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Living in fear and isolation;

gentrification dynamics in a city of crisis in the neighbourhood of hype

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Abstract:

As gentrification trajectories impinge upon the local context, the process is rather divergent, especially in times of crisis that underlie fluidity in quotidian realities. Focusing on an inner city neighbourhood of Athens, which is experiencing gentrification trends, this paper wants to shed light on the everyday lives that gentrifiers, life-long residents and immigrants experience. Apart from the social tectonics, i.e. sharing the same locus, whilst living parallel lives and interacting on the base of exploitation, in situ research brought about the dimension of inner city phobias. As the crisis has affected the quotidian life of the Athenian society, thus has led to further deterioration of inner city areas, feelings of fear arise amongst inner city residents, especially gentrifiers who engage in the conquest of space. Lifelong residents and first wave of immigrants, whilst being satisfied with the upgrading of the built environment, they turn against immigrants without papers. Whether new urban forms of cohabitation are about to emerge or whether a social implosion is about to take place call for new research agendas

Key words: Gentrification, Athens, social tectonics, urban fears

Introduction:

Gentrification is a rather dynamic process that has been identified not only in cities of the Anglophone world, but in cities of the so-called global south (Lees, 2012). Concomitantly, cities of the so-called lower hierarchy, like the ones of southern Europe, bring to the fore gentrification incidences. Either related to cultural strategies, the industry of entertainment, or the attraction of tourism related capital to the city core (Gonzales, 2010; Porter and Shaw, 2008), gentrification has been identified in cities of the Iberian Peninsula like Lisbon (Mendes, 2009), Madrid (Janoschka et al, 2013), Barcelona, Bilbao (Vicario and Monje, 2005), in Rome (Herzfeld, 2010), in Istanbul (Islam, 2005) and most recently in Athens.

In each case the way the process unravels, impinges on the specific socio-economic context of the city (Shaw, 2005), underlying the importance of contextuality in gentrification research, especially in the non-anglophone world (Maloutas, 2012). Gentrification basically involves a change in the population of land uses and land-users (Clark, 2005). The inflow of the new users of a higher socioeconomic profile is accompanied by an outflow of former users of a lower socioeconomic status. The change in land uses underlines the way the exchange values take over use values in space and the way social and spatial relations become commercialized.

As a process, it has a very visible spatial component of social transformation (Smith and Williams, 1986), in each case, gentrification, cannot be considered to be a unitary phenomenon, but needs to be examined according to its own logic and outcomes (Butler and Robson 2001). From this perspective it would be more amenable to consider the range of processes that contribute to this restructuring, and to understand the links between seemingly separate processes (Smith and Williams, 1986).

Gentrification can be conseptualised as a part of a broader neoliberal agenda of a revanchist city, where the middle classes challenge the so far order in order to impose their sense of betterment (De Angelis, 2010). In this conquest, they come into conflict with the pre-existing spatial and social structures. Gentrification is a rather violent process that brings about issues of ferocity and fear of the other. Whilst gentrification dynamics emerge, towards the formation of a cleansed enclave, divergent socio-spatial relations appear. This paper will focus on the way gentrification plays out in the city centre of Athens, focusing on a former working class neighbourhood called

Metaxourgio[1]. The next session will drive attention to the current condition of the city centre whilst the following will discuss everyday realities in the gentrifying neighbourhood of Metaxourgio.

Athens; a city of crisis

The highly dense building stock of Athens, outcome of the antiparochi system[2], has served for the accommodation of the urbanizing deprived population till the 1970s, the accommodation of the first wave of immigration from Eastern Europe since the beginning of the 1990s. It has led to a vertical differentiation pattern were the richer households, the ones that did not suburbanise, reside in the upper floors -with the nice vistas of the city- and the lower strata reside in the ground floors and the basement (Maloutas and Karadimitriou, 2001). The lack of state policies, in terms of physical and social planning, led to an urban pattern characterised by social diversity and deprivation where different immigrant groups and local population, co-habit in a continuously deteriorating housing stock (Arapoglou, 2010). Feelings of discomfort emerge, especially after the 00's with the arrival of the most recent immigrant population from African and other Arabic countries; this new wave of immigrants has nowhere to reside and roams in the central streets of the city, being chased by the police on almost a daily basis, and most of the time falling victim of mafia practices[3] (Kandylis et al, 2012).

The sovereign debt crisis that has fallen upon the country and the forced neoliberal policies (Maloutas et al., 2012) are mirrored in the current condition of the city centre. The foreclosures of retail shops in the central parts of the city has risen to 49% from 2010 (Chatzis, 2012). According to the official numbers of Eurostat the unemployment rate in Greece in April 2013 was almost 27%. Delinquent behaviours dealing with larcenies and drug use in public space, homelessness and illegality have

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[1] The name of the area comes from the silk factory that used to function in this part of Athens. Silk in Greek is Metaxi, hence the area is called Metaxourgio.

[2] Antiparohi refers to the system where promotion is co-exercised by small owners and small construction firms in ad hoc joint ventures to produce small condominiums (Maloutas, 2003). Its implementation led to the erection of the majority of the low-rise–and more often architecturally interesting- housing stock, especially in the central areas of the city, and its replacement by high-rise and dense blocks of flat

[3] Second wave immigrants get exploited by locals who rent mattresses in old derelict apartments charging approximately 5 euros per night.

become everyday realities, whilst the media enhance xenophobic feelings as they relate these social problems to the existence of immigrant groups in the city centre.

Driven from middle class phobias and the anxiety for the future of the city the social democrat mayor, has declared that feelings of safety are not going to be restored, unless, policies against criminality and migration policies are accompanied by the middle classes movement back to the city centre (Kaminis, 14/3/2012). In order to achieve this back to the city movement of capital and people the municipality of Athens, in collaboration with other ministries (the ministry of the Environment and Climate Change, the ministry of Civilisation, the ministry of Development and the ministry of the Citizen's Protection) is about to launch a 'renovation' project, called 'Rethink Athens'[4], which is a supposedly 'sustainable' pedestrianisation, accompanied with cycling paths, of Panipistimiou Axis[5], following the example of Istiklal avenue in Istanbul. This project is going to receive funding from the European Union, as achieved by other European Cities, whilst the competition for the project was funded by the private sector (Onassis Foundation). This approach is actually projecting urban revitalization beyond the city limits by adopting the built environment to the accumulation strategies of the key elites of the city (Swygendoux et al, 2002) Additionally, the Municipality of Athens is launching another project called 'Relaunch Athens[6]' that deals with regenerations and investments in the built environment of the city via European funding. The logic behind these projects adheres to Harvey's (1989) notion of creative destruction of the built environment under neoliberalism. In times of crisis, the build environment, whilst priory undervalued, emerges as a prime asset for capital reinvestment in order to achieve growth and development.

However, so far, the project that is already implemented is that of the Ministry of Citizen's Security called 'Xenios Dias'[7] that has to do with socio-spatial cleansing: immigrants without papers and drug users that roam in the city centre. This social groups are arrested by the police and transferred to concentration camps. In times of neoliberal crisis the enhancement of the right hand of the state (Bourdieu, 2008),

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[4] The project is launched and advertised in English

[5] Panepistimiou is one of the major central axis of the city, and a rather expensive one as most of the banks own or rent buildings therein, some of neoclassical architecture.

[6] Again the name of the project is in English

[7] Which means Hospitable Zeus

demonstrates that policies related to the built environment are anything but laissez-faire (Wacquant, 2010) underlying the aggression of actual existing neoliberalism (Peck and Tickell, 2002). After all, before the investments take place, the state has to undertake some risks, and in the case of Athens security must be restored. From another perspective, a secure place becomes easier gentrified. Nonetheless, some inner city neighbourhood in Athens, like the area of Metaxourgio, had already entered a gentrification trajectory since the early 2000s due to the belles letters of the government that redevelopment would take place thus the regeneration projects that took place in order to prepare the city for the 2004 Olympic Games.

Gentrification dynamics in Metaxourgio

Metaxourgio is neighbourhood, towards the southwest of the city centre, in close proximity to important archaeological sites such as the Acropolis and Dimosio Syma[8], next to the major central squares of the city (Syntagma and Omonia Square) and to the historical center of Athens.
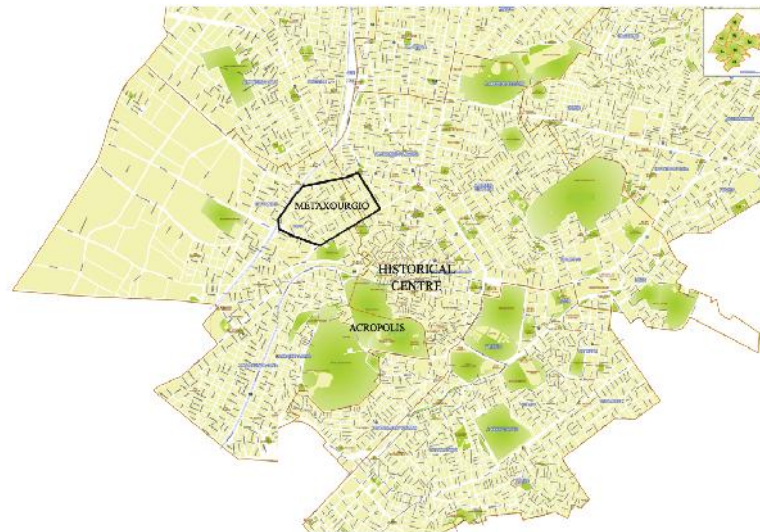
Map: Metaxourgio in Athens

The last years Metaxourgio is highly advertised in the local and the international press as the hype area of the city. National magazines discuss about the artists and the new residents that live there, about the exciting ambient of the area and about its alternative nightlife. International press gives pieces of advice to travelers that next

8 Dimosio Syma is the name of the ancient graveyard of important politician and warrior men

time they are in Athens, they should definitely visit Metaxourgio as well, as: "*The best place to take the pulse of the new Athens is Kerameikos-Metaxourgeio, a bustling quarter where Chinese merchants, North African immigrants, gallery owners and the café set exist side by side with the city's demimonde*" (Times, 6/1/2011).

In order to approach gentrification tendencies in the area of Metaxourgio, qualitative research was undertaken from 2010 till the end of 2011 embracing in situ observation, visual documentation, the collection of planning research proposals for the regeneration of the area by the local and the central state, the collection of newspaper and magazine articles, research on local blogs and conducting semi-structured, open ended, in depth interviews. In total 74 interviews were conducted with residents (gentrifiers, lifelong residents and immigrants) and key informants such as developers, politicians, planners and new local entrepreneurs.

As gentrification dynamics in Athens emerge at the micro-scale, the process has distinct characteristics, reflecting the socio-spatial structuring of the city. So far, the process is *punctual*, i.e. identified in the street, building or apartment level), *sporadic* (gentrification conglomerations in specific parts of the neighbourhood) and *scattered* in space (gentrification enclaves in several parts of the district).

However, the four distinct elements of gentrification, as discussed by Davidson and Lees (2005) are apparent. Capital is reinvested by private initiatives (by gentrifier households and realtors in the area), the land uses of the area are (still) changing, there is an input of households of higher socioeconomic status (upper class and lower middle class), and displacement affects the most vulnerable groups of the area, i.e. the gypsies, immigrants (with and without papers) the lifelong (older in age) households, and artists without economic resources.

The rent gap that was forming till 2007, that is the year prior to the 2008 real estate crisis, has frozen. The land values of the area have diminished, but in comparison to other inner city areas, in Metaxourgio the land prices have shrunken less. As explained in real estate newspapers, the gentrification nest has safeguarded the land market of the area (Kathimerini, 18/3/2012). Nonetheless, the small reduction in the rents of the area has provided the bohemian gentrifiers with the opportunity to rent more spaces that deal with their artistic initiatives (apartments in antiparochi buildings

that accommodate ateliers, or spaces that are turned into rehearsal spaces for theatrical or music performances), thus has attracted more artists in the area.

The upper class gentrifiers that have bought and renovated low story houses in Metaxourgio, have preceded the alternative bohemians. The upper classes that had political networks, had obtained information over the regeneration of the area. Hence, they relocated themselves in the area prior to the emergence of the rent gap. The alternatives followed the subsequent parallel move of the underground theatrical scenes and the nightlife trend. The staged model of gentrification is challenged once again, as it is not the first wave of marginal gentrifier that acted as magnet to the second wave of more affluent gentrifiers. In this case, different socio-economic groups were drawn to this neighbourhood for quite similar reasons, like the lower cost of buying or renting a house and the area's proximity to the city centre and the archaeological landmarks, whilst it seems that the upper class gentrifiers started appearing in the area prior to the marginal ones. This is not to suggest that the staged model should be dismissed, but the Athenian perspective suggests another type of gentrification, one that gentrification waves coexist. However, it is not only that gentrification waves coexist. The other social groups that already exist in the area, like immigrants, lifelong residents and the few gypsies that have not been displaced yet, co-habit with both waves of gentrifiers. Social tectonics, as described by Butler and Robson (2001) emerge in several instances of quotidian life.

Everyday realities in Metaxourgio

Social groups in Metaxourgio seem to run parallel realities to one another, without sharing same everyday experiences. This socio-spatial non-relation is described by Butler and Robson (2001) as the social tectonic aspect of gentrifying places.

Upper class gentrifiers have strong outdoor life in the area that is related to new land uses that satisfy their aesthetics and their conspicuous consumption patterns, thus help them to form a new status of habitus in Metaxourgio. Most of them have experienced gentrification in western cities, such as London and New York, in their early steps in their carriers or in their student life. As such it is frequently mentioned that the area reminds them of Soho in New York and they love the buzz that is being created by the new land uses that are related to entertainment. For their entertainment they prefer the wine bars and the expensive restaurants that have opened in the area. In the interviews

they often mention Polly Maggoo, a French wine bar, Funky Gourmet, a restaurant of molecular cuisine and some restaurants that deal with Greek cuisine in an eclectic way. They often visit the galleries and the art exhibitions in the area and they are very keen on going to theatre performances. For their everyday shopping they prefer biological shops in the city centre, as the one that has just opened in the area does not have variety of products, or up-market retailers in neighbouring areas.

Additionally, the upper class families with children, following the educational strategies of their class, prefer the private schools like the Hellenic American College or the American College, that are situated in the suburbs and the tuition fees are high, even related to other private institutes. This way the upper classes, no matter where they inhabit, they secure the reproduction not only of their dispositions but of their classes per se. In order for their offspring to get to school, private buses (hired by the school) collect them at a daily basis from the area.

The upper class gentrifiers in coalition with the realtor Jason Tsakonas, who owns the real estate company Oliaros and the 4% of the building stock of the area, have formed a non-profit coalition called Protypi Geitonia (PG), which means exemplar neighbourhood. This coalition has undertaken several initiatives that have been highly advertised by the press as bottom up approaches of active citizens, thus they have been portrayed as prime examples of positive activism. Their initiatives deal with the mapping of the land uses of the area, the proposal of regeneration schemes to the municipality of Athens, the temporary gardening of private plots of land as they have named it through 'guerilla gardening', the construction of a temporary playground, the discussion with the head of the police where they asked for more policing of the area.

The coalition tries to advertise the area and attract more land uses and gentrifier population, thus tries to put pressure, or collaborate with the government so as to regenerate the area in accordance to their criteria of disposition. Their initiatives are characterized as 'temporal', whilst, what is actually pursued is the permanent gentrification of the area. Although this coalition appears as the voice of the area, the other social groups of the area are hardly informed for the PG actions and tactics. Especially, the immigrants and the lifelong population claim that they find out about their initiatives either from the press, or from local whispers. However, in some

initiatives, like the gardening, they seem to have collaborated with the less affluent, of alternative culture, gentrifiers.

The 'alternative' gentrifiers share different everyday realities, as they basically interact amongst themselves. They mostly co-habit with friends or other artists in the apartments of the buildings of antiparochi, or they rent not well maintained low storey houses, that they renovate with their sweet equity, as described by Zukin (1989) about the first wave of gentrifiers in New York. The 'alternatives' in Metaxourgio have, too, a strong outdoor life that is related not only to new land uses, but land uses that were initially run by immigrants or lifelong residents. They especially prefer to hang out to new wave of kafenios[9]. New entrepreneurs inspired by the idea of the traditional kafenio, have established new kafenios, where they serve coffee and herbal teas, local spitirs accompanied by meze[10] in really cheap prices. The neo-kafenios are addressed mainly to young people, both men and women. From this initiative a new kafenio culture has emerged. This new culture of kafenio is creating a buzz in the neighbourhood, adding a different tone to the alternative scenery of the area. As the neokafenios revive the nostalgia of the past for the hipsters; in less than 3 years more than 10 equivalent uses have mushroomed in the area. At the same time, especially for the artists in the area, by hanging out in the same places, like some specific neokafenios, they get to create networks and to know people who may help them in their artistic carriers. Some have expressed that in the beginning they did not actually want to move to Metaxourgio, but 'it happened' because their friends were looking for flat mates. The daily ambient of the urban village and the networks that have been created in the area are so supportive and advantageous either for their imagination or for job seeking, that they are not willing to leave the area anymore.

Every year they organize the Carnival, where people dress up and wander in the streets. The carnival is advertised with posters in many languages so that the immigrants of the area can join the fiesta. The carnival route is organized by the alternatives of the area: accompanied by percussion groups they pass from several parts of Metaxourgio, from restaurants and the kafenios, where the owners serve

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[9] Traditionally, kafenio used to be a place where mostly working class men would gather during the daytime or in the afternoons where they would interact. Women would not join them in the kafenio, as they were mostly confined at the private sphere of the home.
10 Meze is like a tapa

people food and alcohol for free. As the main organizer has narrated: "*the whole thing is very Dionysian… in the end we wanted to start kissing each other*". Nonetheless, the carnival was characterised by the press as of a 'return' of a celebration reminiscent of past times, '*we are celebrating so that we can forget what burdens our consciousness*' (Kathimerini, 6/3/2011). Whether the alternatives are trying to create something common in space, in the end it gets commercialized; either by the press or by the new entrepreneurs in the area that are giving their products for free, so as to advertise the nice and tolerant atmosphere that exists, and attract more customers. After all, in neoliberalism, the commons that are produced in space thus the space that is produced by commons will be commercialized by practices (Hodkinson, 2012).

The carnival inspired other creative carnivalesque initiatives like the festival of the colours, organized by the alternatives again with workshops, games and dog beauty contests; all these initiatives take place in the public space of the area. The gentrifiers and their friends amuse themselves, and the immigrants and lifelong residents pass by and gaze at them. Another creative-like initiative puts Metaxourgio in the alternative tourist map of the city, under the title 'urban creatives'. The gentrifiers who organize the Alternative Tours of Athens (ATA[11]) ask 15euros per tourist head so as to walk them around the area and show the artist trend and the alternative nightlife. Nonetheless, these tours are organized in collaboration with the neokafenio owners so that the ATA gentrifiers will get to their shops clientele, and they will not have to pay for what they get. Apart from the spatial conquest of the area, speculating on other people sets on daily practices in Metaxourgio.

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[11] Ata in Greek baby language means 'let's go for a walk'

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY		SATURDAY		SUNDAY
18:00	**GRASSROOTS** Exarchia street art + architecture + arts & crafts + social movements Duration: **3hrs** Cost: **15€** per person Meeting point: **28th Oktovriou Str. (Patision) and Panepistimiou Str.** (Omonoia Metro station. Exit: 28 Oktovriou)	**URBAN CREATIVES** Metaxourgeio street art + architecture + arts & crafts Duration: **3hrs** Cost: **15€** per person Meeting point: **Omonoia Metro station** (Exit: Piraos str, in front of the Fashion Hotel)	**G.O.T.H. TOUR** The Goddess of the Hunt Tour. street art + arts & crafts + design + architecture Duration: **3hrs** Cost: **15€** per person Meeting point: **Panepistimio Metro station** (Exit: Korai square)	**ARCHITECTURE** Old New Modernism Kolonaki + Exarchia Duration: **4hrs** Cost: **15€** per person Meeting point: **Evaggelismos Metro station** (Exit: Vassilisis Sofias Ave. / Rizari Str. at Rizari Park) **Booking** is required. For a group day/time can be rearranged.	**URBAN CREATIVES** Psyrri street art + architecture + arts & crafts + social movements Duration: **3hrs** Cost: **15€** per person Meeting point: **Monastiraki Metro station** (Exit: Monastiraki square in front of the church) **Booking** is required. For a group day/time can be rearranged.	**ARCHITECTURE** Prestige Architecture From US Embassy and Athens Conservatory to Onassis cultural center Duration: **4hrs** Cost: **20€** per person Meeting point: **Megaro Mousikis Metro station** (Exit: Eginitou Hospital) **Booking** is required. Transport ticket for tram is required for this tour	**PHOTOGRAPHY** Athens' city center photo tour Duration: **3hrs** Cost: **10€** per person Meeting point: **Panepistimio Metro station** (Exit: Korai str) **Booking** is required. For a group day/time can be rearranged	**SOCIAL MOVEMENTS** Syntagma + Exarchia real democracy movement and new grassroots organization Duration: **3hrs** Cost: **10€** per person Meeting point: **Syntagma Metro station**, Syntagma square, at the fountain **Booking** is required. For a group day/time can be rearranged	
15:00	**BIKE TOUR** City's center biking tour Duration: **3hrs** Cost: **15€** per person Meeting point: **Acropolis Metro station** (Exit D. Aeropagitou str) **Booking** is required. For a group day/time can be rearranged		**STREET ART** Metaxourgeio + Gazi Duration: **3hrs** Cost: **10€** per person Meeting point: **Omonia Metro station** (Exit: Piraos in front of the Fashion Hotel)	**ARCHITECTURE** Downtown Regeneration From Metaxourgeio and Petralona to Gazi Duration: **3hrs** Cost: **15€** per person Meeting point: **Metaxourgeio Metro station** (Exit: Karaiskaki Square in front of the Imperial Hotel) **Booking** is required. For a group day/time can be rearranged.	**ARCHITECTURE** Alternative City History From the initial urban nucleus to its neoclassical expansion (Monastiraki – Plaka – Syntagma square) Duration: **3hrs** Cost: **15€** per person Meeting point: **Monastiraki Metro station** (Exit: Monastiraki square in front of the church) **Booking** is required. For a group day/time can be rearranged		**LITERATURE** Duration: **3hrs** Cost: **10€** per person Meeting point: upon arrangement **Booking** is required. For a group day/time can be rearranged	**BIKE TOUR** Biking tour to the seafront Duration: **3hrs** Cost: **15€** per person Meeting point: **Acropolis Metro station** (Exit: D. Aeropagitou str) **Booking** is required. For a group day/time can be rearranged	**PHOTOGRAPHY** Thiseio photo tour Duration: **3hrs** Cost: **10€** per person Meeting point: **Acropolis Metro station** (Exit: D. Aeropagitou str) **Booking** is required. For a group day/time can be rearranged
21:00 / 22:00	**NIGHTLIFE** upon arrangement	**NIGHTLIFE** Syntagma - Psyrri - Monastiraki Duration: **3hrs** Cost: **10€** per person Time: **21:00** Meeting point: **Monastiraki Metro station** (Exit: Monastiraki square in front of the church) discounts/free drinks included	**NIGHTLIFE** Gazi - Metaxourgeio Duration: **3hrs** Cost: **10€** per person Time: **21:00** Meeting point: **Keramikos Metro station** (Exit: Technopolis) discounts/free drinks included	**NIGHTLIFE** Syntagma - Psyrri - Monastiraki Duration: **3hrs** Cost: **10€** per person Time: **21:00** Meeting point: **Monastiraki Metro station** (Exit: Monastiraki square in front of the church) discounts/free drinks included	**NIGHTLIFE** Gazi - Metaxourgeio Duration: **3hrs** Cost: **10€** per person Time: **22:00** Meeting point: **Keramikos Metro station** (Exit: Technopolis) discounts/free drinks included	**NIGHTLIFE** Exarchia Duration: **3hrs** Cost: **10€** per person Time: **22:00** Meeting point: **Panepistimio Metro station** (Exit: Korai square) discounts/free drinks included	**NIGHTLIFE** Syntagma - Psyrri - Monastiraki Duration: **3hrs** Cost: **10€** per person Time: **22:00** Meeting point: **Monastiraki Metro station** (Exit: Monastiraki square in front of the church) discounts/free drinks included		**NIGHTLIFE** upon arrangement

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However, apart from the alternatives' conspicuous consumption of space, their other everyday consumption patterns are similar to the lifelong residents and the immigrant population. For their daily shopping, although they would prefer to buy biological and fresh products, since they do not have the adequate economic capital, they are forced to shop from the conventional supermarket of the area. They, also, shop from the ethnic mini markets of the area, as they like the ethnic products they can find therein in cheap prices.

From another standpoint, the lifelong residents and the immigrant population shop from the supermarket of the area, or they visit discount supermarkets in other parts of the city. The children of the immigrant and the lifelong population are sent to the public school of the area. The immigrant population is quite satisfied with the quality of the studies that are provided to their children, and from the fact that they may meet new friends, i.e. meet other parents of non Greek origin that send their children to school. However, the Greek population is not that satisfied with the educational status of the area, because of the high percentage of immigrant students at the local school.

In their free, time, the immigrants prefer to visit their compatriot friends in other parts of the city, or they prefer to go out in areas where there is a clustering of people of the

same origin. The lifelong residents, mostly men, meet each other at specific traditional kafenios in the area. Apart from this activity, they hardly use the new land uses related to entertainment nor go to the galleries, the art exhibitions nor the art performances in the public space of the area. Nonetheless, both, immigrants and life-long residents are satisfied with the upgrading of the area, as the new land uses have brought 'light and new people in the streets of the neighbourhood'.

The way quotidian life evolves in Metaxourgio, the divergent social groups may share the same space, but their lives run parallel to each other. Social cohesion arises only amongst people of the same class and social status. Hence, the social groups live in isolation from one another. As expressed by an interviewee:

> *while the newcomers mainly come from upper class families who have different status and relationships in the neighborhood, etc which is a bit isolated from the rest... but they can call an Afghani for gardening etc.... but that's the ... social they get, they do not become friends, their social relationship is limited to exploitation, and it is up to the boss if the job appointed is going to be a good or a bad one, if the payment will be set at 20, 50 or 100 euros... it is not that they will become friends and join each other for a cup of coffee at home and some chatting ... the only calls are 'come to paint my wall' or 'fix me my roof' etc*
>
> George, 26/10/2010

The relations that emerge amongst the different social groups are based on exploitation, especially of the immigrant population. After all, the labour of the newest wave of immigrant population is relatively cheaper, since this population is still without papers and they work in the black market with very little money. This condition gets really convenient, not only for the gentrifiers, but the life-long residents as well. At the same time, the immigrant population, apart from falling victim of speculatory practices, causes feelings of fear amongst the other social groups. As declared by a gentrifier interviewee:

> *...here in Metaxourgio there are groups of people that give you the notion of social cohesion... but let's not make fool of ourselves, there*

Phobic Syndromes in everyday life in Metaxourgio; when Jason met Jessica

In many interviews, residents of Metaxourgio, either gentrifiers, lifelong residents and first wave immigrants, have expressed feeling of anxiety and fear towards the second wave of immigrants. Especially, in many interviews with gentrifiers it was expressed that: *"I am not a racist, but…",* and then the dialogue would continue over the deterioration that is caused because of the immigrant population, especially the ones that have nowhere to reside and roam in the streets. The immigrants not only cause insecurity to the gentrifier population but they challenge their aesthetics as well. At the same time the long-life residents, consider the immigrant population and the gypsy community the main reason for the previous deterioration of the area. Most recently, they express a kind of relief with the displacement of the gypsy community, and their replacement by new land uses, mainly new kafenios.

Gentrifiers, lifelong residents and first wave immigrants, who copy the everyday culture of the Greek population, express their inconvenience with immigrants who have not settled well. The immigrant that is settled in the area is a friend, if s/he is 'like us', a family-man or woman with a job and a child that goes to school. Immigrants without papers are more likely to be considered criminals and they are to blame for their neglected looks, that insult the indigent aesthetics. Nonetheless, this new wave of immigrants that is considered as a threat is consisted of people displaced from wars, reminiscent of violent times of war battles and give the sense of burden homes; images that should not be transferred to the daily routines of our safe environment (Bauman, 2007).

At the same time, due to the crisis and the liquidity it causes to everyday realities, upper class gentrifiers feel especially threatened by public fears. However, fear is socially constructed (Koskela, 2010). In the case of gentrifying areas, fear becomes the explanation for any kind of danger (Koefoed and Simonsen, 2012) and it takes the form of the 'other' who is to blame for delinquent behaviors that threaten the order of

inner city life (Pain and Smith, 2008). From this perspective, the upper class gentrifiers' coalition with J. Tsakonas, can be considered as a defensive homeownership strategy, as suggested by Atkinson (2006). In order to protect their properties from public fear, they collaborated with each other so as to secure gentrification in the area thus strengthen the conquest over the urban frontier (Smith, 1996).

Most recently, the municipality of Athens has decided to approve the regeneration proposal of J. Tsakonas and his partners for the area of Metaxourgio via the European initiative of JESSICA[12]. The Jessica initiative supports public-private partnerships by providing low-interest loans to the investors by the European Central Bank. The project has to be designed in a sustainable way in terms of economic reciprocity as well. The urban project that J. Tsakonas and his partners want to launch in the area of consisted of redevelopment of building in the area as offices for creative young entrepreneurs, like architects, fashion designers, designers and new entrepreneurial ideas, the construction of students' residences, service studios accommodation facilities, creative pop-up markets and the redevelopment of buildings that will serve as housing to the creative clientele (atelies, studios, apartments etc). It should be underpinned, that apart from the PG gentrifiers, J. Tsakonas collaborates with important architectural national and international offices, and is in contact with European schools of architecture. So far the buildings that he owns in the area are used for free by artists in art exhibitions, such as the Remap that he organizes every two years[13]. When meeting the Jessica final approval, his gentrification plan will be put in practice in real terms and spatial appropriation will sharpen. As the mayor of Athens has declared, Jason's initiative is a very crucial one for the future sustainability of the city, as the municipality is broke. After all, in times of crisis the novel attempts to create the ground for gentrification (Davidson, 2012) will be celebrated as opportunities of economic recovery.

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[12] Joint European Support for Sustainable Investment in City Areas

[13] In this exhibition a map of the area is provided so that the visitors can roam from one building to another, check on the art, the buildings and the hype in the area.

Reflections on gentrification

In gentrifying spaces issues of social interaction exist in a superficial way. Different social groups that co-habit in the area hardly develop urban bonds amongst each other. Social ties are created only among people of the same class and aesthetic disposition. Social tectonics emerge in everyday relations among people of different backgrounds, be it ethnic or of class. Social groups live parallel lives in the same locus. Each group acts and reacts according to the specific habitus that is developed by people of the same socio-economic background.

Especially gentrifiers with their quotidian patterns of outdoor life and conspicuous spatial consumption, appropriate space, and sharpen the urban frontier conquest of the middle classes. Their relations to the groups of people who are not like them are based on speculation, i.e. driven by utilitarian purposes, they take advantage of impoverished households. They act in isolation, as they interact only with people like them. In Metaxourgio, the upper class gentrifiers form coalitions that end up in the socio-spatial control of the area, the appropriation of space and the enhancement of the gentrification trajectory. The alternative gentrifiers, whilst celebrating their creativity and their aesthetic dispositions, they actually work as the research and development sector of the real estate investors in the city centre (Ley, 1996).

Apart from cohabitating in the same area, the social groups seem to share feelings of fear that arise due to the crisis, the deteriorating of inner city living conditions and the threats they feel against delinquency. The 'other' i.e. the immigrant without paper, the drug user, or the prostitute, becomes the explanation of any kind of threat. As fear takes spatial forms, in contested spaces, fear of the other may become the driver of gentrification. Middle classes feeling threatened of the future outcome of gentrification, elaborate on the urban frontier and strengthen their socio-spatial conquests. In times of crisis, gentrification initiatives arise as the survivor opportunity for capital reinvestment in the city centre. As such, gentrification cannot be bad; investments in the built environment take place, new land uses emerge and more people 'like us' rehabilitate central areas. 'The other' who is actually to blame for all the inner city deterioration is displaced. After all 'the other' is not welcomed in our backyards. However, the 'other' is the real side of the gentrification story. The displaced gypsy, immigrant, poor household, i.e. the displaced other, underlies the

vengeful socio-spatial cleansing mechanism of urban neoliberalisation. Gentrification in times of crisis may arise out of the ashes of the creative destruction practices of neoliberalism. Nonetheless, as socio-spatial injustices become more apparent at the same time, cities' implosions become at stake. The current riots in Istanbul are about to tell a very important story of the rage of people against gentrification and urban neoliberalisation. It is then up to urban researchers to reestablish their research agendas according to the interrelated contextualities of gentrification that underlie the issues of social and spatial injustice and ferocity.

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