

Introduction

Coping with Socio-economic Consequences of the Crisis in Athens and The Four Concepts of the Summer School

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Athens, like most Greek urban centres, has been severely affected by the economic crisis that began in 2008. The city's economics badly suffered from impacts of the crisis that, unfortunately for the society, resulted in serious difficulties of social and economic sectors, such as growing unemployment, a rapidly increasing inflation rate, high cuts in medical care and the pension system (KENTIKELÉNIS et al. 2011: p. 1457). These and other strictly-related to crisis outcomes strongly affected the increase of general poverty, as well as vulnerability and, therefore, a sudden decrease of liveability factor in the city (PETRAKI 2013: p. 8, SAKELLARI 2013).

For planning, these economic and social changes imply dealing with multiple uncertainties and complexities that cannot be predicted. It presents the challenge of exploring flexible and innovative forms of governance which have to address specific local vulnerabilities and build capacity to accommodate future transformation - the resilient city becomes a planning goal.

From the 24th to 29th of June 2018, the second of the three planned summer schools, within the research project “HeKris - Challenges of resilience in European cities”, took place in Athens, Greece. The core point and emphasis of the Summer School 2018 were the economic, social and demographic changes and the financial crisis in the metropolitan area of the capital city of Greece; with a focus on threats that occur in spe-

cific neighbourhood areas and their consequences for people - the economic situation and the social dynamics.

The crucial question to be discussed during the event was how to deal with social and economic issues as planners and architects when aspiring for a resilient and liveable city for present and future generations. The aim was to propose an integrated perspective on the resilient development by identifying and understanding events (both, previous to the crisis and currently occurring) and their consequences, to develop planning and steering methods to handle economic and social adversities, allowing for current demographic tendencies.

The scope of work of the Summer School

The participants of the Summer School had to focus explicitly on five topics given by the organisation body. These were:

- Abandoned Buildings/Places
- Affordable Housing
- Homelessness
- Local Food Production
- Temporary Uses

The five groups - formed by German and Greek students - were bound to conduct their research and organise their activities in the centrally located Athenian neighbourhood - Exarcheia. Before starting the task, the students were provided with useful materials, such as maps of the district, and topic-related literature to prepare themselves and support their knowledge with valuable information.

Additionally, during the duration of the Summer School, interesting keynotes were presented by local and foreign researchers to broaden the knowledge of the students on the topic of urban resilience. A particular approach was the introduction of **“The Past of Things to Come: A Futuristic Study of the Case of Exarcheia”** by *Zoe Hatziyannaki*; the presentation of an installation work that displayed Exarcheia neighbourhood, and Athens at large, as a dystopian scenario where visitors obtained an opportunity to question social, public and temporal situations without a room for certainty. Just as the visitors, the

students were suggested a redefinition of the relations that occur in the location of study.



Fig. 1. Participants of the Summer School 2018. Source: Chocontá

The groups, while working on their strategies, had to recognise to what extent the chosen topics are visible in the area, get into detail about their characteristics in the local context and study the effect they have on the life in the neighbourhood. Moreover, after the analysis, the participants had to create strategies of how to deal with chosen issues using various planning tools, that could eventually contribute to building a liveable and more resilient Exarcheia.

The groups presented their final recommendations on the last day of the event. Importantly, the groups did not only focus on their single tasks but also came out with excellent, innovative ideas on how the cooperation between them could contribute to building an integrated strategy in a holistic approach. The final ideas of each group on how to deal with given topics are presented in the four following articles:

Four concepts of the Summer School

After a careful SWOT analysis and different scenarios exploration, the proposal to „**Make Exarcheia’s Housing Affordable Again**“ written by the students *Alina Ehlers*, *Carola Wilhelm* and *Dimitra Vreda* introduces the adaptation of the foreign concept of “Stadtteilbüro” (neighbourhood office) to the situation of Exarcheia so that local actors (i.e. residents, planners and architecture students) could make joint actions possible and ensure a good communication base. It was explained how such

cooperation could lead to, for example, community-based renovation of abandoned, listed or run-down buildings.

„Dignifying Life Beyond the Streets“ by *Laura Chocontá* consists of the analysis of “homelessness” situation and how Greek policies have tackled it. The critic of the current policy and parallel analysis of the spatial and social potentials of the case study area are related to one another with the inspiration from social initiatives that have been successful in other similar scenarios. The final result is a series of strategies that exposed how an integral approach to socio-economic issues could be achieved when investing in building the social capacities of a community and being more efficient with the economic resources by cooperating with other actors and interests.

The **“Community Empowerment through Establishment of a Local Food Supply Chain“** submitted by *Helia Molla Ahmadi Dehaghi, Spyridoula Driva and Diego Vizcarra Ganoza* presents network activities in Exarcheia, in which urban gardens and farms are built and farmer’s markets, as well as collective kitchens are organised. Managed by grassroots initiatives, it proposes a particular focus on empowering and supporting vulnerable groups of people who live in the area. It is expected that the local food supply chain will reduce the expenses of food production and supply. Instead, it would increase the social capital in the neighbourhood by boosting the interaction of different groups of inhabitants.

„Enhancing Community Cohesion in Exarcheia, Athens: Focussing on Temporary Uses“ by *Hanna Jordan, Jana Brenner and Evdokia Valli* outlines an approach for temporary uses as an informal planning instrument to foster urban development and increase social resilience. The primary approach includes the implementation of a temporary use agency which serves as a mediator between local initiators and owners and as a legal adviser. The goal of the concept as a whole is to promote temporary use as a flexible approach for urban transformation.

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