The wave of racism was underscored during the June 2012 parliamentary elections, when the far-right, anti-immigrant Golden Dawn party won 18 seats, while the Racist Violence Recording Network recorded more than 150 racist attacks against non-citizens in 2012 (Global Detention Project, 2014). Increasing violence and hostility directed at foreigners, combined with legal impunity in cases of racist based attacks as well as police hostility and recurrent rounding up operations - like operation 'Xenios Zeus' that ironically translates as 'hospitable Zeus' launched in August 2012 – and an ineffective legal and institutional framework for the regularization and integration of immigrants have created a fragile environment for the country's immigrants, who face extreme social , economic and political marginalization (Kasimis, 2012; Global Detention Project, 2014) ¹⁰¹.

More than half of the legal foreigners reside in the area of greater Athens. The prefecture of Athens concentrates 74,3% of Attica immigrants and 36,08% of all Greece (census 2001). By the beginning of the 21st century the first generation of immigrants that were dispersed in various working-class neighbourhoods in the periphery of Athens started having families and they

¹⁰¹ The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) 2010 International Migration Outlook came to the conclusion that nearly half of the immigrant population in Greece is unauthorized. The problems of exclusion and of social and political marginalization includes even the naturalised 155,139 immigrants of ethnic Greek origin who returned to Greece after the fall of the Soviet Union (known as Pontic Greeks)and 189,000 immigrants of Greek origin from Albania (Kasimis, 2012).

permanently settled at the city centre, filling the gap left by the inhabitants who were leaving for the suburbs (since the 90s), and thus influencing the urban landscape, creating multicultural neighbourhoods, opening new stores and creating new places of culture and social gathering (Bisti, 2012) ¹⁰².

Yet, similar to the conditions in the rest of the country, the recent crisis has aggravated the existing economical, social and political inequalities and some of the neighbourhoods mainly in the north-west part of the centre have started showing elements of ghettoization (Petropoulou,2008). Those inequalities combined with a feeling of fear and uneasiness are also apparent in the city's public spaces as there are numerous cases of immigrant exclusions from these spaces, the most notorious being the case of Agios Panteleimonas where an arbitrarily formatted neighbours' association decided to lock the playground, patrol, beat up and intimidate all immigrants who used or crossed the square. It is important to note here that, since the majority of the immigrants, especially the precarious and impoverished newcomers, are living in extremely overcrowded flats, and because of the consequent lack of private space, they are one of the main social groups that use the public spaces of the city centre. However the current conditions and their precarious position (as well as the lack of political power since many of them are illegal) prevents them from having any political control and subsequently from participating to official discourses (municipal or governmental) in regard to the production of public space. Yet, as Petropoulou (2008) writes, although precariousness and racist behaviours have in the past prevented migrants from getting organized, there is currently a significant number of immigrant organisations, associations and groups that have emerged and started participating in the social movements of Athens.

¹⁰² This thesis will not focus at those newly formed neighbourhood public spaces and practices.

2.3.3.4 New urban actors: December 2008 and the proliferation of urban movements.

The increasing economic dysphoria in Greece, combined with the start of the global financial crisis, the new type of government intervention favouring the growth of excessive profit of the private or ecclesiastical domain against the social interest, and the strong attack on public services and public spaces created explosive tensions, especially among the youth, who felt that their future was bleak. In December 2008, following the death of the upper-middle class sixteen year old student Alexandros Grigoropoulos who was murdered by the police, an unprecedented urban riot broke out in Athens soon followed by urban uprisings in most of the major Greek cities.

Athens is not a city unaccustomed to demonstrations and protests. Nevertheless, the urban insurgencies of December were different to any other. It was the duration and intensity of the riots, the scale of violence, the amount of participation and the plurality of opinions and civil claims that emerged as a consequence that differentiated this uprising from all the previous ones.

On a first level the murder of the young boy fuelled frustration against alleged police incompetence and brutality. On a deeper level it condensed into a single act all dominant measures, politics and ideologies which imprisoned youth in a pre-determined future of antagonisms and disappointments (Stavrides, 2011). The initial demonstrations and violent protests against the police soon broadened to encompass protest against youth unemployment, social inequality, corruption, state inadequacy and higher education reforms, among other perceived grievances (Economides & Monastiriotis, 2009). The emergence of the global recession at the same period intensified the urgency of the claims.

The participation in the events of December 2008 was direct in the form of thousands of protesters and rioters – coming from every social class and age. Their involvement varied from pacifist silent protests and music performances to burning and looting. Moreover, the demonstrations also included an indirect

participation in the form of public debates and involvement in assemblies, virtual forums, and internet blogs. In other words, the events materialized the relation between social groups and claims in public space both in terms of theoretical discourses and in the form of urban warfare, actual violent clashes, contestations and evictions that reshaped the urban geography of Athens.

Undoubtedly, December brought violence and destruction in the city centre. However, at the same time, possibilities of renewal and redefinition of the existing conditions had sprung through the rupture of urban fabric and social relationships. A number of issues that were in a state of lethargy after the reconstitution of democracy in 1974 in Greece came into question, arising from the proper usage of public spaces and the right to the city and expanding to political rights and citizenship. And it was exactly this rupture that led to a mushrooming of social movements concerning the urban space itself (Portaliou, 2009). New urban movements in Athens went beyond simple rejection of existing order and confrontation with it so as to enter into the collective creation and radical changes of space and of everyday life in the city. As Petropoulou (2010) observes, the December youth uprising has functioned as a melting pot of ideas and practices in generating a new framework for creative agency for another and different city: 'thus, advances have been made from simply claiming the right to the city to the creation of a bottom-up city through everyday praxis in order to contest capitalist practices that target everyday life' (p217).

Since December 2008 numerous new forms of collective re-appropriation of public space can be traced in dispersed initiatives focused on collective everyday defence actions against the austerity measures (Stavrides, 2010). Also, as this thesis will seek to show, there is a relationship between the movement of December 2008, the springing of numerous small scale urban movements in the city and the large scale massive movement of the Indignants during the summer of 2011. At the same time, streets and public places host more and more alternative groups of artists that offer a critical view on the current situation and create the possibility of experiencing the city in a different way (Petropoulou, 2008).

The new urban movements, as will be further explored in the thesis, have altered the dormant and reclusive relationship between the state and the society, increased acts of solidarity and social cohesion that are unprecedented in Greece¹⁰³ and formulated new political and collective identities. Most significantly for this thesis, the new urban movements brought new influential bottom-up actors into the highly hierarchical, top-down and unbalanced equation of public space's production¹⁰⁴.

Those new movements rarely enter into official scientific, political or urban discussions and are treated equally by the state and the popular media as minor and inexistent. At the same time the reaction of the state to various citizen's movements, solidarity acts (such as soup kitchens, free social pharmacies and medical centres) environmental actions, squats and independent social centres is almost hostile. Since 2008 and in combination with the surveillance methods introduced before the Olympic Games, the state (via its regulatory mechanism, the police) is repressing bottom-up, emancipatory and dissenting political voices that spring from urban movements¹⁰⁵.

The increasing repression of social movements is not an isolated governmental praxis but part of a diffused militarization and surveillance of the urban space. On one hand this is directed towards the immigrants, especially the illegal ones who are considered by default *personae non gratae*. On the other hand those measures are also implemented against the body of citizens and the general public and aim to prevent, contain and repress public

¹⁰³ The defence of public space is the main priority of social movements in Greece, while those priorities are different in different countries; for example in Turkey, Easter Europe and Latin America the accent is in habitation issues Portaliou (2011).

¹⁰⁴ As it was mentioned in the introduction, the relationship between Decembers' uprising and the flourishing of urban movements is a fairly new research field. For this thesis I will be combining the scarce (but increasing) bibliographical sources on the subject with ethnographical research.

¹⁰⁵ Repression includes the police attacks at the Navarinou park, Kyprou and Patission park, the closure of Dimotiki Agora Kypselis, etc.

dissatisfaction and dissent. The repression of dissenting voices extends to limiting and banning protests, publicly performing police violence on industrial scale (Amnesty International, 2011) (e.g. during the indignants movement in 2011, during the general strikes of 2012, 2013) culminating in the abolition of the 'university asylum'. The 'university asylum' law was introduced in 1982 to protect freedom of thought and speech expression making it illegal for police to enter university property without the permission of rectors. The law was introduced in memory of November 1973 when the dictatorial government bloodily suppressed a student rebellion at the Athens Polytechnic in which at least twenty three people were killed. This law, unique in Europe, guaranteed students' sanctuary from arrest or state brutality and safeguarded the right of free speech and was abolished in 2011. Ladis (Future Suspended, 2014, 25:00-25:49) claims that there is a further reconfiguration of the state's repression policy including new concepts and discourses. One of them, the concept of 'anomy' (lawlessness) comes to replace previous models of treating law-breaking or social disobedience, since the concept of criminality is no longer sufficient in describing the multiple facets of resistance and disobedience to the state's plans. According to Stavrides (Future Suspended, 2014, 26:20), this is a transformation that moves towards a kind of totalitarian state with democratic facade 'but which is actually explicitly focused on controlling behaviours and practices, which are considered as anti-social because they are resisting the destruction of society'.

All these institutional changes are spatially expressed as enclosures of autonomous spaces, squats and social centres, as restrictions of spaces of public expression and dissent, such as the streets during the protests, squares and the asylum offered by universities, and as restrictions of public activities. The range of public activities that are considered illegal or punishable is broadening to include everyday practices formerly considered legal: protesting, assembling¹⁰⁶,

¹⁰⁶ During the visit of the German Chancellor Merkel it was decided by the General Police Director of Attica that " it is prohibited for reasons of public safety and non-disruption of socio-economic life of the capital, in the period from 09.00 Tuesday 09 October 2012 until 22.00hrs the same, every public outdoor congregation or march in of the City of Athens bounded by the streets ... "bringing back memories of similar decisions imposed during the

wearing specific types of clothes (e.g. hoods) and when even gardening can be considered a reason for arrest.¹⁰⁷

2.4. Conclusions

This chapter reveals the idiosyncrasies but also the chronic pathogenies of the Greek public spaces. They reflect characteristics of the Greek state that have persisted since its foundation, namely its financial poverty and dependence on other states, the foreign interference and the undermining of Greece's national sovereignty, the permanent lack of public expenditure, the lack of a sustainable network of larger cities and towns and the disproportionate accumulation of institutions and services in the capital, the centralisation of state authority and the underdevelopment of civic society.

This chapter reveals also the hierarchical structuring of the production of urban space¹⁰⁸ in Greece which mirrors the relationship between state and body politic (initially the Kingdom and its subjects) and investigates the realities and the potentialities of collective arenas in the constitution of public spaces¹⁰⁹.

In the top of this hierarchical structure stands the Greek state, which due to specific historic and political circumstances in the process of its creation has grown disproportionately in relation to civil society. The state's overbearing role in modulating social action, centralized decision making, and the

dictatorship" (Serafim, 2012).

¹⁰⁷ I am referring here to the movements of Agros in Ilion, the movement of Ktima Prapopoulou, etc. and numerous other movements in Athens where gardening can be considered trespassing. Obviously the issue is not gardening as an activity per se but the occupation of the spaces that are selected for privatization.

¹⁰⁸ State, Municipality, Society, Citizen, Denizen (a term used for an inhabitant who does not have civic rights, e.g. an illegal immigrant).

¹⁰⁹ The formation and proliferation of urban social movements and the emergence of commons are not the norm but a novelty in contemporary Greece.

maintenance of patron-client relations at the state level, resulted in a society that succumbed to political cynicism and was reluctant to form coherent civil groups and act collectively, a characteristic that started drastically changing, however, after 2008. On the other hand, the state has proven extremely weak in terms of general and systematic intervention in the organization and regulation of the built environment. The non-regulation/deregulation of urban space has been reaffirmed in the latest modification of the master plan and the national spatial agenda.

The prefectures and municipalities that follow the state in the hierarchy of urban space control are theoretically closer in representing the civil society than the central bureaucratic state and thus legislatively able to interfere and modulate the formation of urban space. In reality, despite continuous nomothetic, administrative and urban reforms that promote the decentralization of authority and decision making (mainly during the 80s and early 90s) the municipalities remain dependant on state institutions. Under the new plan of municipal administration (Kallikratis), the local municipalities are stripped of the last remaining political authority and deprived of a large percentage of municipal funds. Kallikratis recentralizes the financial, political and administrative power to the state, and simultaneously centralises the strategic role of Athens in expense of other urban centres.

The result of the above mentioned, coupled with the chronic chasm between legislative regulations and their actual application in urban space¹¹⁰, is that until very recently the production of urban space in Greece was characterized by unorganized and unsystematic actions and random claims that are realized either by personalized political relationship with the authority (clientalism) or by taking advantage of loopholes in the complicated urban legislation and the ordinances of the Greek state, a state that does not represent a national constituency. The legislative attempts of the 80s have aimed at restricting the anarchic development by regularizing the urban space and

¹¹⁰ Those characteristics (legislative-executive chasm, anarchic building and clientelism) are the main reasons that the Athenian public spaces are all deviating from the models and plans according to which are designed.

reducing the gap between individual claims and state ordinances by introducing participatory tools for communities and social groups. Nevertheless, those attempts remained 'on paper' since a parallel social change that was required for their application that was not realized. Further on, the decade of the 90s brought forth an unsubstantiated financial optimism, consumerism, and political indifference perpetuating this model of urban space production well into 21st century. This has only started to change (together with the economy, the society, the political attitudes and the relation of the citizens to the state) after 2008.

Athens, which was resuscitated as the capital of the New Greek state in 1834, is the administrative, executive, institutional and legislative centre of the state and holds a disproportional share in decision making in the domestic political equation. Furthermore, the icon of the ancient city of Athens plays an important symbolic role in the formation of the national identity. Therefore public spaces of Athens hold a strong symbolic role, different to other Greek cities, since they should be not only representative of the city/municipality (polis) and the citizens (politēs), but also representative of the city as head of the state, the state itself and the citizens of the Greek nation. This symbolic role was evident as we have seen both in the choice of Athens as the capital and in the creation of Athenian statutory public spaces; assigned by their position, vision lines and surrounding monuments. This "symbolic" meaning is not a past characteristic of the spaces as it is one of the key values that drive all contemporary renovations of the city centre (Theodorou, 2014). Also as we will see later in the thesis, whether in statutory or in small scale neighbourhood public spaces, numerous contestations take place because of the symbolism that the spaces hold.

The current austerity measures - the reduction of government expenditure in a bid to redress debt levels and restore growth – have had detrimental effects on pre-existing urban problems. Regarding the physical stock of public, open and natural spaces, one observes their depletion and their transition from being public assets to investment assets. The depletion is supported by the creation of a set of "crisis management" rules, based almost

exclusively in immediate financial return. The new set of rules (either new bills, or more frequent amendments of bills) allow for the overwriting of the existing Athens masterplan¹¹¹, that is the most important and serious effort of organization and protection of urban space, perpetuating thus the anarchic production of Athenian urban space and jeopardising both the natural environment and the quality and quantity of public spaces. Also, a fairly new characteristic is the interference of private bodies (such as foundations of ship owners Stavros Niarchos and Onassis) with the city's masterplan, again in the name of financial efficiency and the lack of state money for the implementation of the plans. This interference allows not only the public space to be sold to private investors but also for private investors to design and manage the city centre. Most importantly, though, this modus operandi of the state is influencing the notion of the public that is no longer safeguarding the public interest in terms of social reference and is creating a lasting 'state of exception' because of extraordinarily urgent conditions¹¹² dictated by the crisis. Simultaneously the state has increased social control punishing dissenting voices that oppose social dissolution and public sell-out as antisocial, anti-democratic and lawless.

Another current governmental policy considering public spaces that continues from the previous two decades is the emphasis in flagship projects¹¹³ and the corresponding diminution of funds for neighbourhood, small scale, local projects. The remaining public spaces, whose maintenance is in a duty of the municipality, are physically decaying as the last renovation works were executed before the Olympic Games and the spaces are not further maintained. Also, as will be discussed later, in some cases the devaluation of specific public spaces becomes a method of either 'punishing' a politically dissenting

¹¹¹ Enacted in 1983 and amended in 1997.

¹¹² When a law or amendment is characterised as of urgent importance, there are fewer required deliberative processes required for its voting as for example the new legislation about regional and urban planning.

¹¹³ New Opera House, Casino in Mount Parnes, Amygdaleza tunnel, Rethink Athens, etc.

neighbourhood¹¹⁴ or a method of reducing public reaction to their selling or exploitation. The solution to physical deterioration appears to be either the bottom-up neighbourhood movements and initiatives that are suppressed by the state because they are resisting privatisation while simultaneously producing alternative political bodies¹¹⁵ and or the top- down private investors, favoured and promoted by the state.

In Athens, the current conditions of crisis and the subsequent austerity measures, the impoverished conditions of both the urban spaces and its users, the highest level of unemployment in the euro-zone¹¹⁶, the asphyxiating financial conditions for a vast majority of working middle class, the increasing amount of homelessness¹¹⁷ alongside numerous empty buildings and closed enterprises¹¹⁸, the marginalised immigrants and the waves of extreme nationalism are resulting into an overall discouraging, decaying and militarized city centre containing immense dissatisfaction, tension and discontent. Yet it also contains new urban actors, springing from social urban movements, who are claiming their right to the city collectively re-appropriate public space and contest capitalist practices that target their everyday life. The research of this thesis takes place in this contested landscape.

¹¹⁴ For example the garbage collection becomes a political tool as the municipality is not consistent in all its duties equally in all neighbourhoods.

¹¹⁵ That would be explored further in the thesis using the method of visual ethnography.

¹¹⁶ Youth unemployment in Greece is currently at 61% while in Europe is a little short of 25%, which is also a huge number (BBC, 2014; Bridging Europe, 2014).

¹¹⁷ While in the past, homelessness was an almost unknown phenomenon in Athens (although it was common in several west European countries) it has been rapidly increasing on the city centre. Usually, since the founding of the modern city, the poorest social groups would build their own informal settlement in any way they could in the (omni-extending) periphery of the city. Yet the unregulated rise of rents since 2000 (currently in decline) together with the increase of immigration, the lack of welfare support and the new austerity social policies (or more precisely the lack of them) further reinforces this phenomenon (Petropoulou, 2008).

¹¹⁸ With the exception of large brands in the main commercial streets.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 The research field

3.1.1 Social, spatial and temporal 'particularities' of the research field

The decision of engaging with the method of visual ethnography and more specifically digital video was taken in the second year of my research. Although the use of video was one of the research methods in my research proposal, it was aimed at the production and analysis of complementary visual material rather than practicing visual ethnography. The main reasons that have led to this methodological decision were the challenging particularities of my research field that became accentuated after the events of December 2008, namely the novelty, informality, heterogeneity, elusiveness, and dynamism of the civic social practices.

More specifically, the riots of December 2008 signalled a rupture in the ways that the public sphere was perceived and formulated in Greece. Up to this point the formation of public space was apparently canonical. And by canonical I mean that the distribution of power in formulating the public space had been regularized and mainly accepted (or at least not widely opposed) by society at large. As was discussed on the second chapter, this power was distributed hierarchically with the state at the summit of the pyramid and the people at the base forming a loose civil society. The events of December, however, empowered different social groups to challenge the supremacy of the state in many different ways and to seek new and active ways of political participation, beyond routinely voting for a government that did not represent the national constituency. This empowerment led to a large number of demands affecting primarily the notion of public sphere – challenging accepted ideas about who constitutes the public, about the meaning of 'publicness', and about what should constitute civic rights and obligations- and led consequently to claims upon and changes to the actual space of the city and a political re-charging of the public

space. From December 2008 and onward, and even before the enactment of these claims, the physical transformation of public space and the emergence of commons in the city, it became obvious to me that this time¹¹⁹the existing power balance was so shattered that things would not go back to how they were. In other words I realized that the main parameters in my research (the public sphere, the relation of the state with civil society, the customary methods of political participation) were altered suddenly and drastically and the reverberations of this rupture were going to last for many years. Consequently my research on the constitution of public space in contemporary Athens had to employ a method that would allow me to engage, register and reflect on the changes that were occurring simultaneously as the research proceeded.

3.1.2 Strategies and Tactics

The second reason for employing visual ethnography was because it was a good strategy to obtain data regarding the social constitution of space. Researching the term 'public', in particular after the events of December¹²⁰ and the increasing empowerment of civil society demanded a close study of the social groups in the city, their everyday practices, the study of the quotidian and they way people related to, behaved in, operated and constructed public spaces. Stavrides (2010) writes that everyday life is not only the locus of social reproduction but also contains practices of self-differentiation or personal and collective resistance; molecular spatialities of otherness can be found scattered in the city. Yet those practices are neither easy to detect nor typically 'scientifically' studied; in the words of de Certeau (1984) they constitute 'a migrational, or metaphorical city' that 'slips into the clear text of the planned

¹¹⁹ Riots and demonstration are common practice in Greece involving of different social groups and different ages. I have personally participated to demonstrations almost annually since I was 15 years old starting with the mass student occupations in 1991.

¹²⁰ Petropoulou (2010) writes that December fired radical changes of space and of everyday life in the city.

and readable city' (p93). In order to describe the urban landscape, characterised by the battle between repression by authority and the forces of expression active in everyday practices, De Certeau (1984) outlines a distinction between strategies and tactics. For him strategies are employed by organizational power structures, such as the state or municipality¹²¹, or by those working within them, to define and ultimately control a 'proper', univocal and stable place, by rational organisation and panoptic practice. Tactics, on the other hand, are used by those who are subjugated and are actions, devices, and procedures people use every day on the micro level in order to subvert the disciplining powers. Tactics and strategies depend and depict different spatiotemporal conditions; strategies are a triumph of space over time while tactics are deployed within the space of the other, worming their way into the territory of that which they seek to subvert and are by nature opportunistic and reliant on time. As I have shown in the previous chapters, the Athenian public spaces are similarly defined by the strategic plans of the state and the municipality as embodied in the city plans and official urbanized space and the tactics of a changing public, exploiting opportunities and gaps in the plan, and evading 'urbanistic systematicity' (De Certeau 1984, p105). The question that permeates this chapter is how to grasp these elusive and temporal tactics? Moreover, since everyday life is not unchangeable but continuously shifting and dependent on historical circumstances (Lefebvre, 2008), the previous question becomes more complex and gets rephrased as how to grasp tactics within a constantly and fast moving field defined by a shifting urban culture, as it was the case in post 2008 Athens?

3.1.3 Informality of civic social practices

The third particularity and methodological challenge of my research field was the informality that characterizes the practices of Greek civil society.

¹²¹ Also by the corporation or the proprietor, a scientific enterprise or the scientist (De Certeau, 1984)

Sotiropoulos (2004) writes that in addition to formal civil society associations, of which there are comparatively fewer in Greece than in other EU countries, there is an informal civil society emanating from a flourishing social mobilization: 'in Greece social interaction has been regulated by official, formal rules and regulations. In practice, however, as every resident of or visitor to Greece quickly realizes, there are evolving patterns of social interaction which often go unreported [...]. This is the informal level of social and economic life, with its own rules' (p9). Sotiropoulos is interested in political mobilization in post-transitional, democratic Greece and for his research he embraces an "activist version of the definition of civil society¹²²" that refers to active citizenship, to growing self-organization outside formal political circles, and expanded space in which individuals can influence the conditions in which they live both directly and indirectly through political pressure. Consequently, he acknowledges that social instances such as unofficial groupings, loose networks, social circles and collectivities that practice active citizenship and contribute to the public sphere should be equal and important instances of civil society; together with official social practices such as political parties, labour unions, NGO's, etc. In Sotiropoulos words " understanding civil society to be a wide-ranging set of social interaction and collective action taking place in the public space available between the individual household, on the one hand, and the state apparatus, on the other". Nonetheless as he acknowledges all these informal instances are often left out of account by analysts. Even if a researcher wishes to acknowledge them, like Sotiropoulos and like myself, it is methodologically difficult to locate informal groupings, networks and circles through the usual social surveys. Moreover, there is little readily-accessible empirical research on the informal aspects of civil society particularly in the case of contemporary Greece ¹²³(Sotiropoulos, 2004).

As those informal groupings, constituting the 'activist version of civic society' are in the core of my research, it was essential to incorporate a method

¹²² Kaldor, 2003, cited in Sotiropoulos, 2004, p11.

¹²³ Empirical research on the Greek civil society started only in the 1990s and general statements about Greek civil society have been rare (Sotiropoulos, 2004).

that would allow me to gather empirical data since the material encountered in bibliography, social surveys and official statistics of European union would not be sufficient for capturing a wide spectrum of civil engagement including instances of primarily informal and loose-knit organizations. Furthermore, the fact the fact that many of those groups were concentrated in Exarcheia lent a particular focus to my research.

3.1.4 Exarcheia

Exarcheia is considered a subcultural, neighbourhood area that is neither part of the historic centre (although close by) nor mainstream touristic (although the archaeological museum is within the area's boundaries) - hence its general omission from history books, travel journals, governmental reports - nor is it the kind of characteristic working class areas likely to be the subject of socio-financial studies (e.g. Drapetsona, Liosia, Metaxourgeio, etc). Those are some of the reasons that the bibliography on Exarcheia is very poor. Some sociological and historical data for Exarcheia can and be extracted from literature, music and filmic works related to the area, yet these sources are scarce and mainly offer insights until the mid nineties¹²⁴. In addition, the information extracted by the mainstream media that could possibly be another source of knowledge, is considered unilateral and biased¹²⁵ as they mostly

¹²⁴ E.g. "Ένα αγγελάκι στα Εξάρχεια" [A little angel in Exarcheia] of Loti Petrovic, 2006 , is a children's book which talks about Exarcheia during the 1950s; the cult movie 'Ο Δράκουλας των Εξαρχείων' [Dracula of Exarcheia] ,1983 by Nikos Zervos offers some insights about the area during the 1980s; the movie 'Μαύρο + Ασπρο' 1973 by Retzis and Zervos for the Athenian and Exarcheian Underground of the post war period, 'Η ωραία Νεάπολις και τα παρεξηγημένα Εξάρχεια', [The beautiful Neapolis and the misjudged area of Exarcheia] 2002, by journalist Giannis Kairofylas covering a wide period from 19th century till the beginning of this century.

¹²⁵ This is a widespread opinion shared by the inhabitants and member of solidarities and collectivities which I interviewed. While I will expand later on this topic it is also important to remember that Exarcheia is an area of intellectuals, leftists and anti-statists, who are very critical on the mainstream media and their alignment with authority.

depict the negative characteristics of the area and its inhabitants. A shared opinion among researchers whose case study is Exarcheia- working on different topics such as young cultural movements, student movements, the architecture of space, geographies of social struggles, etc- is that the social constitution in Exarcheia is heterogeneous, regulated by ideological, professional, cultural and personal relationships that change over time and through events and therefore are fleeting and elusive (Ioannou, personal communication, 2008; Kourtolykou, personal communication, 2009; Papadimitropoulos, 2011). Papadimitropoulos (2011) who is an anthropologist studying anarchist groups in Exarcheia writes that:

'After 1981 Exarcheia becomes the centre of social relationships and personal contacts [of anti-state groupings], where some characteristics of behaviour and ideas get solidified composing a heterogeneous sphere of meanings. Those meanings communicate and overlap through practices [...].The meeting of different tendencies is realized within a specific geographic space and a dialogical space where practices alter one another transforming the lived space"' (p13).

In the same paper he also mentions the lack of relevant bibliography¹²⁶ and the lack of media information about the informal civil society of Exarcheia¹²⁷. In his research proposal Papadimitropoulos (2010) exposes his methodological reflection : 'for the researcher that decides to study the relationship between social practices, collective action and specific social teams [anarchist and antiestablishmentarians] in the [Athenian] urban landscape there

¹²⁶ 'Because of the lack of valid bibliographical sources it is hard to define specifically the various ways and conditions that the anti-statism of different social groups is formulated as a political ideology' (Papadimitropoulos, 2011, p11).

¹²⁷ 'in this period [late 80s] the televised spectacle was still embryonic, which explains the invisibility of the procedures I am describing: large demonstrations where participants are clashing with the police at the points where traditionally protests take place, even for very unimportant reasons -like the student elections or strikes of small scale.' (Papadimitropoulos, 2011, p14).

is always the problem of heterogeneity of subjects'(p7).

An extra difficulty for the researcher is also the fact that Exarcheia, apart from being the territory of different and heterogeneous social manifestations, also has an important cultural or political meaning for different groups of people, and this might depend on practices that are not necessarily territorialized in the area¹²⁸. On the same note, Ioannou (personal communication, 2009) said that 'it is impossible to understand what is going on in Exarcheia unless you are in Exarcheia'.

3.2 Ethnography, a reflection on method

Due to the peculiarities on my research field and the methodological challenges those characteristics posed I needed to employ an empirical method that could register the social actuality and grasp the temporal, the informal and the symbolical expressions of the social practices. For these reasons I opted for visual ethnography, a subcategory of ethnography. Bhatt (2012) writes that ethnography is a valuable research method if the researcher wants to "'step back' from the obvious and 'ordinary' and look at the social world and social interactions 'afresh' explore 'extraordinary' or 'unusual' beliefs, behaviours and practices learn about other groups or subcultures"(p164), while Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) consider ethnography, through participant observation of the social and cultural worlds, as a method that opens out the possibility of an understanding of a reality which no other method can realize. Spencer(2011) further accentuates the relevance of ethnography when researching social practices within changing environments stating that 'the importance of the impact of political and cultural changes and how these are

¹²⁸ Papadimitropoulos (2010) writes that the anarchists are not a strictly territorialised community, though they might consider Exarcheia as their base at the city centre. Furthermore during the late 80s he notes that there has there has been an 'exodus' of anarchist and leftist groups towards other neighbourhoods via building squatting, aiming at a 'radicalization of everyday life' and the dissemination of anarchist ideology in wider urban environment.

expressed through daily lives, interactions and representational forms of a group or groups is the stuff of ethnography' (p47). He encourages the use of visual research methods, as they have the potential to provide a deeper and more subtle exploration of social contexts and relationships 'allowing us to see the everyday with new eyes.'(Spencer, 2011, p1). Moreover, and this is particularly relevant for researcher conducting research in their own culture, such as myself, conducting visual research 'adds intimate, particular and substantial detail to the exploration of social actions which may be habitual and commonplace, and hence easily overlooked' (Spencer, 2011, p2). This is due to the immersing nature of visual ethnography that requires long-term intense involvement with the people being studied, participation in the life of others and intensive observation. Turning this intensive scrutiny on one's own 'home' environments, as it was for me the centre of my hometown, is more difficult¹²⁹ because the everyday, taken-for-granted aspects of culture are particular difficult to recognise and observe. 'The ability of visual depictions to capture those seemingly unremarkable signs of everyday life is one of the particular strengths of visual ethnography'(Spencer, 2011, p47).

3.2.1 Spontaneity, improvisation and temporality

Visual ethnography did not come about only as a better strategy in gaining data and creating a recorded archive. It has also been chosen because it allows for a multi-method approach, a combination of observation with theoretical reflection and analysis rendering it flexible, improvisational and 'temporal'. As Cerwonka and Malkki (2007) put it, 'ethnography is a process entailing three always co-present kinds of practices. Ethnography is simultaneously a critical theoretical practice, a quotidian ethical practice, and an improvisational practice' (p164), "The ethnographer must take on risk and

¹²⁹ On the other hand Faris (1992) claims that "we can only be *cultural* critics of the *culture* of our own systems, for these are the only social forms of which we have a sufficiently intimate knowledge"(p173).

responsibility of improvisation [...] has to negotiate fieldwork in real time, in "live" social contexts' (p185). Working with a method that would allow for improvisation and serendipity was crucial when navigating into the mouldable post-December social space, given the spontaneous and unpredictable character of the tactics I was aiming to observe.

Visual ethnography can include both photography and video among other visual media. While I am using pictures in order to depict the built space, I mainly contacted my research by video. The main reason for this preference is the dynamic relation of video with time: 'Film may be said to possess tense- the present tense; a rudimentary future or anticipatory tense; and a somewhat longer and more stable past' (Marshall & De Brigard, 2003, p136). Visual ethnographers might ask their respondents for past memories and customs, and future projections, while at the same time the video is recording the present. The fact that video can record not only what has already happened in the space or what is happening but what people desire, plan and dream about the space is crucial for my research for numerous reasons. Firstly, a central feature of my key studies, the squatted public spaces, first appeared after December 2008 and continue to evolve, secondly because a time base medium is able to acknowledge different temporalities of social practices and thirdly because some qualities of the public space materialize only, temporally, in the form of an event.

3.2.2 Engaging with the urban quotidian¹³⁰

The choice of ethnography and visual ethnography was also informed by the experience of other researchers¹³¹ working on the urban quotidian and

¹³⁰ I have borrowed the phrase 'engaging with the urban quotidian' from the thesis of urban sociologist Giulia Carabelli (2012) who is also using ethnography to research on every day practices and their relationship to place in the city of Mostar in Bosnia.

¹³¹ Sotiropoulos' work, which I have mentioned before, consists in acknowledging the existence and the importance of informal civil society and the bibliographical deficiency, yet he does not

everyday life, who acknowledge the binary introduced by De Certeau between a hard, systematic, absolute and geometric urbanicity and the soft, metaphorical, migrational, multi-vocal practices and the consequent methodological difficulties of engaging with the latter. Lehtovuori (2010) in his analysis of public spaces of Helsinki has encountered a methodological challenge similar to mine: the exclusion of the personal, the momentary and the invisible - which he considers important aspects of the space's production - from planning theory. He believes that events, feelings, meanings, surprises, experiencing the space's atmosphere, new assigned meanings, new points of view, etc not merely take place in public urban space, but partake in its production. Yet he felt that his architectural education has not equipped him with an adequate methodological tool in order to register those aspects and events. He summarises his methodological question as 'how as a planner to be subtler towards individual experiences? How to support soft phenomena?' (p7). He calls his research method that combines the analysis of physical space and its use with his own personal, singular moments of invention, observation, introspection and experiences; an 'experiential approach to the production of public urban space' (p5). This is expressed in three different types of texts: memoirs about emotionally strong, important moments; traditional observations and images on social practices and reflective theoretical text. Effectively Lehtovuori's 'experiential approach' describes a sensory and reflective ethnographical method¹³² that he uses alongside architectural and urban analysis.

Another researcher, Spenser (2013), uses visual ethnography¹³³ to explore the ways in which perceptions of place and social identity become inextricably linked in inner city areas of Sheffield. His enquiry comes from an

proceed towards mapping these societal groups.

¹³² According to Pink (2009) a sensory ethnography is major shift away from classic observational methods to more innovative approaches which uses the senses (both of subjects and the researcher) as a route to knowledge. Sensory ethnography is a "process of creating and representing knowledge that is based on the ethnographers' own experiences" (Pink, 2009, p8) and those experiences are directly related to society, culture, and individuals.

¹³³ A 'foot-led' (p82) ethnography as Spenser (2013) calls it.

angle different from yet complementary to Lehtovuori; while Lehtovuori is an urban planner interested in social practices, Spencer is a sociologist interested in the urban environment and the construction of place. Spencer mentions the slow but increased recognition of the 'place' in the discipline of sociology and he believes in 'the construction of place as vital player in understanding social relations' (Spencer, 2013, p79). Similarly to Lehtovuori, Spencer (2013) emphasizes that it is important for the researcher to 'recognize that the varied uses, perceptions and layered representations of the city defy closure, resisting the view of any totalizing official ordinance which might present the city as cohesive, rational space; instead the city can be considered of many lived narratives.'(p81). To address this, he uses visual ethnography to construct multi-dimensional analyses of the city that allow parallel and conflicting representations to coexist leading thus to a dialogic approach to the specialisation of the urban as opposed to monological coherence and closure.

For my research the methodological meeting point of urban theory and sociology is extremely interesting since it marks the interdisciplinary territory that I am interested to explore. As I have mentioned in the thesis introduction I am aiming to re-establish the connection between structure, syntax and morphology of space in relation to social structure that was for long overlooked in the Greek context. So similarly to Lehtovuori and Spenser¹³⁴, I have opted for visual ethnography as a method that would allow me to gather empirical data about the social compound of my key studies including the informal, unofficial or unregistered status of the practices, to study the relationship between those practices and place and to engage, register and reflect on the changes of my research field that were occurring simultaneously as the research proceeded.

¹³⁴ Papadimitropoulos (2011) also uses ethnography to research the fluid and unpredictable field of Exarcheia and the relationship between social practices and place. In his research proposal he writes that 'it would also entail a daily and systematic presence in Exarcheia aiming into the deepest possible observation and recording the relationship of an embodied experience with the meanings enfolded in space. The desired outcome is to understand ways of constructing political subjectivity through discourses and the relationship that develops between people and place' (p37).

3.2.3 Reflexivity, positionality and objectivity

Most relevant for the framework of my research is the emphases given to practicing reflexivity in ethnography. Pillow (2003) says that 'reflexivity is commonly used in qualitative research and has been posited and accepted as a method qualitative researchers can and should use to legitimise, validate and question research practices and representations' (p175). The main assumptions behind the claim for being reflexive are that knowledge is always situated and that reality is socially constructed. Since knowledge is always produced under certain circumstances, it becomes crucial to unfold and investigate those circumstances in order to give a more complex and detailed picture of the subject of the research. As Donna Haraway (1991) puts it 'positioning is ... the key practice grounding knowledge' (quoted in Rose 1997, p308). Ali and Kelly (2012) write that for Haraway 'positionality' means that all research is only ever 'partial' as it depends on the researcher's position, and can never be fully 'objective', neutral or value free. Yet this does not make the research less valid or useful. It does though require an ability on the part of the researcher to reflect on decision making at different levels; to learn from experience and to use that learning during the research process. For Ali and Kelly (2012) positionality and reflexivity requires that the researchers' ethical awareness covers the entire research process and they ought to reflect 'not only what they know, but also how they know it' (p60). It entails that the researchers question their own assumptions, critically examine their processes of inquiry, and consider their effect on the research setting and research findings-whether in terms of their presence in fieldwork situation, the way they select their data, the process of data collection and analysis (Tonkiss, 2012).

More specifically to visual ethnography Pink (2006) suggests a reflective approach based on the inherent subjectivity of video and other visual media, in terms both of production and interpretation. She argues that it is impossible to capture objectivity because as in any ethnographic representation research footage is inevitably constructed. It is also inevitably biased; Loizos (1993) highlights four aspects of ethnographical filming that entail biased decisions in

order to criticize the filmic 'objectivity': first the decision about when to film and when to stop filming; secondly the decision to include or exclude particular material when editing footage; thirdly 'the camera's position in space, its point of view which imposes perspective on any action' (p17); and fourthly the 'subjectivity of interpretation' (p18) of the film by the viewer. Those four points prove that selection and individual bias play a significant part in any recording project and the interpretation of the project. Hockings (2003) similarly critical of assumption that film is objective and truthful, treats the ethnographic film as an open-ended text¹³⁵ - as opposed to a record- that embodies multiple perspectives; a conceptual space within a triangle formed by the subject, filmmaker and audience that represents an encounter of all three. Indeed, the most recent discussions on the use of video as a research method, mainly in the realms of anthropology and sociology, have shifted from a realist approach to the video as 'objective' reality to the idea of video as representation shaped by specific viewpoints of its producers and viewers (Loizos, 1993; Hockings 2003; Pink 2006; Chanan, 2007). Pink (2006) criticizes the approach that separates research film or video footage from 'creative' footage, and the argument that the first should be an unedited and not manipulated recording of an objective reality, guided by scientific, ethnographic principles, while the second can be guided by cinematographic intentions and represent the producer's narratives. With reference to this distinction, Loizos (1993) identifies a blurring of boundaries between the two¹³⁶, as ethnographic film might have filmic features while a fiction film may imitate documentary realism via the use of filmic methods¹³⁷. Besides, according to him, it is possible to extract ethnographic

¹³⁵ Moreover Loizos (1992) suggests that ethnographical films should not be treated as 'stand-alone texts' (p630) as this is too limiting but as texts gaining depth from their connectedness to other 'texts', filmic or written.

¹³⁶ Ruby (2000) also mentions the development in the 1960s and the 1970s of literary journalism, or 'New Journalism'; nonfiction novels, docudramas; and other genres that blurred distinctions between fiction and nonfiction.

¹³⁷ "There are dozens of filmic ways of creating a documentary 'feel'-grainy, artificially damaged or burned-out images to suggest old age, or newsreel provenance, poor quality sound, uncertain camera movements, non-horizontal framing, a camera shaking after an explosion, an

knowledge from films that are not explicitly ethnographic¹³⁸. Pink (2006) also suggests that both filming approaches are valid as ethnographic¹³⁹ as long as they are accompanied by a reflective approach that should be focused on the question of how knowledge is produced through the relationship between the researcher and the subject of ethnographic video, the technologies used, and local and academic visual cultures. Marshall and De Brigard (2003) add in this relationship the presence of the camera as 'it possesses a kind of person – a "he, she or it" which is the camera observing from somewhere between the subjective "I" – which filmmakers have tried to use but which is never fully convincing [...] and the collective "they"' (p136) indicating thus that the researcher in visual ethnography should be aware and reflective on the fact that her observation is mediated. As Loizos (1993) puts it 'Unless I am filming myself in the mirror, I am always filming *someone else*, from my chosen vantage point' (p18)

I therefore intend to introduce the visual material and data gathered,

apparent interruption form outside the films narrative. The list of ways in which documentary realism has been imitated in the cinemais very long"(Loizos ,1993, p5)

¹³⁸ Here Loizos (1993) refers mainly to documentaries, not fiction films. He is making a distinction between documentaries and ethnographic film claiming that while all ethnographic films are in some sense documentaries, only a minority of documentaries seek to present themselves to the academy as ethnographic films. Yet he agrees that a wide range of documentaries about humanity in any culture in the world is of value to anthropologists and also feature films can equally plausibly be treated as sources for cultural analysis. Those discussions about the ethnographicness of the film, as well as on the distinction between documentary film and ethnographical film, anthropological film and ethnographical film, etc that have started since the 70s, still pertain strongly today. Ruby (2000) for example proposes that it would be more precise for anthropologists to label their films 'anthropologically intended films', rather than ethnographic (p28).

¹³⁹ On the contrary Ruby (2000) is critical of the dominant point of view among scholars who believe that the term ethnographic can be applied to a large variety of things. He thinks that this 'overly generous' (p26) definition is so inclusive and general as to render the concept meaningless and proposes that if the term ethnographic is to retain any of its original meaning, it should be most profitably applied only to those films produced by competent ethnographers and explicitly designed to be ethnographies.

reflecting on the ways it influenced, altered and enriched the course of my research, keeping in mind that the material does not represent an objective reality but my negotiated and subjective point of view and that the knowledge produced is 'situated' in particular social, political, temporal and cultural circumstances.

3.2.4 Ethnographic analysis and report writing

The production of ethnographical knowledge by video does not concern only the final product which is the edited video footage presented in an audience. Ethnography instead stands for both a process of investigation and a product (Ruby, 2000). It is a continuous procedure that extends before, during and after the footage is produced: while planning the visual research, when filming, editing, projecting, receiving feedback by viewers, and producing writing on the film (Pink 2006). Similarly ethnographic analysis does not begin only after the data has been collected; it is implicit in the rationale and aims of the research and often already visible in the construction of researcher-produced video pieces (Spencer, 2011). Pink (2006) suggests that the analysis should be concentrating on how the content of footage is the result of the specific context of its production and on the diversity of ways that video is interpreted. 'Video may be treated as realist representation of the reality of fieldwork contexts as ethnographers understand them; but they are always representations of the subjective standpoints of the image producers and other viewers, including informants' (Pink, 2006, p140).

Regarding the interpretation of the video material into a written text I will not attempt to transcript the footage, but employ a reflexive approach to analysis. Spencer (2013) writes that adopting a reflexive approach when interpreting visual dimensions of complex phenomenon "is not just flagging up subjectivity to 'cover one's back' methodologically"(p81) but it is an intrinsic part of the research. Writing is not just a mapping-up activity at the end of the research project but is also a way of knowledge production- a method of

discovery and analysis (Rivas, 2012). Yet, it can be both a creative and 'terrifying' process. Part of this 'terror' comes from having to reduce masses of data¹⁴⁰ to something manageable, interesting and informative for the reader but also from the onus of the writer to reliably and authentically represent her subjects. For Rivas (2012) reflective writing can be one way of dealing with worries about authenticity of representation. The researcher reflects on them, and on the biases she bring to the research, such as relevant professional and personal experiences, preferences and know ledges , and then voices her concern so that others can read about them and also reflect on them.

The research report that follows is based on a reflexive accounting that extends before, during and after the footage production following a chronologic sequence. As this research contains two videos, on different but linked topics that are separated by three years, the reflexion period covering the aftermath and the reverberations of the first video coincides with the 'before' period of the second video. Although some parts of the report would refer to distinct footages, I will aim to bring them together whenever is possible by raising issues that refer to the overall research topic and are relevant to both footages, as for example all the issues raised in the first part of this chapter.

More analytically I will start by reflecting on the initial research period and my first 'unsuccessful' experimentations with video recording that could be considered as a pilot study. Then will then clarify how the actual filming influenced the course of the research: how filming altered my perception of the research subject, how it affected the way the interviewees decide to represent themselves while filmed, how I made decisions on which people to interview, and the course of the interview and how myself and the informants were constantly redefining the identity we communicated to each other because of the camera. I will be furthermore reflecting on how video technology was made meaningful locally in Athens and specifically in the area of Exarcheia and Syntagma square during the indignants movement and what is the general

¹⁴⁰ 'Select one from among a number of possible stories, accurately re-present the evidence and include sufficient contextual information to enable an in- depth understanding of what is being described and the limitations and implications of the descriptions' (Rivas, 2012, p499).

perception about visual media and the use of specific technologies (e.g. the model of the camera) (as proposed by Write, 1998) .Lastly will I deal with two questions regarding the expected outcome of the edited film: 'for whom do we make films?' and 'for whom do we shoot research footage when we collaborate with individuals and groups that also have an interest in the footage?' (as suggested by Pink, 2006). The answer to the last two questions that refer to both videos will be also connected with a reflection on their difference of styles, editing and my filming intention.¹⁴¹

3.3 Research report

This text is a reflection on practicing visual ethnography and the knowledge produced, discussed and negotiated throughout the research. The visual research covers the period from December 2008 to January 2014. The locations of the research also differ and reflect the changes to my key studies, the shift of the centre of gravity of my research as well as the improvisation characterising my research design. I have divided my research in four periods. The first one is from December 2008 - November 2009. It is mostly explorative and the video footage, which is not included on any of the films presented, helped me to understand the qualities of the video media, explore the larger urban area of my research, and take decisions on my filming methodology. It takes place at the public squares of city centre (Kotzia square, Omonoia square, Monastiraki square) and public spaces in contested neighbourhoods near the centre (Metaxourgeio square, Exrcheia square, Vathis square) and includes 'procession' recording of walks in those areas and of demonstrations. The second period is from November 2009- October 2010 and forms the main body

¹⁴¹ According to Banks the intention of the film maker is one of the three perspectives that form the 'ethnographicness' of a film together with event (the filming process) and reaction (the response of the audience to the physical manifestation of the event) , that are linked 'in a chain to form a process'(p117). He suggests that ethnographicness is not a thing out there which is captured by the camera but a thing we construct for ourselves in our relation to film as well as in relation to a variety of other things such are fieldwork (Banks 2003).

of the video research, depicted in Avaton. During that I have decided on key areas of the research, mainly in Exarcheia and my filming approach became increasingly more engaged with the space and the users. It also includes a video research conducted at an emerging commons in the area of Kypseli¹⁴². I am separating this period from the third one which takes place from October 2010-September 2011 since the fact that in October 2010 I presented the first edited version of my research material means that after October 2010 my research was influenced not only by my filming activity but by receiving feedback from the viewers multiplying the viewpoints on my subject and introducing new dialogised material. During that period I also filmed in Victoria square and Agios Panteleimonas square in order to compare 'neighbourhood initiatives' based on fascist discourses. The fourth one covers the period from September 2011-January 2014 and follows the filming of the second film, Diavaton, its editing and its first public screening. The research is exclusively about Syntagma square but the filming takes place in different locations.

I should open a parenthesis here in order to explain the temporal particularities of my research, as the research periods might seem too long and irregular for a PhD research. I officially started my PhD in 2006 but my studies were not continuous: I have been studying both full time and part-time and had three years of interruption in between the start of my studies and now. Interestingly the latest of the historical parameters have influenced both my research topic and this research: the beginning of the financial crisis in Greece has caused changes in Greek society but also has caused difficulties to finance my research that consequently led to interruptions. The positive aspect is that as my studies have been long and interrupted this allowed me to spend large periods of time in Exarcheia that were unintentionally productive. What I mean by this is that there are periods during which I was neither registered in the university, nor planning to film, or work on my research, yet ethnographical

¹⁴² The results of this study were presented at a conference in UCL Bartlett on May 2013. From this research I will also be drawing valuable data for the characteristics of the commons, further in the thesis.

knowledge was produced. Toren (1996) stresses that in ethnography *everything* can be significant for the researcher, even the most potentially mundane and everyday activities, and what is equally as important as the role of the observation is the intensity of involvement and participation in the life of others. As he explains 'the idea is that everyone, everywhere, including ourselves, is the locus of relations in which we engage with others and in which others engage with us' (1996, p104). Furthermore, ethnographical conclusions can and should be drawn even from apparent disasters (Michael, 2012). Acknowledging that research is 'work in progress' the researcher should practice reflexivity and self-criticality even when things go wrong. Michael(2012) comments that such analyses about 'research failures' (such as for example my initial attempts to video research) are an invitation to a complex and variegated dialogue about one's (lack of) findings and can be turned into interesting and useful data about the researcher's relationship to both the empirical cases and also to the process of research itself. I will therefore consider as inseparable part of my research the periods I have spend engaged in my research field even without filming. Similarly the research periods do not represent 'officially registered' research periods, but periods that I was involved in the lives of my research subjects, and immersed in my research topic. I will also include related data which I have gathered off-field, as for example while being in Thessaloniki for the projection of my first research film. Furthermore, as the two films that support this thesis are inevitably edited versions of the research footage, focusing on Exarcheia and Syntagma square, some footage referring to other squares that forms my secondary research is excluded. Yet I will be using the knowledge produced from the secondary research in the next chapter.

Lastly, before commencing with my research report, I would like to comment that since my take on the ethnographic process includes personal, experiential, and sensorial instances, and then inevitably for some data exposed there would be no 'hard' evidence but my own experiential knowledge. To give an example I will be mentioning further in the text how my filming was many times interrupted by passers-by, especially in Exarcheia who 'asked' me to delete the recording material. For those events there is no material evidence

except of my commitment to present my research data truthfully and ethically.

3.3.1 December 2008 - November 2009: Pilot study

In December 2008 I used for the first time video recordings, trying to capture and describe the urgency of the experienced situation. Given my inexperience in the media, and coupled with my fear of using the camera while witnessing scenes of extreme violence and illegality, the results were feeble regarding the description of the condition. Yet I had the opportunity to realize the limits of the media and most importantly the connection between my involvement with the action and my position in the field of action, with the captured material. For example when I was standing on top of a bench filming people clashing with the police from a safe distance, this was not the same as it would have been if I had been standing near the clashing group. Not only would the filming results have been different and more immediate but I would also have perceived the events differently, feeling more intensely the urgency of the situation, and sharing the feelings of anger, fear and excitement with the other participants. Nevertheless, neither when I was directly involved in action on the side of the clashing groups, nor latter when I was participating in open public assemblies in universities and occupied buildings did I find the courage to attempt filming. Consequently all my footage of this period is taken from a safe distance from the field of action, a distance that guaranteed my invisibility and disengagement. I would need almost one more year of increasing engagement with the media to break those barriers.

During my next visit in Athens in the summer of 2009, I continued filming, mainly trying to capture in film urban reality as 'objectively' and unobtrusively as I thought I could. My interest was focused on public spaces of the city centre, as approached by different routes, and the social practices within them. I was filming the space and its users from a distance and did not dare to make myself visible, or to ask any user for an interview. Sometimes I was trying to film while walking and pretending that the camera is turned off.

Yet, though I was trying not to attract any attention many times I was addressed aggressively by passers-by, the guard of a bus yard come out of the building threatening to call the police, and I was more than couple of times followed by unknown men. I also have to mention that I was filming mostly in decaying residential areas of the city centre¹⁴³ where there was no apparent tourist attraction or something that would perhaps justify the use of camera for recreational reasons. The culmination of this reactive behaviour in response to the presence of the camera happened during an incident on the 17th of November 2009. On that date I was planning to film the celebrations for the anniversary of Polytechnio in the area of Exarcheia, inside NTUA¹⁴⁴ and the demonstration that was to follow. The celebration of the 17th of November¹⁴⁵ symbolises the fight of citizens against junta, the reestablishment of democracy and the fight against imperialism and foreign interventionism¹⁴⁶. The events start on the 16th with celebrations taking place in NTUA in Exarcheia, followed by a large demonstration on the 17th that starts from NTUA and finish at the American embassy for the majority of demonstrators or in Exarcheia and inside NTUA, where dissenting groups who clash with the police used to seek

¹⁴³ Lenorman, Plateia Vathis, Omonoia, Plateia Dimarheiou, etc.

¹⁴⁴ NTUA is an abbreviation of National Technical University of Athens and in Greek is called Polytechnio, which is also the name given in the events of 1974 and the celebrations on the anniversary of the events.

¹⁴⁵ The participants (both in the demonstration and in the celebrations before) are mainly the communist and other left parties, antiauthoritarian groups and also PASOK (PASOK during the first years of democracy was considered an alternative political party not a mainstream one as it is was in the beginning of my research. When Political youth of PASOK tries to participate in the demonstration they are ridiculed by other participants). The demonstration of 17th of November is a yearly opportunity for most political groups, including antiauthoritarians and anarchists, to express their political opinions either by a symbolic visit to the monument, a participation in the demonstration or a clash with the police after the demonstration. Those practices of Polytechnio celebration, the demonstration and also the violent clashes during and after the demonstration are so frequent that they are considered a 'regular' or at least 'expected' course of events.

¹⁴⁶ Americans that are seen as assisting the junta.

asylum¹⁴⁷. For my research it was interesting to observe the different actions and their spatial manifestation -speeches, festivities, flower laying, singing of revolutionary songs from loudspeakers, clashes with the police, fires, broken windows, Molotov and teargas - taking place in the same area. I also wanted to record an activity, the celebration of the anniversary that within one day activates almost all types of public space: the street as a place of demonstration, procession and conflict, the square as a protest locus, the university as collective space and as an asylum.

I started recording without a specific plan of action from a balcony across Polytechnio, at a safe distance until it was clear that all I was capturing were shots of people distributing leaflets in the street. So I asked my sister (who was completely reluctant and uninterested) to join me and we visited the university yard myself filming with my video camera and my sister with a picture camera.

At this point I shall also mention that during daytime on the 16th and 17th November, the space of NTUA is visited by different TV crews reporting on the annual celebrations, so the presence of cameras is not unusual. The TV journalists are obvious to detect because they cover the event with professional cameras and are followed by TV vans and sound technicians. Furthermore they shoot from specific angles like the angle from the entrance¹⁴⁸towards the monument to the dead students adorned with carnations etc., rather than wandering around with the camera as I did. Also a lot of people take pictures but they are also shooting either at themselves or friends in front of the monument, or the monument itself, never at random people in the yard. The reaction of people to the camera was almost identical¹⁴⁹; everyone observed

¹⁴⁷ Not any more as the university asylum was abolished in 2011.

¹⁴⁸ The entrance of the university was demolished by military tanks during the student protests in 1973. Since then and in memory to the killings it remains closed and opens only during the 16th and the 17th of November.

¹⁴⁹ The only different reaction was when we entered the building of civil engineering and a specific room that a group of widows held an exhibition about the communist victims of the civil war. I was filming the exhibits at the wall when a woman approached me, asked why I was

that I was holding a camera, they were alarmed and alert and gave me inquisitive and aggressive looks. Members of the communistic youth aggressively asked as not to film at their direction. In any case I was trying not to film people aiming at their in faces but to aim at the material exhibited, flags, and the buildings or pretend that I am filming my sister. Still it was very strange to experience this feeling of discomfort, because I had spent eight years almost daily in this space (studying, working for my final degree project, socializing, going to parties). This used to be my everyday space yet it was transformed to an uncomfortable zone simply by the presence of the camera.

When we finally exited the yard of the university we were stopped and surrounded by a group of approximately eight members of the communistic youth (some of them holding wooden batons¹⁵⁰) who demanded to know who we were, to show them identification cards and state why we were filming. The group had no right to pose this question because NTUA is a public space and so everybody has a right to film, but given the fact that we were outnumbered, I decided to answer politely and try to persuade them that I was a university researcher and had no connection with the police. They also demanded to show them what we have recorded and finally one of them stated ' I believe you because you don't look like snitches. If you were you would be sweating from fear while I would be talking to you' and they decided to let us go. Their reaction was interesting because it was not prompted by their personal experience, firstly because in the moment we were filming them they are not doing anything illegal and secondly they were too young¹⁵¹ to have experienced the police filming and the interrogations of military junta themselves. Their reaction to filming was probably prompted by their parents or the party leaders who themselves have had traumatic experiences of police identification during the military junta. My sister never joined my film ventures again.

filming and when I explained to her she gave me a video tape with material to disseminate the truth of the events abroad.

¹⁵⁰ Those are actually flag posts turned into batons during the demonstrations by wrapping the flag tight around the post.

¹⁵¹ They were approximately 15-19 years old, so they were not even born during the junta.

The reason I am mentioning this specific event is that I believe that it summarizes both my filming attitude during the first period of my research (unstructured, explorative, disengaged, coy) and my learning outcomes. The first one is that people in Athens were not accustomed either to the media of video or to the idea of being recorded (either for recreation, research, or as part of an art project). This was observed not only during the aforementioned event but throughout my research. The majority of Athenians¹⁵² think that someone who films is either from a TV channel or from the police, or from a public sector department that has the power to exert authority over them, directly or indirectly. Filming is rarely an 'innocent' activity but it has power. The same, to a smaller extent, occurs at the sight of a photo camera that is not aimed at a personal target (like a member of family of the photographer, his house or his friends). The observed discomfort caused by the video camera, apart from the fact that its use is uncommon, is due to a fear of revealing irregularities and illegalities of the built environment for which the subjects of filming might be responsible. For the Greek, urban space contains a large number of illegalities due to state tolerance of illegal building practices and private land speculation, as I explained in the second chapter. A filming of a typical Athenian street, plot, neighbourhood can easily and almost effortlessly depict illegalities such as constructions on top of archaeological sites, expanding a café's sitting area on the public space, extending the living space of an apartment by building on the balcony, etc. During my research on Athenian public spaces and while filming a number of urban activities taking place as well as the built environment itself, I was repeatedly stopped and questioned by inhabitants anxious to learn whether I am working on the state department of archaeology or the ministry of built environment, and eager to confirm the legality of their houses and enterprises despite the fact that I was not questioning it.

Moreover, the discomfort and suspicion in the presence of a video camera reflected the climate of increasing fear that had begun to characterize the city centre and especially the non touristic, non commercial areas that I was

¹⁵² By Athenians I am referring to people living and being present in Athens, independently from their citizenship status.

investigating. In 2009 this was linked to an increase in urban insurgencies, the increased aggressiveness and randomness of police interventions, the unease caused by the change of the character of the city centre from neighbourhood clusters of middle class white Greeks to immigrant areas, and by a few randomly occurring bomb attacks¹⁵³. This ambience of fear was further nourished by the mainstream media. The reason I am mentioning this is that often people influenced by the media but also in reaction to the attacks which had occurred, regarded filming as involvement in a possible terrorist attack plot. Furthermore, as the reaction of the communist youth has revealed, traumatic national events such as the military junta and the civil war were not forgotten¹⁵⁴. Memories of the police recording and identifying individuals who take part in demonstrations and political gatherings, hang around in specific places targeted as nucleus of troubles for the authority, or are members of autonomous or leftist organizations, still persist in public memory. In contemporary Greece none of these activities is illegal but apparently there is a lot of scepticism about the way in which the law is applied, especially in areas like Exarcheia, where the police often perform random raids dragging inhabitants to the police station because they attended a book gathering on a café¹⁵⁵ or they happened to pass from the square. Consequently in spaces that

¹⁵³ See here a list of attacks with mainly improvised explosive devices during the period 2008-2013: <http://news.in.gr/greece/article/?aid=1231230686>.

¹⁵⁴ I verified my assumption later when I came across Panourgia's (2009) book on civil war as state terror in Greece.

¹⁵⁵ One of numerous incidents that were taking place in Exarcheia during that period is the arrests of approximately 20 people who were present at the book presentation of Christophoros Kardaglis in cafe Floral in Exarcheia on 21 of October 2009. The police entered the cafe following the disapproval of the cafe-goers at the arrest of two teenagers in the square. The author Dimitris Papachristou started protesting and was also arrested. The national television journalist Sotiris Damatopoulos tried to record the incident on his mobile and so he was arrested as well, followed by others. Stelios Elliniadis, a radio producer at "Red" radio station had tried to take pictures of the arrests in the cafe and also got arrested. According to a reporter at the "Red" the policemen made an exit from the cafe making the victory sign. The arrested were shortly released as there were no charges pressed against them (Preza TV, 2009; Theodorakis, 2009).

are in the threshold of legality, like the new squatted public spaces that I later investigated, the participants were doubly as doubtful in the presence of a camera. The same occurred when I was trying to shoot frames that included immigrants who might not have had a residence permission or people engaged in illegal activities like prostitution, drug consumption, drug dealing, and unlicensed commerce.

Summarizing my filming experience in the city centre of Athens during the post December period (but also continuing to the present) my first observation was an attempt on the part of authority to penalize urban space. By 'penalization' I mean the possibility of punishment when an activity takes place - an activity that is different than the ones prescribed by the state and the authority as appropriate for the normal, functional and law-abiding citizens. This fear of penalization that characterises the public sphere, in addition to the fact that the built urban environment contains illegalities by default, since they are part of the construction practice, are the defining material and immaterial conditions characterising contemporary Athenian public space. These conditions were intensified in specific areas of the city centre, the ones that became receptors of the largest percentages of immigrants arriving in the capital coupled by poverty and deprivation and the ones with intense political activity, precisely where the research took place. Realizing these conditions and their intensification was possible only after attempting to record with the video camera.

Most importantly, my video recordings from December 2008 until November 2009 revealed that the way I was attempting to film was insufficient for the purposes of my research and that I needed to further engage with this media practice. It was deemed necessary to abandon the position of the invisible and 'objective' camera operator and become the researcher, the director, the journalist and the bold operator at the same time; though visibility as I had started to realize could be possibly dangerous.

3.3.2 November 2009 - October 2010: Avaton

3.3.2.1 Sampling, research ethics and research design

The main body of my video research for my first video (Avaton) was conducted from November 2009 until October 2010. After November 2009 I defined key areas and spaces that I wanted to focus on, and gradually started to make my filming activity visible, to invite the space users to participate in the film and to ask them for recorded interviews. By gradually I mean that I first started interviewing friends in spaces I felt comfortable¹⁵⁶ with and later moved to more uncomfortable and less known territories. I had at this point, after attempting different filming approaches, observed that interviewing people on camera was the best way to perceive the social constitution of the spaces, make the subjects interested, engage them personally in the research, promote a dialogue rather than collect facts and enquire about the perspectives of spaces.

¹⁵⁶ My first interview was at hair salon, whose hairdresser owner is my sister's friend. He is also member of the association of Exarcheia inhabitants and the salon is the locus of heterogeneous crowd: during the days I spent in the salon I met a diversity of characters varying from ministry bureaucrats to people who have spent some time in mental institutions. Progressively I decided that I should focus on the main square of Exarcheia and the Park in Navarinou. Later, and as I was spending more time in the park I met people from other initiatives who invited me to visit "their spaces" and started to realise that I needed to study at least one more of the Athenian commons, the park in Kyprou and Patisision. In this park I also experimented with collaborative filming by lending my camera to a group of Albanian kids to film the space themselves. The experiment was not successful as the kids were mainly playing with the focus button. Latter two of them were arrested for drug dealing which I managed to capture on the camera. While in Kyprou and Patisision I also came to realise that there are various 'grades' of public space 'ownership'. Kyrpou and Patisision was a municipal square that was occupied and managed as a commons for a period. This peculiar condition set forth numerous questions on ownership, occupation and space control and prompted me to conduct further research in two more squares, the square of Agios Panteleimonas, a public space that had become a stronghold of fascists and plateia Victorias. This square neighbours Agios Panteleimnonas and could have shared the same characteristics and dominance of fascist groups but it did not as at the time of the research the square was also close to a famous anarchist squat that according to interviewees 'held the balances'.

As I have mentioned before, people in Athens mostly react in a negative way when filmed. Because of this it was extremely difficult to persuade people to be interviewed on camera. Holding a camera signified that I was either part of the authority or a journalist and the work of both categories was treated with extreme disbelief. The disbelief towards the authority I have explained sufficiently. The disbelief towards the media comes mainly from the widespread conviction, also depicted in the video, that the media are biased. In Exarcheia, this conviction was more than once proved since the mainstream media characterise the area as the 'nest of vice' and its inhabitants and the people that frequent it as 'elements of disturbance of public order'. In the squatted public spaces the media were initially supportive but as it soon was clear that the squatting movements were not aligned to any political party¹⁵⁷, the media became negative towards them. In the park squat in Kyprou and Patission, another commons which I had researched during the winter of 2010, one member of the inhabitants' initiative explained that they have denied to everyone, including a film crew that came all the way from Australia, the right to film their space. In contrast, the two interviewed Americans were content to be filmed and felt comfortable with the presence of the camera.

In order then to overcome this problem I had to approach the spaces that interested me mainly through friends and a network of acquaintances that kept building up during the research. Secondly I had to reassure everyone who did not know me personally and was present at an interview that I am neither a journalist nor the police and that I am interested in their actions because of my research and most important that I am on their side. Still the interviews were many times interrupted because somebody that would not be present at the interview from the beginning would like to question me about the usage of the

¹⁵⁷ Left parties initially participated in squats of open spaces. Yet from the very first assemblies it was decided that those spaces should belong to the people participating and not be aligned with any political party. After it was rendered clear that political parties could not gain anything (for example to harness the movement and use it as part of their campaign) there was no further interest expressed by political parties. Many of the participants are members of left and communist parties but they do not participate in the movements under their political affiliation but as independent members of the community.

camera. In few cases I was verbally attacked and twice I was forced to erase the recorded material because someone did not want to appear in my footage; even if they were shown crossing randomly a street at the background of my shot. Equally Papadimitropoulos (2010) whose key study are anarchist groups in Athens, writes that a difficulty he was faced with was the inaccessibility of individuals and/or groups and their suspicion towards the researcher, which did not come as a surprise to him since special teams of the police are particularly 'sensitive' (p16) regarding those groups. Therefore he had to revolve his research around the groups/individuals he could contact personally.

My personal contact with the research subjects inevitably raises issues about the validity of the research knowledge, as well as ethical concerns. In regard to the first, Carabelli (2012) who is opting for empathy and personal contact with her respondents in her research writes that the methodological literature on participant observation is divided between the support of empathy and the support of distance between researcher and the person studied. Respectful distance is supposed to avoid the danger that the researcher will 'go native' or identify with the people studied; closeness is supposed to enhance understanding, and this is Carabelli's position. Oakley (1981, cited in Byrne, 2012) also criticizes the traditional standardized, structured interviews based on the idea of a detached and neutral researcher who maintains control of the interview, advocating instead the fostering of friendship and exchange within the interview process. She argues that it

'becomes clear that, in most cases, the goal of finding out about people is best achieved when the relationship of the interviewer- interviewee is non hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship [...] Personal involvement is more than just dangerous bias- it is the condition under which people come to know each other and admit others in their lives '(Oakley, 1981, cited in Byrne, 2012, p213).

In my case it was necessary to opt for empathy, primarily because I am native, secondly because I had personal and friendly relationships with many of

the interviewees and thirdly because if I have tried to maintain a distanced position I sincerely believe that nobody would have agreed to be filmed.

In regard to the ethical issues regarding an empathic position, Fine (1993) argues that the nature of ethnographic inquiry demands that researchers deviate from formal and idealistic rules or ethics that have come to be widely accepted in qualitative and quantitative approaches in research. These ethical dilemmas are evident throughout the entire process of conducting ethnographies, including the design, implementation, and reporting of an ethnographic study. Fine (1993) maintains that researchers are typically not as ethical as they claim or assume to be, for example they might be presenting themselves to the research participants as being more sympathetic than they actually are, might be denying that they dislike any of the participants, might not fully reveal their research goals in order to extract undistorted answers. He essentially maintains that in ethnographical research "each job includes ways of doing things that would be inappropriate for others to know" (p20). I am not using Fine's argument in order to justify a non-ethical way of conducting my research but in order to accentuate the fact that my position among the researched subjects is not completely devoid of personal relationships, at times empathic and unavoidably subjective. Furthermore, an ethical approach to research it is not manifested only during the interviews; neither can it be completely validated by strictly following ethical guidelines. Ali and Kelly (2012) comment that the discussion of ethics should not be restricted to specific parameters of the research but broaden to encompass its entirety, even deciding about the research topic. Ethical issues might permeate all stages of research like the formulation of a research question, sampling, gaining access to data or research respondents, collecting and analysing data, engaging with research audiences and publishing findings. Since all levels of knowledge production (produced from all stages of research) embody power relations, research decisions can have social consequences and impact upon politics and policies affecting individuals and groups even if the researcher sticks rigidly to ethical advice or guidelines. All those stages demand decisions for which the researcher takes ultimate responsibility based on her ethical awareness and integrity. Also, since my research topic included activities that are not

straightforwardly legal in some points I had to follow Feldman's (2000) suggestion that in such cases the researcher should be adept in showing that there are things, places and people that she doesn't need to know.

3.3.2.2 Implementing the research

Starting my research with my personal contacts was necessary but at times also problematic. Often, especially at the beginning of my research it was hard for both parts to get into the role of researcher -interviewee. In this context the role of the camera was catalytic. Pink (2009) considers that researchers and participants create a dynamic identity when technology is introduced and the ways that the camera is interpreted by video subjects thus has an impact on their strategies of self representation. In my research from the moment I was turning the camera on, the conversation had to become 'serious'. A recorded interview acquired an official and 'grave' character that was different from a non-recorded conversation that could be more casual and 'gossipy'. This reaction to the camera was observed in almost all my research subjects and it was strikingly visible in my friends¹⁵⁸. Holding the camera on my hand was giving me a role, I was suddenly perceived not as friend but as a researcher. The camera was introducing a critical distance between me and my subjects that would not otherwise exist. It was also a practical tool to approach those that do not know me.

Another qualitative change that the camera provoked was that it prompted debates on issues of representation. That was more evident when the interview was about a common action, mainly regarding the emerging squatted spaces, where more than one person was involved in the project or in the action. When discussed exactly the same topic without the camera there might be numerous people participating simultaneously and there was never any

¹⁵⁸ They would be nervous and anxious, starting to mumble in front of the camera, asking me for a permission to stop the interview so that they go home and wear better clothes so that they are more 'representable', etc.

debate as to who was going to talk to me. By contrast, the presence of the camera sparked debates about which (if any) person (from a collective or a company of friends) was going to appear before the camera, which meant effectively who was going to represent the space or the action. The arduousness of those debates¹⁵⁹ signaled in some cases the fact that many people were sceptical about being identified with one 'space'¹⁶⁰ but also the importance of horizontality in decision making and consequently in representation for those groups. Moreover, once a subject decided to appear on camera they felt 'obliged' to present the facts as close to the 'reality'¹⁶¹ as possible, and also to start the narration from the beginning of the event/action though I might be asking about a specific moment in the course of action. As a result, I have heard the chronicles of the creation of the parkaki, and of other squatted public spaces numerous times.

Following the suggestion of Pink that visual research methods should also be rooted in a critical understanding of the technologies being used (2009) I would also like to add an observation regarding the technological equipment I was using for my interviews. My camera was a small Sony handcam and because I accidentally dropped it, it made a continuous hissing sound¹⁶² while I was recording. The fact that my equipment was not professional has positively contributed to my research: Every time somebody that somebody asked me if I was a journalist I was able to answer 'if I was a journalist would I be filming with *this* video camera?' a point that seemed to convince the interrogators about my identity.

¹⁵⁹ Despite my reassurance that it did not really matter who was going to appear on camera.

¹⁶⁰ Interestingly in Greek the term the space has dual meaning, on one side it has the same meaning as in English on the other hand it denotes the group of people and practices belonging to a specific political or professional group. Typical expression would be, *ανθρωποι του 'χωρου'* [people of the 'space'].

¹⁶¹ A typical interview would start with a question from my respondent 'why do you want to film me, I do not know precisely what happen'.

¹⁶² Audible in many points in Diavaton, where the sound files from my sound recorder could not be synchronized with the image, urging me thus to use the sound recorded from the camera.

Given the subject's awkwardness in the presence of the camera, but also mine since I was not accustomed to this medium, I have tried during the interviews to treat the camera not as an extension of myself and my field of vision but as a third person who was just watching the conversation. In the beginning of each interview I set the camera on a tripod (and initially on any flat surface I could find appropriate) and then I tried to behave as if the camera was not of any importance. This meant that I did not check whether or not the camera was indeed recording, or whether the film tape had reached its end, which often caused footage¹⁶³ loss. Frequently I exposed to my subjects my own inexperience, explaining that I also don't like filming but am forced to do so for my PhD, so inviting their empathy towards me and a feeling that we are accomplices in this uncomfortable filming task.

Further in the interviewing process, most of the respondents were unprepared and unaware¹⁶⁴ that an interview would take place and I had to negotiate fieldwork in real time, in "live" social contexts. In addition the interviews were semi structured and I was allowing and prompting the respondents to expand on what they felt that was more relevant. For those reasons, my research approach could not be planned fully in advance but had to be flexible and negotiable, both in regards to my desirable research goals and the knowledge produced and in regards to the research logistics (who will I interview, when and where). This caused much delay and frustration, so for example I might have not been introduced to the person I was aiming at, or the people that I was hoping to film refused to be filmed, or people simply did not

¹⁶³ Sometimes I even forgot to turn on the camera, or the tape would run out in the middle of the interview, etc.

¹⁶⁴ Except the case of Tim who knew that I was going to interview him two days in advance, the rest of the interviews of Avaton were impromptu and followed a rough plan of going on site, and hoping that somebody would be interested to talk to me on the camera. An indicative event regarding the improvisational nature of the interviews is the following: The next day after Tim's interview I met his friend Calamity in Exarcheia square. She asked me why I interviewed Tim and not her. And so I got the camera out of my handbag and had an interview with her in a pedestrian street adjacent to the square.

show up at the appointed time¹⁶⁵. But this also led the research into unexpected and exciting paths. This unpredictability did not come as a surprise since it is characteristic of qualitative interviewing. Byrne (2012) writes that it is an interactive, flexible, but also unpredictable, research method that allows the research topics to be approached in a variety of ways. Compared to other quantitative or survey –based, approaches, qualitative interviewing achieves a level of depth and complexity not achievable by other methods because it enables the researcher to become attuned to subtle differences in the subjects' positions and to respond accordingly, both at the time of interviewing and in the subsequent analysis (Byrne, 2012). In fact my project design has changed in the course of the research due to the discovery of new and interesting case studies, and new theoretical notions mostly suggested and negotiated by my respondents.

Opting for qualitative semi-structured interviews, for an empathic position and for incorporating in the sample pool friends and acquaintances had both assets and drawbacks. The assets were the richness and quality of information and the unexpected and interesting turns of the research. The drawbacks were the huge amount of material as the respondents were taking initiative to add into the discussion what themselves thought was interesting or relevant, but sometimes wasn't, and consequently the amount of time invested in the interviews. I will characteristically mention here that the first film, *Avaton* is the editing result of twenty three hours of footage and *Diavaton* of six.

Summarizing the research findings of that period I would say that video research brought forth a change in the scale of my observations forcing me to observe minor spatial details (the fences, the plants, the benches, the children's playground, faeces, types of soil etc) and minuscule behaviours and gestures of the space users. It has also revealed a wide spectrum of space users not initially apparent to me (dealers, gypsies, kids, immigrants, animals, homeless, etc) and helped in unravelling the complicated social relationships of the studied

¹⁶⁵ Though I am reluctant to admit it, after living for eight years in London where the behaviour towards an appointment is different, I can verify that the notoriously vague Greek appointments are vague indeed.

areas¹⁶⁶. The presence of the camera did not only alter my respondents' reaction but also mine. Walking with a camera or filming a specific space prior to an interview prompted a different view and more detailed observation. The addition of spatial and social grain and the fluidity of the social construction of different spaces have also disrupted the perceived - by myself as an architect - solidity of the space. The notions of non-hierarchical and horizontal organization of space and the notion of the commons appeared in my theoretical horizon because of the video research (as they were firstly introduced and discussed by my respondents) and my further filming ventures in other commons of Athens brought forth a refinement of the terms and of the practices. Moreover, I had the opportunity to observe numerous variations of 'public spaces': municipal spaces created and managed by the municipality, existing municipal spaces managed by non-hierarchical common practices, new spaces created by common practices, municipal spaces controlled by hierarchical social practices, etc. Those observations with a consequent reformulation of my research vocabulary were constantly shifting and transforming my research questions: Were the attributes of a space (public, commons, squatted, horizontal, vertical, etc) dependent on space ownership, on space management, or on rights of use? Was the centre of my research public space or the commons? Should I be focusing on Exarcheia or the whole centre of Athens? Should I incorporate in my research spaces that exemplified publicness and displayed manifestations of social life, such as: pedestrian streets, universities, traffic streets, pavements, specific sets of steps etc? But before answering all those questions I had to edit the first twenty three hours of footage in order to present it a summary of my video research to my supervisor and a film on a wide audience at a film festival in London on November 2010.

¹⁶⁶ An interesting social practice was the appearance in Exarcheia of 'anarchotourism'. After 2008 Athens and specifically Exarcheia became a must-visit for anarchists from all over the world as the locus of a possible international social overturn, something similar to leftists visit to the Zapatistas. The Americans featuring on the video were in Exarcheia for this reason. This trend diminished after 2011.

3.3.3 October 2010- March 2011

3.3.3.1 Whose truth? Making a documentary

The typical fate of a research film is not the cinema screen but a screening for a limited academic audience. Marion and Crowder (2013) write that, depending on the research topic, video data is most commonly used for analysis only, having a limited audience (the researcher, the research team, examiners, etc) and the film's main purpose might commonly be to 'review multiple happenings at once or to verify other observations you have already made' (p68). My decision to make a documentary out of my research material and screen it was dictated by three reasons. The first, and more egoistical one, was the fact that having a scheduled deadline and the stressful possibility of a public screening and public exposure would be forcing me to take faster decisions on editing, reduce the size of the gathered material and compress everything in a work with cinematographic attributes. The second one was the influence of my interviewees and many of my friends who have seen parts of the footage and were persistently asking me to screen it. The third one was a desire to present at a wider audience a positive aspect of Exarcheia, different from the one presented by mainstream media, and advocate for an alternative political model. As Chanan (2007) argues, documentary is one of the forms through which new attitudes enter wider circulation, via the form of its advocacy and the articulation of social actors who participate as subjects. Chanan (2007) is preoccupied with issues of subjectivity in documentary films, similarly to the debate permeating the ethnographic film, and believes that the division between subjective point of view and objective reality is false. He does acknowledge the role of film-maker's angle, perspective and artistry to representation of the actuality yet he believes that one should not emphasise only the subjective part - the film-maker's conscious and unconscious choice - and discount the automatic function of the camera altogether. For him the filmic image is both index and icon at the same time: an automatic rendering of the scene and a pictorial resemblance full of associations and connotations.

Consequently the documentary film is 'a creative treatment of actuality¹⁶⁷', a representation imbued with filmic qualities brought to it by the film-maker and simultaneously an art form and a form of social engagement. Sharing Chanan's opinion I felt that the documentary would be an appropriate genre for what I was aiming to achieve: to further my research, document and summarize my research findings, represent my subjects, and produce a film of advocacy while being simultaneously aware that it would inevitably be influenced by my subjective point of view.

In the mainstream model of documentary, subjects and subject matter are mediated by the impersonal director, who hides behind the voice of the commentary and serves both as intermediary and gatekeeper. Chanan (2007) maintains that this mainstream paradigm is getting weaker and there is a shift from the 'false objectivity' (p5) described by the omniscient voice-over to a subjective, individual and personal standpoint. This can be achieved by a whole variety of means, such as the director inserting themselves in the film as a voice asking questions behind the camera, a pensive self-reflective narration or by a first person testimony. Accordingly the truth that the director insists on telling no longer pretends to omniscience and delivered as if from high, but is told from an individual or personal point of view- which for Chanan 'if anything makes them not less, but more persuasive'(p5). Especially when the documentary adopts the stance of the first person testimony 'it becomes the direct expression of novel social trends and tendencies, like those of feminism, gay and lesbian movements and other strands of extra-parliamentary, solidarity, and identity politics'(p5). This shift has more complex ramifications, since a film might speak in the first person singular but imply a first person plural that brings further implications for the way the viewer is situated, as one of the 'us' who are pictured on the screen, or as the other from whom this 'we' wishes to differentiate itself (Chanan 2007). For my film I wanted to represent a non-hierarchical and multi-vocal point of view, which would give justice to the character of the new spaces and practices I was aiming to introduce. So the

¹⁶⁷ Chanan notes that the expression was first used by John Gierson, founder of the British documentary movement.

possibility of a voice-over was ruled out from the beginning. Moreover I wanted to allow for the interviewees to narrate the story themselves in the least intrusive way and without giving a protagonist role to a single voice but all of them, in a way make a film constructed by multiple-first person singular narrations.

Yet, as (Ruby, 2000, p201) writes the documentarian cannot make a claim to be an insider to the truth and reality of other people. For him actuality films are now recognized as an articulation of a point of view - not a window onto reality. And I believe that my subjective point of view becomes very clear at the end of the film with the choice of the title's song. Also, in a more careful observation, I believe that it is apparent throughout the film that my own point of view is sympathetic to the one of most of my research subjects. This was also proved by the fact that when they saw the film they felt it was doing their opinion justice. The only one whose opinion is in opposition with what the film is advocating is the police officer. For this reason he is the only interviewee in my two films who has his identity concealed and his voice altered. I also think this makes an interesting filmic moment as usually in most mainstream films, it would be the anarchists that would have their identities concealed and not the police.

3.3.3.2 Visual representation and identity

After the first public projection of Avaton to a film festival in London, I have kept showing it to friends and acquaintances. One of them who worked for Thessaloniki film festival prompted me to submit an entry, and the film was indeed selected for the 13th Thessaloniki Documentary festival¹⁶⁸. Among the audience in Thessaloniki was one acquaintance who is a member of the 'antiauthoritarian' group. This is a group of people with many similarities to

¹⁶⁸ I have agreed with the organizers to screen the film but I have denied the films' inclusion at the festival's DVD collection and I had no commercial benefits from the screening.

anarchists¹⁶⁹ but also differences that elude the scope of this thesis. The reason I am naming them 'antiauthoritarians' is because they define themselves as such. He said that he really liked the movie but he felt that their group who he believes had an important presence and a strong cultural and political role in Exarcheia was not represented. I have told him that I did not consider my research as finished and that was the reason that the film was ending with the words 'to be continued'. So he proposed that I interview him and other members of the group and include their views in the next version of the film.

During the same period I was approached by a journalist of a mainstream newspaper, Kathimerini, who also saw the documentary in Thessaloniki and wanted to interview me for an article on the newspaper's Sunday supplement magazine. Initially I felt surprised and flattered but on second consideration I decided to discuss this with some of the subjects of the film, as well as with the antiauthoritarians with whom I had an interview the next day. The overall opinion was to keep a 'distance' from the mainstream media. In their interview the antiauthoritarians have admitted that the relationship with the media is problematic primarily because of the false way they are represented: "many anarchists and many people [in movements] react to the presentation of the spaces by the media. They even reject any filming with a camera. Because they consider that filming gives an image of the things but, the image alone cannot genuinely convey the meaning". Secondly because 'in a way mass media are useless to anarchist. Because the discourse should be formed in the street, the working place, the university' (21:08). For them the anarchist movement should not seek to be isolated and closed but try to open up, as 'we cannot allow forever the dominant culture to talk in our name. We should reveal our real ideas and intentions.' Yet this also entails a risk, of how to approach the media. 'We do not want to appear sympathetic or beautified. We don't want spectators or an audience. We want participants'. They have also

¹⁶⁹ The antiauthoritarians and the anarchists are groups with many similarities. Their differences are highly debated and beyond the scope of this thesis. See more on the difference of the two terms on those indymedia debates : <https://athens.indymedia.org/post/844398/> and <https://athens.indymedia.org/post/294073/>.

stressed out that they would have not accepted me to film them if they did not trust me and were not sure about my intentions.

When I declined the offer of the journalist, by saying that my subjects did not want to be represented in a mainstream newspaper, she was initially trying to make me change my mind by saying that their newspaper was always very sympathetic to Exarcheia and she was using a kind tone of voice. Yet the more I was resisting the ruder she became. She told me that since the film was screened in Thessaloniki, the material was beyond my control and she could write anything she wanted about it whether I agreed or not. What I tried to explain is that indeed she could write an article but I would not consent to an interview and furthermore, except for the audience who viewed it at the festival screening, the film was not publicly accessible. The journalist ended our discussion by hanging up the phone and insulting both me and my subjects as obsolete, absolute and stuck up¹⁷⁰.

Those two incidents consolidated some of my previous research findings and brought forth new: the tense relationship of politically alternative groups with the media and the camera, the importance of visual representation in identity making and the strong relationship of space with identity. As Spencer writes the elements that make up identity are shaped within representation and visual culture can be a powerful dimension for affirming personal as well as collective identity. Identity is not eternally fixed but something that has to be regularly renegotiated, always a process of becoming and delineated by societal boundaries. Those boundaries can be hard-edged geographical or political lines drawn on a map to delineate territories and states, but also part of a soft internal landscape, defining territories as well as the imaginations of minds and communities (Spenser, 2011). Similarly for numerous groups, and not only the antiauthoritarians, the geographically delineated area of a public space symbolizes both a territory but also a part of a symbolic landscape of highly representational value paramount to their identity.

¹⁷⁰ in Greek : 'είσαστε όλοι σας κολλημένοι'.

3.3.4 June 2011 –January 2014: Diavaton

The indignant movement in Syntagma square during the summer of 2011 was a unique event in recent Greek history, a massive movement in the main statutory public space, characterized by absence of representatives, diverse participation, stillness and duration, and a public assembly attended by thousands. Furthermore, it was an exciting moment for my research as I perceived the movement as closely related to the emerging practices and the changes in public sphere that I was closely observing. I felt I needed to incorporate this event into my research, an improvisational decision similar to the one I had taken during the riots of 2008. The difference with December was that I did not manage to be present at the indignants movement as I arrived in Athens at the beginning of September, when the movement was fading out. In order to research Syntagma square during the movement I decided to continue my similar methodological path based on the experience and confidence I had gained in conducting video research. The results of my research on the movement of indignants are presented on a second video titled *Diavaton*. Although my initial goal was to have one research video (with the addition of the video material recorded during the spring of 2011) I have decided to create two separate ones. The two videos, *Diavaton* and *Avaton* have a similar filmic style but are also quite different. They depict different types of spaces, different movements, notions of place, notions of identity, differences in the temporality of the described event and differences in the way I have conducted my research (duration, structure of the questionnaire, sampling, choice of location, etc). The titles of the two films are also a reflection on their similarities -as they sound similar- but also their differences as they mean the exact opposite. 'Avaton' in Greek means sanctuary, and it is a world used by the media to denote that Exarcheia is a sanctuary of impunity for extreme political elements, impenetrable from the law forces; while 'Diavaton' means traversable, and refers to the transient character of Syntagma square.

One of the main differences in regards to my research design was the

difference in the “starting point” of each research. Exarcheia as I have mentioned before is a neighbourhood public space while Syntagma is the main statutory space of Greece. Whilst for Exarcheia and the emerging public spaces there was practically no bibliography, there are enough bibliographical sources regarding the ‘hard urbanicity’ of Syntagma square, and so I had a solid starting point for this part of my research. Secondly, Syntagma square, before the indignants movement, was mostly a transition space and not the everyday space of a specific community¹⁷¹. As I will explain more analytically in the next chapter Syntagma had become a transient public space due to numerous renovation projects that have fragmented the space of the square itself combined with the consumerism and a-politicization of everyday life that characterized the lifestyle of the Athenians since the nineties. Yet, those conditions radically changed during the indignants movement. Consequently, what I considered relevant for the framework of my research, was not so much Syntagma square in its ordinary state, but the space in its exceptional state. For this reason, when conducting visual research I was not concerned to ‘immerse’ in the space of Syntagma square, as the space of my interest did not exist anymore. My interviewees were referring to a highly politicized public space, inhabited and experienced simultaneously by thousands of people that were not in the square anymore. The interviewees themselves, who during the summer of 2011 were spending every day in Syntagma, had stopped frequenting the square at the time of the interviews. For this reason, I did not insist in filming the interviews on location but filmed in different locations around the city, wherever the interviewees felt most comfortable.

Another exceptional characteristic of Syntagma square that materialised during the indignants movement (and that is dissimilar to Exarcheia square), that has influenced my research approach, and that is depicted in *Diavaton*, is the lack of any representational ‘space’¹⁷² or group or community identifying with the space. On the contrary as I came to know during my research, the

¹⁷¹ The only exception maybe being the ‘emos’ that used to gather during the early 00s at the steps.

¹⁷² See footnote 45 for the definition of ‘space’ in Greek.

indignants movement's participants explicitly denied identifying any representatives, perceiving the movement not as a gathering of different groups but a gathering of singularities¹⁷³. As one interviewee states in *Diavaton* 'there were a million different desires [in the same public space]' (*Diavaton*, 14:09). Those two characteristics of the movement, the sheer amount and diversity of participants and the explicit denial of representation by the participants made it extremely difficult to gather a representative sample of interviewees. So I started my research being fully aware that the choice of any interviewee sample would have been strikingly partial.

When sampling the interviewees I once more resorted to the pool of friends and acquaintances who had participated in the movement, aiming at those who were more actively involved with the assembly. Also, all of them had already seen *Avaton*¹⁷⁴ and were aware of my standpoint, my filmic style and the way they were going to be represented. They also knew the thematic of the video, and they were also aware of the possibility of a public screening. In other words they were aware of the 'end product' of their interviews and were interested at a wider dissemination of their opinions. Also, my research on *Syntagma* was more carefully and strategically planned, and my questionnaire was significantly more structured than the research featured in *Avaton*. This does not mean that the results of the research were known or planned or estimated beforehand as even the most rigidly planned and structured ethnographical research is not a fixed process but a highly negotiated one. On one side there was a selection of the knowledge exchanged, and my role as the one formulating the questionnaire and eventually editing the film. On the other side of the negotiation were my interviewees who had already selected the information they wanted to share with me and also other subjects who were present at the interviews or the editing process.

Following Chanan's (2007) view that the underlying influences of politics on documentary filmmaking are also revealed in the production of

¹⁷³ Also the participants were very cautious to media representation.

¹⁷⁴ One of them, Thanos, has been in the audience in Thessaloniki.

documentary films, I believe that the production of *Diavaton* reveals my political standpoint but also the political views of my interviewees. And although I did not aim explicitly for a collaborative¹⁷⁵ film, meaning that that I was directing the camera as well as having the final word in editing, yet the influence of my research subjects has been critical at all points of production. Both the interviews and the editing process have been social events. During most of the interviews, and during the editing, a group of people would be present listening to the interviews and interfering. For example Apostolis was present at Ilias's interview and disagreed with what Ilias was saying. The music in the opening titles of *Diavaton* is of Celina, the wife of Thanos who also interfered at his interview and sent me her music which I have used in the film instead of her interview. Lida's interview took place two years after the rest of them, on September 2013. Lida was present in one of the screenings of the edited versions of *Diavaton* and thought that the film was becoming too one sided and naively optimistic. So I have spontaneously decided to interview her and include her opinion on the film.

Also, as I have mentioned before, the ethnographic research does not stop with the production of the film. The feedback I have received after the screening of the film(s) and the continuation of knowledge production confirm Hocking's (2003) definition of the ethnographic film, as 'a conceptual space within a triangle formed by the subject, film-maker and audience that represents an encounter of all three.' During the first public projection of *Diavaton* at an occupied theatre¹⁷⁶ an elderly lady who was in the audience observed that though the film mentions the participation of elder people at the movement, they were strikingly missing from my interviewees. The elderly lady was of course right. If I was to try to represent a larger diversity of movement participants at the video, I would also have to interview a middle aged

¹⁷⁵ Ruby (2000) accentuates the importance of cooperative, collaborative and subject generated filming strategies (like the ones of Jean Rouch) in order to criticize subjectivity and authorship.

¹⁷⁶ Embros theatre is an occupied and self-managed cultural space which is another interesting form of the emerging Athenian commons.

housewife, a police officer, a priest, a nationalist, an elder pensioner and so on. Yet, similarly to Avaton, both videos do not represent the objective reality, as the lack of numerous groups and subjects who experience and produce the public spaces shows, but my situated, political, historical, and partial point of view.

Lastly, reflecting on the research conducted for Diavaton, it has helped me to gather data on the indignant movement, get an insight on an event that I have not experienced myself, learn about the functional distribution and spatial structuring of Syntagma square during the event and about the function and the problems of the assembly, record and present an alternative version of the events, different from the one presented on the mainstream media.

3.3.4.1 On time, event and talking heads

Marion and Crowder (2013) suggest that in order 'to make strong and compelling video, you need more than talking heads [...] you need footage that helps you transition between scenes and keeps the viewer from getting bored with watching people talk.' They are referring to the use of B-roll, which is supplemental footage that helps 'to add context and meaning to a sequence, to transition between scenes. [...] footage you could later weave into your video to help you illustrate whatever your interview is discussing. Never underestimate the usefulness of having b-roll, as it significantly enhances your ability to flesh out whatever topic you cover' (p72). When editing Diavaton I was faced with a serious problem, which was the loss of all supplementary footage. The lost footage contained scenes from Syntagma square filmed on September 2011 where, though the movement was not at its peak, there were still some sporadic assemblies, as can be seen in the background of one of the interviews (Anna). This loss effectively meant that I had no other footage to edit but 'talking heads'. One of the options was to use clips from you-tube videos as B-roll. The massive participation at the indignant movement meant that there was a lot of available material recorded on-line, mostly from the upper part of the square, some shots

from the assembly and the violent clashes with the police. A second option, for which I opted, was not to use any B-roll, compiling the film out of 'talking heads' and voices without heads. For my final editing the interviewees narrations are woven into one multi-layered story, leaving the screen black when the interviewees have denied to be filmed and using a minimal amount of snapshots on the titles.

This editing treatment reveals and accentuates the characteristics of the research field. The first one is that the public space is not shown because *this* public space does not exist anymore (and neither it did at the time of the interviews) and that is why it couldn't be shot properly. In that way, Syntagma square becomes the absent centre of the film, a public space experienced and imagined but one that cannot be rendered visible in retrospective. This absence does not mark merely a temporal distinction, but also a spatial and experiential one, the interviewees have experienced there very exciting but also very violent events which they now narrate safely seated at their home sofas. Public space is presented thus as an event, not a place.

In addition the black screen reveals one of the characteristics of conducting visual research in Athens: the fact that for some people, even if they have full trust in my approach, the camera is still a taboo. Lastly, the contemporary city though it is not directly addressed, is revealed through the background setting and through the environmental sounds¹⁷⁷ that reveal its density and noisiness¹⁷⁸.

3.3.5 On the use of visuals

'Escaping the imaginary totalisations produced by the eye, the everyday has a certain strangeness that does not surface, or whose surface is only its upper

¹⁷⁷ Marion and Crowder (2013) believe that environmental sounds constitute a knowledge imbued soundscape for ethnographic filmmakers.

¹⁷⁸ One of the sounds of Diavaton is a hissing sound that reveals the use of a non-professional faulty camera.

limit, outlining itself against the visible' (de Certeau, 1984, p93).

Choosing this particular filmic treatment, based on oral narration rather than on visual images is highly accentuated in Diavaton yet it is also apparent in a lesser extent in Avaton. Frequently the films' viewers have commented that I am showing very few images of the actual space and that it is a pity that such an vivid story is not accompanied by vivid images; as one viewer characteristically said to me: 'I wanted the person talking to go away from the screen to be able to have a good look at the square'. A similar visual frugality characterises the whole thesis as the study is not further supported by images or maps, an unusual decision given its architectural provenance.

In choosing this approach my aim was not to relegate the importance of visual material (maps, photographs and filmic descriptions of the actual built space) but to shift the emphasis from the visual standing for 'optic' to the visual standing for mental vision, 'an image perceptible by the mind' (Dictionary.com, 2015). This is achieved through the multiple narrations that infuse this body of work provided by an interlinking of my personal reflections with my respondents' reflections as we are using the city, talking about the city and reading the city with our bodies and everyday actions, and conveying such a manifold reading to the reader of the thesis. The reason for choosing such an approach is to emphasise the possibilities of resistance within the urban space; what de Certeau (1984) describes as an everyday anti-disciplinary network composed of the 'clandestine forms taken by the dispersed, tactical, and makeshift creativity of groups or individuals already caught in the nets of "discipline"' (pp. xiv-xv).

De Certeau (1984) overtly links the art of storytelling with space, everyday tactics and the possibilities of resistance. He is contrasting the notion of *space*, emerging through active re-writing of the city and story-telling, with the notion of abstract *place*. De Certeau's use of place refers to a stable configuration of positions ruled by the law of the 'proper' that is defined by the distribution of elements in relationships of coexistence (p117). Place allows an institution to demarcate itself and its others and to employ strategies of power using this distinction. Similarly, the city as place, is described by de Certeau (1984) as an

abstract concept produced and imposed from above by the panoptic eye of the planner or cartographer. This panoptic gaze, austere, totalizing, and omniscient in relation to the city, could be conceived quite easily as a map: a map of the city. 'We look at a map of a city and assume a view from on high' (de Certeau, 1984, p92). The maps produced by the strategies of governments, corporations, and other institutional bodies describe the city as a unified and easily manipulated whole, rather than a complicated field of differences and possible resistances. They do that by flattening the urban reality, thus transforming 'the urban fact into the concept of the city' (de Certeau, 1984, p94). The maps function strategically to colonise space, rendering geographical knowledge as an abstract place that erases the spatial practices that are the condition of its possibility.

Space, on the contrary, is for De Certeau a 'practiced place'. Space is experienced and 'written' through the everyday practices of a city's inhabitants. De Certeau is illustrating the contrast between place and space, and the process of space 'writing' using the physical activity of walking in the city. For him pedestrians are in effect narrating urban stories through their movements as they give shape to spaces and weave together places in ways that potentially transgress, from within, the abstract map. The physical act of walking realises the possibilities of space organised by the spatial, in the same way that the act of speaking realises a language, its subject, and writes a text (Collie, 2013). This process 'affirms, suspects, tries out, transgresses, respects etc., the trajectories it "speaks"' (De Certeau, 1984, p99). Collie (2013) explains that for De Certeau walking is framed as an elementary and embodied form of experiencing urban space: a productive speaking/writing of the city. The walker for him becomes at the same time the user, the reader and the re-writer of the city. In that way, the street is transformed from a geometric place defined by urban planning into a space by walkers, while the streets are thus perceived as places 'filled with forests of gestures that cannot be fully captured or circumscribed from above by a picture or a map' (Collie, 2013, p2)). The networks of these moving, intersecting writings compose a manifold story. Stories about place create a second, metaphorical geography of the city, proposing other routes through which everyday urban practices are organised and given meaning. The city thus

becomes meaningful and habitable through the stories, legends, memories, and dreams that accumulate in and haunt places (de Certeau, 1984).

Similarly to de Certeau's analysis of urban space, the city of Athens is characterised by a systematic, hard urbanicity of the strategic plans, the institutions and the urban and political authorities that describe the city as an abstract place and the soft metaphorical and migrational stories created by the tactics of a changing public that constitute an interweaving of different spaces. For example one of my respondents, in the chapter that follows, describes Exarcheia square as the very same centre of different, overlapping maps, one for the state, another for the architects of the municipality, another for the police, another for the anarchists, and yet another for the drug addicts (Sisi, personal communication, 2011).

By emphasising the narrative method of description and analysis of the city over the 'imaginary totalisations produced by the eye' I aim to present the city of Athens as *space*, rather than *place*. This body of work aims to accentuate the different readings and writings of the urban space of Athens, bringing forth the multiple geographies of the city and the possibilities of tactical resistance. For this reason the tactics of the shifting public are not depicted in maps but are narrated. Collie (2013) writes that the act of documenting and reflecting on the everyday practice, as intended by de Certeau (1984), returns some of the particularities of this reading, the trace of its history, to the reader, whether the reader is the everyday practitioner experiencing the space, or the reader of the text. Similarly I have decided to narrate the hard geometric urbanicity and the strategic plans of the state as I would like the reader to imagine the cartographer and the urban designer measuring, segregating and abstracting the city, bringing forth a mental image of the space, rather than showing the actual image of the map.

Lastly, the experience of urban space as narrated and not illustrated introduces a different time of perceiving and experiencing the text, a slower time. The story of the text is talking advantage, worming into the readers' time - in a similar way as the public's tactics - as it lacks the immediacy of the image [not sure what you mean in this sentence?]. The city of Athens, with its particularities, its hard and soft geometry, its tension between

strategies and tactics and its composition of overlapping maps, is central in this body of work, asking for the films' viewers to mentally peek across the shoulder of the 'talking head' that blocks the image of the square, and for the reader to experience it without necessarily seeing it.

3.4 Conclusions

In this chapter I have illustrated the reasons that video ethnography was deemed an appropriate method for researching the contested public spaces of Athens and addressing the peculiarities of my research field. More specifically with visual ethnography I have aimed to record and study the novelty, informality, heterogeneity, elusiveness, and dynamism of the Greek civil social practices that are intrinsic to this thesis. I have also commented on the ways the research was conducted, the selection of settings and the selection of participants. Video ethnography has allowed me to document newly formatted social practices, to compile a visual archive, to immerse and to study the everyday life and the tactics of my research subjects and the exceptional characteristics of public spaces. Documenting through a video camera has altered the way of looking at my key studies, both in terms of perspective and scale of observation and in terms of mediation between me and my research subjects. Moreover it has influenced and enriched the theoretical arsenal of this research: various notions like the commons, horizontality and direct democracy and their connection with spatial practices are actually resulting from my practice¹⁷⁹.

I have also aimed to justify the ways that knowledge was produced and presented through practicing visual ethnography. For my practice I am adopting a reflecting position acknowledging that all knowledge is unavoidably partial, subjective and political and that the key grounding knowledge is 'situating'. This translates in being aware and reflective about my subjective position within the research context. Such a position extends knowledge

¹⁷⁹ Although they are presented at the theoretical chapter of this thesis.

production and also ethical issues and my commitment to an ethical conduct prior to, during and after the research. I have therefore intended to introduce the visual material and my research findings reflecting on the ways my practice influenced, altered and enriched the course of my research while keeping in mind that those findings do not represent an objective reality but my negotiated and subjective point of view which is 'situated' in particular social, political, temporal and cultural circumstances.

Marion and Crowder (2013) write that a researcher should be certain about why the use of video would be the best technique for her research project 'before recording even one minute of footage' and that poor answers would include 'I won't know exactly what I am trying to say until I begin shooting', or 'it should be cool to make a film about it' (p68), both of which describe part of my decisions for filming which was a spontaneous reaction to the emerging challenges of my research field. Marion and Crowder (2013) also characterize as a 'beginners' assumption the thought "that a video presentation will be a popular means for sharing their research" (p68). Yet as I am concluding this chapter on video research and evaluating my experience I would totally disagree with this opinion. I believe that uncertainty, exploration and improvisation are valuable stages of the research. Also, similarly to Hastrup (1992) who believes that 'the visual documentation [in comparison to the written] has an immense power of seduction' (p14) and that 'ethnographic films are extremely powerful in conveying the plurality of the world... and as means of advocacy' (p21). I believe that video was an excellent and seductive way to share my research and research questions. I have been engaged in numerous and fruitful conversations about the public spaces of Athens and my research questions with friends and audience after the screenings of the research films that would not have taken place otherwise¹⁸⁰. Moreover, in answering Pink's question 'for whom do we make [ethnographic] films?' I would answer that I wanted to make films not only for myself and my research but also for my friends and my research subjects. Both Avaton and Diavaton are

¹⁸⁰ On the contrary I have often asked my friends to preview my thesis chapters, and none of them have ever done so.

ethnographic films, archives and documentaries. They are intended as justification and records of this research, as archives of the presented events, spaces and practices; as ways to share my research and ways to continue learning through the interaction with the audience; and as creative filmic works and means of advocacy.

My visual research has been a journey. It coincided with a period of fascinating events and changes in the Athenian public space. Within this context I have set a loose but persistent path, allowing for many deviations, frustrations, findings and surprises; and it was definitely a journey worth taking. This experience brought forth the realization that the plurality and richness of the social practices and everyday life in public spaces can never be exhaustively and objectively observed as they constitute a dynamic and continuously shifting field. Public space is a mirror of a society, urban life, and socio-political circumstances, and therefore unless we stop time there are always going to be new events and changes brought to the field. In that sense this research is a snapshot of the existing conditions that are undoubtedly changing as those lines are written.

In the chapter that follows I am going to critically engage with main findings of the fieldwork in the key studies combining bibliographical information and the knowledge produced through my practice. I will be attempting to illustrate an idea of architecture that is also a complete social world, and urban space would be presented as the entanglement of the strategies embodied in the hard geometric urbanicity with the tactics of soft, metaphorical and everyday social practices.

Chapter 4: Key studies

This chapter focuses on the key studies of my thesis which are three public spaces, in two neighbouring but distinct areas at the centre of Athens, Syntagma and Exarcheia. Rather than dividing this chapter according to the squares' position in the city,¹⁸¹ the narration unfolds in a chronological sequence that describes the journey of this research in a constantly shifting terrain, mapping simultaneously the changes in public spaces, the changes in my perception as a researcher and the changes in my research question. In doing so I will aim to include manifold voices - of scholars, of people interviewed, people in the crowd, audiences, sometimes directly and in this case I will quote them and sometimes indirectly as I believe that my own experience and my personal look at the city's public spaces it is strongly influenced by those voices¹⁸². The narration starts with Syntagma square, the main statutory space in Athens and one of my initial key studies, which I considered when I wrote my research proposal 'an example of democratic political systems in the modern city'. Yet as my research proceeded I have increasingly started to question the exemplariness of this specific square. I have also started distinguishing differences within the political model of democracy.¹⁸³ Based on initial concepts and theories of the definition of public space, I started to differentiate between two main categories, one being the statutory public spaces of the city centre like the square of the parliament (Syntagma) and of the

¹⁸¹ A structure followed in the architectural thesis of Melambianaki(2006), Terzoglou (2001).

¹⁸² For this chapter I am going to quote both the films and part of the interviews that are not included in the films. The reason is that, as I explained on the previous chapter, the films are the result of a more extended practice. Although I will be quoting parts of my videos and my interviews increasingly often towards the end of the chapter, my practice has also influenced the specific approach of my narration and my research even in parts where I am using only bibliographical sources.

¹⁸³ At the start of my research I was planning to examine all my key studies within the frame of incumbent Democracy. I considered the model to be so clearly defined and uncontested that I did not include or challenge its definition in my research proposal.

municipality (Kotzia¹⁸⁴) and the other comprising most of the neighbourhood squares. Apart from their obvious differences in regard to size, monumentality, symbolism, surrounding architecture, the important difference - in the context of this research topic - was that I perceived the first category as being defined by top-down state strategies, which precluded the social constitution of space; whereas the second category included a wider plurality of civic practices and bottom-up tactics. So at this stage the focus of my research turned into Exarcheia, an extraordinary case of neighbourhood public space, because of its distinct political character and a history of political dissent that was not so apparent in other Athenian neighbourhoods, and where the public space was a product of contestations between social groups and statutory policies. Exarcheia also had a vivid everyday life that seemed to be missing from Syntagma. While initially focusing on the main square of Exarcheia, the events of December 2008 re-charged politically numerous other Athenian public spaces and the relation between the production of public space and political systems now came to be a topic intensely discussed following a long period of political lethargy¹⁸⁵. In Syntagma square, protesters set ablaze the Christmas tree in a symbolic act against commercialization, which the mayor rushed to replace within days urging the citizens to restore the festive spirit. Yet in other areas of Athens the reverberations of December lasted longer and materialised in new spatial practices. In Exarcheia, the inhabitants created new type of public space whose definition sparked debates among its users, its friends and its critics and created new questions around the notion of public space and its difference from the notion of the commons, a new spatial practice that appeared during that period (2009). Similar ventures proliferated in the rest of the city, some short lived and others long lasting, that came to be interconnected, creating a wider network and enriching the form and the notion of the public

¹⁸⁴ Though I have conducted a secondary research for this square it will not be included in this thesis. In general its creation, position in the city plan, design and uses follow a very similar pattern to Syntagma square.

¹⁸⁵ It is possible that this ambience of political lethargy was also influencing me, as before 2008 I had not thought of or discussed any other democratic model except the existing incumbent one.

and public space as well as challenging the dominant definition of the statutory democratic model. At the same time neo fascists also used their 'right to the city' to terrorize and expel immigrants from other Athenian neighbourhoods. The city of Athens became a laboratory of countless variations of 'public spaces' and consequently of new discussions in regards to the characteristics of public space, issues of ownership, issues of exclusivity, and the relation of spatial practices with different political models, varying from fascism to direct democracy and their potential to be implemented on a larger scale.

What I will aim to show in this chapter, focusing on two areas (rather than the wider Athenian territory), is that despite my initial categorizations of public spaces as 'ideal', 'real', 'statutory', 'everyday' 'public', 'commons', 'political', 'a-political', 'central', 'suburban' etc and without denying the existence of different characteristics, the public spaces of the city are intrinsically connected as a circulation of meanings, notions, ideas and practices. The emergence of one space does not constitute necessarily a different category but might be more fruitfully perceived as a critique and a spatial experiment, on the bases of a different form, different ownership, different practices, and different politics that enriches the notion of public as understood in a contemporary democratic state. For this reason this chapter will start and will conclude with Syntagma square.

In tracing the civic history of the respective sites, I intend to show how each space has acquired a distinctive socio-political and cultural character over time. However, I do not propose to suggest that this layering of meanings should be understood in a deterministic way. The events in Syntagma square, with which I conclude, show how this history can be undone. Correspondingly, the ambiguity of the word *Avaton*, ghetto or refuge, applied to Exarcheia, shows the danger of identifying any particular place with a culture of resistance, for to do so is to neutralise that resistance, cause it to become, in effect, a safety-valve for social discontent rather than a source for change. That is why the proliferation to which I have referred, across different spaces, is of such importance.

4.1. Syntagma square

4.1.1. The creation of the square

Syntagma is the main statutory space of Athens. Its creation coincides with the birth of the Modern Greek state in 1834. The spatial characteristic of the square, its design and its position in the city - as depicted in the first urban plans of Athens and as the plans were gradually modified and implemented from 1933 and throughout the 19th century - are a combination of existing geographical elements, existing historic axes, iconic views (to the rock of Acropolis and Lycabettus hill), micro-climatic factors, the socio-political characteristics of the era and the aspirations of the new governing class (Bastéa, 2000). The numerous modifications also express the conflict between of the local population and the Bavarian rulers (Mircovic, 2012). The history of the square is intrinsically connected to the presence of the King's palace (which later became the parliament building) at the east side of the square, a presence that emphasized the political and dictated the social character of the space. Accordingly, the open space of the square was modified in reference to the palace-parliament complex (Terzoglou, 2001). The uses of the square depended both on the urban habits of the era and the permitted borders set by each period's urban legislation (Melembianaki, 2006).

The square firstly appears in Kleantes - Schaubert neoclassical plan as under the name of Plateia Mouson (Muses square) marking one of the three vertices of the triangular city centre (the same triangle also marks the contemporary city centre). Plateia Mouson was designed as the cultural centre, while the other two vertices were the administrative and the market centre. The position of the square was not a random one, as, during the Ottoman occupation, this was the location of an important gate and one of the main entrances to the city. The side of triangle connecting the administrative centre (nowadays the site of Omonia square) with the cultural centre defined an axis between Acropolis and Lycabettus hill that pointed towards the ancient

Panatheneum stadium¹⁸⁶. The careful placement of the first Athenian squares reveals the strong symbolic value that those locations held for the existing local population, the new rulers and the architects, who wished to accentuate (selective) links to the ancient past of the city through urban design.

As was shown in the second chapter, the Kleanthis- Shaubert plan was never implemented, because of the strong reaction and opposition of the land owners as well as the economic weakness of the state, and its inability to engage in extensive expropriation of land. Those factors led to successive modifications of the plan, proposing the sites of Keramikos and even Acropolis¹⁸⁷ as adequate sites for the palace. The final decision was taken by Ludwig I according to the proposal of his commissioned architect- the famous Bavarian Friedrich Von Gaertner, who was also given responsibility for the modification of the surrounding area (Melambianaki, 2006). The position finally decided on for the palace was the top of Agios Athanasios hill, at the location of Plateia Mouson, currently the upper part of Syntagma square. This spot had the advantage of a healthy microclimate and was endowed with the panoramic view of the Acropolis, Olympian Zeus Temple and the Saronic Gulf (Terzoglou, 2001).

The building's cornerstone, one of the scattered stones from the Acropolis, was laid in February 1836. The ceremony, which impressed the gathered locals, marked the birth of a kingdom and the purpose of the building was to create a sense of security and permanence in the local population (Bastea, 2000). It was further conceived as a symbol of political stability which would encourage the wealthy Diaspora Greeks to invest in new, prosperous, motherland. The chosen style for the palace was neoclassicism, which celebrated the return of ancient Greek-inspired architecture to its birthplace, linking the capital's glorious past with a promising present and future while competing in splendour with prominent buildings across Europe (Bastea,

¹⁸⁶ Classical antiquity and the remaining ancient ruins and historic axes were important points of reference in Kleanthis-Shaubert plan.

¹⁸⁷ The young king loved the idea and found it adequate for his residency but it was rejected by his father (Kallivretakis, 1994).

2000). The proposed style - iconographically inspired by the country's past but the invention of a modern German architect - was also indicative of the new order's desire to create a city that would no longer be Ottoman but European.

Ever since the consolidation of Syntagma¹⁸⁸ square as the location of the palace and as the administrative centre of Athens, the history and the character of the actual square has been intrinsically connected with the building that dominates it. The open space in front of the Palace was divided into two parts, separated by Vassilisis Amalias Avenue¹⁸⁹, the rising ground in front of the Palace and at the east side of Amalias Avenue, and the main space of the square (Biris, 1933).

Large parts of the square at the west axis of Stadiou and Philelinon Street were claimed by land owners at different periods (1840, 1843, 1847, and 1849); however, the space was finally established as a state property through the personal intervention of King Otto (Melambianaki, 2006). In 1839 a royal decree defined the final area of the square and the position of the royal garden. The first modification of the main square was made according to the plans of the architect Theofilos Hansen in 1842. This plan proposed that the central plateau should be dug out and surrounded by retaining walls on three sides, while the central staircase should be leading from the upper part to the middle level and the fountain. Those initial features of Syntagma square, the marble staircase, the fountain and the retaining wall are still major elements of the contemporary space¹⁹⁰.

At the end of 19th century the territory of the square was split into three areas of different spatial characteristics that served different functions; however, they eventually blended together. They were known under different

¹⁸⁸ This part of the square was initially called Plateia Mouson.

¹⁸⁹ Queen Amalia was the wife of Otto and first queen of Greece.

¹⁹⁰ Being listed since the 1990s those features cannot be moved or altered and so they are meant to feature in the life of Athenians for the years to come. A very strong image of the indignants movement during the summer of 2011 was a "human chain" of protestors carrying water from the central fountain to wash off the square from the chemicals that the police had thrown at them.

names: the east part under the name Palace square was used as an official forecourt, the middle part was named Kipos Mouson, and was lushly planted as a garden and used as an area for more private encounters and relaxation, while the western part, named Syntagma square, was the social part, used as an alfresco extension of the cafes, outdoor spectacles and promenading.

Nowadays, although the square is still split into three different parts, almost similar to the initial ones, the name Syntagma square refers to the whole area at the east side of the parliament building between Vassileos Georgiou I¹⁹¹ street, Vassilisis Amalias Avenue and Othonos Street.

4.1.2. Looking westward: a square for *tailcoat-wearers*¹⁹²

During the first years of its creation, and even after the completion of the Palace in 1846, The Palace Square was considered isolated since the main city core was then the traditional market area around Monastiraki and Eolou street and was described as a 'depressive valley' (Melambianaki 2003). For many years the building activity was scarce and controlled by the King. A Royal Decree imposed special building regulations for the buildings surrounding the Square, in order not to diminish the splendour of the Palace, and the building owners were obliged to have the plan approved by King Otto in person (Terzoglou 2001).

It was around 1860 that Syntagma square acquired an important role in the life of the city. The presence of the palace drove the development of the area, since it gave a strong incentive for the settlement of the upper and upper-middle class. Those classes were mostly formed of wealthy expatriates who were returning to Greece and building their luxurious and monumental mansions at the east side of the new town and outside of the old part of the

¹⁹¹ King George the second King of Greece.

¹⁹² During the first period of Greek history the majority of Greeks wore their traditional clothing and white skirt called foustanela. The ones who started wearing western style clothes were called 'fraggoforemenoi' translated as 'the ones who wear tailcoats'.

town where the empty space was scarce. The upper class character of the area also encouraged the installation of high class hotels targeting wealthy visitors to Athens. At the same period the ground floors of the houses surrounding the square were turned into places for social gathering: cafes, restaurants, pastry shops and beer houses, serving primarily a wealthy clientele of local residents, and later expanding to include professional, literary and political circles. Some of the mansions of Syntagma square functioned as philological soirées where the most famous intellectuals of the era gathered.

This was a place for the wealthy and powerful. The less affluent users of the square were either simply crossing it or using the space occasionally, in order to observe the appearance and behaviour of the upper classes, to offer their services, to watch outdoor performances or to get informed about actuality (Skaltsa, 1983). Most of those cafes and restaurants had an alfresco extension occupying the sidewalks of the streets around the square or the square itself, to such an extent that in a newspaper of 1886 it is mentioned that the square is 'half used as the yard of Giannopoulos café' while another mentions that Syntagma square had 'one thousand five hundred al fresco tables, one hundred and fifty servants, conflicts of jurisdiction and overpriced drinks'. (Newspaper Asty , 20.17.1886; cited in Melambianaki, 2006). On Sundays, at the end of 19th century, the crowds were so dense that one could not even cross the square. Although in the following years the crowds reduced as the development of Zapeio (a promenading garden , very close to Syntagma) attracted a number of Syntagma users, the square was for almost 100 years (until the 1960s) one of the busiest points in the city used for recreation, entertainment, networking, communication and display, both social and political.

4.1.3. Politics, ceremonies, parades, demonstrations and riots

Since its origin, the square with its theatricality (in terms of its spatial distribution and its theatrical social character) and its direct association with the Palace, has functioned as the stage where the different acts between rulers

and people have been performed both emphasising the hegemony of the governmental mode, as for instance in military parades or official ceremonies and as expression of political opposition and disagreement to governmental decisions. The name of the square¹⁹³, which in Greek means constitution, is a record of this relationship: it was named after the bloodless revolution that took place on the 3rd of September 1834, when rioters demanding a constitution gathered in the square under King Otto's window and forced him to yield to their demands. The political model of Greece changed from absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy in Syntagma square.

Some of the acts in this theatre had an overtly political character, while some related to the royal lifestyle (up to the beginning of 20th century) and were indirectly political. In 1863 King George I¹⁹⁴ arrived to Athens and was welcomed by a celebrating crowd at a specially decorated square. In 1868 Athenians gathered in the palace square and Syntagma square to celebrate the birth of Konstantinos, the heir to the throne, that raised a wave of enthusiasm among the people since he was the first Greek-born royal and later to celebrate his eighteenth birthday in 1886, as well as his wedding in 1887. The square was also the centre of celebrations for the silver crown anniversary of King George in 1889, when it got illuminated with electricity for the first time as well as the first Olympic Games in 1896.

In June 1863, after the expulsion of King Otto, violent clashes erupted in the square that spread in the rest of the city. The clashes were between rival political fractions named 'lowlanders' and 'highlanders', supporters of the English and French-Russian parties respectively. The army occupied the Palace building, while the 'lowlanders' were lined up in the square besieging the Palace with artillery. The toll of dead was eighty people¹⁹⁵. Eventually, the conflict ended with the intervention of the ambassadors of the three great powers¹⁹⁶. In

¹⁹³ Initially only the western part of the square.

¹⁹⁴ King George I took the place of the expelled King Otto.

¹⁹⁵ The total account of the clashes is nearly two hundred dead.

¹⁹⁶ England, France and Russia.

1876, during a series of riots called 'Ecumenics', a large rally took place in Syntagma Square. On this occasion the crowd was demanding the martial preparation of the country in order to set free the remaining enslaved Greeks. Rallies and political speeches continued throughout the end of 19th century in the square. During the riots called 'Ethnika' in 1885, a large rally took place in front of the palace, while during the 'Evangelika' riots in 1901, student protestors arrived in the palace square to express their demands to King George. It should be also mentioned here that until 1925 when the plateau in front of the palace was lowered by three meters, the crowd gathered directly in front of the palace/parliament. Later in the chapter I will explain how different features of the square (retaining walls, staircases, etc) formed important boundaries that defined the allowed political action for the public.

Throughout the turbulent political history of modern Greece and the change of political models (constitutional monarchy, dictatorships, democracy and reconstitution of democracy in 1974), numerous political actions and counteractions have taken place in the square: rallies, riots, revolutions, demonstrations, ceremonies. Almost every significant historic moment and change of political regime was announced to the public assembled in the square. One could mention the speeches of prime minister Eleytherios Venizelos, on the sixth of September 1910, the fifteenth of June of 1917 and on the thirtieth of October 1920; the speech of the dictator Ioannis Metaxas about the military regime of the fourth of August in 1936, and the speech of prime minister Georgios Papandreou in 1944 celebrating the liberation of Greece from the Germans (Kitromilides, 2008). During the Second World War, the German Garrison headquarters had also been in Syntagma square. When the Germans entered Athens in 1941, and during the occupation, the German Garrison was placed in the hotel king George and the General Headquarters at the Grand Bretagne hotel, both in Syntagma square (Terzoglou, 2001). This placement had strong symbolic value; the German headquarters could not be placed in the building of the Parliament as this was the seat of the collaborationist Greek Government, but alongside it, sharing the same square. Three months after the retreat of Germans from the country and during a demonstration organized by the National Liberation Front (EAM) (controlled effectively by the Communist

Party of Greece KKE) against the disputed order for the disarmament of the left-wing guerrilla forces, Greek governmental and British troops opened fire against unarmed demonstrators in Syntagma square, killing twenty eight of them. The violent events that followed the demonstration, described under the term Decemvriana, are considered the prelude to the Greek Civil War (1946 - 1949).

In summary throughout its history, Syntagma constituted a direct reference point for all political actions either consenting or dissenting with the ruling forces, and all significant political changes in modern Greek history were initiated or announced there. All those historic events highlight the importance and the high symbolic value of the space: a ceremony, event, speech or announcement performed in this square acquired national significance.

4.1.4. Everyday life

The political character of the square was demonstrated both through extraordinary events such as the ones I have mentioned and through being part of the ordinary, everyday social life of the square (or the lack of it) which for one hundred years, since approximately the 1860s, was related to the square's cafes. It was in the space of the cafes that politics was discussed and political opinions expressed and contested on a daily basis.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the cafes in the square, then characterised as the 'navel of Athens and the navel of Hellenism' (Melambianaki, 2003, p104), were the centre of the social, political and cultural life of Athens. Frequenting a café during that period was a habit intrinsically connected with the Greek way of living and socializing. Moreover, the specific cafes of Syntagma square due to their vicinity with the centre of political power (the palace and later the parliament) were overtly politicized and were characterized as 'Lobbies of the Parliament' (Panapotis, 2014). They were the meeting places for political discussions, confrontations and centres of deliberation of voters and politicians (Papakostas, 1991).

Political debates were not restricted to the café areas and their clientele, but often expanded to debating groups and amateur political orators in the open space of the square, who formed and multiplied according to the urgency of events. Every time there was an announcement of common interest or something new happened, people rushed to the square to become informed and discuss the news 'where actuality and rumours are created' (Melambianaki, 2003, p105). Intensely discussing groups occupied the square and the streets around it, whether by day or night. The square hosted a political forum of the people, which was unofficial and yet sometimes as influential and effective as the parliament, on a daily basis (Papakostas, 1991). The daily activities in Syntagma included debates, discussions and impromptu orations and speeches that merged with diverse social activities such as literary discussions, gossiping, socialising, networking and entertainment. The actual presence of discussants at the square acted as a barometer of political urgency: the larger the importance and gravity of a political event, the more people gathered at the square.

The most famous cafe of them, called Zaharatos, founded in 1888, was essentially connected with every historic phase of political development in Greece during the early 20th century. The café was a meeting point for all politicians and politicized citizens who formed the famous 'senate of Zaharatos which judges the wrongs'¹⁹⁷, to the majority of Greek intellectuals and poets. Zaharatos café was also referred as 'the small parliament', a 'civic ecclesia' and the 'second and more liberal parliament' (Lambrou, 2001, p50) since it was the centre of political debates between political influential people and often crucial political decisions were decided at the café. During the years of 'national division' (1915 - 1917) the link between politics and frequenting a cafe became physically evident, as the seats of the cafe came to represent the different wings of the parliament: the supporters of Democratic institutions and Venizelos (Venizelists) sat on the tables across the hotel 'Great Britain' while the supporters of the King sat at the ones in Bucurestiou street (Panapotis, 2014).

Although the character of the square started changing at the beginning of

¹⁹⁷ In Greek 'γερουσία που κρίνει τα κακώς κείμενα' (Lambrou, 2001).

20th century, the habit of frequenting the cafes and the vivid everyday life of Syntagma square continued. The newspaper Ethnos¹⁹⁸ mentions that the intense social life of the square before the Second World War and during the 50s took place at the cafes and their extended al fresco territories in the lower part of Syntagma square, which, while maintaining their luxurious character¹⁹⁹ nevertheless became more accessible to the expanding Athenian middle class²⁰⁰.

The radical changes at the perimeter of the square that have begun in the 1920s and culminated during the 1960s, namely the introduction of the use of reinforced concrete and the beginning of the high-rise construction, combined with a numerous other political changes that will be analysed below, affected the cafes, which began to close one after another, as well as the character of everyday life in the square. The plots around the square were the ones with the highest market prices and consequently, after the changes in the urban legislation, the old three storey buildings were gradually replaced with new high rise ones²⁰¹. The increasing prices, combined with state policies that favoured uses such as services, offices, retail and hotels made the cafe business unprofitable.

The building of the palace also changed use. In 1909 the palace was burned down twice and the Royal family was moved to another mansion²⁰². After the move of the royal family the character of the square changed and it

¹⁹⁸ <http://www.ethnos.gr/entheta.asp?catid=23539&subid=2&pubid=12286947>.

¹⁹⁹ Arvaniti-Michalopoulou (2008) writes that Zagoritis cafe was 'decorated with crystal mirrors, plush crimson seats and marble tables.

²⁰⁰ Under the process the petit-bourgeoisisation described in the second chapter (Mantouvalou and Mavridou, 2001).

²⁰¹ Melambianaki(2006) mentions that there was a major uproar following the construction of the seven storey building on the corner of Philhellenon street and Otto street, built in 1917. It was the tallest building of its time in Athens, and one the first buildings using reinforced concrete. The construction of the building initiated a dispute over the maximum height of buildings in Athens that continued during the interwar period.

²⁰² Mansion of Herodotus Attikos.

was no longer connected to high-class lifestyle. The palace building was initially abandoned and later had different uses, housing the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Health, the International Migration Service, the City Police, the 'Christian Union of Young Women' (YWCA), the Hellenic Red Cross, the International Association of Women etc. It was also used as an infant clinic, student guest house, hospital and orphanage of the Near East Relief, and as Laboratories. In 1929-1934 the building was renovated following the plans of architect Antonis Kriezis and acquired its contemporary tenant the Greek parliament (Vozani, 2010). Dwelling uses decreased in the square and gradually other uses (services, ministries, and hotels) replaced housing and the cafes almost entirely. The poet Dimitris Christodoulou characteristically commented to a friend while walking in Stadiou street in the 1970s "Look at the state of this city, this country: all our intellectual and artistic hangouts have all turned into banks" (Christodoulou, 1973, cited in Gionis, 2011).

Yet is it was not only the scarcity of the cafes at the square that contributed to the decay of political everyday discourse. Another important reason was the increasing climate of censorship and political persecutions. Immediately after the liberation from the Germans, Greece went through a civil war (1945-1949) between the communist (EAM-ELAS) forces and the national army, which had the direct support of the British and American governments (Michas, 2008). After the unilateral disarmament of the communist side, the Greek government, supported by the west, in an effort to avoid the danger of a possible communist revolution, started persecuting and censoring political opponents. Moreover, in 1953, the Karamanlis government created a censorship and control mechanism of the press, to support an essentially authoritarian regime. The National intelligence service²⁰³ (in Greek Κεντρική Υπηρεσία Πληροφοριών, ΚΥΠ) consisted of Greek and foreign journalists and military officers who later became dictatorship (1967-1974) officials (Michas, 2008). It is obvious that the historic sequence of a civil war followed by a political period of strict censorship followed by a dictatorship does not constitute an adequate ground for the flourishing of free political expression

²⁰³ Under different names the service was functioning until 1986.

and deliberation among the citizens. Although Democracy was reconstituted in 1974 it took many years until Greeks felt free to express their political opinions and regain their confidence in political institutions. As I have shown in the second Chapter, after the reconstitution, Greece experienced a period of political populism and civic political compliance followed by a period of depoliticization during 1990s. Depicting the spirit of the times and combined with its physical segregation and fragmentation from the rest of the city Syntagma square gradually lost its everyday social vibrancy and everyday political character.

4.1.5. Diavaton

4.1.5.1. The monument of the Unknown Soldier

An important factor that led to the physical segregation of the square is the construction of the monument of the Unknown soldier initiated in 1927 and completed in 1932. All the decisions associated with this relatively small scale urban intervention, such as the monument's location, its architectural design and its artistic value, were vigorously contested. Effectively, its construction reflected ideological and political issues of the time connected with the design of public space and issues of representations of collective memory (Vozani, 2010). In order to settle the contestations it was decided by the military ministry, which was the responsible body for the management of the square at that time, to proclaim a competition for its design in July 1927. The competition jury consisted of professors of the architecture school and the School of Fine Arts of NTUA, the archbishop of Athens, the Mayor, the Prefect, and senior officers. The decision for the ideal position of the monument and its architectural style expressed the need for the synthesis of a common ideology for the city, which would take into account equally the opinions of representatives of religious authority, the state, the army, as well as scientists and artists of the highest competent educational institution in the country. Nevertheless, when the jury ultimately concluded that the most appropriate

location for the monument was the square of the Old Palace it was considered as a decision that reflected the strength of the most conservative forces of the country and particularly of the army (Vozani, 2010), proving thus the relationship between spatial modifications and political ideology and the strong ideological charge of Syntagma square.

The construction of the monument of the Unknown Soldier²⁰⁴ in its current location completely changed the form and the function of the upper square. A difference in level of seven meters was created between the pavement of the square and the entrance to the building of the old palace - they had been at the same level before the construction of the monument. In addition to those changes the main entrance of the building was moved from the side facing the square to the side facing Amalias Avenue, further enhancing the building's disconnection from the square. Although the rationale behind the placement of the monument in this specific location was to denote that in the base of Democracy there is a funerary monument dedicated to the struggles of the Greek nation (Demenagi-Viriraki, 2003), the spatial effects of this installation were controversial. The director of the National Gallery Zacharias Papantoniou few days after the inauguration, stated: "We lost the calm face of the Bavarian building to win what? Who would have thought! The aesthetic nightmare that the building of the Palace is suspended in the air "(1932, cited in Vozani 2010).

²⁰⁴ The main element of the monument is a large bas - relief representing a dying Greek hoplite on a retaining wall by artist Kostas Demetriadis. This is based on the dying nude hoplite in the east pediment of the early 5th-century BC temple of Aphaia on the island of Aigina. On either side of the relief there is the ancient Greek text of Perikles funeral oration given in 431/30 BC and the bronze shields on other walls commemorate military victories since the Greek War of Independence in 1821. According to the proposed solution the formation and functions in the Palace Square are related exclusively to the monument, since the access to the building of the palace is no longer at the front side and the whole composition works only in relation to the monument. As the artist described the monument draws its concept 'from the grave and the square' (cited in Vozani, 2010). By placing the tomb at the end of the square where there is no traffic, and bringing forth the relief-decorated steps at the sides of the monument, the tomb appears in a deeper level. The traffic carried by south side ramps, and the stairs are solely used during the ceremonies as stalls (Melambianaki, 2003).

This change made a huge impact in the square as it isolated the Parliament, which was relocated to the building of the Old Palace in 1934²⁰⁵, from the public space of Syntagma square. This disconnection was further accentuated by the initiation of an hourly change of guards as a gesture of respect to the unknown soldiers. The ceremonial guarding became a tourist highlight and a place of high symbolic value where state representatives deposit wreaths in commemoration of important historic events. At the same time the guarded wall of the relief of the monument and the lateral steps are used as the boundaries²⁰⁶ of physical interaction between the public and the Parliament. The parliamentary officials descend from these steps only twice a year during the official parades, while the access to any member of public is forbidden.

4.1.5.2. Segregation and transience

The main space of the square, which roughly maintained its original borders and historic features, also became fragmented and isolated from the rest of the city. This was not an abrupt change but happened gradually throughout the second half of the twentieth century and was the outcome of interrelated spatial, political, social and historical circumstances. As I have shown, some of the spatial reasons included the change of surrounding uses and the gradual demolition or closure of meeting places, the increasingly heavy traffic in the surrounding streets that cut off the square from the peripheral functions that actually 'feed' the daily life in the main square, the gentrification of the wider area, as well as the numerous renovation projects at the end of the

²⁰⁵ The decision for the relocation is taken by Venizelos in 1928 (Viriragi-Demenagi).

²⁰⁶ Dalakoglou (2011) writes about the strong symbolic value that the crossing of the imagined spatial boundary of the pavement in front of the Unknown Soldier Monument and the climbing of the lateral stairs holds. This area which has not been crossed by any of the many hundreds of demonstrations taking place annually in Athens the last thirty or so years was crossed on 6th of May 2010 (BBC news, 2010).

century that disturbed any remains of everyday social life.

The space of the main square, considered is a listed space²⁰⁷, become the object of numerous and frequent renovations (four between 1989-2014), in fact so frequent that Athenians became used to seeing the square being fenced and boarded up (Nikos, personal communication, 2011). The history of those recent renovations is indicative of the characteristics Athenian urban design and its spatial implementation. It illustrates the hastiness of these processes, poor coordination of separate government agencies, a lack of long term planning and discrepancy between plans and implementation. In the case of Syntagma a total renovation took place in 1989 under the mayorship of Nikolaos Giatrakos and was completed in less than a year, a record time by Greek standards. According to Rizospastis (15.01.2004) there was a public outcry against the renovation, since the excavation works for the metro of Athens were soon to start in the square, and the space would need to be reconstructed and repaved again in a short time. Yet considering that that similar governmental declarations for the construction of metro had been announced since 1965, to be finally realized only in 2000, it is possible that the metro works would not be a certainty in 1989.

When the Syntagma metro station was completed and inaugurated in 2000 the rest of the square was not. Its surface was dismantled and parts of it remained fenced and closed to the public for almost a decade, up to 2009. The responsibility for the design of the square was transferred from the Municipality and the Ministries of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works, and Ministry of Culture, to the 'Company for the Unification of Archaeological Sites', which proclaimed two architectural competitions for the design of the square. The first one, in 1998, does not result to a first prize. In

²⁰⁷ Terzoglou (2000) mentions the listed urban furniture elements in the square that cannot be altered in any renovation plan, namely the historical axis based on which the Square was formed in 1837, the marble steps that connect the upper and lower parts of the Square and the retaining wall, the central fountain, the large trees of the square, the marble balustrade which separate the Syntagma Square from Amalias Avenue, the six sculptures and the ancient Muses's Garden landmark.

March 1999 the company launched a second architectural Competition and the first price is given to the architect Dimitris Manikas. The main point of the winning proposal was the expansion of the lower squares' pavement up to Ermou Street (which was also pedestrianised) aiding the pedestrians' circulation in the square and achieving the integration into the square of the neighbouring urban blocks, formerly separated due to the high traffic (Terzoglou, 2001). The company had the responsibility to deliver the works before the Olympic Games in 2004 following the plans of the winning proposal. Yet in 2004 only half of the square was ready. The company repaved the rest of it and removed the fences hastily in order to present the square to the international visitors of the city. The proposal for the expansion of the square towards Ermou Street has yet to be realised.

The various urban reconstructions and regenerations of the square, which interrupted its social life, the gentrification of the wider Syntagma area, the replacement of inhabitation with commerce and services, the continuous policing of the Parliament, the surveillance of the square by the security cameras of the lavish surrounding hotels, have transformed Syntagma Square into a place with scarce social activity. The placement of two metro entrances at the top of the square in 2000 further fragmented the surface of the main square, which became a "corridor" connecting the station and Ermou Street, the main commercial road of Athens. The pedestrianization of Ermou²⁰⁸ also contributes to the creation of this movement. Galatoula (2013) describes this human flow effectuated without a pause or stop, as a 'swarm' composed of individuals whose common destination is mainly consumerism or another personalized target and whose only relationship forms as they move together. Syntagma square has turned gradually from a vivid lived and experienced political space

²⁰⁸ Another result of the pedestrianization is the replacement of middle-class local shop owners who could no longer afford the increased rent and who contributed to the everyday life of the square, with big retail brands such as Zara, Mango, H&M, etc.

to a meeting point, a space to cross rather than a space to familiarise²⁰⁹ and a space to get associated with. Undoubtedly, the space of the square has remained politically activated because of its extremely charged symbolic and representational value. Yet the character of the political expression has changed from continuous everyday deliberation to temporary and ephemeral symbolic acts. For example most of the demonstrations in Athens begin or end in the square, or pass from it, but the public does not remain there. Even sedentary protests in front of the parliament do not hold their position for long. As the everyday life in the square became mostly transcendental so did the political expression.

4.1.6. Produced for the citizens or produced by the citizens?

As the political conditions started slowly to change in the city and as I was enriching my theoretical research on public spaces (analysed in the first chapter) it seemed that Syntagma square was closer to Bauman's (2001) 'public but not civil' space 'for organized movement, organized consumption and organized entertainment' characterized by a 'redundancy of interaction, lack of friction, togetherness and any deeper reason to communicate' (p27) and Mitchell's (2003) 'festive space' (p138) that 'encourages consumptions while maintaining order, surveillance and control over the behaviour of the public' rather than the space of an active civil society. The lack of everyday political activities in the city's central public spaces could have been indicative either of a climate of perceived political stability that characterised the country in the early 2000s or of political indifference and cynicism. The space of Syntagma then seemed to exemplify the hierarchical production of Greek urban space, described in the second chapter, with the Greek state in the top of this hierarchical structure, grown disproportionately in relation to civil society, and

²⁰⁹ Perhaps the only exception to this tendency is the 'emos' group that was gathering at the square in the 00s. However the 'emos' were a social category commonly tied to music, fashion and emo subculture and had mainly apolitical stances.

a society succumbing to political indifference or cynicism and reluctant to form coherent civil groups and act collectively. Following this same pattern, the space of square expressed disproportionately the ordinances of state and personalized claims (represented by commercial interests) rather than the space of any community. It was a space envisaged, designed, produced and managed by the state and offered to the citizens who did not seem to have any independent claims to its use or influence on its production.

Nothing lasts forever though, since everyday life is not unchangeable but continuously shifting and affected by historical circumstances beyond state control (Lefebvre, 2008). During and after the events of December 2008, the unprecedented changes these events caused to Greek society, coupled with the start of the global economic crisis, led to the political re-charging of the city's space and the proliferation of political dissenting groups and civil associations. As these groups started to challenge the supremacy of the state and the current democratic model both politically but also in regard to the production of public space, I felt it was necessary to include in my research a public space less dominated and defined by statutory politics, a space rich in social contestations, manifesting the struggles between top-down policies and bottom-up claims by the public, in order to challenge the assumptions about the formation of public space produced and granted from the state to the citizen that seemed to characterise Syntagma square, and investigate the potentialities of collective arenas in the constitution of public spaces. For this reason I turned to a different area of Athens, Exarcheia.

4.2. Exarcheia

Exarcheia square is a neighbourhood public space of Athens the core of an area that was once at the city outskirts, but nowadays forms part the city centre. The square gained its fame, or rather its notoriety, not because of its exceptional size, centrality, or prominent monuments on its precinct, but because of its picture drawn by Greek and international media as the core of

dissenting youth and anarchism²¹⁰, accentuated every time there is a minor or major urban warfare between rioters and police²¹¹. Exarcheia is simultaneously the symbolic centre of alternative political groups, a leisure space for students and young people, a dealing point for drug addicts, the commercial centre of the neighbourhood and a dangerous ghetto according to mainstream media. These contradictory portrayals and actions show that Exarcheia square does not have a static character, but it is constantly contested by different social groups who attribute different meaning to the same space. During the 1990s and until 2008, which coincides with the start of my research, it was also one of the rare public spaces in Athens where the inhabitants and the users formed organized groups in order to challenge state authority, make demands, and intervene in the constitution of the space itself. The relationship between spatial, social and political factors from the formation of the square in 1865 until nowadays, is the subject of this part of the chapter.

4.2.1. The creation of the square: builders, students, poets and dissenters

The area of Exarcheia, nowadays a Central district of Athens, was firstly inhabited in the middle nineteenth century, as an extension of Neapoli (which in Greek means new city), which was the first new borough of Athens beyond the original traditional core at the foot of Acropolis after Greece's independence and outside the designed historic centre. The inhabitation of Neapoli began

²¹⁰ Named as the 'nest of evil', 'the incubator of vice', area of the anarchists and the drug addicts, a ghetto that police ought to 'clean'. Anarchists are not referred as a political group but get identified with "those who solely wish to break and damage the city". L.Kyrkos, ex-leader of KKE and inhabitant of Exarcheia said "Exarcheia was never a neighbourhood of thieves and murderers; on the contrary it was always a neighbourhood of students and young scientists. It is unthinkable that every time that something violent occurs the 'marginal' space of Exarcheia is to be blamed for this" (Galera, November 2008, p36).

²¹¹ "Exarcheia is a rebellious district, popular with self-styled anarchists, and there are frequent clashes with police." BBC <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-11513309>.

following the proclamation of Athens as the capital of the new Greek state, mainly as an illegal settlement inhabited by of the various builders from other Greek cities who worked for the King's Palace and other important neoclassical monuments that were built in fulfilment of the first city plans .The vicinity with the quarry at the hill of Stefi, the central hill of Athens and at the core of Exarcheia, provided free stones for new houses for those who could not afford to buy building material. The settlement was finally planned during the early years of the reign of King George the first in the 1870s. It acquired paved roads, water mains and municipal road cleaners. Interestingly the new streets were named after the heroes of the Greek revolution, unlike the Streets of old Athens and the city centre that were given ancient Greek names²¹² (Kairofyllas, 2002). Since then it has been an area of students and scholars. It has been the area of many representatives of Modern Greek culture of the late 19th and early 20th century. The square appears in 1865, in the first City Plans that incorporate Neapoli with the old city. It took its name, at the beginning of the twentieth century, from a grocery store on its south-west corner owned by a merchandiser called Exarhos which was the reference point for the entire area, which is since then called Exarheia.

As I have discussed before, during the late nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century the public social and cultural life was intrinsically connected with the space of the cafes (Skaltsa, 1983; Papakostas, 2002; Kovani, 2008 etc). Kovani (2008) further writes that the historic study of the cafes proves that those spaces were and still are mirrors of their surrounding economic and social conditions. Three categories may be distinguished: the historic, the folk and the literary. The historic, like café Zaharatos in Syntagma square, are the ones frequented by socialites, career politicians and established journalists. The folk ones are the cafes of all the neighbourhoods, frequented by locals, and the literary are the ones frequented by writers and poets. The political element is present in all three categories as

²¹² The names of the streets both in Exarcheia and the city centre are maintained until nowadays.

the everyday, cultural and social life of that period and imbued with politics²¹³. Exarcheia during that that period was a green low class suburb with a mixture of cobbled and soil streets (up until the 1920s), a mixture of neoclassical and low rise self build houses with a high concentration of cafes, folk and literary²¹⁴. The cafes were low budget, frequented by adolescents, youth, students, local inhabitants, journalists and scholars and characterized for their critical and dissenting²¹⁵ character. This relationship of the social, cultural and the political is illustrated characteristically in a description of the notorious Exarcheian cafe “the Black Cat²¹⁶” founded in 1917. The cafe was also the headquarters of the homonymous literary magazine, an artist’s club, and organized famous philological soirées every Saturday night. The socialist party was also housed temporarily in one of the rooms of the cafe as back then it was considered an

²¹³ For example, a literary argument such as whether to use ‘Katharevousa’ or ‘Dimotiki’ version of the language acquires political character.

²¹⁴ Gomez- Carillo (1909, cited in Covani, 2008, p34) (La Grece Eternelle). The author, who most probably visits a literary café, praises the atmosphere and the intellectual tradition within a Greek café. He characterizes it as a place where the Logos prevails, an informative, deliberative logos that fortifies the feelings of belonging to a cultural entity: ‘For the Athenians elegance of speech is part of good education, good upbringing,’ says the writer: ‘The cafe is the modern Agora. The Modern Academy. Inside the Cafes , those who believe they have the right to actively intervene in the life of their country are drunk all night. Their drink is Logos.’ Gomez- Carillo also mentions that an Athenian told him that ‘Logos is a strong drink’ (p34).

²¹⁵ Not all Exarcheian cafes were frequented by left wing supporters. For example the cafe Mpanikas, later called Plaza cafe(in the junction of Harilaou Trikoupi and Metaxa street), was a literary cafe during 1912-1914, while in the period during the German occupation and the period of the cold war it was a gathering place for left wing supporters. It was considered the opponent of the Rompos cafe in the junction of Kallidromiou Street and Zoodhou Pigis Street which was frequented by the Exarcheia inhabitants who supported the left wing. The owner of the cafe, Mister Mitsos is described as constantly being in conflict with the teenager patrons of the poolroom, which was placed inside the cafe, because they were destroying the pool rods with their aggressive playing. This description reveals both the merging of social activities with political discussions and political mobilization, and the cafes usage by different ages varying from adolescents to elders.

²¹⁶ A name inspired from the Parisian Chat Noir.

alternative small party²¹⁷ and did not have any headquarters. The following excerpt from the newspaper *Scrip*, published on the occasion of the socialists' arrests following one of their propaganda campaigns for the mobilization of the workers, shows the 'literary-socialist' (Kovani, 2008, p18) character of the cafe: "Those arrested testified that the printing and distribution of the seized proclamation was made after repeated meetings of socialist trade unionists in the Infamous cafe "the Black Cat", which was the centre of democratic, socialist, anarchist²¹⁸, scholars who recited there their long and terrible projects, prose and verse " (Newspaper *Scrip* 05/07/1917 cited in Kovani, 2008, p18).

At the periphery of Exarcheia square, which until 1938 was surrounded with mainly low rise buildings, was one of the most renowned cafes, called 'Astypalaia', which is a meeting place for the supporters of Venizelos²¹⁹. Venizelos himself gave some of his speeches in the same café (Kitromilides, 2008). It is also interesting to compare the impact of the speeches of the same politician in an Exarcheia café and in Syntagma square. In Exarcheia it was a speech directed to his supporters in an intimate environment while in Syntagma a similar speech, as I have shown was of national importance. Numerous other cafes and taverns surround the square like the café Floral on the ground floor of the "Blue" block of flats²²⁰ which is still in operation²²¹, similarly to the open air cinema VOX (which is now an antiauthoritarian squat) and the 'Leyka' café used by Dhimotikistés²²² as their meeting place

²¹⁷ In 1981 the socialists won the elections and became the Government.

²¹⁸ The adjectives democratic, socialist, anarchist, are not used to describe several but one sole category of users who combine all those, as well as being scholars.

²¹⁹ Venizelos (1684-1936) was a charismatic and controversial leader in the early 20th century Greece. Elected several times as Prime Minister of Greece, he served from 1910 to 1920 and from 1928 to 1932 (<http://www.ahistoryofgreece.com/venizelos.htm>).

²²⁰ "Blue" block of flats by architect I.K. Panagiotakos in 1933, is an iconic modernist building built in the south-east corner of the junction of Arahovis and Themistokleous street, replacing a single storey building.

²²¹ The interview of Dimitris in Avaton takes place in Floral.

²²² After the establishment of Greece as an independent state in 1829, the Katharévusa

(Papakostas, 1988). Kovani (2008) writes that Exarcheia square already since the beginning of 20th century, despite its small size and its rudimentary furnishing has had a distinct cultural identity and has played an important role in the organization of the social life of the district.

During the German occupation of Athens a food Black Market was in operation in Stournari Street. When there were blackouts, performances of *karagiozis* shadow-puppet theatre were organized in the space of VOX cinema. In the basements of the Blue block of flats and the building of VOX there were shelters in which the inhabitants of the neighbourhood gathered when the sirens were sounding. The whole area of Exarcheia was one of the main resistance centres. Witnesses remember teams of resistance gathering in the basements of NTUA (Melambianaki 2006). Exarcheia is also at the epicentre of the event of Dekemvriana with the Nationalists fighting from Strefi hill and the leftists²²³ from the Blue building in the corner of the square.

After the Second World War the low rise character of the area was altered. The city of Athens expanded towards the suburbs and the area of Exarcheia became a central one. A series of building regulations that allowed new buildings of the city centre to cover almost fully the surface of the plot and to reach approximately eight storeys, combined with financial incentives to the

(Καθαρεύουσα) form—Greek for ‘purified language’—was sanctioned as the official language of the state and the only acceptable form of Greek in Greece. The whole attempt led to a linguistic war and the creation of literary factions: the *Dhimotikistés*, who supported the common (Demotic) dialect, and the *Lóyii*, or *Katharevusyáni*, who supported the "purified dialect". Up to that point, use of Dhimotikí in state affairs was generally frowned upon. Use of the Demotic dialect in state speech and paperwork was forbidden. The fall of the Junta of 1974 and the end of the era of Metapolítefsi 1974–76 brought the acceptance of the Demotic dialect as the official Greek language.

²²³ The headquarters were actually the house of parents of the left politician Leonidas Kyrkos, who was then a young student who was firing from the window at a tank of the British forces that were aligning with the nationalists. Also fighting against the same tank was another young student, unfortunately the grenade that he used to stop the tank exploded in his hands. During the dictatorship the student, Yannis Xenakis, who survived the blast, sought refuge to France becoming a famous composer (Kovani, 2008).

plot owners, led to the destruction of almost all the neoclassical building stock of the area. This change is not a unique characteristic of Exarheia as it took place throughout the whole municipality of Athens²²⁴. The number of inhabitants in Exarcheia increased significantly and so did the residential buildings. The square of Exarheia became central in location but still facilitated uses of neighbourhood level rather than metropolitan ones (Melambianaki, 2006). The square maintained the alternative-student-intellectual character being in close vicinity to the National Technical University of Athens, the old University and the Law School (Nomiki), two of which (NTUA and Law School) are still in operation.

4.2.2. Politics, skirmishes, anti-authoritarianism, music and drugs

In 1973 the NTUA became the centre of resistance against the American assisted dictatorship. Students gathered in the building protesting and emitting radio messages against the dictatorship. On 17th of November the army entered the building violently, killing, injuring or arresting all present. The event signaled the beginning of the end of the regime. Since then the central door of the building, where the tanks entered, remained sealed and every university was considered an asylum until 2011. Since then the NTUA has become organically connected with the square of Exarcheia for numerous reasons, as the daily space of the students, as a public space, as a cultural space (hosting public lectures, poetry, rave parties, etc) and until recently as the base of operations of independent groups, who regularly gathered in the square, during urban warfare against the police, especially during the anniversary of the 17th of November²²⁵ as it was explained in the previous chapter.

²²⁴ As I have described before those processes have also altered the character of Syntagma square.

²²⁵ In 1974 Konstantinos Karamanlis, the first prime minister of democratic Greece after the dictatorship, declares as day of the first democratic elections the 17th of November. The same day it is claimed by opposition as a commemoration day for the events of 1973 against

After the reconstitution of Democracy and the period of metapoliteysi the area became the epicentre of political fermentation, gathering intellectuals, anarchists, students, leftists and housing the offices and headquarters of political organizations, antiauthoritarian hangouts, parliamentary and extra-parliamentary left. The extra parliamentary parties and leftist groups were against the rigid communistic doctrines of the KKE. The members of the KKE use the term “under-cultured leftism” to describe the political ambience of the square (Ioannou, 2008). Along with dozens of political organizations, numerous social movements developed in the surrounding area of Exarcheia, among others the most active being militant feminists, conscientious objectors, the Gay Liberation Movement of Greece (AKOE), the organization ESEAN against marijuana legalization led by doctor George Economopoulos²²⁶, the Movement for the Rights of the mentally ill, the first green initiatives but also movements for the ‘freedom of radio waves’²²⁷ (Ioannou, 2008; Raouzaios, 2012). The libertarian spirit of the square was not embraced either by the rather culturally conservative newly forming Greek middle class, or by the mainstream media, or by the communist party. Rizospastis (the official newspaper of KKE) wrote in 1980 ‘The square of Exarcheia has become an anarchists’ headquarters. They have gathered in Exarcheia in order to be closer to the University, the Law school, the NTUA. To be able to act within the universities, playing the familiar role ... they have occupied the sole square region! Any time one passes through there one sees people with long hair and tattered clothes lying on the grass undisturbed. As if the residents did not have enough problems, now they have also to face the corruption of the "anarchists", drugs, prostitution. The government is to blame for this unacceptable situation. It does not take any action. "Anarchists", drug addicts, etc. act undisturbed and are tolerated by the police ‘(Rizospastis 16/12/1980).

dictatorship and American interventionism. 17th of November becomes a contested day by authority and opposition.

²²⁶ The first Greek who smoked cannabis publicly.

²²⁷ In the 70s and 80s there were only State radio stations. The rest of the transitions were considered illegal.

In November 1981, twenty days after the socialists' electoral victory a group of anti-authoritarians occupied an abandoned neoclassical building in Valtetsiou Street. It was followed by many more squats as well as other experiments in communal living. The Athenian underground, evicted from the area of Plaka because of the area's gentrification, moved, matured and became politicized²²⁸ in Exarcheia (Paolo, personal communication, 2009; Yannis, personal communication, 2011). During this period in Greece, musical preference was also a political preference. Rock and punk music listeners came to be considered the alternative ones standing against the capitalism and societal commands and were differentiated strongly from disco listeners, another fashionable music type, seen as aligning with consumerism and capitalism. Culture and politics merge in the daily and nocturnal life of the square.

Drug dealing and drug addicts appeared in the square. Drug consumption became related to the alternative music scene that had its base in Exarcheia, and famous singers were openly heroin users (Poulikakos, Sidiropoulos, etc). The lyrics of their songs and their almost public admittance of drug use, functioned almost as indirect advertisement. In regards to the drug market, though, there were always rumours that it was manipulated by the police (a rumour that persists until today and I which was able to verify while interviewing a police officer for Avaton) as a method to turn the square users into easily manipulated drug addicts instead of active and sceptical citizens, provide them with informers who prefer to collaborate with the police than to get imprisoned, and create an ambience of decadence in the square which can be used as a strong incentive to their operations. The anarchists widely circulate a poster claiming that 'Cops sell the heroin²²⁹'. On November 1987

²²⁸ As Panos (personal communication, 2011) said in Exarcheia 'if something it is not political, it is not important'.

²²⁹ Tasos (personal communication, 2011) described to me a similar event taking place in September 2009. He said that when Pasok won the elections, the first thing that they did a week after they won was a big 'sweeping' operation 'a pogrom in Exarcheia square' which included an attack of every tax collector on the area's stores and an attack of riot police and all police forces on everyone who was present at the square over a period of ten days. The 'tragicomic' part is

they detained several heroin dealers in the square and published their names on the press, yet the Police did not proceed to any arrests nor issued any statement (Antonopoulos, 2009).

Members of alternative social and political groups, generally called in Greece the 'alternative space' were hoping that this political change, from years of dictatorship and right-wing governance to a socialist party that promised social change, would bring the end of ghettoization of the square and the end of the prosecution of its users. Their enthusiasm though was short-lived. The intense politicization of the area provoked repeated and extensive police operations. The Valtetsiou squat, the first one in Greece, was forcibly evacuated in 1982, an eviction supported by the mainstream media. The repression culminated with the police 'Operation Virtue' of 1984-1985 on the pretext of removing the punks from the square, as 'marginal' elements and threats to society. The real target, though, was the autonomous administration of the space of the square and the aim was to arrest and frighten groups that were considered politically undesirable by police and state (Tasos, personal communication, 2011; Sisy, personal communication, 2011; Panos, personal communication, 2011). Using extremely violent methods (Tsapa, 1999) the operations were reminiscent of the military junta while their name was a reference to their morally corrective character, again reminiscent of similar regime laws²³⁰. They were supported by numerous newspaper articles on the immorality, illegality and degenerate behaviour of the square's punks. Characteristically, Ethnos writes 'Exarcheia: after the drugs and the anarchists

that the police occupied the square, three whole teams of it, and they were stopping and checking the documents of any by-passer, of any age, 24/7, but the heroin trading that was taking place in the middle of the square continued undisturbed. 'For us it is old news but this was a breaking point for the inhabitants of the area, because then they understood that when in 1979 the anarchists circulated a large black and white poster that said "The cops sell the heroin", this then seemed as an extreme political claim, it was proved that once more 10 years, 20 years and 30 years after the poster, the anarchists were right. And it was deemed obvious to everybody that the drug dealing is protected by the police. Because everybody had troubles with the police, except the heroin traders!' (Tasos, personal communication, 2011).

²³⁰ Forbidding kissing, holding hands, long hair, short skirts, etc.

now came punks with shaved heads (...) with their brush-like haircuts, often dyed in various colours, they are begging, scaring the elderly, throwing beer bottles here and there and public pissing' prompting the idea of the 'need to clear the area of the marginal elements" (Ethnos, 1984 cited in Eagainst, 2013). During the spring of 1985 police actions in the square and the area took place almost daily. Their arrests were no longer according to stylistic criteria: whether punk, or having long hair, or wearing a suit, the square users were forced in police vans after being beaten up mercilessly (Tsapa, 1999).

In November 1985, during the anniversary of the Polytechnic, the police officer Thanassis Melistas murdered the sixteen year old student Michael Kaltezas by shooting him in the back of his head. The NTUA was occupied by nearly two thousand protesters (mainly extra-parliamentary left groups and anarchists) while the same evening others occupied another university building in Exarcheia, the Chemistry (Chimeio). The occupation in Chimeio was suppressed when during dawn the forces of the riot police and special forces squads forced themselves in the building through the terrace using the fire-escape ladders of the fire brigade²³¹. Throwing dozens of tear gas grenades into the building and threatening the occupiers with automatic guns they led out about forty people in police vans beating them simultaneously. A few of the occupiers manage to escape and join the occupation in NTUA through the sewage system. The raid in Chimio was the first suspension of the asylum law since its enactment. During the conflicts that followed the next day and night in Patisson street the riot police for the first time since 1976 made an extensive use of tear gas and were assisted in their work by extra-governmental elements, the so called *prasinofrouroi* which the media next day termed 'enraged citizens' (Antonopoulos, 2013). This tactic of police repression, with the use of special police squads against students and political dissidents, the police's collaboration with extra-governmental²³² elements and the use of tear gas

²³¹ An operation showing the collaborative spirit of the period between the police the army and the fire brigade.

²³² In Greek 'παρακρατικοί'. This rapport between police and fascists was admitted by my police respondent while filming for Avaton (2010).

formed a pattern that was repeated countless times over the next two decades. Unfortunately so did the murder of an adolescent.

4.2.3. (Real e)state of Exarcheia

During the years of PASOK governance, but also during the interim governance of New Democracy between 1989-1993 Exarcheia remained a 'dangerous' square and the users of the square were constantly characterized by the media as 'suspicious leftists' and 'outcasts' of society, although many of the users had initially supported the socialist party²³³. Since 1895 the media habitually uses the term 'state of Exarcheia'. General Drosogiannis, who was also an officer of the nationalist army forces during the civil war, became the head of the police and adopting the media-favoured term he stated in 1986: 'We will not tolerate the existence an anarchist state in Exarcheia. The square will be like all the others, and everyone will be able to move freely' (Antonopoulos, 2013)

The plan of normalizing Exarcheia did not include only the 'virtuous' operations of the police but also extended to the urban fabric of the area, which became the target of urban renewal plans. The plans targeted three distinct areas of Athens: Plaka, Fokionos Negri and Exarcheia, all of which coincided with centres of youth culture. The rationale of the plans as stated on the first leaflet that was distributed by the Ministry of Planning (ΥΠΕΧΩΔΕ) was the 'discouragement of various marginalized social groups from monopolizing the use of space and causing its degradation' through the conversion of Exarcheia district into an area that 'will attract visitors and tourists' and 'will stimulate residential use', obviously referring to residences of the wealthier social strata, as the area was never short of inhabitants. The renewal of Plaka and Fokionos Negri were 'successful' as the areas indeed attract tourists and evicted the 'marginalized youth' and their culture which moved to Exarcheia, as the area

²³³ Some of the members of the socialist governments and the communistic party have been active in the student struggles of the previous decade and frequenters in Exarcheia.

proved more resistant to gentrification. The Deputy Minister of Planning (later Minister of Public Order) George Voulgarakis proclaiming a new round of renovation plans declared in 1993 that 'Exarheia will become like Plaka' ("Eleftherotypia", 6/18/93 cited in Eaganst, 2013).

During the middle 1990s Exarcheia square started to change socially. This was also the period (1992-2000) in which I was daily experiencing the space of the square as a student in NTUA. Many commercial cafes, bars and restaurants started to appear, to such an extent that they almost occupied the ground level of every building around the square. The property prices of the area rapidly increased. The transfer of the new courts of justice in Evelpidon Street, a neighbouring street to Exarcheia, increased the demand for housing by young lawyers. Exarcheia could prospectively become like its neighbouring Kolonaki, a high class area, central, and full of expensive restaurants, cafes, luxury hotels and galleries. The leisure industry was also taking advantage of the previous character of the square, so the frequenters of Exarcheia were characterised automatically as the 'alternative' ones, compared to the users of Kolonaki's leisure zone. The 'alternative' characterisation eventually referred more to clothing than to a political attitude and during the 1990s the borders between the two areas started becoming more permeable. High-heeled lawyers started feeling safe to park their expensive cars²³⁴ and enjoy their dinner in the area.

While commercialization increased in the area, the square itself was at periods solely populated by drug addicts, who left the space only temporarily, mostly for some weeks, only when they were violently evicted by alliances formed between inhabitants, shop-owners and anarchist groups (Giorgos K., personal communication, 2008).

Phenomena that are both connected to the leisure industry such as racketeering, and mafias controlling drugs and trafficking, appeared at the square. Still the area maintained its political activity and cultural vividness. It

²³⁴ Destroying or burning an expensive car was not a rare phenomenon in the square, as it was perceived as a capitalist provocation (Tasos, personal communication, 2011).

housed (and still does) alternative festivals²³⁵ like the first Gay Pride or the Indy Free festival, countless solidarity parties, unions, publishing houses, theatres, leftist and antiauthoritarian associations. Stournari Street, which is the street outside the NTUA became the Greek 'silicon valley' housing numerous retail computer shops, while chain shops²³⁶ started to appear in the street. The NTUA and the wider area remains the epicentre for clashes with the police and protests, as for example the fights following the school occupations in 1991, the NTUA occupation in 1995 following the acquitting of Kaltezas and where many of my student friends were almost suffocated inside the building by the tear gas thrown by the police, the riot during the Clinton visit in 1999, etc. During the pre-Olympics period when the city of Athens was under a construction frenzy, Exarcheia was one of the few areas in Athens in which you would see posters and graffiti against the Olympics. Yet, overall, the impact of the commercialization sweeping over the city was also felt in the wider area of Exarcheia and the square while at the same time political action was being decentralized. Anarchist and leftist groups were making an 'exodus' towards other Athenian neighbourhoods via building squatting, aiming at a 'radicalization of everyday life' and the dissemination of anarchist ideology in the wider urban environment (Papadimitropoulos, 2010). Still though, Exarcheia square remained as the symbolic centre for anti-authoritarian groups.

4.2.4. Renovating the square

On 2002 and as part of the regeneration wave that swept the whole city of Athens before the Olympics the ministry of Public Works attempted a new regeneration of the square beginning the process all of a sudden on 5th of June 2002. Having anticipated reactions, the plans of the regeneration were kept

²³⁵ Until 1985 the festivals in Greece were only political.

²³⁶ During the riots of December 2008 the chain shops like 'Plaisio' are the first one to be burned down.

secret and announced to the public the same day that the excavating works began. The plans aimed at fragmenting the main space, elevating it from street level, dividing it in many different levels accessed by steps and separated by concrete tiers, reducing the green and the space for free use while increasing the alfresco area for the surrounding cafes. The private contractor 'Diktyosi' that subcontracted the work from the Ministry, fenced off the space and started cutting the trees and ripping the pavement with a bulldozer, while leaving intact the space occupied by the tables of the cafes. The same day, fifty people invaded the construction site, destroying the fencing and graffitiing "regeneration = suppression" (Giorgos T., personal communication, 2009). On the 11th of June, two people were arrested for setting fire to the construction materials and were sentenced to four months imprisonment suspended while in the court they openly claimed that it was an act of resistance against the regeneration (Anarchist Bulletin, 2004).

On the 13th, the inhabitants established the 'initiative against the regeneration' and organized a concert in the square attended by hundreds of people. By the end of the event numerous people destroyed the site fence while some attacked the adjacent bars which were seen as supporters of the plans, and the event finished with an exchange of teargas and stones thrown between the police and some of the event participants. On the 9th of July the residents' initiative called an assembly to Strefi hill, and thus created a meeting place for the communication and coordination of various different initiatives to begin developing resistance against the new plans. This assembly as well as the numerous ones that were to follow, was also attended by members of assemblies of other neighbourhoods, such as Argiroupoli and Ilioupoli and Philopapou that were resisting similar pre-Olympic 'regeneration' plans (Bellum Perpetuum, 2009). This indicates both the beginning of social group formations and the formation of social networks. The urban plans of the period, whether aiming at an aesthetic upgrade or an enclosure of public spaces and their commercialization, were seen as aiming at 'an architecture of control, creating spaces sterilized from every element of spontaneity, dead zones of continuous consumption, volumes of cement, surveillance cameras and constant policing' and have a common denominator: 'the promotion -through

the enforcement of prescribed uses of space and the multiple prohibitions-the alienation, the crushing of every opportunity of collectivity, solidarity and resistance and the subjection to the rules of "order and security"(Anarchist Bulletin, 2004). Eleni Portaliou (2003), an architect, professor at the NTUA and member of the initiative who writes in the press release of the inhabitants also criticizes the ways that the plans apply the concept of regeneration by destroying the social and spatial context, and flattening collective memory and history. In contrast she argues that regeneration ought to mean to enhance a historical physiognomy of space and to facilitate the reclaiming of the space by its users and the symbolic re appropriation by 'the entire polis'. The inhabitants claim that the new design of Exarcheia square reduces the green areas, erects walls and closes passages, defining forced access routes and adds stairs violating the geometrical and physical characteristics of the site imposing on residents the specific ideas of its designer. Portaliou (2003) claims that in famous squares all over the world the uses are not imposed by the design but remain flexible as they are an organized product of the people who inhabit the city. The press release ends with: 'Local residents and patrons of the square and those associated with it in many ways, those who work or are housed here will defend the square. The Ministry and the Municipality of Athens must revise their plans. It is inconceivable that a poorly formed "redevelopment" is imposed with riot batons'.

On the 28 of July the new assembly at Strefi hill decided consensually to demand that the square be restored to its original form, followed by a new sabotage of the site. At the beginning of August the ministry decided to suspend the work and to discuss corrective recommendations for the plan with the initiative. This divided the initiative members between those who agreed with the negotiations and those who didn't, mainly members of antiauthoritarian groups. The square remained as an abandoned construction site for months, cleaned and managed by the inhabitants, and on December 2008 the construction started again, based on a negotiated plan.

The opinions about the result of the inhabitants intervention is divided between those who consider it successful, as the final implementation contains

less commercial space and less fragmentation than the original plan, and those who see the whole process of negotiation as an unacceptable sell-out (Giorgos T., personal communication, 2009). Nevertheless what remains from the intervention, the protests and the negotiations is the formulation of an inhabitants' initiative that remains active and open to all interested members until today. The inhabitants initiative has protested and has had its say in numerous issues affecting their public space since that event, organizing protests against illegal mobile phone antennas, supporting a series of evictions of drug dealers (by peaceful or violent means), participating in the creation of the new Navarinou park, cleaning garbage and uses syringes from the hill of Strefi, protesting against police violence and demanding the removal of police vans from the neighbourhood.

Secondly this intervention reveals the particular socio-political background of Exarcheia, the inhabitants' resilience, and the area's politicised, dissenting and critical character. Their critique, which arose from a spatial intervention and which examined the link between municipal 'regeneration' plans for Athenian public spaces, capitalist development, and the consolidation of social control. This critique, at the time apparently localized and supported only by the members of a specific political space, has proved of lasting and wider relevance, as it has spread to other neighbours of Athens and has become the main idea behind numerous movements and initiatives that have multiplied since 2008. As I will argue later in the chapter it was also a proof that the public spaces of the city are not isolated islands but connect through social practices.

Lastly, the reaction and the final outcome of the regeneration plans, and the multiple contestations taking place at the space of the square reveal a public space that resists commodity and capital. In the period of the late 90s and beginning of the 00s it was one of the scarce Athenian neighbourhoods where civil collectivities²³⁷ were formed and their claims were materialized in actual

²³⁷ Currently Exarcheia is the neighbourhood square of the inhabitants, a vivid and profitable leisure centre, a symbolic centre of the anarchist movement, the square of non parliamentary political groups and activists like PKK (Party for the independency of Kurdistan), 'Freedom to Zapatistas', the 'Immigrants' House' (Steki metananston), Nosotros: Independent Centre of

space, a characteristic that it retains. Even after the completion of the renovation works, Exarcheia did not become a 'fixed' square as its shape and mainly its users and uses are flexible. It is a public space characterised by a 'constant struggle between top-down policies and bottom-up claims from the public' (Mitchell 2003) ; it is ambiguous, containing idealizations of stability, as for example the ones expressed in the municipality's plans, and simultaneously defined by dynamic and conflicting practices.

4.2.5. Avaton

The contestations that took place during the square's renovation in 2004 were neither the first nor the last ones but are a vivid illustration of the character of the square. The claims for 'publicness' and the right to the square were the outcome of multiple contestations deriving from different social groups that varied from peaceful deliberation to 'creative' evictions like the one described in Avaton (2011) , sabotaging the municipalities construction works, but also occasionally violent evictions and struggles, as for example the eviction of the drug dealers by violent means in 2008 by an alliance formed between the inhabitants initiative, the shop-owners, and the anarchists, or the continuous police raids at the square. At the same time both the constitution of a symbolic meaning and the material construction of the space, is a combination of public claims and statutory policies. As one of my respondents said Exarcheia square (Sisy, personal communication, 2011) is the very same centre of different maps, one for the state, another for the architects, of the municipality, another for the police, another for the anarchists another for the drug addicts etc. The different but overlapping 'maps' bring forth the existence of borders, which can be

Communication (Nosotros: aytonomo epikoinoniako kentro), a dealing point for drug addicts, a sleeping area of homeless, a piazza for taxis, a meeting point of students and of fashion models (in the neighbourhood and specifically in Strefis Hill, there are a number of hotels rented by fashion agencies), an unofficial market place for illegal immigrants . These groups operate simultaneously in the public space of the square, but their share as part of the public is neither equal nor always 'naturally occurring'.

imaginary, symbolic or territorialised, yet in any case so important as to be worth fighting for.

For the authority and the mainstream media²³⁸ those borders describe an *Avaton*²³⁹. The police is frequently patrolling the periphery of Exarcheia (mainly outside the political party offices of PASOK and KKE, governmental buildings like the ministry of Culture, banks²⁴⁰, etc), while the borders of those patrols are defined by numerous skirmishes. When a police car crosses the boundary and enters the area, it is an act of high symbolic value, it does not only stand for a regular patrol but also as a symbolic trespassing that would most probably not go unnoticed (M., personal communication, 2010; Tasos, personal communication, 2011). This ghettoization works in many ways. For the authority it serves in order to keep the so called 'extremist elements' gathered in one place. For the government the Exarcheia ghetto is a concrete visualization of the damaging part of the society. This visualization is used by authority in order to deny any political responsibility for the causes of riots, struggles and possible property damages and attribute it to the space of Exarcheia and its users. On the other hand this differentiation of the square from any other square of Athens and its symbolic elevation to another sphere leads a number of groups that seek to differentiate from the state authority or from the mainstream cultural style to identify with the space. The square has both real and symbolic meaning. The meanings are appropriated both by the users to identify themselves and by the authority to identify them as the 'others'.

²³⁸ The press continues to use specific characterizations in regards to the area and supporting the negative image for the region, through terms such as: "300" anarcho-bandits "of Exarcheia" («Espresso» 30 / 4/2007), "state of Exarcheia" ("Kathimerini" 29/4/2007) and "conversion of entire areas of the centre in unfortified neighbourhoods" ("Vima" 29/4/2007) "Hoodies of Exarcheia" ("Proto Thema" 29/4/2007) "strongholds of anarchy" ("Eleytheros Typos" 27/4/2007) in order to restore peace in the square, or "long-term invasion" in Eksarxia («Espresso» 29/4/2007) in order to catalyze the famous "Avaton" ("Vima" 29/4/2007).

²³⁹ Avaton means ghetto, sanctuary.

²⁴⁰ It is interesting to mention that there are no banks in Exarcheia. When I was a student in the 1990s there use to be a National Bank in the main square but I remember it has been attacked so many times that eventually it was closed.

For many of my respondents the *Avaton* does exist but not in the negative sense given to the term by the police or the media but as social imaginary. It exists as an area patrolled by the authority, and also an area of different social relations. For them the *Avaton* is not only the geographical space itself, it is also the sum of the imagined and desired qualities that the users impose on that space that keeps different social movements, social cultures and political positions together, regardless of their differences. Tasos (personal communication, 2011) said “The glue that unites all those difference trends is the imaginary community. A metropolitan zone in which you feel safety from aggression by authority, meaning from the police, from commercialisation , from mafia, from other things that in other parts of the city makes you feel more vulnerable.’ For him what connects everybody, even people very different, ‘for example the owner of an organic grocery with a punk that drinks beer in a junction of a city is this imaginary constitution, this feeling that *here* is different, even if this different has different meaning for everybody. What mass media present as the *Avaton* of Exarcheia is present above all in our imagination. But it is an imaginary that we defend. A materialised imaginary, an applied utopia. It is not just a desire, it is a realised desire.’ Sisy (personal communication, 2011), in the same interview, adds that what it is meant by ‘imaginary society’, and ‘realised desire’, it is not something simple and abstract but something concrete that they aim to materialise ” not applied in the space that the state allocates to you in order to create or express yourself but in the framework of social struggles, through self-management of the space and the creation of relevant resistances [...]because imagination and creativity produce new spaces, not only appropriate the space.”(Sisy, personal communication, 2011, 1:05).This is also what motivates their solidarity actions²⁴¹, and gives a different meaning to public space as a locus of this diverse community, but also as a space whose borders need to be defended.

During the middle 2000s the strong symbolism and history of the main square, as well as its re-occupation by drug addicts motivated a number of users, particularly of a younger age, adolescents, school pupils and university

²⁴¹ Solidarity to political prisoners, immigrants, social kitchens, etc.

students in their early twenties to start using a different public space, the pedestrianised part of Mesologeiou Street. This coincided with the opening of some new cafes and bars in this spot (Poleitai, Kousko, Hasan, etc) which formed a new cluster that attracted users in a different part of Exarcheia, although most of the Mesologeiou users preferred to sit on the street's pavement rather than to use the cafes (Takis, personal communication, 2008). As one of my respondents said 'we felt that we wanted to break free of the heavy and overused symbolism of the main square and wanted to identify with a different space, one that would be adapted to our own characteristics'(Takis, personal communication, 2008) . Mesologeiou Street is really close to the main square and most of the people (including myself) are using both and later on, also using Navarinou park. Yet in Exarcheia even moving couple of blocks away acquires a high symbolic value; when the adolescents move to Mesologeiou they see it as a declaration of their independence; when the drug addicts move away from the main square it is perceived as a victory for the inhabitants initiative; when the police decide to move their patrols two streets away it is again seen as a victory for the antiauthoritarians; equally when somebody gets arrested in Exarcheia and not in Kolonaki it is perceived as a victory for the police and so on. And as historic events have proved -like the murder of Kaltezas in 1985- and as the following event the existence of those borders²⁴² and their crossing can also be lethal.

²⁴² I will not claim that the murder of the adolescent took place because somebody literally crossed the border of Exarcheia, yet the location of the murder played an important role in the reactions that followed, in the depiction of the events by the media and even in the defence line of the accused police officer. For example if a teenager was shot dead on the Greek-Albanian border this event would definitely evoke different connotations and reactions. The lawyer Korkoneas in his trial tried to portray a bleak image of the murdered teenager as a 'problematic' one exactly because he was frequenting Exarcheia.

4.3. The emergence of the Commons

4.3.1. December 2008

On the 6th of December 2008 a group of school children was seated in Mesologeiou when a police car passed in front of them. As I have mentioned before, the presence of a police car is not an exceptional event in Exarcheia. It is also not exceptional that the children yelled at the police car²⁴³. What was exceptional in this case was that the police parked their car²⁴⁴, approached the kids and one of them responded to the insult by aiming his gun and shooting at the fifteen year old Alexandros Grigoropoulos. The boy was shot in the heart and died on the pavement in front of his friends. The police calmly returned to their car and left (Preza TV, 2009).

The news of the murder of the young boy, caused instant reactions as the information was instantly transmitted via sms and Indymedia. Within the hour hundreds of people flooded the streets of Exarcheia, organizing spontaneous protests. Soon protests involving increasing numbers of people started spreading initially to the whole centre of the city, and during the next days to other neighbourhoods, to other Greek cities and all over the world. One of my respondents who received the news of December in Oakland California said characteristically 'we thought that the revolution was about to happen' (Tim, personal communication, 2010). As any participant in the events can verify an accurate chronology of the events would be hard to recount, because of the events' multifaceted characteristics: at the same time central and suburban; local and national, spontaneous and planned. During the month of December 2008 Athens became the epicentre of a violent urban insurgency. On the first level the murder of the young boy fuelled all the frustration against alleged

²⁴³ I have personally witnessed an exchange of insults in the presence of a police car countless times.

²⁴⁴ They parked the police car outside the PASOK headquarters, which signalizes one of the patrolling borders that I have mentioned before. Parking the car inside those borders and without the police being inside it or around could have resulted in the car being damaged or burned.

police incompetence and brutality. On a deeper level it condensed into a single act all dominant measures, politics and ideologies which imprisoned youth in a pre-determined future of antagonisms and disappointments (Stavrides, 2011). The initial demonstrations and violent protests against the police soon broadened to encompass protests against youth unemployment, social inequality, corruption, state inadequacy, higher education reforms among other perceived grievances. The emergence of the global recession at the same period intensified the urgency of the claims assuming an anti-systemic and anti-capitalist form (Economides and Monastiriotis, 2009).

The participation in the events of December 2008 was direct in the form of thousands of protesters and rioters –coming from every social class and age. Their involvement varied from pacifist silent protests and music performances to burning and looting. Moreover, the demonstrations also included an indirect participation in the form of public debates and involvement in assemblies, virtual forums, and internet blogs. In other words, the events materialized the relation between social groups and claims in public space both in terms of theoretical discourses and in the form of urban warfare, actual violent clashes, contestations and evictions that reshaped the urban geography of Athens.

Undoubtedly, December brought violence and destruction in the city centre. However, at the same time, possibilities of renewal and redefinition of the existing conditions had sprung up through the rupture of urban fabric and established social relationships. A number of issues that had been in a state of abeyance since the reconstitution of democracy in 1974 in Greece came to the fore, arising from the proper usage of public spaces and the right to the city and expanding to political rights and citizenship. And it was exactly this rupture that led to a mushrooming of social movements concerning the urban space itself (Portaliou, 2011). New urban movements in Athens went beyond simple rejection of existing order and confrontation with it so as to enter into the collective creation and radical changes of space and of everyday life in the city (Petropoulou, 2010). A common effort to actively express a different public culture was becoming apparent. And this culture contained forms of collectively reclaiming the city.

The creation of a new type of 'public' spaces, which I am going to describe further in the thesis resulted from those urban movements. They are challenging the ways in which the public space has been created up to the present, as offered by the state to the citizens. Those new occupied spaces materialised the claims both for the actual space of the city and for a redefinition of the very concept of the public sphere.

4.3.2. Navarinou Park

As I have shown the desire for a 'different' public space already existed in Exarcheia, interpreted in a plurality of ways, whether as modifications of the main square (freed from drug dealing, and the control of the police, preventing the expansion of commercialisation) or as appropriation of other spaces, like the pavement of Mesologeiou street or as expression of a different public culture disassociated from the meaning and the spatial form given to it by the state that was increasingly seen as aligned with the capital.

A new opportunity presented itself on the 7th of March 2009 when a protest in the form of a happening took place in Exarcheia, organized by the inhabitants. The location of the happening was a small plot of 1476 square meters, at the junction of Trikoupi, Navarinou and Zoodohou Pigis Street, owned by the Technical Chamber of Greece (TEE). The purpose was to demand the construction of a new public space in the plot that had been used until then as an open air car park.

The idea for the creation of a public space in this plot goes back a decade before this protest. In May 1990, the management committee of TEE decided to request from the Municipality of Athens permission to create a public space in the plot mentioned above 'since the position of the plot in the urban fabric is extremely interesting' (Decision 1203/15.5.90). Practically this action required a modification of the plot's usage in the City's Regulatory Plan and the purchase of the plot by the municipality of Athens. TEE would be compensated by

transferring the building allowance percentage²⁴⁵ of the plot in Exarheia to another plot that TEE owned in Marousi. In November 1990, the city council of the municipality of Athens decided unanimously to accept the proposal of TEE, underlining that ‘the conversion of the plot [to a public space] is necessary because the plot is adequate for a square in a densely built area of Athens , which is significantly lacking public spaces’ (Decision 1673/7.11.90). The municipality, though, did not proceed in changing the Regulatory Plan in order to allow for the new use, nor did it purchase the plot, which remained as property of TEE and continued to be used as an open air car park. When the contract between the parking owner and the TEE expired and as the municipality never proceeded in any action regarding the specific plot the TEE expressed the intention to develop it (Parkingparko, 2010).

The Inhabitants of Exarheia reacted against this intention and during the happening they organized on the 7th of March they occupied the plot. They planted trees, organized music concerts and other activities and promoted their demand via the Architects Registration Board. During the three following weeks, the plot was guarded by a group of inhabitants since they were afraid of attacks by neo-fascist groups, or the police. On the 30th of March the president of TEE, G.Alavanos, and the mayor of Athens N. Kaklamanis finally agreed on exchanging the plot in Exarheia with a municipality’s property in Alexandras avenue. The plot would thereafter belong to the Municipality of Athens and it would be turned into a public space once the decision was validated by the Ministry of Planning and Built Environment (ΥΠΕΧΩΔΕ). The inhabitants of Exarheia declared their intention to continue guarding the plot until the decision was validated and the creation of a public space instead of the car park would start taking place.

From the second day of the space occupation until now, the park is managed by an open assembly that defines the character of the space as: self managed, non-hierarchical, non commercial. The assembly, the frequency of

²⁴⁵ The building allowing percentage is defining how many square meters can be built in a given plot according to the plot’s location and size. In some cases it is allowed to transfer this percentage and add it to the allowing percentage of the new plot. ΓΟΚ, article 18.a.

which depends according to the needs of the space, deals with every issue regarding both the usage and the formation of the space and sets the course of action. It is open to everybody that wishes to participate and operates on a broad consensus. The participants do not vote and every single idea or proposal gets expressed and negotiated but the decisions taken are binding for all the users. According to the park users the park is shaped by an open solidarity; it is mouldable and flexible and changes day to day (Avaton, 2010).

The Navarinou Park is a highly contested space. On a first level the space materializes the claims of the assembly as opposed to the plans of the municipality. Theoretically, it still belongs to the state but it is continuously attacked by the police, who frequently invade the space and randomly arrest people who frequent it. The arrested are held for a short time and later released, since there are no charges pressed against them, which makes it rather obvious that the reason of those raids and arrests is to intimidate and discourage the users. The park is also expressing the claims of different social and political groups and individuals that are articulated on different levels: symbolical, spatial and functional. Some examples of those claims include anarchists opposing to any type of performances that do not deal with politics and anarchy, claims of homeless people who want to sleep in the playground, drug addicts who want to shoot heroin in the space, nihilists who want to set the neighbourhoods' garbage bins on fire or try out their first Molotov bomb, or adolescents who want to play loud music in the middle of the night. All of these issues were negotiated in the assembly, some of them more successfully than others.

The park is far from an idealised space where all the differences are resolved peacefully and consensually during the assembly since violent clashes, arrests, fights and evictions are continuously occurring. Still the park is there, is functioning, it gathers a large amount of users daily, it gives voice to different social demands and allows for direct participation in the formation of space (Avaton, 2010). Furthermore it has become the seeding ground for new political ideals, both as notions but also as realised practices, such as for example the idea of direct democracy which began fermenting in Athens in

spaces and ventures similar to the park. This reveals the existence both of a strong desire to maintain a space with these characteristics (horizontal, non commercial, self-organized) and also the existence of a network of social practices that have enough 'will, body and power' (Tasos, personal communication, 2011) to withstand the space's enclosure, either its assimilation by the state (in this case turning the park into another public space maintained by the municipality, institutionally accepted and normalized and no longer competitive with the dominant culture) or enclosure as exclusivity of the parks use by a specific community²⁴⁶ (in which case the park turns into someone's stronghold rather than a space of encounter, collective protest and creative alternative critique). A look at the posters in the space of the park and the park's blog (<http://parkingparko.espivblogs.net/>) also reveals the relationship of this space with similar ventures and practices that have proliferated in the Athenian space after December, all of which emphasize their political character. Similarly, the Park and its users, but also all the network of urban movements²⁴⁷ are distancing themselves from practices of charity or urban voluntarism (e.g. Atenistas) who aim at a beautification of the urban environment without any political aims, but also from self-organized practices of hate like the exclusion of immigrants and their kids from the playground in the neighbourhood of Agios Panteleimonas (Dimitriou, 2011).

4.3.2.1. A definitional challenge: public space or commons?

Navarinou Park is an idiosyncratic space since almost every term attributed to it is contradictory. It is a public space since it technically belongs to the municipality; nevertheless the municipality did not interfere either in its

²⁴⁶ In 2009 I have also conducted a research in the park of Kyprou and Patission. Although this has started in a very similar way as the Navarinou Park and for a period it was managed as a commons by an open assembly it gradually became, for a number of reasons, the stronghold of specific groups and lost its commoning character.

²⁴⁷ See the list of areas of social resistance in the Attica Basin associated with free/open spaces <http://www.asda.gr/elxoroikiatalBantist.htm>.

creation or its maintenance. The park is not designed by an assigned architect in a designated urban plot as a regular public space but is instead claimed by force. Moreover it is built, planted, cleaned and regulated by its users. It is a public space and therefore according to Nancy Fraser (1999); 'it relates to the state, it is communal; it is accessible for everyone; something that affects everyone; a common good or common interest' (p120); however the police, being a regulatory mechanism of the state, attacks its users. The users declare the space to be independent and autonomous, yet the water and electricity are taken from the municipal network. It is officially registered as a public space and as such it is legal but it is also an occupation, regulated by non legislated procedures and therefore illegal. It is not a private space and every commercial use in it is strictly forbidden although according to the Greek legislation the municipality can grant parts of any public space to be used commercially as long as the free usage of space is not jeopardised²⁴⁸.

Without denying all the other definitions of Navarinou Park -public, municipal, occupied and autonomous, it is also a commons: the use of space is open but has specific rules set by the users, it is created and managed in a collective way, the decisions are taken at a horizontal level and it is strictly non commercial. Navarinou Park as commons is defining a new political space where the existing framework of political participation is challenged and the borders of the political sphere redefined. The design and governance methods of the space constitute the space itself as the embodiment of a political ideal. This ideal differs from that of representative institutionalised Democracy, and the contribution of the state to the decision making process is either overlooked or confronted.

Moreover, the Park became a space where political practices were defined, on a first level practices concerning the space itself, on a second level practices launched or fought outside this space and on a third level practices that formed through networking and connecting with other solidarities and socio-political movements (movements that are critically positioned towards

²⁴⁸ Under this law the largest part of the square's pavement is occupied by the alfresco extension of the cafes who rent the space from the municipality.

the official state politics, regarding for example immigration , the legal and punitive system, the conditions of socially excluded groups, ecological issues, etc.). By being both the spatial embodiment of a new political ideal and the space where new political practices emerge and become diffused the Park becomes a new political space. For the users, its explicit political character is what it distinguishes the Park as a commons, as a green space of everyday life but also a space of social resistance against the dominance of the state and capitalism summarizing the desires of the social groups that support it -and who were already present in Exarcheia- for 'no control, no dominance, no hierarchy, no mediation, no exploitation'.

4.3.3. Meanwhile in Athens

Navarinou Park is one of the open space occupations that appeared after December 2008. Some other examples include the park in the junction of Kyprou and Patission Street, which was occupied after the Mayor of Athens decided to turn the space into an underground car park, cut the majority of trees and bulldozed the space; Parko Drosopoulou, which was occupied to prevent the municipality from building on the park, and Agros in Liossia which was occupied in order to prevent the commercialisation plans of the municipality. All those spaces formed a new way of creative resistance against the depletion of the common resource and the threat of imminent enclosures of the city's public spaces. They were the products of crisis and the after- effect of a violent urban insurrection that caused destruction, but that also set in motion the processes of social and political emancipation.

As Makrygianni & Tsavdaroglou (2011) say, December was not just a flare that lit suddenly or momentarily in the streets but it sprang from 'existing structures and relations among us and sowed seeds that are still very much alive' (p29). It was a historic moment that condensed all the tensions, inequalities, frustrations and desires that had been circulating in the city of Athens. And for this reason, because of the pre-existence of all these desires, the

events of December have continued to reverberate, creating pockets of resistance that displayed the wealth of the struggle: strikes of railway workers, lorry-drivers, dock workers and air-traffic controllers, committees against paying tolls in national roads, occupations of theatres, multiplication of squats and social spaces. At the same time, December has also changed the attitude of authority, which took a turn for the worse: 'it has left the menace with which cops would uproot trees at Navarinou Park during one of their usual raids; the new Dias motorcycle police force, aspiring to win back the force's long lost flexibility in urban terrain- and an even more bloodthirsty, murderous state, immune to the disdain for it that hordes of people seem to cherish' (Makrygianni & Tsavdaroglou, 2011, p54). New stricter legislation against the 'hoodies', against terrorism, even against public congregation, bringing to mind again scenes of the military junta. The same reaction came from the side of the municipality, which began attacking (legally or forcibly) numerous social centres and occupations, for example closing down the initiative in the market of Kypseli.

For my research it was an exciting moment as new forms of public spaces started springing up around the city: Exarcheia had more posters than ever, the pedestrian street of Mesologeiou street had become a place of pilgrimage for the youth, public spaces and public practices sprung in many and different neighbourhood in Athens. The events seemed to be dispersing through the city, creating a city of thresholds, of cracks and of opportunities (Stavrides, 2010), responded to with extreme violence by the state but also gaining victories, saving trees, buildings and open spaces but also creating new political subjectivities. The emergence of those new spaces, almost in their totality managed by open assemblies, was challenging the ways in which the public space had been created until then. They materialised the claims both for the actual space of the city and for a redefinition of the very concept of the public sphere. It was during that period (2010-2011) that discussion began about the relation of spatial issues to political issues, the relation of reclamation of public space with political resistance, on participatory processes of design of public space, on the ideal format of solidarities. The new spatial practices also brought forth questions and endless conversations on the ideal of public space. Was

public space intrinsically statutory? How could it be organized as a commons? Could horizontality be maintained on a large or even national scale or was it a characteristic of neighbourhood ventures? Amidst this fertile political and increasingly critical Athenian crowd, the summer of 2011 brought another fascinating event, an event that summarised all the neighbourhood scale social practices and is forming the epilogue of this chapter and this thesis.

4.3.4. Indignant movement

Not everyone could have guessed that what appeared to be the peak of the crisis in 2008 was in fact just the beginning. As the Greek crisis was deepening, dissatisfaction with the existing political system was growing, with regard to politicians, political parties, and the current democratic process that left very few opportunities for public participation in the making of decisions that affected the citizens' welfare.

On May 2011 following a call for protest against the government's austerity measures that was organized by social media and inspired by the square occupations in Spain, thousands of people flooded Syntagma square and the surrounding streets. This first gathering marked the beginning of a movement named as the 'Greek Indignant Citizens Movement'²⁴⁹ or simply 'Indignants', a name drawing parallels to the Spanish movement of 'Indignados'. This movement portrayed substantially different qualitative and quantitative characteristics to any previous political actions. Apart from the large public participation and long duration, its novelty was also based on the fact that the movement was absolutely peaceful, it had no official organizers and representatives, it was not party-affiliated, and it included people from all social strata, political beliefs and ages, even traditionally²⁵⁰ conflicting ones like anarchists and nationalists, communists and priests (Ilias, personal

²⁴⁹ In Greek 'Κίνημα Αγανακτισμένων Πολιτών' and 'Αγανακτισμένοι' respectively.

²⁵⁰ 'Traditionally' refers to the history of Greek movements but also to contemporary urban conflicts.

communication, 2011).

During the movement, Syntagma square acquired a different spatiality. At the first stage, the heterogeneous crowd totally covered all the surface of the square and overflowed into the surrounding streets, reaching the monument of the Unknown Soldier (Nikos, personal communication, 2011). This human 'carpet' succeeded in uniting the fragmented surface of the square, abolishing the barriers between the street and the square and connecting Syntagma with the surrounding city, from which it had been cut-off for almost forty years. After the first couple of days, the space of the square split into the upper square and the the lower one, which the participants characteristically called the Dionysian (corporeal) and the Apollonian (intellectual) (Nikos K., personal communication, 2011). This distinction marked the space of two different but interconnected ways of expressing political opposition. This division also followed the spatial characteristics of the square.

The upper one, the Dionisian, which was formed in the part closest to the parliament and in front of the monument of the Unknown Soldier, exhibited a more carnivalesque character that emphasized direct action and conflict with government. The dissent was expressed in spontaneous bodily gestures, movements, songs, cries and chants, etc. Also it comprised a greater number of far-right or nationalistic elements, plenty of whom were chanting the national hymn and covering themselves in Greek flags (Anna P., personal communication, 2011). The Lower Square, on the other hand, the one that represented metaphorically the mind within the body²⁵¹, was formed around a

²⁵¹Galatoula (2013) believes that this division between mind and body and the attempt to discriminate the crowd is reproducing the political forms of bio-political power, according to which the body and the mind should stay separated so as to be better civilised. Yet, even using this distinction that was widely accepted among the participants it should not be considered as scornful for the part of the 'body' that it is not thinking; as it is not necessary that the Apollonian part that is more subversive. Merrifield (2006) for example writes that Lefebvre favours Dionysus who he sees as a purveyor of Anti-Logos and of the forces seeking to re-appropriate abstract space, as opposed to the Logos, of Apollo expressed in 'rationality, constantly asserting itself in the shape of organizational forms, structural aspects of industry, systems and efforts to systematize everything; business and the state, institutions, the family, the; establishment'

process of participatory democracy based on consensus, open assembly and equality. The assembly sought to transform the angry protest into a movement that was asking for 'Direct Democracy Now'²⁵², it was a movement demanding a complete, radical restructuring of politics. It was hosting the people's assembly and the movement's camp (infirmery, translation centre, radio station, sleeping tents, etc). During the two months of the movement the square had totally lost its transient character and a different spatialisation took place. The movement created multiple points of interest, each one central to the different work groups that were organized within the movement (in total nineteen workgroups such as a children's playground, a homeless campaign meeting point, a multimedia group, a first aid centre, an international solidarity group, an artists' group, a 'time-bank' place, etc). This spatial organization and rearrangement also allowed for the daily occupation and habitation of the space and the 'rooting' of the movement to the space. One could say that a spatial re-imagination of the public space was taking place parallel to the re-imagining of a new political system.

Perhaps the most extraordinary aspect of the movement (in a country quite used in demonstrations and protests) was the daily central assembly organized in horizontal basis and attended by hundreds. The selection of the speakers was random following a draw, in equal time slots and independently from their political, views, reasons and desires. The horizontally of the assembly was emphasized by its participants at every opportunity, as no group or opinion was allowed to dominate and everybody maintained the right to speech²⁵³. Although numerous speakers and participants had right or far right political standpoints, fascist discourses and fascist behaviours were not tolerated. The reason was that those standpoints were perceived as against the universality and the openness of the movement, as for example during the first

(cited in Merrifield, 2006, p117).

²⁵² A slogan written on the banners in the square (Avaton, 2011).

²⁵³ This was also impressive as most of the recent public assemblies that taking place in collectivities, social movements end up being dominated by those who have the strength, or the experience or even the loudest voice (Kiki G., personal communication, 2011).

days guys wrapped in Greek flags had attacked immigrants at the square (Ilias Z., personal communication, 2011; Apostolis F., personal communication, 2011). The assembly also opposed any representation or any kind of political or professional identification. As Ilias Z. (personal communication, 2011) put it 'it was a square that fitted everybody... unless you were a politician or a cop'.

Although the excitement for the function of the assembly was widespread and is shared between most of my respondents and from thousands of participants expressing their opinion in social media (Facebook, real-democracy.org, amesi-dimokratia.org, Aganaktismenoi.com), yet it was not devoid of criticism among the participants²⁵⁴ in terms of its organization, selection of speakers, location and centrality. For example Isa (personal communication, 2011) has commented that the fact that the assembly was organized late at night impeded elders, or people who had to work next day or people with young children from attending. Kiki G. (personal communication, 2011) argued that the assembly should have been placed at the steps between the upper and lower square as to avoid the split between two parts and so that elders would have a place to sit down comfortably, that it should be split in many assemblies in order to comply with discourses in the square that demanded pluralism, horizontally and de-centralisation. Other criticisms included the fact that the two-minute slot for a speech was not enough for the development of an argument and did not allow for any deliberation (Isa, personal communication, 2011), criticisms against the creation of the committee that was assuring the smooth operation of the assembly, but which was allegedly manipulated by Left parties posing as ordinary citizens or by those who were more long-standing participants in the movement (Isa, 2011). Yet it is certain that the public assembly in the main statutory space was a historically unprecedented and unique event. It offered the opportunity to thousands of participants to participate in the public sphere, to share a common space where everyone would meet and everyone could articulate an opinion, a

²⁵⁴ "There were some tensions (especially surrounding the question of livestream coverage of the meeting) but this is inevitable in meetings where living-breathing people participate" (De.indymedia, 2011).

place of direct and unmediated participation according to the model of the archetypical agora. Panourgia (2011) writes that 'young people who had never before bothered themselves with politics - either in its ancient Greek sense of caring for commons (common spaces, common governance, common jurisdiction, common rights, common responsibilities) or in the modern sense of partisanship - caused (again) the emergence of a polis'. Effectively what took place in Syntagma could be characterised as practice of commoning of unprecedented scale, commoning as a social dynamic (Bollier, 2010), horizontal, inclusive and non-commercial, organized around the common resource of Syntagma's public space but also resisting the immanent enclosures of the city's and the country's public and common resources, material and immaterial. The indignant movement rejected the existing participatory framework of democratic political procedures set by the state and was actively implementing new models generated by the participation of the public in the movement. Its long duration, which affected the everyday life of the participants for a period of time, and the function of the assembly, turned the square not merely into the usual stage of dissent but also into the actual place of political fermentation.

4.3.4.1. Mediation and representation

The issue of representation was a very important and central argument in the square during the movement. From the first days of the movement it became apparent that at least in the main space of the square the TV crews were unwanted. As a participant recounted: 'in the square there is now Papadakis' TV crew wanting to interview us. We refuse categorically. TV is fighting this movement and we will not pretend to be its representatives. Creeps, you showed someone who said he was going down to Syntagma to complain about criminality in the city centre! You are such clowns' (De.indymedia, 2011). The reaction of another participant to the TV crew is 'They need a kicking. They are looking for idiots to tell them about the movement, and show them next to commercials with boobs and arses. They

debase everything, the sell-outs' (De.indymedia, 2011). This hostile behaviour towards the main media is soon turned to a ban, voted by the assembly which it extended also to foreign TV crews, journalists and photographers. In general any mediation external to the movement is denied. This becomes a contested decision, for example Anna P. (personal communication, 2011) complained that it was not democratic: 'Syntagma square is a public space, and if it is a public space this means I can take pictures'. The same participant also commented on the partiality of the assembly's decision: 'when the square it is attacked by the police, or somebody gets beaten by the cops then they urge you to take pictures, but if you go at your own will to document anything at the square you are the one that gets beaten'. Media team members also have stressed that part of their role was actually to negotiate access for approved journalists and to physically accompany them inside the square so that they weren't assaulted by members of the public (Dimitriou & Kavada, forthcoming). Yet, as the existence of numerous private pictures and videos from the square shows, it was not forbidden to use media as an individual. As Ilias (personal communication, 2011) explained, what was banned was representing the movement as a professional photographer, or as member or a professional body or crew. In any case the ban to all external media was a highly contested argument as it also raised the issue of who was considered internal or external in a movement that was supposedly open to anybody. It appears that that the movement activists were determined to retain control of the space of the square and, by extension, of the representation of the movement in the media (Dimitriou & Kavada, forthcoming). The emphasis was thus on self-representation. Also if one compares the media ban of the indignants at Syntagma square with the widespread mediation of other similar movements around the world, it is easy to highlight the grave importance and possible consequences that filming activity acquires specifically in Athens.

The discussions about representation and mediation also extended to the various websites of the movement. As it was already mentioned, the movement actually started on Facebook, when, inspired mainly by the Spanish Indignants movement, a page was set up calling for a similar gathering in Athens, proving the continuously increasing relationship between virtual and

actual space. Interestingly the initial creation of the sites followed the spatial characteristics of the square and the split between upper and lower parts. The websites Real-democracy.gr and amesi-dimokratia.org -who were in conflict in regards to which one was the 'official' site of the square-were related to the functions of lower square and included pages with the minutes and decisions of the meetings of the assembly, while aganaktismenoi.com, seemed to belong to the more nationalist or far-right part of the movement and the upper square and did not seem that interested in the assembly. Yet, opposite to the spatial organization, those three websites and their dedicated Facebook were quite top-down as it was the administrators²⁵⁵ running the website who ultimately had editorial control of their virtual space. Furthermore the sites did not link to each other but seemed to be isolated internet islands while, in contrast, the common physical presence in the square forced different, even conflicting groups to communicate with each other and coordinate their actions. The square also played a more centrifugal role in another respect. In the absence of many common statements or other 'texts' expressing the common will of the movement and combined with a negative attitude towards spokespeople, the representation of the movement centred on what was happening in the space of square – the assemblies, the demonstrations, the police violence etc. For this reason, once the movement lost its central physical locus in the square, it was impossible for activists to develop a sustainable and flexible organizing structure based only on the digital properties of the movement (Dimitriou & Kavada, forthcoming).

Undoubtedly, however, the sites helped in the diffusion and decentralisation of the movement, facilitated a representation that was internal to the movement and different from the one presented by mainstream media, and furthered the extension of the public sphere. Taken together, the

²⁵⁵ Administrators also had access to the personal and log data of users, a source of power as in movements with no official membership lists these databases operate as the unofficial membership log. On all websites, it was also not clear who the administrators were, which led to discussions around who was behind the websites, whether they were associated with a specific party, what were their political interests etc. (Dimitriou & Kavada, forthcoming).

online/offline spaces of the movement facilitated the production of a heterogeneous movement that employed a diversity of tactics – from carnivalesque disruption to the building of a community based on the rules of participatory democracy. They allowed the movement to be dispersed but connected, to scale up but maintain a central focus, to be united in its indignation but divided in its practices.

4.3.4.2. Eviction

On July 28 2011 and during a forty-eight- hour general strike a small number of protesters clashed with the police in front of the Greek parliament and other areas of central Athens. Using this isolated incident as an excuse, the police attempted to evacuate Syntagma Square of protesters, as well as other key protest spots in Athens, employing an excessive, disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force criticized by *Amnesty International* (2011). Video footage²⁵⁶ shows the police throwing tear gas at citizens trapped inside the underground metro stations, throwing stones, brutally beating defenceless and elderly people, driving through the crowds on motorbikes, destroying the tents and sending hundreds of people to the hospital, some of which were seriously injured, permanently blinded or deafened. The unprecedented - during democratic times - violence continued throughout the night and on 29 June, the day when a new package of largely unpopular austerity measures was passed. Despite the violent police attack the protesters returned to the square, used human chains to wash off the surface of the square from chemicals and tear gas and re-establish the movement's camp.

The degree of brutality used by the police, as well as the number of

²⁵⁶ Some indicative video material recording the extensive police violence and tactics: PALAVIARIS30, 2011. *XHMIKA STO METRO SYNTAGMATOS 29-06-11*. [video online] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xR_ME-XYZM> [Accessed 12 June 2012]; RealDemocracyGr, 2011. *Χούντα στην πλατεία Συντάγματος / 29 Ιουνίου 2011*. [video online] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S20_JuaX8gg> [Accessed 12 June 2012].

mobilised officers, clearly denoted that the target was not a small group of violent protesters but the entire movement on the square. For various MPs, mostly from the governing party, the movement was undemocratic and therefore should not have taken place in front of the parliament. Even before the outbreak of violence, on 29th of May the vice-president of the Greek government declared that ‘movements without ideology and organization, that is to say movements based on anger, can only lead to either an ineffective venting of emotion, which at the end of the day is of no interest to the political world, or pave the way for an undemocratic change of regime by organized groups’ (Pagalos, 2011). In the same manner the deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs commented on 31 of May: ‘I can accept tougher questioning and criticism, but not the levelling of our political system. Democracy can give a solution. The flattening of our democracy can only lead to a slippery road. The majority of the Greek people can be angry, but not under these circumstances’ (Skai, 2011).

Nevertheless the excessive police brutality had its toll and the movement started gradually losing participants. Some of the participants claim it was because they got demoralized since the bill was voted by the parliament, some were fearful of another police attack, some said the climate in the square was getting unbearable because of summer temperatures, some got bored and some believed that it was time for the movement to take a new form and to decentralize. At the end of July 2011 and using the law against free camping and exhortations to maintain the ideal image of the city²⁵⁷, the mayor of Athens ordered a nocturnal attack of three special force police squads to evacuate the camp in the square by force (RealDemocracyGr, 2011). The assembly continued for approximately one more month with lessening participants until slowly the movement diminished. Syntagma Square returned to ‘normality’ and the protesters soon got replaced by rushing shoppers. Nevertheless, as I am going

²⁵⁷ This was considered ironic as during the events of the 29th of June police squads were attacking people who were eating at the restaurants of the most touristic areas of Athens, an image that could be considered more harmful for the public image of the city than a handful of camping tents at the square.

to further argue in the conclusions of the thesis, I believe that that similarly to the events of December of 2008 the reverberations of the events of the summer of 2011 will last for many more years to come.

4.3.4.3. The emergence of a new public

Trying to situate the acts of Syntagma square within a democratic framework, as described in the first chapter, one faces a feeling of bewilderment as both the public and the state define the model of democracy differently. For the public that assembles in the square the existing democratic system is close to Schumpeter's(1943) ideal, an elitist²⁵⁸ approach to democracy, which entails leaving great autonomy - to the extent of unaccountability - to the elected leaders and reserving political action for the parliament and not for the public. Based on Habermas' (1989) notion of democracy the public in Syntagma square is indeed formed in order to respond to moments of crisis and alleged abuses of political office by the authority. Furthermore, the daily assemblies based on deliberation between equal members and had extended the public sphere and established a culture-generating paradigm of democracy. But the deviation from this ideal Habermasian democratic prototype comes from the fact that there are not constitutionally grounded legal procedures to acknowledge a public that refuses the accepted norms and asks for a reconstitution of democratic culture. Such a possibility is rejected as not related to the political word and interaction between the state and such a public is denied. Moreover, this rejection does not take place in the frame of an agonistic relationship, such as described by Mouffe's(2000) democratic model, where the conflicting parts recognise each

²⁵⁸ Indicative of elitism could be the fact that since the reconstitution of democracy in 1974 two members of Karamanlis family (Konstantinos G Karamanlis in 1974 and 1978 and Konstantinos A Karamanlis in 2004 and in 2007)and two members of Papandreou family (Andreas Papandreou in 1981, 1985 and 1993 and George Papandreou in 2009) were prime ministers of the country. Konstantinos G Karamanlis was also in office in 1955, 1958 and 1961 and George Papandreou (the elder) in 1944, 1963 and 1964.

other as legitimate adversaries. On the contrary, the parts are perceived as illegitimate and undemocratic opponents that constitute a highly antagonistic and violent relationship. It is also quite clear that the indignants in Syntagma cannot be described by Mansbridge's (1980) differentiation of unitary and adversary democracy, since none of those two models can describe the indignant movement: a large-size, non homogeneous polity that was further resisting any institutionalisation of political participation.

It is then possible that the acts as described in Syntagma square express two antagonistic definitions of democracy strategically opposed and possibly incompatible: incumbent and critical democracy. Yet they are simultaneously in operation, sharing the same space and the same time. The public space of the square becomes the common ground where those clashing claims gain visibility. What becomes crucial is primarily to understand that making the conflict visible is not an impediment but an essential part of democratisation. Staeheli (2009) has demonstrated that 'the unruliness and the struggles between those who seek to maintain particular kinds of order and those who would disrupt it are at the heart of democratization, or of the enactment of democracy' (2009, p74). She believes that those struggles may be most powerful when they involve spatial transgressions that differ from spaces of formal, institutionalized power and cause a relocation of the public sphere. She has argued that disorder can be a powerful tool in fostering democracy because it highlights the conflicts that are inherent in democratic politics. While disorder can undermine the process of democratisation by making participation in public life and governing impossible, the suppression of disorder and the eradication of the disorderly public is a greater threat to democracy (Staeheli, 2009). Consequently, maintaining the possibility of divergent acts (assembling, waving a flag, chanting, expressing a political opinion, etc) to take place in Syntagma square is essential for democratic politics. Those who assembled in the square were neither the public who hated their city nor the personifications of enemies of democracy, but rather a public who challenged the set social norms thus indicating the urgency of a political change. Understanding the acts of Syntagma square as indications of inherently different political projects also establishes different grounds for evaluating their political and social importance. Quite

often the critique of the Syntagma actions and also the critique of movements, acts and occupations in different Athenian public spaces, such as the Navarinou Park, as well as the critique of the recent global occupy movements is based on notions of success, result and progress that are connected to efficiency, institutionalization and hierarchical organization, which are characteristics and assumptions deeply rooted in the idea of incumbent democracy. On the contrary, the vagueness, the slow decision making, and the impracticality of some aims could be considered negative for the engineers of one type of democracy and positive assets for the other. A participant in the Spanish square movement illustrates some those differences: 'In the square, the discussion itself is more important than its conclusion. The responsibility is to defend and extend this [...] it is very difficult to think about tomorrow when you are wrapped up in the events of today. It is even more difficult because the rhetoric of the political class has always held forth on 'tomorrow'. In this movement, tomorrow is unthinkable for the moment. There is only now.' (Kaejane, 2011).

The strength of critical spatial practices, viewed through the lens of critical democracy is to voice diverse opinions and demands, to empower and to further extend the public's imaginary in directions that are not within the existing social and political norms since those are dictated and constituted by rules and values based on incumbent democracy. Visualizing, and more importantly, experiencing the claims for a different democratic participatory framework is producing - slowly but progressively - a different kind of public.

4.4. Conclusions

In this chapter I have provided an account of my key studies in two neighbouring, interrelated but also quite different areas of the Athenian city centre, demonstrating that the city functions both as an arena for Rousseauian self-creation of new citizens, but also a *war zone* (Holston 1999), showing how the dominant classes met the advances of these new citizens with new strategies of segregation, privatisation and fortification (Holston 1999). Equally,

the public spaces of the city are places of power; they offer visibility, acknowledgement of one's being, social and cultural networks, and the rights of the public, a visible manifestation of diversity and heterogeneity placed together (Amin, 2006).

I have started with Syntagma square, the main statutory space of Athens, in the city centre and in a high value non-residential area dominated by commercial services, hotels, office and governmental buildings, most prominent of which is the building of the parliament. The square was created in alignment with the values of the newly born Greek state and the aspirations of the authority and it was always part of the city plans. Its position, design and uses reflect historical social and political changes. The public space of Syntagma is considered as highly significant for Athens and its inhabitants, for more than two centuries it was viewed as a central place of interaction and contact among people, as a place where social networks and associations were built and where social life flourished, such associations and interactions considered indispensable characteristics of public space according to Jacobs (1992). Syntagma square is reflecting the relationship between the individual and society, a terrain of public expression of social psychology and citizenship, and therefore according to Simmel (1984) it can be considered as a representation of models of civil society where the urban mentality is revealed, characterised by distance and reservation, yet also by a complexity of relationships and situations.

Despite the intentions of the authority to produce a proper, geometrical, controlled and planned space of the square was often interrupted and interpreted differently by the actions of the users. Examples vary from orchestrated political gatherings and demonstrations, riots, symbolic acts of dissent like committing suicide²⁵⁹ or burning the Christmas tree but also the everyday informal political discussions that influenced the official politics during the previous century. Nevertheless, the strongly regulated and centrally

²⁵⁹ 77 year old pensioner Dimitrios Christoulas committed suicide in the main space of the square, in plain light on 4th April 2012, for financial reasons. In his suicide note he accused the government of causing his financial failure

designed and planned space of the square did not allow for a specific community or social group to influence or dictate any of the spatial modifications, although every single renovation of the square was followed by heated public reactions. Further enhanced by spatial decisions that cut off the square from its surroundings, the everyday uses of the contemporary square represent the depoliticization and commercialisation characterising the majority of the city's public spaces. According to Bauman's (2001) definition, Syntagma in its current everyday state is 'public but not civil', a space for organized movement, organized consumption and characterised by a 'redundancy of interaction, lack of friction, togetherness and any deeper reason to communicate' (Bauman 2001, p27). During exceptional dates, mainly during holidays, Syntagma becomes what Mitchell (2003) calls 'festive space' (p138), a space that encourages consumption while maintaining order, surveillance and control over the behaviour of the public. The square's current condition exemplifies the hierarchical production of Greek public space with the state at the head of the structure, aiming to control and even suppress the social practices that are at the bottom of the structure, a transcendental space of minimum social interaction.

The second key study area is the one of Exarcheia, created primarily as an illegal extension of the properly planned city, which, even after its incorporation in the city plan has maintained a 'dissenting' character, mainly because it has always been an area of students and intellectuals. This is because of the area's strategic location between different universities, its affordable accommodation and consequently the affordable prices of its cafes and taverns. Throughout its history the area's main square maintains a vivid combination of social, cultural and political character that blends with everyday life activities. Exarcheia square therefore is a public space where everyday multiculturalisms develop; a place of encounter between strangers and a place for sociability, association and interaction which, according to Sennett (1977), has the potential of challenging stereotypes. In its current state the square is simultaneously the symbolic centre for dissenting, antiauthoritarian groups, one of the central drug dealing places, the centre of the neighbourhoods' social life, a student hangout, a profitable commercial place and a problematical area

for the police and mainstream media. All these groups do not share the space equally but are in a continuous and dynamic process formed by shifting collaborations and contestations. These shifting conditions challenge the neutral or idealised definitions of public space as such definitions do not account for power and status differences and inequalities that shape the dynamics of those forming the public (Fraser, 1999). The access to the public is not equally available to all for reasons of power (Fraser, 1999) and different groups avoid encounters in the public space or are socially constrained in using the square (Sennett, 1977). On many occasions the public space tends to be dominated by groups whose community might be strengthened but it often simultaneously excludes others. The highly contested square entails a boundary crossing that for Sennett (1977) can be negative as much as it can be positive depending on how it is achieved, and produce more fear and anxiety than familiarity. On the same note the square is often perceived by different groups as threatening or excluding. Exarcheia square challenges the liberal notion of the public that is assuming public space is something perceived and used similarly by members of all different groups as Sharpe (2000) argues.

As both Syntagma square and Exarcheia square are part of the city's public space, they are both influenced by the same historic circumstances and their production, as municipal squares, proceeds along the same main legislative lines that define the production of Greek urban public space and that were analysed in the second chapter. Yet those circumstances materialize differently in each one of those squares, revealing on the one side the dominance of state control and on the other the resilience of social practices. For example, the conditions of commercialisation and depoliticization and the processes of gentrification of the 1990s completely took over Syntagma square and its surrounding area. By contrast, during the same period, the existence of a social community in Exarcheia, whether imaginary, political, cultural, etc created a dense network that was powerful enough to oppose those processes and slow them down. The same difference becomes apparent during the events of December 2008. When during the events the protesters set ablaze the tall fake Christmas tree of the municipality in Syntagma square, the enraged Mayor responded by ordering and installing a new one declaring that 'In spite of all

those who do not love this city we insist to decorate it and celebrate, because the kids of the city deserve all the festive moments of which we deprived them those previous days' (Ta Nea, 2008; Aspro Provato, 2009) . With this declaration the mayor seemed to forget that the murdered teenager was also an Athenian kid. He further urged all citizens to continue visiting the commercial centre of the city and continue with their shopping, so that the Christmas celebrations could go on undisturbed. Syntagma indeed returned to 'normal' in couple of weeks. The same event in Exarcheia was seen as an opportunity to challenge the role of the state in both the public space and sphere by creating and maintaining a new type of public space, which as I aimed to show could be fruitfully characterized as commons. In this thesis I focused to Navarinou Park space that fulfils de Angelis' (2010) three precondition of commons: a common pool of resources, a community to sustain them, and commoning as a verb, which is the social process that creates and reproduces the commons.

Of course it would not be possible to equally compare the Exarcheia square and the park with Syntagma, as there are major differences in their bearing symbolism, their design, their position in the city, their uses and their social constitution, which I have aimed to demonstrate. The reason I am using the different materializations of events is to highlight the different extent of top-down and bottom-up practices and politics in the production of public space: Syntagma square is almost exclusively formatted by top-down policies, a public space representative of Crick's (2002) 'good' citizen, aligning with statutory and incumbent the definition of citizenship while Exarcheia is formatted by a constant struggle between top-down policies and bottom up claims for the public representative of the 'active' citizen (Crick, 2002) who desires to deliberate on this definition . Yet, as the event of indignants have shown, despite their differences the public spaces of the city are interrelated and function as conductors of social practices and the political imaginary, which spread in the city like the fires of the riots. The emergence of the commons, whether materialised as in the space of Navarinou Park or immaterial as the practices in Syntagma square, also indicated the existence of a common desire for deliberation and a critical reassessment of citizenship and the current political model.

As I have shown in this chapter, the public spaces of a city are mirrors of historic social-cultural and political conditions. The contemporary emergence and circulation of the commons in the Athenian space indicates a transition from the previous period of depoliticization and commercialisation of the urban landscape to a new politically active period of institutional critique, at least for a wider percentage of the Greek public and changes in the collective political imaginary which produces inventive manifestations of political critique and resistance.

Chapter five: Conclusions

This research has explored Athenian public spaces with a focus on the contemporary city. The central concern and finding of this work is the convergence of public and commons, notionally, spatially and politically. The central points of my analysis have been space and politics within a democratic political framework, with an emphasis on the first. What I aimed to show is that this convergence occurs when space and politics - whether expressed through statutory politics, through civic explicit political acts or through everyday life - are examined as intrinsically bound up together and mutually constituting. Such a mutual constitution becomes evident when the public space is examined as an intrinsically political space, not only shaped by politics and the container where politics are manifested but also where the politics are produced.

In order to bring forth the political praxes of a space, I opted to follow Lefebvre's (1991) analysis of space as 'produced' by material practices of representation and everyday practices of appropriation. This approach contributes to the existing scholarship on Greek public space mainly approached from the disciplines of architecture and urban design, where space is analysed as a 'fixed' geometrical entity. On the other hand, works that seek to investigate the social or civic practices in Greek public spaces, especially the

latest literature on social movements, seem to ignore the element of space, or relegate its importance.

This convergence, spatially, legislatively and politically, constitutes a departure from the classical literature on public space, which as I will explain further is problematic for the examination of Greek cases, as the notion of public, examined in contemporary liberal democratic countries, is seen always in relationship with the state. The commons on the other hand has emerged as a critique of the statutory production of public space and as a reaction to the supremacy of the state in managing, controlling, creating, designing, allocating public space and defining the public sphere. Nevertheless, as I have aimed to show, those notions, though seemingly antagonistic, meet in my key studies. I have also aimed to show the significance of their convergence: Public space examined 'as commons' places an emphasis in its public character as against its depreciation and commercialisation, while commons examined 'as public' distinguishes commons from enclosed strongholds.

5.1 The Greek public condition

In this work I aimed to examine the current condition of public space in Greece, building on a critical evaluation of past socio-political conditions and the factors that shaped the public space production proving that its current state reveals chronic pathologies of the wider urban space production.

In order to achieve an in-depth analysis of the production of public space I have conducted a historical survey, starting from the creation of Athens as a capital of the Modern Greek state. Initiating the survey from this specific period, going well beyond the focus period of the thesis, was important for grounding the analysis of the key studies. The Modern period, hit the Greek ground forcefully, introducing radical territorial, social and political changes, and most significantly, for this study, introducing the first concepts for the contemporary city as body politic.

The historic survey has revealed the multiple layers, stories and symbolic meanings that permeate the public spaces from their conceptual perception, their successive formation and the present condition, presenting thus the city as space and not as an abstract ahistorical place. It has further revealed existing characteristics and idiosyncrasies of the Greek urban space, being tightly connected with the social and political condition of the country. Revealing the space's historical layers and knowing the existing and past characteristics and relationships that have shaped and defined the space constituted a solid base for assessing the present condition, but also for thinking of new political directions, new systems of governance, for reconstituting a totally different kind of city and for imagining and a future right to the city. As Merrifield (2013) suggests, in order to evaluate and learn from the legacy of the recent movements, one should ask how revolutionary crowds form, where they draw their energies from, what kind of spaces they occur in and what kind of new spaces they produce. It would be impossible then to recognize the novelty and importance of the commoning practices, and new formed spaces in Athens without acknowledging their past. A small neighbourhood park or a neighbourhood assembly would not be containing the seeds of political change if it wasn't for the existing and past characteristics of the Greek public condition.

As I have shown in the background chapter, for numerous historic reasons public space, until recently hierarchically produced, reveals on one hand the dominance of the state over civil society, and on the other the state's weak ability to systematically intervene, regularise and organize the built environment and its inability or unwillingness to safeguard public property against the personalised claims and commercialisation that have become the norm.

Regarding the physical stock of public, open and natural spaces in the metropolitan area of Athens, I have indicated their current depletion and their transition from being public assets to investment assets. This depletion has been sustained through the creation of a set of "crisis management" rules, based almost exclusively on immediate financial return. The new set of rules (either

new bills, or more frequent amendments of bills) allow for the overriding of the existing Athens masterplan. Also, a fairly new characteristic is the interference of private bodies with the city's masterplan, again in the name of financial efficiency and given the lack of state money for the implementation of the plans. This interference not only allows public space to be sold to private investors, but also permits private investors to design and manage the city centre. Most importantly, though, this modus operandi of the state has entailed a subordination of the principle of safeguarding the public interest, in response to a declared 'state of exception' dictated by extraordinarily urgent conditions 'created' by the crisis; an ostensibly temporary measure that is destined to become permanent. The overall outcome has been a reconfiguration of the notion of the public and almost everything dependent on this: public good, public assets, public property and public space. Simultaneously the state has increased social control punishing dissenting voices that oppose social dissolution and public sell-out, as antisocial, anti-democratic and lawless.

Another current governmental policy respecting public spaces that continues from the previous two decades is the emphasis on flagship projects. Unfortunately, this kind of large scale project in Greece is often not incorporated in the masterplan, but is rather the excuse to alter it, thereby weakening any relation either with the context or with the longer term. Also, as flagship projects absorb the lion's share of the state budget, the corresponding funds for the maintenance of existing public spaces or the funding of neighbourhood, small scale, local projects is diminishing. The remaining public spaces are physically decaying and the solution to physical deterioration appears to be either their management by top - down private parties, favoured and promoted by the state and hailed by mainstream media, as against the bottom-up commoning practices and spaces that are suppressed by the state, because they are resisting privatisation while simultaneously producing alternative political bodies.

With the dual processes of deregulating urban space and altering the notion of public while strictly regulating civic practices, the state is clearly aiming at preserving political compliance through either personalised

favouritism and clientelism or by exploiting or promoting indifference and apoliticization, while simultaneously augmenting the control and restriction of dissenting voices and practices. In effect, we are witnessing a concurrent shrinking of both the public space and the public sphere leading to an enclosure of the public good for the benefit of few.

5.2 Public as commons and commons as public

This crisis of the public became evident with the emergence of the commons, spaces and practices of resistance against the depreciation of the public and as a critique of the dominant statutory definition of the term that seemed to increasingly lose any reference to common benefit.

Commoning practices accentuate the material, immaterial and symbolic value of the public spaces as a resource that by definition should be considered a common resource. Indeed Public space in Greece is legislatively described by its ownership status and the terms of its use; under the terms 'of common use' and 'for common benefit' that denote something that is not private, but instead subject to the various classes of public use. Consequently the principle of availability to common use of public space is a more important factor than the conditions of ownership in relation to private-public split. Public space is increasingly considered by the public as a common resource, which belongs to all, can be managed and taken care of by all, and less as 'of the state'; thus one could talk about the 'public as commons' as a term that resists the enclosure of the resource and maintains it as open and accessible. Also, as I have shown, commoning practices in public spaces are also reinvigorating the public sphere through civic education, public participation in political processes and engagement with public affairs (practices that were until very recently declining), promoting ownership on decision making as well as expanding the public sphere to include voices and demands that are not usually heard.

On the other hand, I have shown that the commons should be seen not as independent but in relation to the public space. Firstly because their emergence

as a term, as spaces and as practices, comes as a resistance against the perceived usurpation or misuse of the public space by the state, against the institutionalised definition of the public and public sphere, and against what is perceived as an enclosure of the public, in other words they are formulated in critical relationship to the public. Secondly, the commons in question, whether their users accept it or not, are also public spaces. Furthermore, for their practical viability the commons depend on public resources such as water, electricity, the municipal garbage collecting system, etc., and on public institutions: for example, Navarinou Park is safeguarded against commercialisation by a court decision that defines the spaces as public. Therefore, a more appropriate term would be 'commons as public'. This does not only denote the spatial reality of Athenian commons but also constitutes a further refinement of the term commons, one which emphasises the danger of another possible enclosure, an enclosure from within, where the space becomes the stronghold of a specific community and not a place of public use. Lastly, the Athenian commons, as spaces and as a network of similar commoning practices in the urban space, play an important role in raising awareness of the imminent enclosures threatening the city's public spaces, many of which have not yet taken place. And it is precisely this network of resources, both of spaces and social practices, such as urban parks, alternative methods of political behaviour, social creativity and political resistance that need to be maintained as plural, open and productive; so that the yet unimagined, unknown, un-designed and unspoken commons that depend on those resources might come to light.

Public spaces and commons coexist in the Athenian context. The public spaces can be perceived as commons that are institutionalised, hierarchically managed, ordered according to the model of incumbent democracy and typically refer to national scale, while the commons can be seen as public spaces that are horizontally managed, mostly localised and implemented on the model of critical democracy. Yet despite their differences, their convergence in Athens mirrors the existing socio-political conditions and indicates the public's need and desire to change them, to safeguard the openness of the resources and to criticize the current political system. When analysed in regard to the Democratic political model, their convergence constitutes a shared field of

practices that enriches the public sphere and can lead to a deepening of democratisation processes.

5.3 The use of visual ethnography

This thesis aimed to analyse urban space as the entanglement of the strategies embodied in the hard geometric urbanicity with the tactics of soft, metaphorical and everyday social practices. Engaging with the method of visual ethnography has enabled me to record and understand those tactics and Greek civil social practices, a challenging task since those practices are characterised by novelty, informality, heterogeneity, elusiveness, and dynamism, and therefore hard to approach through bibliographical sources.

Furthermore, by using visual ethnography, a reflective method has allowed me to understand and represent the multifaceted topic of public spaces, offering a personal and situated account that supplements the 'objective' chronicle that predominates in existing Greek literature on the subject. The spontaneous character of visual ethnography allowed me to negotiate fieldwork in real time in "live" social contexts, revealing that social practices and everyday life in public spaces can never be exhaustively and objectively observed as they constitute a dynamic and continuously shifting field. Public space is a mirror of a society, urban life, and socio-political circumstances, and therefore unless we stop time there are always going to be new events and changes brought to the field.

The visual aspect of my chosen method also had a major impact in the analysis of my topic. Documenting through a video camera has altered my way of looking at my key studies, both in terms of perspective and scale of observation and in terms of mediation between me and my research subjects. It has also revealed a multiplicity of findings about urban space that would not have been explored otherwise: the extent of contentious and illegal spatial practices, the militarisation of public space, the existence of historic traumas, like the trauma of civil war or the military junta, that have not healed despite having being an

ignored topic in contemporary Greek history, and the importance of issues of representation within specific spaces and movements.

In pursuing these methods I have also created visual archives that document practices in relation to space that have not been recorded before. The videos of this research are at the same time ethnographic films, archives and documentaries. They are intended as justification and records of this research, as archives of the presented events, spaces and practices; as ways to share my research and ways to continue learning through the interaction with the audience; and as creative filmic works and means of advocacy.

This approach contributes both to methods of analysis and to ways of representation in architecture and urban design. Holding a 'reflective and situated point of view', rather than a true and dominant point of view (as for example the bird-eye view of the architectural models and plans) when conducting spatial research can allow for a pluralist reading of the urban space that often eludes standardised architectural representations, illustrating an idea of architecture and space described by social practices.

Summarising the research findings and the contribution of this thesis to contemporary literature, I will argue that is threefold. Its theoretical contribution lies in the convergence of the terms public and common, and the investigation of the terms 'commons as public' and 'public as commons' that can be critical tools for the understanding the contemporary conditions in public spaces and the contemporary practices of critical resistance that emerge in public spaces. Methodologically it contributes to the existing literature with a reflective, situated, visual, ethnographical method used for both the analysis and the representation of space, than is unusual in spatial practices. Thirdly it contributes to the contemporary literature of Greek public spaces by examining the space as 'produced', by combining existing with emerging key studies, and by focusing in close-up on the area of Exarcheia, which is conspicuously absent from scientific discourses.

5.4 Avenues for future research

The results of this research picture a moment in the on-going changes in Greek public spaces. As such, they provide a consistent contribution to existing academic debates, but not final conclusions. Accordingly, the first avenue for future research must be appreciated in the continual necessity of monitoring changes in the urban landscape (its physical reconstruction and its socio-political re-assessment) in order to establish a long term plan to investigate the production of the contemporary city. For example, the reverberations of the indignants movements have produced spaces and practices that are only now becoming evident: people who met in Syntagma during the summer on 2011 are collaborating on new business models, community centres, and distribution networks based on solidarity and horizontality while creating a network of practices, that has begun to influence the Athenian context.

A further direction of research could be towards the opening-up of the categories of citizen and denizen, as they include numerous groups such as immigrants, drug addicts, homeless, the unemployed, precarious workers, etc, whose needs, desires and practices are well as their potential in shaping the democratic public space and sphere are underestimated when they remain roughly homogenized under those terms.

Secondly, as this research is clearly situated in Athens, an avenue for future research could include other Greek urban centres and also rural areas that have long been neglected. A fascinating change would occur if further research on this direction would be locally 'situated', departing from the standard discourses that evaluate all the other Greek urban centres in relation to the capital, and from the perspective of researchers who live and work on the capital. A further debate on decentralisation both of services and resources and of political power would greatly benefit from such a direction in research. A recently observed 'exodus' of the Athenian population towards smaller cities and the countryside and the return to agriculture or the formation of agro-communes emphasises the need to expand research beyond Athens and beyond the urban.

Moreover, as public spaces in Greece are mirrors of socio-political relations at a national level, so too are public spaces in different countries. The increasing number of popular movements that have taken place internationally in public spaces, with the most recent being the current one in Hong Kong, the global occupy movements, but also a number of movements and riots connected to appropriation or defence of the public spaces in contexts with totally different political, national, social, cultural characteristics, as well as the statutory repression and violence with which those aims are met, are also indicative of the contradictory meanings attaching to the concept of the public, the urgency of its redefinition and a common public need to criticize the statutory political models in a global scale. A future avenue for research then would be to situate the Greek phenomena within an international context.

In general I believe that the investigation about the locus and form of the political should expand to more spheres including the personal, the regional, the rural, the transnational, etc., including accounts that are simultaneously local and global, situated and networked. Otherwise there is a danger that the potentiality of political resistance gets restricted on several *Avatons* of specific formats and specific spatial strongholds, creating a discursive enclosure that limits the political imaginary.

Lastly, a direction that I would be personally interested to explore is the role of design as a political tool. What conclusions can be drawn and perhaps avoided from the deterministically designed uses of the statutory public spaces and what can be learned from the appropriation and the subversion of those determined uses and users when the space is collectively managed? In a city characterised by incomplete or decaying large scale flagship projects, such as Athens, can the commons contribute to a new model of urban intervention that would be flexible, resourceful, small scale, inclusive and participatory in its design?

On the other hand, what would be the role of the architect in relation to practices and spaces of commoning? Considering that the all the emerging commons are very critical and almost negative in attitude towards any architectural intervention or coordination, invariably perceived as top-down or

as aligned with the market, is there any possible role that the architect can play? Using the example of my filmic “space” as a space that depicts, expresses and accommodates different voices within a central direction, I would like to investigate the possibilities of translating this concept in to a build form and enquire the potentialities and challenges of designing for a commons.

Lastly, what I consider as the most fascinating future aspect of this research is that nobody can predict with certainty whether the public spaces of Athens will turn into outdoor shopping malls or if a new urban revolution it is on its way, and this is because the circulating practices are producing ways or resistance that are still unimagined, and new commons that are yet to come.

Timeline of Modern Greek history

GREEK WAR OF INDEPENDENCE (1821-1829)

- 1821, 25 March: Bishop Germanos III of Old Patras blesses a Greek flag at the Monastery of Agia Lavra and proclaims the beginning of the Greek War of Independence. The Greek Revolt had been initiated earlier the same year (on 21 February) by the leader of the secret organization Filiki Eteria (Society of Friends) Alexandros Ypsilantis.
- 1826, 10-11 April: After almost a year under siege, the Sortie of Missolonghi symbolizes the culmination of the bloody War of Independence. Approximately 8,000 Greek soldiers and civilians perish, nevertheless international sympathy for the Greek cause augments.
- 1827, July 6: Signing of the Treaty of London by the United Kingdom, France, and Russia. The Great Powers agreed to force the Ottoman government to grant the Greeks autonomy within the empire and dispatched naval squadrons to the eastern Mediterranean Sea to enforce their policy resulting to the Battle of Navarino on 20 of October.

FIRST HELLENIC REPUBLIC (1829-1832)

- 1828, 24 January: Ioannis Capodistrias, a Greek Foreign Minister of the Russian Empire and a distinguished politician and diplomat in Europe, is elected Governor of Greece. Kapodistrias launched a major reform and modernisation programme that covered all areas, nevertheless was opposed by rich and influential merchant families. He was assassinated in Nafplion in October 1831.

KINGDOM OF GREECE (1833–1924)

Reign of King Otto (1833–1862)

- 1832, 7 May: Signed by the Great Powers (the United Kingdom, France and the Russian Empire) the Treaty of London established the independent Kingdom of Greece to be reigned by King Otto from 1833 to 1862.
- 1834: Athens is chosen as the capital of the newly independent Greek state, mainly due to historical reasons. King Otto commissioned distinguished public buildings and a modern city plan drawn originally by the architects Stamatis Kleanthis and Eduard Schaubert, and redrawn by Leo von Klenze.
- 1844, March 18: After the 1843 military and public uprising against the autocratic rule of King Otto, the Greek Constitution is voted into effect.
- 1862, 10 October: Otto is forced to leave the throne and the country.

Reign of King George I (1863–1913)

- 1863: The Great Powers nominate Prince William of Denmark new King of the Hellenes, thereafter called King George I.
- 1896, 6 April: The first modern Olympic Games are held in Athens.
- 1897, 17 April: The Ottoman Empire officially declares war against Greece. The 1897 Greco-Turkish War ended with the signing of an armistice on 20 September by which Greece agreed to make minor territorial concessions in Thessaly and pay war indemnities. The loss of war undermined the inability of the Greek state to fulfill national aspirations, whereas in order to pay the reparations Greek economy came under international supervision.
- 1901, November: The Gospel Riots or “Evangelika” burst out apparently as a protest against the publication of a translation into modern spoken Greek of the gospel of St Matthew, although other motives also played a part. The disorder reached a climax on 8 November, 'Black Thursday', when eight demonstrators were killed.

- 1910, 2 October: Eleftherios Venizelos founds the *Komma Fileleftheron* (Liberal Party) and becomes Prime Minister of Greece.

First Balkan War

- 1912, 8 October: The member-states of the Balkan League declare war on the Ottoman Empire. The First Balkan War begins.
- 1912, 9 November: The Greek army enters Thessaloniki. The southern Macedonia region is liberated from Turks and occupied by Greece.
- 1913, 30 May: The First Balkan War ends with the signing of the Treaty of London.

Second Balkan War

- 1913, 16 June: Bulgaria attacks its former allies Greece and Serbia. The Second Balkan War begins.
- 1913, 10 August: Signing of the Treaty of Bucharest. The Treaty recognizes Greece's sovereignty over great part of Macedonia as well as the definitive annexation of Crete. The Second Balkan War ends.

National Schism

- 1915, January: Britain offers Greece post-war concessions in Asia Minor and Venizelos agrees to join the Allies. Opposition by the King Constantine I forces Venizelos to resign shortly afterwards. The National Schism begins.
- 1916, 30 August: Venizelos establishes in Thessaloniki a parallel administration called the Provisional Government of National Defence. During 9 months Greece had two governments.
- 1916, 18-20 November: A political dispute over Greece's neutrality in World War I leads to an armed confrontation in Athens between the royalist government and the forces of the Allies supported by Venizelos. The so-called

"Noemvriana" (November events) denote three days of rioting when royalist paramilitary units targeted the Venizelists.

- 1917, 19 August: The Great Fire of Thessaloniki destroys most of the city. French architect and archaeologist Ernest Hébrard supervised the reconstruction plan.

World War I

- 1917, July: Greece officially joins World War I on the side of the Allies.

Greco-Turkish War

- 1919, 15 May: The Greek army invades Smyrna. Beginning of the Greco-Turkish War.
- 1920, 31 July: Greek diplomat, philosopher, and writer Ion Dragoumis is assassinated in Athens as payback to the assassination attempt against Venizelos the day before in Paris. November of the same year Venizelos loses the General Elections.
- 1920, 10 August: Signing of the Treaty of Sèvres. Eastern Thrace is ceded to Greece, as well assigned the administration of the area of Smyrna for 5 years, however leaving the region under the Ottoman Empire.
- 1920, 19 December: After the sudden death of King Alexander I earlier this year, Constantine I returns as King.
- 1922, 9 September: The Turkish army re-captures Smyrna. During the next days, the city is set on fire and approximately 100,000 Greeks perish.
- 1922, September: After a military and public revolt the government is deposed and the King is forced to resign and is succeeded by George II. Venizelos returns in Greece.
- 1923, 24 July: Signing of the Treaty of Lausanne officially ends the Greco-Turkish War, defines the borders of the modern Turkish state, and stipulates the population exchange that brings approximately 1.5 million Greeks from Asia

Minor to the country. In a period of a few months the population of the bankrupt Greece increased by 1/3.

SECOND HELLENIC REPUBLIC (1924–1935)

- 1924, 25 March: Greece is proclaimed a republic and Pavlos Kountouriotis becomes President.
- 1935, March: After a failed coup against Panagis Tsaldaris' government, Venizelos flees the country and dies in Paris the next year.

KINGDOM OF GREECE RESTORED (1935–1967)

- 1935, 3 November: George II returns to the throne.

4th of August Regime (1936–1941)

- 1936, 4 August: Self-coup with royal support by General Ioannis Metaxas, who declares a state of emergency, ordains martial law, annuls various articles of the Constitution and suppresses the spreading riots to restore social order. The Metaxas regime was rooted in Greece's classical history, espoused the values and symbolism of Italian Fascism, and had economic ties with the emerging Nazi Germany; nevertheless, its international policy was neutral.

World War II (1940–1944)

- 1940, 28 October: Ioannis Metaxas rejects an Italian ultimatum demanding to allow Axis powers to occupy Greek territory and Italian forces invade Greece. Beginning of the Greco-Italian War.
- 1941, 27 April: The German Army enters Athens; the Nazi flag is raised on Acropolis and Greek writer Penelope Delta commits suicide.

- 1941, 22 May: The King, the Royal family and the Government flee to Alexandria.

Axis occupation and Resistance (1941–1944)

- 1941, 30 May: Law students Manolis Glezos and Apostolos Santas tear down the swastika flag from the Acropolis. This act inspired resistance against the Axis occupation.
- 1941, 27 September: The National Liberation Front (EAM), the largest resistance group, is founded.
- 1941-1942, winter: Mortality rates peak during a winter of mass starvation known as the Great Famine.
- 1942, June: The Greek People's Liberation Army (ELAS) initiates armed resistance in the mountains.
- 1942, 25 November: The Gorgopotamos bridge is blown up in a common operation between the Greek militants and British saboteurs (Operation Harling). This successful operation disrupted the German transportation of ammunition via Greece to the Nazi Africa Corps commanded by Rommel.
- 1943, 13 December: The most serious case of war atrocities by German occupying forces in Greece known as the Massacre of Kalavryta takes place.
- 1944, 10 June: The Distomo massacre. 218 civilians are murdered and the village is looted and burnt. In 1997 four relatives of victims brought legal proceedings against the German government demanding reparations, eventually to be rejected in 2012.

Restoration of the Greek Government - Civil War (1946–1949)

- 1944, 14 October: Athens is liberated and the Greek government-in-exile headed by George Papandreou returns.
- 1944, 3 December: A demonstration organized by EAM is dispersed by shootings from British troops and policemen leaving more than 28 people dead.

The so-called "Dekemvriana" (December events) mark the prelude of the Civil War.

- 1945, 24 October: Greece becomes a founding member of the United Nations.
- 1946, March: Fighting resumes between the Government and the Communists after the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) boycotts the elections in protest against the persecution of former leftist and resistance members during the state-tolerated White Terror period.
- 1947, 12 March: After the British withdrawal, the Truman Doctrine is announced and military and economic assistance is destined to Greece and Turkey to fight Communism. The Cold War begins.
- 1947, 1 April: King George II dies of sudden heart failure. His younger brother Paul succeeds to the throne.
- 1949, 16 October: The commander of the Communist guerrillas announces a ceasefire that in effect ends the Greek Civil War.

Postwar Greece (1950–1967)

- 1952, 18 February: Greece and Turkey become members of NATO.
- 1963, 27 May: Assassination of politician, anti-fascist resistance icon, and activist Gregoris Lambrakis.
- 1963, November: The Centre Union party is elected to power and George Papandreou becomes Prime Minister. His political rival Karamanlis is self-exiled in Paris.
- 1964, 6 March: The royal government announces the death of King Paul. He is succeeded by his son Constantine II.
- 1965, 15 July: Premier George Papandreou is forced to resign after the *Aspida* scandal and the political crisis known as *Apostasia* (Apostasy), practically a Royal Coup involving a group of politicians from the own Centre Union party, among them Konstantinos Mitsotakis.

Military dictatorship (1967–1974)

- 1967, 21 April: Coup d'état led by a group of colonels initiates the *Seven Years* of right-wing military juntas.
- 1968: Counter-coup organized by King Constantine II fails. The Royal family leaves the country.
- 1968, 13 August: Assassination attempt against Dictator Papadopoulos by Alexandros Panagoulis fails.
- 1968, 1 November: George Papandreou dies. His funeral becomes the occasion for a large anti-dictatorship demonstration.
- 1973, 1 June: In an attempt to legitimize and “democratize” the regime, Dictator George Papadopoulos declares Greece a republic and himself President.
- 1973, 17 November: The Athens Polytechnic uprising ends in bloodshed, and a total of 24 civilians and students are killed. Since then, the Polytechnic uprising is hailed as a symbol of resistance to tyranny. The commemoration day 17th of November culminates to a demonstration that begins from the Polytechnic ending at the United States embassy.
- 1974, 20 July: Turkey invades Cyprus.

Third Hellenic Republic (1974–2010)

- 1974, 24 July: Konstantinos Karamanlis returns to Athens and wins the elections celebrated on 17 November with his newly formed conservative party, named New Democracy.
- 1974, 14 August: Second phase of the Attila Operation in Cyprus. 40% of Cyprus comes under Turkish occupation.
- 1974, 13 December: With a national referendum, monarchy is abolished and parliamentary republic established.
- 1981, 1 January: Greece joins the European Community.

- 1981, 21 October: Andreas Papandreou becomes Greece's first socialist Premier and PASOK is alleged as the "Change."
- 1989, 26 September: Greek liberal politician Pavlos Bakoyannis is assassinated by the terrorist group N17 (November 17).
- 1994, 6 March: Greek actress, singer, activist, and Minister of Culture Melina Mercouri dies of cancer.
- 1996, 31 January: Greece and Turkey are brought on the brink of war after a Greek military helicopter crashes in the area of two uninhabited islets in the Aegean Sea. The Imia-Kardak crisis resulted from sovereignty issues remaining to date unresolved.
- 1996, 23 June: Andreas Papandreou dies.
- 2004, 1 May: Cyprus joins the European Union.
- 2004, 4 July: Greece wins the UEFA Euro Cup in Portugal. A month later Athens hosts the 2004 Summer Olympics.
- 2008, 6 December: Riots and protests begin after the assassination of 15-year-old student Alexandros Grigoropoulos by two policemen in Exarcheia.
- 2010-2012: A series of demonstrations and general strikes take place across Greece against austerity measures. Memorandum is signed between the Greek government and the so-called Troika formed by the European Union (EU), European Central Bank (ECB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF). The Greek government-debt crisis and the Eurozone crisis continue.

Glossary

Allagi

Allagi (“Αλλαγή”) meaning “Change” in Greek denotes the change of government and is often used by Greek political parties in their political campaigns. Nevertheless, it is principally associated to the 1981 Parliamentary elections that resulted to the first socialist government in the history of Greece led by Andreas Papandreou PASOK.

ASOE

Established in 1920, the Athens University of Economics and Business is popularly known by the acronym ASOE (Α.Σ.Ο.Ε.Ε.), which stands for the former Supreme School of Economics and Business.

Central Intelligence Service (ΚΥΠ)

Originally founded in 1953 under the name Central Intelligence Service or KYP, the administrative division became a civilian agency in 1986 and changed its name to National Intelligence Service (NIS). During its first eleven years (1953-1964) KYP was controlled by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), while during the Junta of the Colonels (1967-1974), KYP actively supported the military regime.

EAM-ELAS

The National Liberation Front or EAM was the main organized body of the Greek Resistance against the Axis occupation during World War II. Though closely associated to the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) throughout the Occupation period the EAM included several other leftist and republican groups. The Greek People's Liberation Army or ELAS was the military arm of EAM, and remained active until February 1945. EAM-ELAS was popularly known as the “Mountainous Government.”

EKAM

EKAM is the Special Counter-Terrorist Unit of the Hellenic Police.

EPON - ΕΠΟΝ

EPON is the acronym for the United Panhellenic Organization of Youth, that is, the youth wing of EAM, as well active in the resistance against the Axis Occupation forces.

Hoodies - Koukouloforoi

Against the background of civil demonstrations and riots, the hoodie (a sweatshirt with a hood) has become a political symbol and a stigma for rioters, often including police-driven agent provocateurs.

GSEE - Γ.Σ.Ε.Ε.

The General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE) is the highest, tertiary trade union body in Greece. It was founded in 1918 by the aim to defend the interests of Greek workers.

KKE

The Communist Party of Greece (KKE) was founded in 1918 as a Marxist-Leninist political party, effectively being the oldest party in the Greek political scene. KKE was outlawed by the dictatorial regime of Metaxas in 1936 and persecuted during the Regime of the Colonels.

MAT

A Special Forces division of the Hellenic Police whose primary role is that of riot control. The division is officially titled the Units for the Reinstatement of Order however it is popularly known as "matatzides" or "matades".

MEA

During the first government of Andreas Papandreou PASOK the MAT unit was temporarily substituted by the "Special Mission Units" or MEA.

Metapolitefsi

Translated as regime change, metapolitefsi denotes the transitional period from the fall of the Colonel dictatorship (July) to the Greek legislative elections of November 1974, as well as the democratic period following these elections.

National Technical University of Athens (NTUA)

Established in 1837, the National Technical University of Athens also known as *Metsovion* Polytechnic University, is among the oldest and most prestigious higher education institutions of Greece. Its original campus is located in central Athens, in the Exarcheia neighbourhood, and features among its premises the Averof building, an exceptional example of the Athenian Neoclassical period.

National Schism (1914 - 1917)

The National Schism was a series of disagreements between King Constantine I and Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos regarding the foreign policy of Greece during the years preceding World War I. Nearly resulting to a civil war, the National Schism had far-reaching consequences for the political life of the country and is directly connected to Greece's defeat in the 1919-1922 Greco-Turkish War and the establishment of the dictatorial Metaxas Regime.

New Democracy (ND)

New Democracy (Νέα Δημοκρατία) is a liberal-conservative political party in Greece founded in 1974 by Konstantinos Karamanlis. Its position in the political spectrum is centre-right and its colours is blue.

Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK)

The Panhellenic Socialist Movement or PASOK is a social-democratic political party in Greece founded in 1974 by Andreas Papandreou. Its position in the political spectrum is centre-left and its colours is green.

Prasinofrouroi

Translated as the "Green Guardians" (Πρασινοφρουροί), the title stands for the partisans of PASOK.

Propylaia

Propylaia or Propylea is the colloquialism for the central square in front of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (otherwise University of Athens), being among the most common starting points of public demonstrations. Not to be confused with the monumental gateway that marks the entrance to the Acropolis of Athens.

Synaspismos

The Coalition of Left, of Movements and Ecology commonly known as Synaspismos (Συνασπισμός) that is "Coalition," was a left-wing political party active from 1991 to 2013. Until 2003, it was called the Coalition of the Left and Progress, while since 2004 it has become the main body within Syriza.

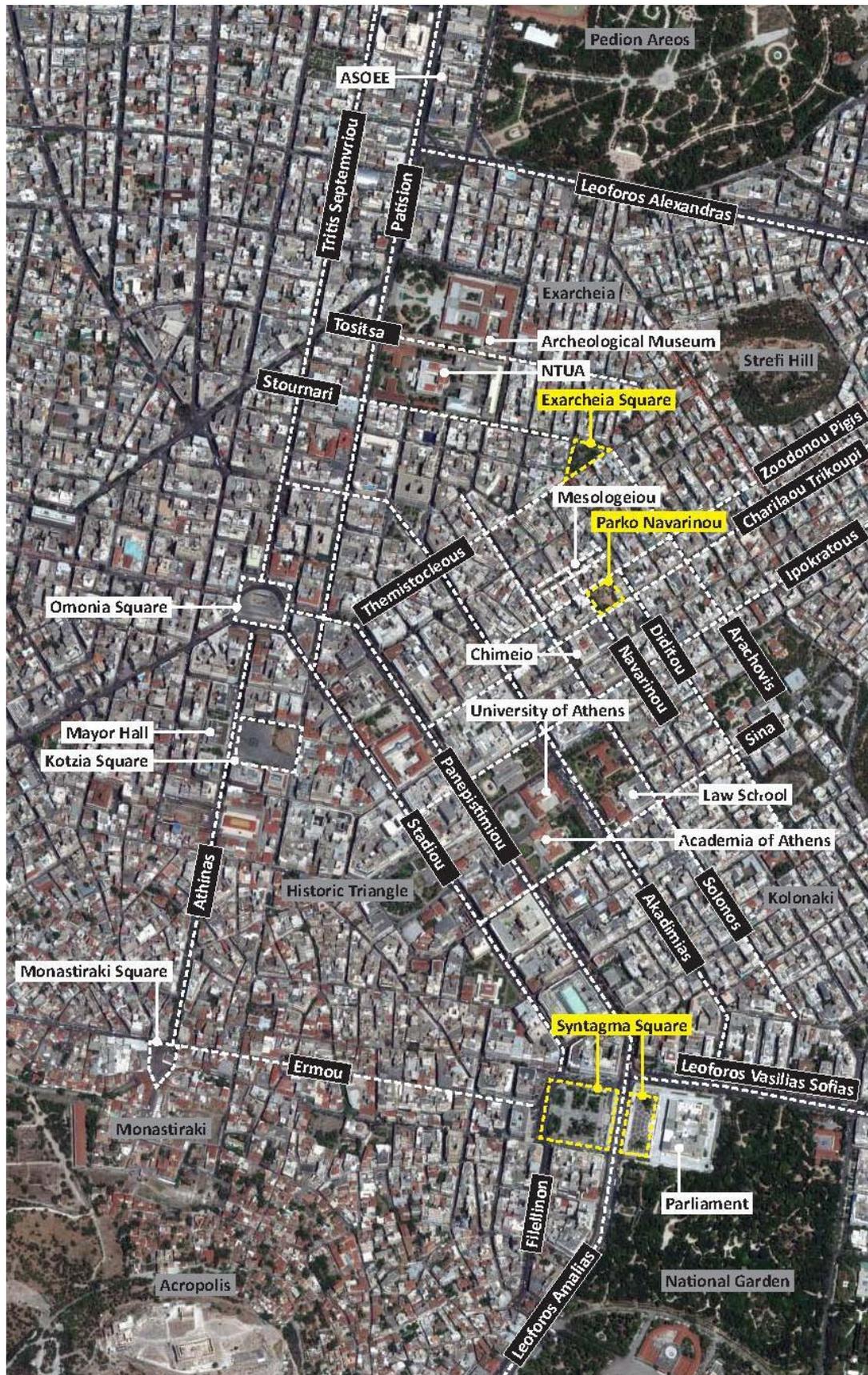
Syriza

The acronym Syriza stands for the Coalition of the Radical Left, a Greek left-wing political party founded as an alliance in 2004 and as a party in 2012. Its leader is Alexis Tsipras.

The Chemistry – Chimeio

Due to its central location, the Chemistry Faculty has often been occupied after public demonstrations. In November 1985, the occupation of the Chimeio building by anarchists met the brutal response of the Greek government that permitted the first asylum removal by the Hellenic police. The Occupation was a reaction to the assassination of the 15-year old student Michalis Kaltezas by the policeman Athanasios Melistas during the demonstrations for the anniversary of the Polytechnic uprising.

Map of Key Locations



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