

Changing Socio-Spatial Identities. The case of the Asia Minor Refugee Urban Settlements in the Greater Athens-Piraeus Region in Greece

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The paper presents the main findings of a research conducted in the metropolitan region of the capital of Greece, focusing on the Asia Minor post-refugee urban neighborhoods. The research took place in 2009-2014, with parts of it updated during 2016-2019 and 2020-2023. The main findings of the research outline the issue of changing socio-spatial identity, emphasizing on the socio-economic discrepancies in the housing sector, as met within the urban refugee settlements. The paper explores the contemporary physiognomy of the post-refugee Attica that faces dereliction and demolitions of the old refugee houses. To explain the significance of these settlements, the paper combines literature review and field work. Field work includes original cartographic depiction, quantitative and qualitative methods. The aim of the paper is to provide findings on the contemporary situation of the urban refugee settlements of Attica, describing representative cases within the spectrum of urban socio-spatial identity transformation.

Keywords: refugee housing; urban transformations; Athens; Greece.

The research focuses on the range of socio-spatial transformations of the urban conglomeration of the capital of Greece, through the examination of the evolution of the Asia Minor refugee settlements. The refugee issue of 1922 was a milestone for the Greek history of the 20th century, as it was associated with a vast demographic change in the country. In fact, it is known as one of the biggest refugee settlements in worldwide history (Pentzopoulos, 1962).

Following the Greek-Turkish war (1919-1922), the Lausanne Treaty in 1923, ordered the compulsory exchange of populations, in Greece and Turkey (Exertzoglou, 2016). Based on historical evidence (Clark, 2009), more than 1.200.000 Christian Orthodox and 400.000 Muslims had to leave their homes and settle in Greece and Turkey respectively. This vast demographic flow, is perceived as a critical turning point for the Greek history. The experience of expulsion, the traumatic memories of the destructive fire in the city of Smyrna, the dislocation together with the efforts for assimilation, formed the narrative that shaped the contemporary Greek identity (Papadopoulos, 2013).

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Abstract

Introduction



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Despite the fact that there is plenty of literature for the circumstances of that first settlement (Λεοντίδου, 2001 and 2017; Σαρνηγιάννης, 2000; Γκιζελή, 1984), little is known about the socio-spatial evolution that occurred afterwards. From this point of view, the research provides original material based on extensive field work (direct observations, photographic documentation, quantitative and qualitative research methods.) The research took place from 2009 to 2014 during author's PhD studies and it was updated through author's post-doctorate research during 2016-2019 and 2020-2023.

According to literature (Σαρνηγιάννης, 2000), the first urban refugee settlements were spatially oriented outside the boundaries of the existing city, approximately one to three Km. This spatial orientation had also a social impact. For many decades the refugee population was subject to discrimination and social exclusion, living in urban forms with lack of social infrastructures (Λεοντίδου, 2001). All these led to the formation of a solid cultural identity within the refugee settlements, based upon common social attributes and the experience of the violent displacement. Through the lapse of time, several changes on social, political and economic level altered the balances in the former homogenous urban refugee settlements. A noteworthy fact, is the transformation of ownership status from public to private after the payment of the required price from the refugees and their descendants. Consequently, the majority of the refugee apartments have gradually become private. Given this, the prevalence of the flats-for-land system has erased tangible elements of the Asia Minor refugee heritage. In many cases, most of the refugee estates have been demolished and replaced by typical blocks of flats. From this point of view, the old refugee houses could be perceived as tangible elements of socio-spatial identity in terms of collective memory (Rossi, 1991).

The aim of this essay is to propose an alternative approach regarding the analysis of urban space emphasizing on specificities of time and place. For the purposes of this study, the Asia Minor Refugee issue has been employed as a lens for urban space interpretation and analysis. The paper concludes with findings related to the contemporary condition of the urban refugee settlements in Attica that could serve as a basis for further consideration and research. The study also indicates critical enclaves among the plethora of the post-refugee areas in the Greater Athens-Piraeus Region, providing information relevant to the most degraded post-refugee areas that require efficient regeneration plans so as to avoid further dereliction. Moreover, the study includes general guidelines of how to further investigate the issue of the post-refugee neighborhoods in order not only to preserve the urban collective memory but also to improve the quality of life.

Methodology

The starting point of this research was a spatial observation, according to which, contemporary images of the old refugee settlements appear to be totally different. Regardless their common origin and purpose, today's images vary widely. To organize research framework, the main hypothesis is based upon the fact that the refugee settlements which had stronger interdependence with the nearby urban surroundings have been evenly assimilated to the urban fabric, whereas the one's that remained excluded have been trapped in the vicious cycle of degradation. The main research query is about the mechanisms or social practices that led to the one or the other direction, specifying on the local circumstances. The research took place in 44 refugee settlements in the wider area of the urban conglomeration of Athens-Piraeus from 2009 to 2014. Parts of the research have been updated in 2016-2019 and 2020-2023.

The study presented here comprise four distinct parts; the first part (2009-2011) involves identification of the remaining refugee housing complexes within the Greater Athens -Piraeus Region, the second part (2011-2012) is associated with description and documentation of the remaining refugee housing complexes, the third part (2012-2014) selection of case studies for in depth analysis and the last and fourth part (2016-2019 and 2020-2023) updating of the findings focusing on

the crucial enclaves identified in stage three. The key-issues examined during the first three parts of the research are presented below:

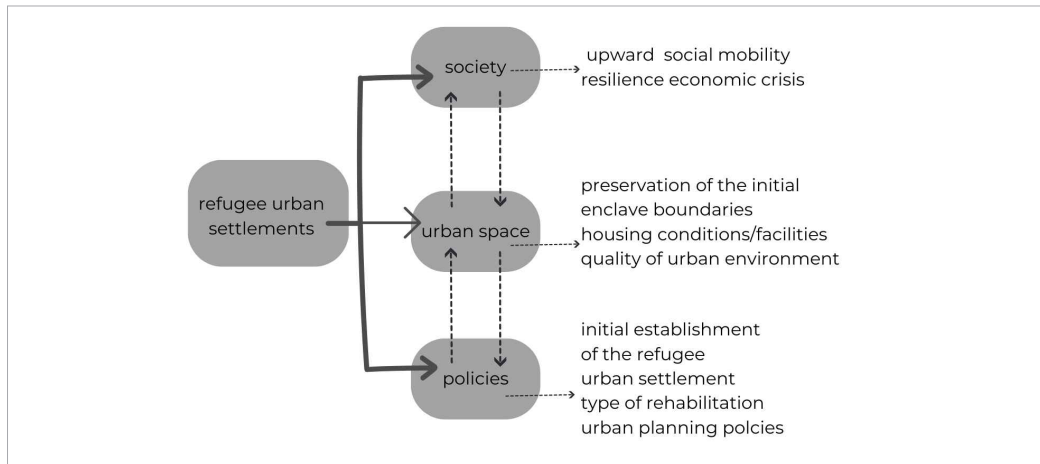


Fig. 1

Diagram depicting key-issues in Research Part I, II, III, author's work

Parts I and II of the research (2009-2011) and (2011-2012) focused on the collection of archival cartographic material and spatial observations regarding the existence of old refugee houses in accordance with the socio-economic attributes of their inhabitants, as documented by the Hellenic Statistical Authority. Results of parts I and II have been updated so as to depict the contemporary situation (number of refugee houses today, grade of assimilation, land and property values). This first part of the research involved multiple visits on site and study of archival material (old maps and blueprints from the Greek Ministry of Social Welfare). Following this procedure, a categorization of the post-refugee areas was necessary, according to the following criteria:

- _ amount of existing Asia Minor Refugee housing complexes
- _ State of maintenance (good, average, low). As a good quality refugee apartment, the study describes a well-maintained housing unit, with well-preserved frames, plastering, roofs and load-bearing structure. As average refugee apartments, the study describes housing units with a few construction damages on the frames, roofs and plastering, that are still habitable. In the cases of low quality of maintenance, there are evident and severe construction damages, including the load-bearing structure as well.
- _ land prices, compared to neighboring municipalities

In Part III, three areas were chosen so as to delve into the crucial issues recognized during parts I and II. This part of research took place from 2012-2014. The chosen areas were residential areas of different socio-economic stratification based on official census data from the Hellenic Statistical Authority. The selected areas were New Erythrea, New Philadelphieia and Nikea. The emphasis on living conditions in residential areas is based upon literature as many scientists associate them with different levels of social hierarchy (Soja, 2010). As Edward Soja underlined in *"Seeking for Spatial Justice"*, place of residence defined individual rights and responsibilities and became a new political framework for achieving social justice. As a consequence, the sense of identity in social or personal level is radically influenced by the residential area in each and every case. The main objective of field work in the three regions was the adumbration of the contemporary socio-spatial identity of the areas, given the fact that such information is not provided by existing literature. From the beginning, special emphasis was placed on today's situation with the view to trace processes and mechanisms that shaped the present socio-spatial profile of these post-refugee areas. Given the fact that the main thesis of this research is the assumption that initial planning was a critical and determinant factor for the subsequent urban development, effort has been made to collect relevant data through field work.

Quantitative and qualitative methods were also employed. During Part III of the study, a sample of 890 observations was designed with the help of the statistic method of quota sampling. Quota sampling is the non-probability version of stratified sampling and despite the fact that there is a controversy about its accuracy, detailed statistic controls took place to ensure its results. To be more specific, samples were efficiently selected in size using the proportional sampling method, taking samples from each participating region (Nikea, New Philadelphia and New Erythrea) based on the population of each region. In that way, adequate representation of all areas is preserved, so that it is possible to draw safe statistical conclusions. A sample of 350 people was selected in Nikea, 270 people in New Philadelphia and 270 people in New Erythrea. In this context, based on the population data for each municipal district, a random sample of telephone numbers of households was selected (generated with a random number generator). The phone number list contains 1,300 numbers in every area, almost four times the size of the requested samples to enable the export of successful contacts. The phone numbers used correspond to landlines originating from the base of OTE and they correspond to all the municipal departments of each municipality.

This sample size is considered reliable, since it forms the maximum standard statistical error at 3.3 percentage points, given the real population of the selected case studies. At the same time, it provides the possibility of creating sufficient bases for the analysis of each area of the examinee population. The formula used to calculate the standard statistical error was $SE = \sqrt{p(1-p)/n}$, where n is the sample size and p is the percentage/proportion under examination. Assuming that the sample follows a normal distribution, the confidence interval is calculated as $\pm 1.96*SE$, which will include the 95% of prices. Microsoft Office Excel 2010 was used for the calculation. Data have been analyzed with the help of SPSS software.

The thematic units of the questionnaires were about the transformations of the synthesis of the population and the different types of households, the socio-economic attributes of the population, the level of social mobility from generation to generation, stability towards the contemporary financial crisis, quality of urban environment, housing conditions. To be more specific the questionnaire included the following categories and subcategories:

1. Socio-economic attributes - Social Mobility
 - _ Education (participant's and ancestors-mother and father-)
 - _ Employment (participant's and ancestors-mother and father-)
 - _ Income (participant's and ancestors-mother and father-)
 - _ Housing conditions (participant's and ancestors-mother and father-)
 - _ Stability during the economic crisis of 2008-2012
2. Spatial Mobility
 - _ Place of birth
 - _ Refugee descendants and new residents in the neighborhood
 - _ Years of residence in the post-refugee neighborhood
 - _ Other places of residence
 - _ Evaluation of the quality of urban environment in the present area of residence
3. Collective social practices

The findings from the quantitative method were combined with data collected from qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews, focus groups and biographic histories taken from inhabitants of the areas chosen. The beneficial outcomes of the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods are supported by numerous scholars (Ιωσιφίδης, 2003; Κυριαζή, 1999). The purpose of field work is to present the alterations of urban identity in accordance with the changes in spatial and social level.

The concept of socio-spatial Identity

Retracing to pertinent bibliographic sources, there is interminable theoretical discussion on the subject of identity. There are multiple different theoretical aspects on this issue and the term has been so frequently used, that some scholars tended to indicate a kind of “trend” in the use of “identity” (Gallissot, 1987 at Γκέφου-Μαδιανού, 2006). Furthermore, the sense of place is associated with shared cultural values, ascribing special meanings to particular places (Cross, 2001). Referred to as “place attachment”, the identity of place connects people with their environment. Scholars also mention that “place attachment” is associated with social practices in a given spatial unit (ibid). This type of attachment usually includes a complex interrelation of conscious and unconscious ideas and values (Peng et.al, 2020).

Undoubtedly, there is a direct connection between geographic space and social parameters (Hirschon, 1998; Soja,1989). The study of this connection has started to attract scientific interest since the dawn of the 20th century, due to the vast growth of the new industrial urban centers and the new phenomena related to it. Studies on this field have already proved that an urban spatial module is not just an area of recording socio-economic and cultural attributes, but it has its own dynamic affecting human activities, relationships and choices (Νικολαΐδου, 1993; Παναγιωτάτου, 1983).

This interaction is filtered through a psycho-socially and culturally determined notion of urban space (Massey,1994). Based on the opinion of G.Paolucci, cities can be described as time-machines; the urban form concentrates, interprets and specifies different experiences of time, translating them into social relationships with spatial references. From this point of view, the dimension of space in daily human activity is examined mostly by its material expressions as a cartographical geography capable of interpretation through patterns of social and historical forces (Soja, 1989).

On the other hand, this materialization of different kinds of activities has always a symbolic aspect strongly attached to the concept of identity. In these terms, explaining social phenomena and their spatial effects, should inevitably involve a review of changing socio-spatial identities in urbanization process. The way that people define themselves and simultaneously give attributes to others, tends to be determining for all social procedures and their spatial counterweight (Νικολαΐδου, 1993). The synthesis of psychological, social and spatial factors is prone to give useful evidence for the underlying reasons of phenomena observed in urban space.

Transformative Urbanization Process. The case of Greece.

To analyze the alterations of contemporary urban sceneries it is vital to explain some kind of specificities relevant to the formation of the Greek urban scenery. To begin with, the Industrial Revolution of 18th and 19th century, had been an era of significant and constant change, expressed through intensive urbanization procedures. As a result, traditional rural communities were gradually turned into modern industrialized societies, altering the character of employment and the socio-spatial circumstances as well.

Despite the fact that urban societies were known since the ancient years, urban environments produced by Industrial Revolution were totally different, as they were organized in a basis of different principles (Giddens, 1990). That's why their study involved different ways of analysis and interpretation. Modern city was gradually formed as a complex manifold structure, characterized by severe contradictions. On the one hand, it was the symbol of progress and on the other hand it was associated with poverty, manipulation and inequality. In the context of this observation, several scientists, philosophers and artists tried to reveal and understand the contradictions of the urban scenery produced by Industrial Revolution.

To understand the Greek Metropolis, it is necessary to adopt the theoretical position which emphasizes on the fact that this metropolis is being evolved through an autonomous pattern of urban

growth. This pattern is not considered to be a defective or delayed aspect of the progress met in the cities of Western Europe and North America (Stevenson, 2003; Massey 1994). In association with the centers of global economy and market, this pattern of evolution is considered to be “regional” (Stevenson, 2003). This regional model is observed in the countries of South Europe and in the wider Mediterranean area. Based upon this model, urban reality is formed through the prevalence of the role of family and the formal or informal social networks of assistance (Hirschson, 1998). These practices act in a way, as substitutes of social policy and infrastructures.

To explain what happens in the wider area of the urban conglomeration of Athens, it is necessary to look back in the dawn of the 20th century, when the new capital of Greece started functioning as a small city. According to bibliographical sources (Σαρηγιάννης, 2000), the discrimination of districts in the wider area of Athens was already developed at the end of 19th century, due to several parameters, one of which was the spatial orientation of each district. This means that the south-west district of the city offered worse living conditions due to the mixed usages of land, as dwellings were near industrial units. As a result, these conditions formed the socio-economic stratification of the population: the upper class lived in the north-east part of the city, while the working class was hosted in the south-west part (ibid).

In addition, the vast demographic change that followed the Asia Minor Catastrophe in 1922 deteriorated the existing situation. Based on historical sources, 1.500.000 refugee's found shelter in urban and rural areas, 48% of whom were hosted in the wider area of the urban conglomeration of Athens (Μαράτου-Αλιπράντη, 1998). This demographic flow, affected every aspect of life for many decades afterwards, leading to a sudden and severe urbanization process (Tousi, 2014, 2021). One of the main issues related to this change, was the housing rehabilitation as well as the social integration of the refugee population to the existing social structures. The post-war urbanization, the industrialization of '60s, the de-industrialization of '70s, alterations in urban planning legislation and the inflow of economic immigrants since 1990, altered the social synthesis of the urban fabric (Κουβέλη, 1997 and 1995; Οικονόμου, 1987). All these transformations owed to demographic flows and historical incidents, influenced the physiognomy of the gradually formatting urban space, affecting the socio-spatial identity of the post-refugee areas as well.

Results and Discussion

The methodological framework of the research put emphasis on the socio-spatial inequalities that are found in the wider area of the capital of Greece. The interrelation between spatial and social parameters functioned as a lens for reading the spectrum of transformations. The city space, as studied here under the light of the refugee issue, was significantly affected by the actions of residents' choices. Fieldwork highlighted aspects of boundary transformation in the initial refugee enclaves. This finding is considered an issue of high importance, in relation to a broader framework of socio-spatial in-depth analysis of the urban fabric.

From this point of view, in the aftermath of the Asia Minor Catastrophe (1922), certain areas outside the boundaries of the existing cities were turned into slums, without urban planning and social infrastructures. Most of the times, these slums were near industrial units, where the majority of the refugee population used to work (Σαρηγιάννης, 2000). As years went by, these areas were progressively assimilated to the rest of the existing urban fabric. However, until today some of them suffer from numerous problems owed to a large extent to their first foundation and the policies followed afterwards.

The need to resolve the housing issue, from 1922 to the first post-war decades, ordered solutions that covered basic housing needs. Social housing in its refugee rehabilitation context, provided residential complexes based on low construction costs with the view to accommodate a large number of beneficiaries. The apartments with a small area, the high building density and the lack of privacy, gradually led the owners in search of a new home. In the immediate post-war period,

boundary changes in the original refugee enclaves, were associated with the influx of internal migrants and the development of the flats-for-land system. These two parameters mitigate refugee settlement's marginalization of previous periods, having a catalytic effect on the socio-spatial transformations. The context of the original refugee settlement, where social housing played a dominant role, collides with the explosion of private housing.

Speculation on land, reinforced by various measures and instruments, influenced the perceptions of residents – refugees and descendants – on the issue of ownership. The solidarity of previous decades, having its roots in common cultural and socio-political identity, gave way to strategies of economic empowerment of the household unit. As found through qualitative research methods (interviews), tolerance towards usufructuary and donations of land parcels were gradually replaced by legal reservations and land boundary claims. This was most evident in cases where authorities provided allotted plots instead of houses. These new procedures, combined with the merger of properties, especially in the late 1970s, contributed to the flourishing of the flats-for-land system in some of the refugee districts. In cases where the urban rehabilitation policy offered refugee apartments, a complex ownership status emerged after WWII. The large number of owners on the same plot and the excessively large subdivision of land, left out of the flats-for-land process several enclaves with refugee complexes.

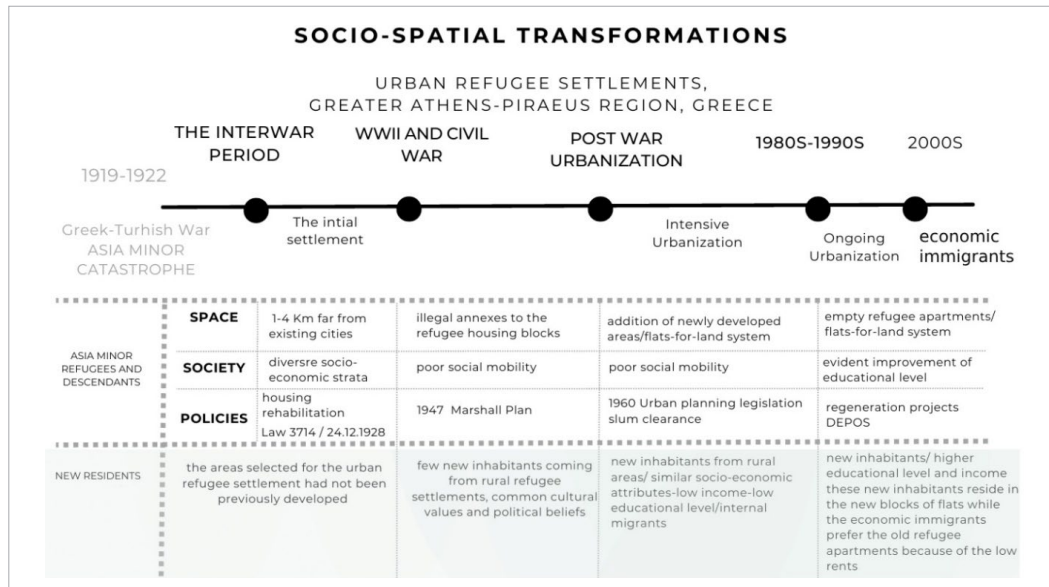
Since the 1980s, the continuous improvement of the educational level and the sector of employment shaped different housing perspectives; to move away from the refugee apartments. This fact led gradually to the transformation of the social synthesis of the urban refugee neighborhoods. Private initiatives in housing, in particular the flats-for-land system, altered the boundaries of the original urban refugee enclaves, affecting the development of each area. An important finding of the research is the fact that in these procedures no pattern was detected. Each region was influenced by local special factors thus, the study focused on examination in smaller geographical level.

The changes in the ownership status of the granted houses or plots and the social practices around the issue of home ownership, led to substantial transformations within the refugee cores. These changes led to intra-city relocations, a phenomenon that is found in literature as "housing mobility". In this context, household movements create a sequence of transformations, leaving behind empty housing shells. The availability of housing but also the quality of habitation, appeals to specific population groups on a case-by-case basis. In particular, after the mid-1990s and especially after 2005, old refugee apartments attract economic immigrants because of the low rents owed to the provided housing facilities (poor quality of preservation, lack of central heating system, small apartment area). This finding highlights the evident socio-economic inequalities in housing as found in the post-refugee urban neighborhoods during field work.

The phenomenon of housing mobility in each region, was influenced by various parameters, however, the household's life cycle played a key role. In the three case studies, about half of the sample population were descendants of Asia Minor refugees who have never changed residential area, resulting in the creation of neighborhoods of permanent establishment. An important research topic, is the issue of "neighborhood effects", which is directly related to the social possibilities of mobility considered here in relation to spatial mobility and home ownership. Field research has shown that these effects have more power in neighborhoods that are neglected by the state, suggesting that without appropriate measures, degradation tendencies affect the quality of life and urban space. On account of all the above-mentioned, research indicated four key-chronological periods in the urban refugee settlements in the Greater Athens-Piraeus Region, as presented in Fig. 2. These key-periods identify critical turning points on the historical evolution of the examined urban refugee settlements, offering useful information for the contemporary identity of these areas.

Fig. 2

Key-chronological periods for the urban transformations of the refugee settlements, author's work

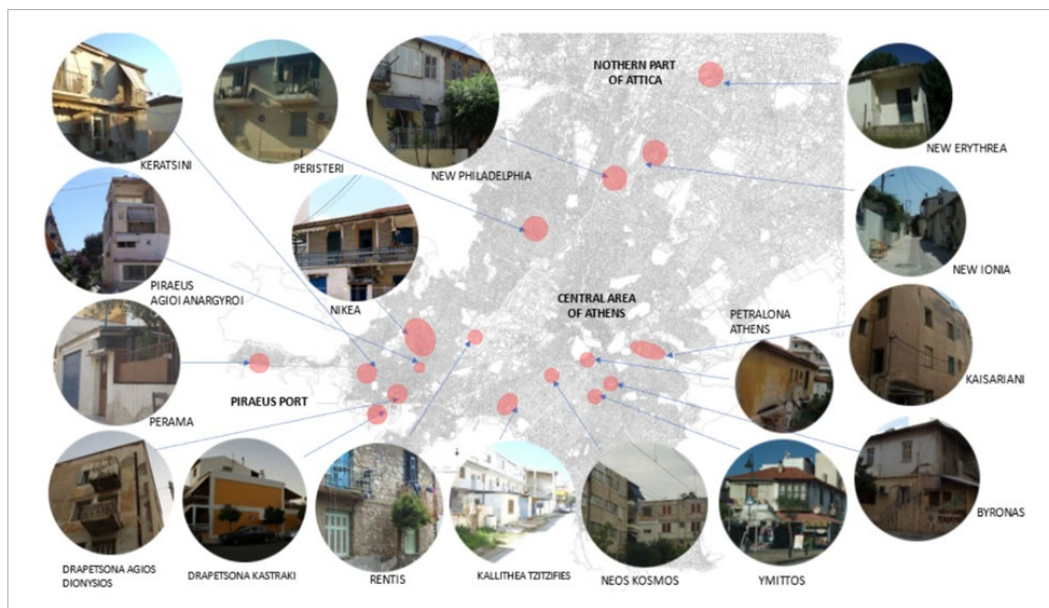


Delving into fieldwork Findings: Part I and II

Parts I and II of the research, emphasized on description and documentation of the existing Asia Minor refugee settlements within the Greater Athens-Piraeus Region, Fig. 3 presents the location of these areas within the urban agglomeration of Athens-Piraeus and selected architectural features of the social housing units. Part I of the research identified refugee areas where the flats-for-land system flourished, altering the original enclaves as early as the 1960s, but also areas which due to special circumstances did not follow this kind of development (Fig. 4). In special cases, such as New Philadelphia, the low building rates, combined with the advantages of the original design limited this procedure, maintaining the socio-spatial physiognomy in the original refugee enclave.

Fig. 3

Location and architectural features of the urban refugee enclaves in Attica, author's field work, 2014 updated 2022



As presented in the maps below, there are post-refugee municipalities with low land prices (Fig. 4) combined with poor preservation of the old refugee housing complexes (Fig. 6). As shown in Fig. 7, the majority of the urban refugee settlements preserves either enclaves or scattered refugee

housing complexes. Given the spatial distribution within Attica, the derelict refugee housing reserve could be described as a major issue for the contemporary city (Fig. 3). In most of the cases, there is a significant number of derelict apartments. This situation challenges the socio-spatial cohesion in these areas, threatening neighbourhoods with urban blight. As presented in Fig. 5, post-refugee areas with poor maintenance of the old refugee houses share also common socio-economic attributes, based on 2011 census data. Having compared the 2011 census data to the recent 2021 census data, there are no significant differentiations. The cartographic depiction below, uses the municipal administrative boundaries of each post-refugee area, where the refugee houses are found scattered.

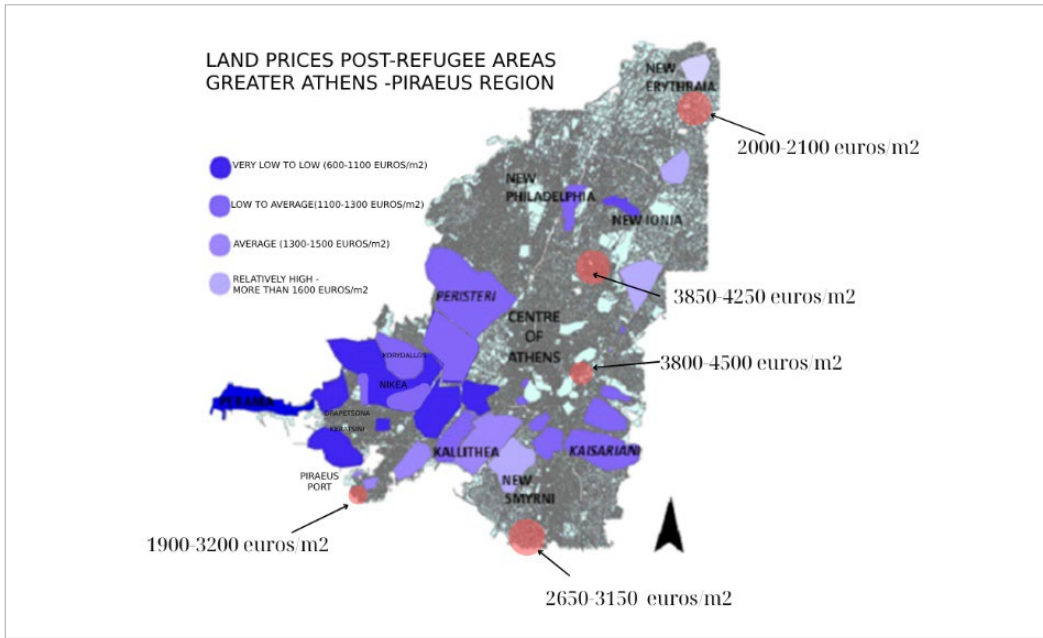


Fig. 4

Land Prices in the Asia Minor Refugee urban areas compared to other neighboring areas, author's work updated 2023, source for land prices: the official website of the Ministry of Economy of Greece, available at <https://maps.gsis.gr/valuemaps/>, source of background map: Laboratory of Spatial Planning and GIS, School of Architecture, NTUA, 2014

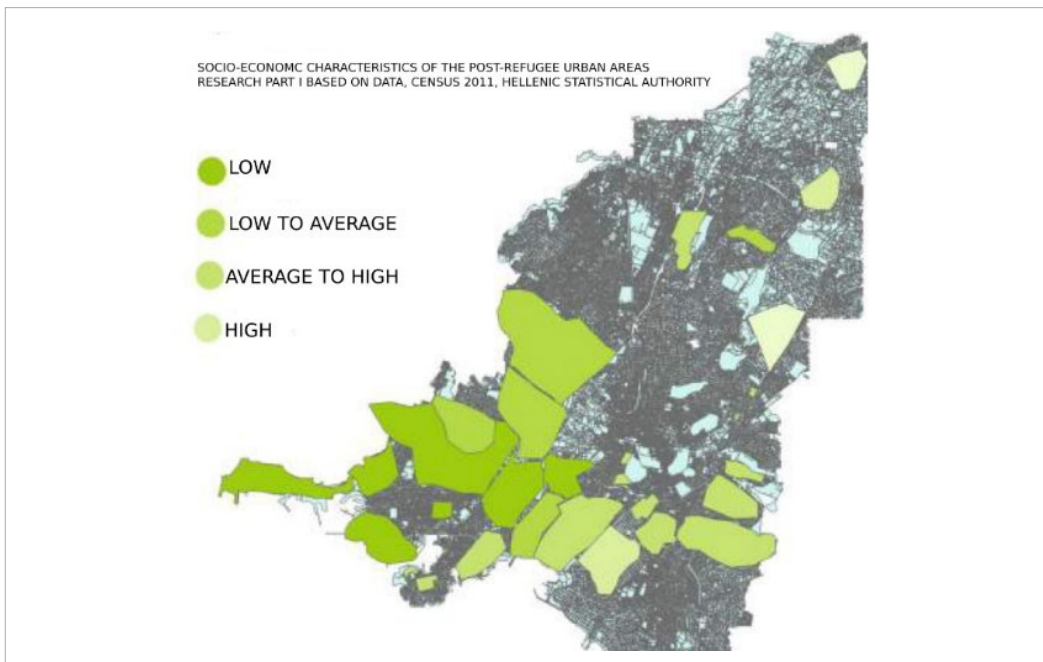


Fig. 5

Socio-economic stratification in the post-refugee urban areas in the Greater Athens-Piraeus Region, author's work, 2014 based on census data 2011, Hellenic Statistical Authority, source of background map: Laboratory of Spatial Planning and GIS, School of Architecture, NTUA, 2014

Fig. 6

Maintenance, post-refugee areas, author's work 2014 updated 2022, source of background map: Laboratory of Spatial Planning and GIS, School of Architecture, NTUA, 2014

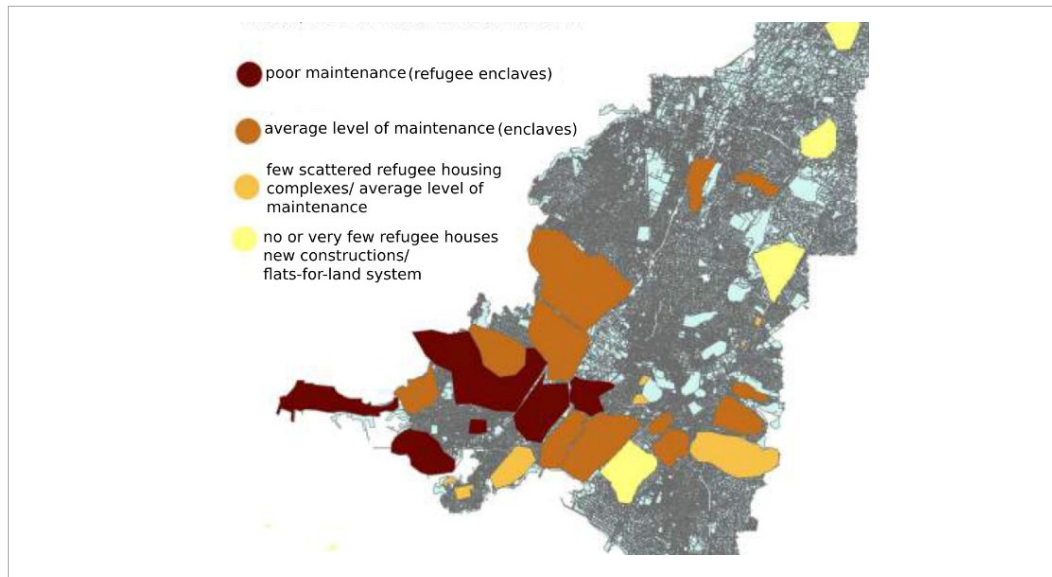
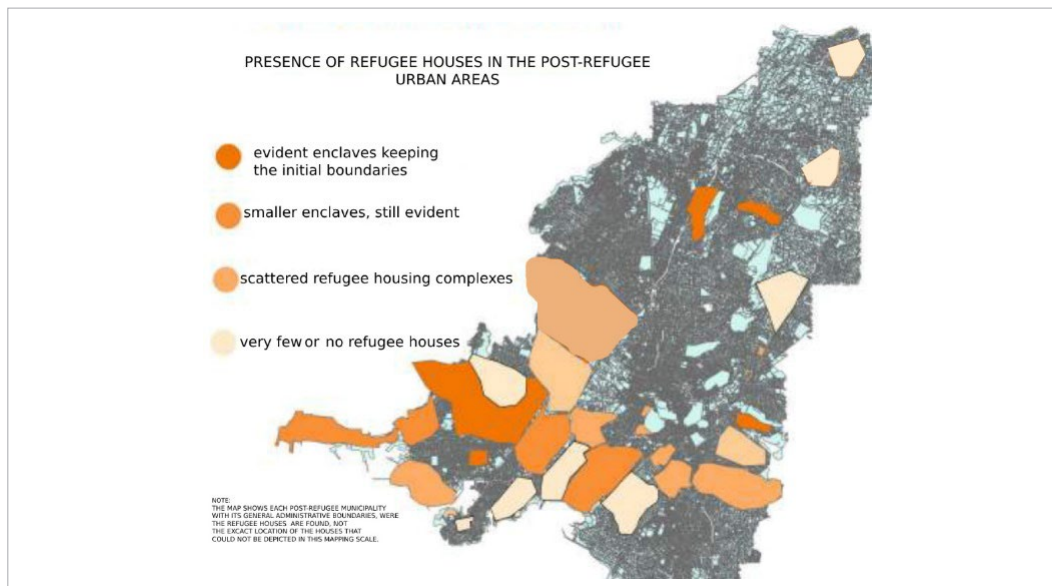


Fig. 7

Presence of refugee houses, author's work 2014 updated 2022, source of background map: Laboratory of Spatial Planning and GIS, School of Architecture, NTUA, 2014



Delving into fieldwork findings: Part III

To look in depth the socio-spatial transformations of the Asia Minor Refugee areas, three case studies have been chosen, belonging to different socio-economic stratification. The first one is an upper-middle class residential suburb-former Asia Minor refugee settlement (New Erythraia), the second a typical middle-class post-refugee neighborhood (New Philadelphia) and the third a working class post-refugee residential area (Nikea). The analysis below outlines the three representative cases within the spectrum of the urban socio-spatial transformation procedure that has taken place since the 1930s.

New Erythraia is one exceptional case, that does not preserve tangible architectural elements relevant to the Asia Minor refugee identity. However, according to the SPSS1 processing, research data (2014), show that the 44% of population in New Erythraia are descendants of the first refugees of 1922. As field work has revealed, the interdependence between New Erythraia and the nearby haute bourgeoisie suburbs, shaped the future of the area contributing to its gradual assimilation, putting emphasis on the empowerment of each household unit. Since the mid- 1930s

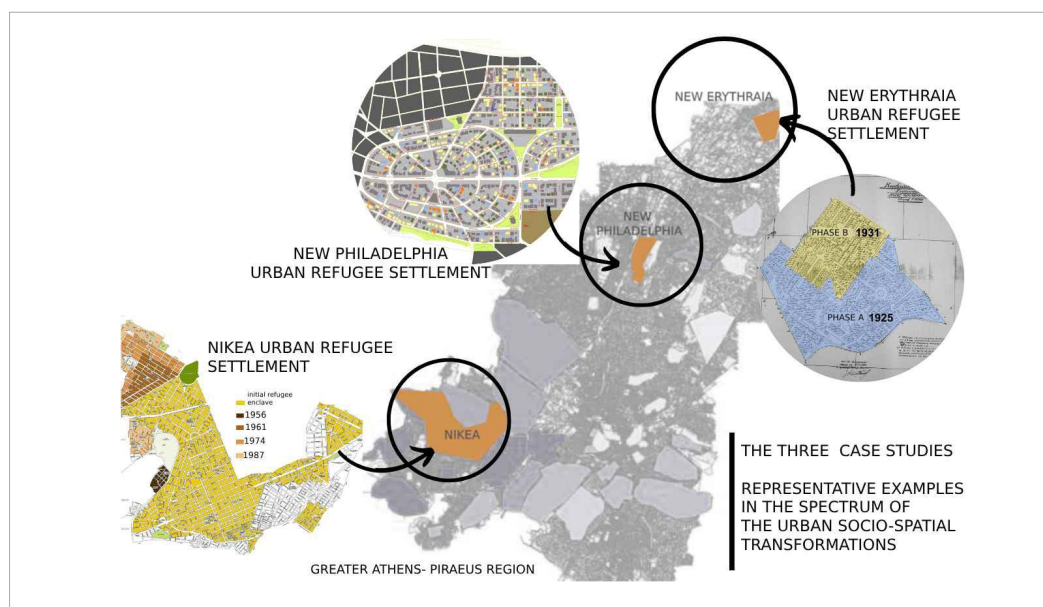


Fig. 8

The three selected case studies, representative in the spectrum of urban socio-spatial transformations, author's work 2014

the inhabitants of New Erythraia began to work as gardeners or domestic helpers in the nearby houses, as found during field work (interviews). During the immediate post war period, transport services were developed and New Erythraia became the area to offer commercial enterprises and holidaying. The holidaying started at first for sanitary reasons but soon enough was turned into a significant source of income. According to quantitative research, 78,5% of the ancestors of today's inhabitants used to rent their houses. This statistically significant percentage reveals a particular social practice that supported the empowerment of each household. This procedure had taken place until the mid-1970s as found through the interviews with the locals.

Several changes in urban planning legislation led to further socio-spatial transformations. In 1985, the agricultural area of Mortero, granted for the refugee population of New Erythraia, was incorporated into the rest of the urban fabric. Thus, the former agricultural land was turned into building lots suitable for housing construction through official planning permission. In these terms, the character of New Erythraia started to change through the settlement of new inhabitants. Based on the quantitative research, most of the new inhabitants belong to upper middle-class socio-economic strata (63,3%). The extensive housing construction has eliminated the old refugee houses, offering today luxury apartments and upgraded housing facilities.

The second representative example is the case of the urban refugee settlement of New Philadelphia. It was designed after the principles of the garden city movement, introduced by Howard Ebenizer during the early 20th century. Compared to New Erythraia, New Philadelphia preserves tangible elements of the Asia Minor refugee identity. The refugee enclave has been incorporated into the National Listed Monuments Catalogue, as a settlement of unique significance and value. It was declared by a Presidential Decree of 2001. Pertinent legislation shapes also the general framework for new constructions; there are certain architectural morphological guidelines to follow so as to better preserve the unique identity of the settlement. According to relatively recent data (2014) 52% of inhabitants have Asia Minor refugee origin and 43,4% resided in refugee apartments. Most of the refugee housing estates have been efficiently preserved and there are only rare cases of derelict apartments.

The third example refers to a typical working class post-refugee urban suburb in the south-west part of Attica, named Nikea (see Fig. 1, 2 and 4). As found through the interviews with the locals, the area was not connected to the rest of the city until the late 1970s offering poor transportation services as well as poor housing facilities (high population density, cheap building materials, no

central heating system). This area's population was an active part of the Resistance and there are tangible elements to commemorate citizen's contribution (National Museum of Resistance, monuments etc.). The area's population showed limited upward social mobility until the 1980s. It is important to mention that today, the area preserves a large number (around 35-40%) of the old refugee houses covering an area of about 1,6x1,4 Km. According to the quantitative research, 55,4% of the population had Asia Minor refugee origin; 29,9% resided in the refugee apartment while 15,4% had constructed a new house on the refugee plot. The majority of the residents in the old refugee houses are elderly people descendants of the refugee population. The condition of the housing reserve in the area is below average, with a large number of derelict apartments. The socio-economic stratification of the refugee complexes comprises households with low incomes, elderly people and economic immigrants.

Table 9

Critical factors affecting the socio-spatial transformations in the three areas, author's work

critical factors	Nikea	New Philadelphia	New Erythraia
social	active participation during the Resistance and the Civil War	-	rental refugee houses commerce and services
spatial	high building density large number of beneficiaries	designed as a garden suburb	semi-urban - semi-rural refugee settlement
policies	absence of holistic approach few regeneration attempts	Presidential Decree of 2001 -Presevation Regime	transformation of the agricultural land of Mordero, planning permission

Delving into fieldwork findings: Part IV

Fig. 10

Recent demolition of a ground floor refugee house, author's field work 2022



Focusing on the most degraded refugee housing enclaves, research examined in depth the contemporary situation in the refugee core of Nikea during the periods 2016-2019 and 2020-2023. The refugee apartments in the refugee core of Nikea have a small area of 30 to 60 sq.m. and many arbitrary additions both to the building itself and to the outdoor public space and to the sidewalks. The majority of the refugee houses does not offer a central heating system. There are five main architectural types mostly ground floor constructions and two storey-housing complexes with 16

apartments. The building factor in the area is particularly high (2.6), resulting in high blocks of flats compared to the two-story or ground-floor refugee houses. This type of cityscape creates a morphologically heterogenous image with significant effects on the environmental response of the buildings such as unwanted mutual shadows, insufficient natural lighting and ventilation.

The majority of old refugee houses has not been efficiently maintained, resulting in serious damages to the load-bearing body. Demolitions of refugee complexes were rare until the 2008-2019 period (two in ten years). After 2019 demolitions are becoming more frequent and mainly concern single-story refugee houses (Fig. 10). Another critical factor with potential impact on the demolition rate is the location

of a new metro station in the refugee core of Nikea. The new station is part of the blue metro line that connects the central national airport to Piraeus Port and opened its gates to the public on July 2020. At the same time, of high significance is the fact that the remaining refugee houses have not been included in a conservation regime. Moreover, their tenants belong to sensitive social groups, who flock to the area due to low rents (low-income households, immigrants, elderly people). Thus, new forms of social exclusion appear in the same housing shells, relevant to poor housing facilities and energy poverty. All these factors, raise skepticism for the future of the area and its vulnerable population.



Fig. 11

Two-storey refugee housing complex with arbitrary additions, author's field work 2019

Research has revealed that the majority of the urban refugee settlements of Attica preserve parts of the initial Asia Minor Refugee enclave or at least a few scattered refugee houses. However, despite their common origin these settlements offer today different housing facilities and belong to different socio-economic stratification. From this point of view, there are evident socio-economic discrepancies in the housing sector even in areas with common past, as the urban refugee settlements. These differentiations are associated with the level of assimilation of the initial refugee settlement to the rest of the city. Critical factors include the initial planning, the population's social practices and the policies followed after the first settlement.

Compared to the other refugee areas New Erythraia has the higher grade of assimilation into the adjacent urban surroundings. In addition to this, the policies followed afterwards played a key-role (the transformation of Mortero agricultural land into commercial land). Undoubtedly, refugee descendants have created a stronger new identity delegating the previous one that was connoted with negative stereotypes. This new identity was created through upward socio-economic mobility, achieved through certain social practices. On the contrary, Nikea as being cut off the rest of the city for many decades, seems to be trapped in forces of ongoing degradation. The case of New Philadelphia is somewhere in the middle; the presidential decree of 2001 managed to combat degeneration after the earthquake of 1999. As it is shown by the data, the examined refugee areas have almost half of their population related to the Asia Minor refugee identity. However, they present different quality of housing facilities and offer different tangible elements of collective memory. From this point of view, future policies should aim both at individuals and areas (Fig. 12). The complex situation within the degraded refugee enclaves requires social and spatial policies so as to improve living conditions in such areas.

Conclusions

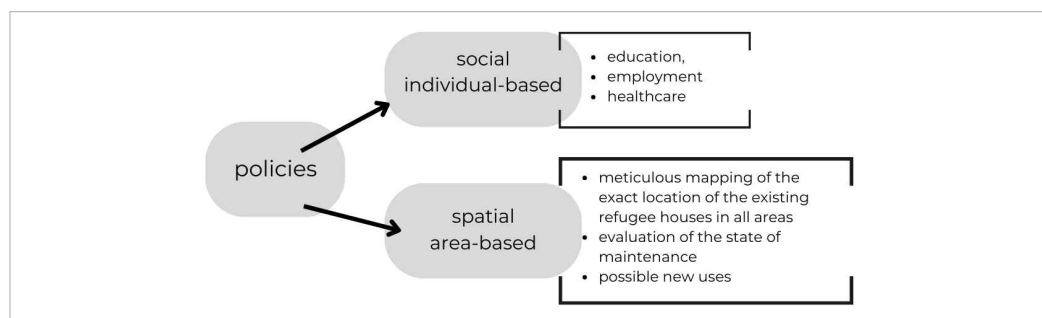


Fig. 12

General suggestions for future policies, author's work 2022

Despite the fact that identities outline an interactive relationship with the past, they are strongly connected to questions that refer to the future. From this point of view seeking for identity does not mean returning back to roots, but negotiating with them so as to cope with the present and visualize the future. Taking into consideration the contemporary situation in the majority of the Asia Minor Refugee housing enclaves, it is important to ameliorate poor housing conditions but is also necessary to keep and respect the sense of historic past in terms of urban collective memory. In the examples analyzed here, the case of the upgraded ex-refugee area New Erythraia has not preserved tangible elements relevant to its historic past. That's why it is vital to maintain some important historic elements when it comes to urban reformation programs, incorporating them into the present circumstances. This approach could be supported by bottom-up practices as a step for inclusive urban planning and design, putting at the center of interest the citizens and their perspectives.

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