

## **Understanding inclusionary dynamics for newcomers and migrants resulting from social housing strategies in Greece: "arbitrary construction" and "antiparohi"**

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The "housing question" has acquired, as we know, particular accent in different social and political contexts in the phase of growth of industrial capitalism. However, the models and practices of housing production for numerous poor strata of the population, which prevail in every context, differ in their basic components, such as the institutional form of property and appropriation of land and buildings, the processes and materials of construction, the relation between formal and informal practices of construction.

In a very schematic retrospective, we can say that in the second half the 20th century the industrially developed European countries, being in a phase of intense urbanization, applied and developed a model of policy aiming to supply decent housing for the poorest population strata, through the growth of a non market social housing sector. This sector was controlled mainly by the state (with, in some cases, small participation of the third sector) and was associated with the growth of industrial methods of production and the activation of big financial capital, both state and private. The breadth of beneficiaries was extended also to include members of social strata who were able to buy in favorable terms, in a prospect to reduce dangers of ghettoization. However, both the relations of production and appropriation of social housing, as well as their articulation with practices in other sectors (such as employment, urban and social infrastructure, fiscal policy and governance) led to deterioration of a large number of neighborhoods and to marginalization of their population. Moreover, it should be highlighted that this process, which is recorded today as a crucial problem in various European cities, mainly refers to immigrants from third countries, of first, second and - sometimes - third generation, who took the place of former poorer native strata that were the beneficiaries of social housing. That is to say, the effort to mix residents was annulled by the increase of possibilities and the withdrawal from deprived/ deteriorating neighborhoods of the most active social strata, who were in turn replaced by immigrants unable to ensure housing.

Despite the worldwide ideological dominance of the industrial mass production model of social housing in the first thirty years after the second world war, in the non industrial countries - that is to say, mainly third-world countries - the urbanizing populations, resorted to the construction of housing in the urban peripheries and/or city voids through self-help, or otherwise occupied abandoned buildings etc. in order to secure housing. The ways to obtain land, the relation to the urban infrastructure, the processes of construction, the materials, the types of buildings, the ways of space appropriation differ considerably in various regions contexts. The dynamics of such areas and their residents are associated with the ways in which the factors above are articulated and connect the initially not commercial, self-help, processes of housing production with the total productive mechanism in its formal or informal versions.

The question of how to incorporate the squatter or slum areas in the city, the prospects to encourage the consolidation of property rights, the relation of informal processes of housing construction with the formal sector, their evolutionary potential etc. have been the subject of debates and differentiated evaluations among scholars who approached the housing question from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Undeniably, the base of these different approaches is political and refers to a spectrum of positions, from radical opposition to the processes of capitalist evolution to neoliberal contributions.

Today the policies practiced in a framework of globalization and restructuring of productive activities and social policy, have led – with unprecedented intensity – to population

movements and migration towards burgeoning urban centers, particularly in third world countries. Thus, the search of social strategies, which would ensure decent housing on a mass scale and in a functional urban structure, constitutes an urgent question. In this framework, a renewed interest for the processes of self-help construction can be identified<sup>1</sup>. In this context, great importance is attributed to the thesis of Hernando de Soto concerning the “dead capital” inherent in self-help constructions, whose exploitation can give to their residents a place in the market economy<sup>2</sup>, while the approaches of John Turner<sup>3</sup> and the World Bank are being re-discussed. Here, one should refer also to Grameen Bank, who became famous for the micro-credit grants schemes in Bangladesh with similar objectives<sup>4</sup>. The political dimensions of this discussion are obvious. Necessarily, in any case, the discussion is centered on the reevaluation of critical factors of the housing sector, such as ownership or appropriation of land and buildings, urban infrastructure, relation of informal-formal sectors of production, interrelations with employment, etc.

### The Greek experience

In the middle of 20th century Greece was confronted with successive and most intense housing crises, mainly connected with dramatic historical facts (1920s: incoming of 1.25 million refugees to a country of 4.00 millions; 1940s and 1950s: destructions of the building stock and big internal movements of population because of the second world war and the civil war), as well as with related productive restructurings. The Greek experience in housing and urban infrastructure issues has particular interest. In the 1920s, there exists an intense activity for the production of social housing through the mobilization of state and institutions of the third sector, which covers to a considerable degree the large demands. In the 1950s, despite the ideological dominance of state-controlled models of social housing, the large and urgent housing needs, first in Athens and then in other cities, were met through processes of self-help, developed in the limits of, or contrary to, the urban legislation and legal processes of production. We are referring to the Greek “arbitrary construction” process through which the housing needs of urbanizing rural populations were met. The housing needs of the urban populations, on the other hand, were met through legal self-construction, mainly through the small commercial production system called “exchange in kind”<sup>5</sup>. Although the state sector exists, it mainly supports households through loans, thus promoting indirectly the operation of the commercial sector. Direct intervention of the state, through construction of social housing, is quantitatively negligible. Finally, we can say that the production of “arbitrary construction” and of commercial housing through “exchange in kind” functioned to a large extent additionally as a system of land and construction that acquired great importance for all productive and social relations and for the dynamics of integration of urbanizing rural populations in the life of city.

Since the 1980s “arbitrary constructions” do not constitute anymore the mode of accommodation of poor strata, since rural immigration has practically completed its circle.

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<sup>1</sup> From the recent bibliography: Neuwirth Robert, 2006, *Shadow Cities. A Billion Squatters. A New Urban World.*, Routledge.

Davis Mike, 2006, *Planet of Slums*, Verso – γαλλική μετάφραση *Le pire des mondes possibles*, La Decouverte.

<sup>2</sup> de Soto Hernando, 2000, *The Mystery of Capital*, Basic Books.

<sup>3</sup> Turner John F.C., 1976, *Housing by People. Towards Autonomy in Building Environment*, a Marion Boyars book.

<sup>4</sup> Davis Mike, 2006, *Le pire des mondes possibles*, La Decouverte, p.188.

\* The term used in Greek is “*afthereti domisi*”. As explained in the text, “*afthereti domisi*” is not totally illegal but at the margins of legality. Leontidou (1990) has proposed the term “semi-squatting”, to refer to legal ownership of “agricultural land” on the urban periphery, but illegal use of it (for housing purposes). We prefer the term “arbitrary construction”, which is closer to the processes in operation in Greece (*Translator’s note*)

<sup>5</sup>Exchange in kind’ (*antiparochi*) is a mechanism through which the owner of land passes it on to a developer in exchange for part of the final built volume. ‘Exchange in kind’ presupposes a combination of plot price, building volume that can be constructed on it and demand. A relatively high coefficient of plot exploitation is thus necessary, while developers can limit construction cost since they do not have to invest in land and infrastructure. For the “exchange in kind” system, see Mantouvalou M., 1980, *Production de logements et rapports de Pouvoir en Grèce*, Thèse de doctorat, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris, and M. Mantouvalou, M. Mavridou and D. Vaiou 1995, « Processes of Social Integration and Urban Development in Greece : Southern Challenges to European Unification », *European Planning Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1995, p. 189-204. »

However, we consider that the extent of “arbitrary construction” and the policy followed have contributed to the social integration of areas and population groups. Given also the new interest in the processes of self-help housing construction internationally, we can locate the first Greek example in the sector of “arbitrary construction”.

From the 1990s the mass arrival of immigrants of foreign origin to the cities alters the landscape. The housing issue of immigrants is located in the base of important problems of European cities. We consider therefore that it is interesting to draw the second example from aspects of this issue.

### **Story 1: Settlement of internal immigrants through “arbitrary construction”.1950-1980.**

After the end of second world war and the civil war that followed (1940-49), many internal immigrants from rural areas come to Athens, as consequence of the disorganization of rural sector, caused by the war operations.

At that time, the crisis of housing in Greece is enormous<sup>6</sup>, the State is administratively disorganized and economically weak<sup>7</sup> and the Greek society very deeply divided because of the consequences of the civil war. Social housing programs on the part of the state<sup>8</sup>, as in many Central and Western Europe countries, are not an option in these conditions. Nor, however, is it possible to guarantee housing via the regular market. Thus, internal immigrants try to survive with their own means, to ensure a minimal income and basic accommodation.

Until the end of the war, farmers who lived in the urban periphery of Athens supplied the urban market with agricultural products, mainly cereals. The imports of cereals after the war from countries such as Canada, in much lower prices, created a crisis among farmers<sup>9</sup> who ceased progressively to cultivate and tried to find alternative ways of survival. It is in this economic context that the dynamics of “arbitrary construction” were formed and mechanisms were constituted, that on the one hand ensured housing for the internal immigrants, on the other hand brought progressively the farmers of the urban periphery into the urban way of life and the consumer models, which were established after the war: The farmers, owners of rural land, understanding the existing housing demand, subdivided the fields that were relatively near to populated areas or along provincial roads (in distances up to one kilometre), in small “parcels of agricultural land”<sup>10</sup>, sized approximately 100 m<sup>2</sup><sup>11</sup>. The internal immigrants approached the sellers of land parcels in order to buy. Many of them had some small capital from the sale of land in their place of origin. The prices of land parcels were regulated through successive negotiations between the dealing parties – in the 1960s prices

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<sup>6</sup> Already during the 1940 census it is estimated that 43% of the families are homeless or housed in improper shelters. During the 1940- 44 period 410.000 buildings were destroyed. (Notes et études documentaires, 1955, *L' évolution économique de la Grèce 1944-1953*, No 2052 Juillet-Aout.)

<sup>7</sup> The larger part of the Marshall Plan Aid was spent during the civil war for army equipment in order to fight the communists.

<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, the state during the post-war period, either through choice, or through need created in the troubled conditions of the era, does not intervene actively in many other economic sectors, apart from housing and urban development. (P. Kazakos, 2001, *Between the State and the Market, Athens, Patakis editions (in Greek)*). Thus, we notice the creation of situations, both in construction and in the labor market, that stand on the limits of legality or even violate legality, without that being socially disapproved

<sup>9</sup> It should be underlined, that those farmers are owners of the land they cultivate. Following the rural reform of the interwar period, in the context of policy by the governments of El. Venizelos, each farmer became owner of a piece of land of approximately ten acres. (Vergopoulos C., 1975, *The Agrarian Question in Greece*, Athens, Exandas (in Greek)

<sup>10</sup> The subdivision of land outside the city-plan for construction purposes, is prohibited by law. Thus, naming the land parcels as “agricultural” implies that these will be used for cultivation, therefore the subdivision is rendered legal. Naturally the Administration is aware of the real intentions, but does not intervene.

<sup>11</sup> The owners assigned the subdivision of their fields to qualified engineers, registered at the Technical Chamber of Greece, because the subdivision could be rendered legal only in this way. According to the existing legislation, in the contract for the transfer of parcels, the plan of subdivision of the initial field has to be attached, signed by an engineer. It is worth noticing that the engineers handled the fields as potential building blocks of a future city plan. The parcels are facing the street and their form and dimensions favor the construction of a house. The characteristics of parcels do not deviate much from those in the city plan, only in their size is smaller.

were stabilized at 5,000 drachmas per land parcel<sup>12</sup>. It was quite common that no contracts were signed for the transfer, in order to avoid expenses and tax payment. In a lot of cases contracts were signed many years later, by the heirs of the initial purchaser and seller. The transaction was realized orally with a down-payment, which was determined depending on the capacity of purchaser, ranging from 1/5 to 1/10 of total price. The remaining amount was paid in installments, the time and the sum of which were agreed between dealing parties, according to the needs of the seller and the capabilities of purchaser. With the down-payment the purchaser was considered owner of the parcel and had the capacity to build.

Until this point the process of transfer is almost compliant with formal law (if one excludes the non signed contract and payment of tax, that is postponed for the future) and corresponds to the urgent character of the need for accommodation of internal migrants, as well as to the income needs of farmers in the urban periphery. This reciprocal need has led the agents of this process to develop between them, through all these 20 years (1950-70), relations of confidence and solidarity. As a result, throughout this period, tensions among them usually are not marked, nor frauds reported. The middle and low strata of urban population, who lived in central areas of Athens, despite their economic difficulties at that time, did not turn to "arbitrary construction". They prefer to share their residence with other households, or buy through loans small apartments in the blocks of flats that start to be built after 1953. However, the successful outcomes of the system of "arbitrary construction" described above, encouraged also many of them to buy parcels of land through installments, either to guarantee their small savings, or with the hope of speculation.

The internal immigrants were not considered as intruders or illegal neither by the farmers - residents of peripheral areas with whom they lived together, nor by the residents of the city, although the latter refer to them, contemptuously, as "peasants" that submerged Athens. The newspapers and popular magazines are full of anecdotes and caricatures, which depict how "brutal" and "uncivilized" the newcomers were. The State does not intervene in the process, although it is obvious that the land parcels are not intended for agriculture but for construction. The loss of income from tax evasion that this process involves is compensated by the growth of the real estate market without any public spending for infrastructures and, especially, through the prospect to accommodate internal immigrants and thus remove the dangers of social disorder because of administrative weakness to house them.

The construction of arbitrary houses had to take place in one night, because, according to the law: "Buildings characterized as arbitrary, are demolished by the police authorities without any further procedures, provided that no permanent accommodation of persons has occurred". Thus, neighbors, relatives and friends were mobilized, and progressively builders groups became "specialized" in rapid construction. When the illegal building was finished and the family entered in it, then "negotiations" to avoid demolition began.

During the first phases, the settler himself came to an agreement with the police, which was obliged by the law to demolish arbitrary constructions. The standard "tariff" to avoid demolition of one room was in the 1950s around 2,000 drachmas. Later the network was organized more effectively: the contractor undertook the negotiation and the bribing, the sum increased and was paid in advance. Illicit bribing of policemen was equalized with acquiring a building permit. The policemen of the era were not condemned in the consciences of settlers, as it is shown from interviews<sup>13</sup>. On the contrary, their intervention was considered helpful, since finally the arbitrary construction was not demolished, and the total sum paid was much

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<sup>12</sup> During the 1960s the average monthly wage of a man working in industry was 1,765 drachmas (Structure and articulation of Greek labor market, 1973, publication of Association of Greek Industrialists, Athens) (in Greek)

<sup>13</sup> Mavridou M., 1987, *The Conjunctural Development of a Peripheral Neighborhood: Nea Liossia*. Unpublished PhD dissertation, National Technical University of Athens (in Greek).

smaller than the expenses that would be necessary for a building permit, which, in any case, they were not entitled to.

Another reason that many settlers were grateful to the policemen of the era is that they did not apply political criteria for the non-demolition of the illegal settlements: they behaved in the same way for both right wing winners and left wing losers of the civil war. Even though their motives were economic, their behaviour contributed to the gradual abolition of civil war climate that dominated at the time in Greece and to the creation of consent.

The density of illegal houses and population creates conditions for the installation of services, ensuring simultaneously certain job outlets for the settlers. The first shops were building materials warehouses and cafes-groceries that sold practically everything. Transport needs were covered with "pirate" taxis (actually private cars), water was supplied by kegs, and sewage with cesspools or free flow in the streets. The settlers, as results from local press of the time<sup>14</sup>, did not appear dissatisfied by the low level of services; nor did they make demands to the state for their improvement. Their models for good residence were still determined by their experiences in the rural areas of their places of origin.

Transport becomes the subject of first demands. The streets, from where transport finally passes through are mainly old rural roads. The construction of the roads often takes place with personal work of residents, and progressively a road network is constituted, where trade and other services are installed. Thus, those streets are progressively differentiated from the rest of an homogeneous and non-hierarchical web that was created arbitrarily, presenting characteristics of centrality. A second issue of claims is the integration of the settlements to the city plan. The main demand that the settlers put is the legalization of the situation as it had already been shaped, so that their properties are not affected. A legitimate demand, since the most stable bond of the settlers with the city is their small urban property, of which the price increased rapidly. Regardless of the constitution of "associations for the improvement of the environment" by the settlers and the continuous reports in the local press, urban equipment and infrastructure improvement took a long time to materialize. Therefore, the demand of integration in the city plan is easy to achieve, since no funds are required for expropriations, construction of infrastructure and so on. The areas are included in the city plan progressively between 1950 and 1980, depending on the density of arbitrary buildings, during pre-election periods, with the help of politicians, who attract electoral clientele among the residents.

After their incorporation in the city plan, and mainly after 1968 when the coefficients of plot exploitation increased, low income civil servants and military, entitled to state loans for housing, as well as small business owners, small merchants etc come to the area, thus contributing to some kind of social mix. In the neighborhood of Nea Liossia, which is characteristic of this process of urban development, in 1982, when the area was already entirely part of the city plan, economically active population was distributed as follows: 40% workers – in construction and industry, 25% employees, merchants, professionals, 25% (mainly women) domestic workers; 10% the rest of sectors<sup>15</sup>.

After their incorporation in the city plan, initial settlers gradually expand and improve their houses, investing their savings from work in the city. They also build vertical extensions, at a pace that corresponds to their economic possibilities, in order to secure housing for their children. Public facilities come very slowly to the area, when it has somehow consolidated, and they are located according to the availability of space. Technical infrastructure is built in small increments, with discontinuities and without any hierarchy. Until now these areas keep

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

some of the features of their original state: narrow and crooked streets, few open public spaces. However, they do not differ from better central neighborhoods.

The internal migrants from rural areas, who experienced the violence of uprooting from their villages, were incorporated in the society of the city also through the process of arbitrary construction. The scarcity of housing which characterizes Athens in the postwar period and the weakness of state to intervene, led them to purchase small pieces of land, according to a possibility that was conjuncturally shaped. Thus, although in an unintended manner, they became small owners at the phase of their settlement in the city. The small piece of land that they acquired, in combination with the employment that they found very rapidly in the developing sector of construction, contributed to their consolidation in the city. Apart from the favorable economic situation, the attitude of the state is proven to be a decisive factor, which, without centrally directing the whole process, recognizes their right to housing and tolerates the semi-illegal situation of construction. Subsequently, it legalizes these areas, without demanding taxes of surplus value. That is to say, it subsidizes the settlers with land surplus value, which rises when former rural parcels become urban plots. Naturally the settlers are voters and allocate political power. Thus all political parties, even the Left that supported housing as a right to be covered by the state through social housing projects, supported the demands of illegal settlers for integration in the city-plan and the construction of infrastructure in their districts.

The process of arbitrary construction was supported equally by market mechanisms and by the social dynamic that was shaped ad hoc in the areas of settlement of internal migrants. There exists a sense of common fate between local and newcoming migrants. The monetary relations that condition so much the land market and the arbitrary construction are thus accompanied by mutual understanding and solidarity that moderate the coercion of transactions. Even the policemen, agents par excellence of state legality, observation and control of the "loyalty" of citizens, show tolerance in the construction of illegal settlements. One could possibly speak (*avant la lettre*) of a "welfare society"<sup>16</sup>, since the factors that supported the acquisition of housing were also social: it was the social will for protection from marginalization that was constituted through personal contacts and transactions and was expressed through the actions of individual and collective subjects.

Integration in the city plan and settlement in these areas of more petit-bourgeois strata in the 1970s and 1980s meant their recognition as regular districts of city, without erasing, of course, divisions and inequalities between classy northern suburbs, downtown middle-bourgeois districts and western working class districts. However, those social strata were not placed on the margins of the city and were not reduced to poverty, as in areas with illegal settlements in other countries.

Focusing the discussion on the factors that have been pointed out as basic and with particular political impact in the international discussion about mass production of self-help housing, we can summarize some inclusion dynamics from the example of Greek "arbitrary construction":

- The ownership of land is from the beginning explicit and certified by regular titles. This does constitute a basic parameter of inclusion dynamics for the new urban populations and for the integration of areas in urban institutional regulations
- The process of construction is informal and is realized in several phases. The materials are sought in the market and the construction process is a mix of personal work, friend's help and paid labor. In this way, the local market of materials and labor is developed progressively, a fact that facilitates the integration of new residents in the urban economy and life. The establishment of a continuum between informal and

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<sup>16</sup> Pierre Rosanvallon, 1995, *La nouvelle question sociale. Repenser l'Etat-providence*, Seuil. (Greek translation, 2001, Metechmio)

formal market for materials and labor constitutes an important factor for the development of inclusion dynamics for the social groups concerned

- Integration in the city plan and the possibility of legal and increased exploitation of each land plot by its owner, constitute perhaps the most important factor, symbolically as well as factually, for the integration of the social groups concerned in the society of city
- The city plans function as an institutional validation of the situation already created, through local action and the initiatives of urban organization by the residents themselves and their voluntary work. Undeniably these city plans are characterized by poor planning and design standards, both aesthetically and functionally: Lack of squares and green spaces, narrow streets and obstacles in the movement of pedestrians and vehicles and so on - the well-known deficits of urban standards in Greek cities. However, those models predominate in the entire urban space and in some way they homogenize the urban fabric, thus avoiding the creation of important ghettos or spatial polarizations, that constitute basic factors of exclusion dynamics
- Corruption did exist but was limited in the local level and in circuits of small scope. Involvement of important actors of the political or economic life in these local networks did not exist, at least not in any considerable degree. It is indeed recognized that in the local level the corruption of police contributed to the overcoming of "cold-war" climate which intentionally excluded left-wing citizens from every form of public support. Clientelistic relations of settlers, although they existed, they were limited in their effects in the central political scene
- We would like to underline particularly this last point: The multiple fragmentation of groups and forces locally, dominance throughout the social spectrum of small urban property and small capital in combination with small industrial growth, prevented any big concentration of interests, the creation of monopolistic situations and the imposition of a bureaucratic logic in urban development. We argue that this relative multiple fragmentation of forces, competences and interests deterred acute polarization and contributed to the activation of diffuse forces in the social tissue. This last point constitutes, according to our analysis, the most central and interesting element in the frame of processes that encourage the growth of inclusion dynamics.

## **Story 2: Settlement of immigrants from third countries in central densely built areas of Athens after 1990.**

The global reconfigurations after 1989 created – among others – large waves of migrants. In Athens economic migrants and refugees come from a lot of countries but mainly from neighboring Albania, where a minority that speaks also the Greek language exists in the southern regions. During the first period, the conditions of arrival and settlement of immigrants were difficult. There existed discomfort and fear for the foreigners, among several groups of local population, impressed also in the media, along with voices of individuals and organizations who pointed out – at times militantly – the bad conditions of immigrants' daily survival and the need for the state to create mechanisms of reception. The police often organized operations to arrest and deport illegal immigrants. The first pieces of social research<sup>17</sup>, based on data from 1992-3, reported intense phenomena of social exclusion. However, progressively Albanian men can be found in almost every house of the middle and upper social strata as craftsmen and technicians, gardeners, carriers, and Albanian women as domestic helpers or carers for children and the elderly. At the same time they participate more broadly in the labor market, mainly in construction (sector always very powerful in the

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<sup>17</sup> see for example Psimmenos I., 1995, *Immigration from the Balkans: social exclusion in Athens*, Athens, Papazisis (in Greek).

Greek economy) and in manufacturing, formally or “hidden”, with or without social insurance, in places of low social status that the locals avoid, while at first they undertake jobs with much lower wages than the legal levels or from those that usually the locals demand. Nevertheless, until today, negative references for illicit, illegal and criminal activities of immigrants do not disappear, both in the media and in private discussions.

Immigrants are present in the public spaces, not only of the Centre of Athens, where they initially stood, looking for work, but also in the central neighborhoods which were traditionally places of residence of middle income groups. Their presence is impressive and progressively intensifying after 2000. As we will see, the central neighborhoods, apart from an important reserve of residences, provide also opportunities for employment in shops and manufacturing units that exist in the urban fabric, because of the existing system of mixed uses. It is not only in the streets and squares where one meets this world of foreigners circulating and assembling in nationally-homogenous groups and families. A lot of children of foreigners go to the public schools and progressively shops operated by foreigners and addressed to same-nationality immigrants make their appearance. In 1999, it was estimated that, in Greater Athens, lived 89,000 households of foreign citizenship, from which the 40% lived in the Municipality of Athens. 54% of total immigrant households were of Albanian origin, from which 35.2% lived in the Municipality of Athens<sup>18</sup>. This data and direct experience, indicate the settlement of immigrants in houses / apartments in the central neighborhoods of Athens.

A key for understanding the processes through which immigrants acquire housing in the central neighborhoods of Athens is the processes of production of housing, which, although it has big historical depth, it is intensified and solidified after the second world war: We spoke in the previous chapter for the process of arbitrary construction, through which internal immigrants, and more generally low income- households were accommodated, without the direct intervention of state. The more prosperous middle and higher incomes are accommodated in the areas within the city-plan, through the system of “exchange in kind” (antiparochi) that is constituted also conjuncturally, without direct intervention of state. Of course, in both cases the state is not totally detached, but it is not the main organizer, financier, planner and distributor of housing centrally through bureaucratic mechanisms.

Through the “exchange in kind” system (antiparochi) all the central districts were rebuilt after the war, following the incentives of high coefficients of building that the state established and because of the large demand for housing. The reconstruction took place without important interventions to guarantee infrastructure works, free spaces and social services. The contractors were small businessmen, not financed by the state and usually undertook to build one apartment building at a time, in agreement with the owner of the plot, whose size ranges from 180 to 500 square meters<sup>19</sup>. The apartment was judged as high quality residence and a large part of middle and upper income groups were accommodated in such apartments. It should be pointed out, however, that the apartment building as typology includes in its structure a spectrum of apartments with different characteristics as far size, view, light and airing, nuisances from the street and so on are concerned, and consequently apartment prices vary from one case to another. Thus, a single apartment building usually attracts a relatively wide spectrum of households, from the point of view of social stratification. Accordingly, since the 1980s, as apartment buildings multiplied, densities increased, as well as car traffic, many young households whose incomes increased, sought residence in the suburbs which were being rebuilt in rapid rhythms, a fact that resulted to a partial

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<sup>18</sup> DEPOS, 1989-90 and 1999, Conditions and Tendencies in the Housing Market of Big Urban Centres. DEPOS, Department of Research, reported in: D. Emmanouil, 2000, "Social segregation, polarisation and inequalities in the geography of Athens: the role of mechanisms of housing market and urban growth". The research took place in the frame of documentation for the revision of Athens Master Plan.

<sup>19</sup> Small ownership of land dominates also inside the city plan areas, as a result of a long-term state policy, see Mantouvalou M., 1989, "La pianificazione urbanistica in Grecia, 1830-1930," in the collective volume *Dall' Acropoli di Atene al Porto di Pireo*, Athens: National Technical University of Athens and Politecnico di Milano.



abandonment of more unfavorable apartments in central neighborhoods – where elderly people stayed on.

The move to the suburbs is not the only reason for which additional residences are being built. There is a tradition in Greek society, connected with past economic crises where there was a lack of other safe investment possibilities and institutions of social security, for households to buy more than one piece of property as a guarantee. The housing stock is thus always much higher than the number of households: According to data of the National Statistical Service of Greece, in 1981 in the Municipality of Athens the number of residences was higher than the number of households by 70,955 units, a number that corresponds to 18% of the total housing stock. Between 1981 and 1987, according to data of Ministry of Environment, Physical Planning and Public Works 12,787 additional new residences were built<sup>20</sup>. In any case, it should be noted that this large number of residences belongs to a lot of households, that is to say there does not exist any central management of residences from big companies or government owned institutions. Each owner follows a personal strategy for his property and thus several alternatives are created to access housing.

Immigrants settled initially in the most deteriorated residences, in half-devastated detached houses that were not rebuilt to blocks of flats, and in apartments that were in the back or in low floors, for which, as we said, the demand had decreased dramatically. The new tenants repaired those houses and flats by their own means, personal work or with the help of friends, as most of them work in the construction sector and know already the job. Renting takes place either through a proper contract, which is also essential for the immigrants to apply for residence permit, or is granted by the owner as payment in kind for work provided. In such cases often the owner lives in an upper floor in the same block of flats. The immigrants, and mainly women immigrants, are satisfied by these houses, since they compare them with those in their places of origin. In recent years many of them buy those houses.

We would like to support the argument that these processes have functioned positively –at least until now- to the integration process of immigrants in Greek cities producing inclusionary dynamics.

The housing of immigrants in generally more deteriorated houses, which are abandoned because of the mobility of their owners to better housing, is a mass phenomenon. However, both the structure of the Greek model of apartment buildings that dominates in the central districts of Athens and includes a spectrum of apartments of different characteristics and price, and the social and functional constitution of these districts, restrains ghettoization. Undeniably, here as well, a basic factor is the multiple fragmentation of property, which involves a variety of appropriations and management of residences by each owner, who does not own, generally, a large number of apartments. Thus a variety of situations are easily created, that allow the development of different dynamics, contrary to the bureaucratic rigidity that characterizes the management of social housing stock. The central districts of Athens, despite the impressive presence of immigrant men and women, remain socially mixed areas and have so far avoided the economic crisis because of lack of demand and reduction of population

For the Greek owners, the commercial exploitation of the relatively more deteriorated residences, by renting them to immigrants, was favorable in many ways: Directly, as it contributed to prevent the loss of incomes from those particular assets. Indirectly, through the avoidance of economic crisis it protected all from the insecurity and the danger of reduction of their property value. We consider that this beneficial effect in the value of Greek

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<sup>20</sup> Mantouvalou M. and Mavridou M., 1989, *Urban Land Rent and Markets for Land and Housing in Housing Neighbourhoods of Post-war Athens*. Research Report, phase A', General Secretariat for Research and Technology and NTUA-Department Cities and Social Practice, particularly Chapters 3 and 4 (in Greek).

landed property that resulted from the settlement of immigrants, although not reported explicitly in the current debates, contributed decisively to avoid conflicts and the occurrence of racist reactions.

D. Emmanuel in his report to the Athens Master Plan Organization writes: *"...the central areas of Athens, with the large variety of areas and gradations in the building stock, function substantially as a big "melting pot" of social and economic integration and social co-living in a multinational, multicultural and multi-class frame... the policies to upgrade the city-centre should be more balanced, aiming at general upgrading of conditions for all social strata."* (D. Emmanuel, 2000). We agree with this opinion.

For the immigrants, the social and functional mix in the central neighborhoods facilitate in many ways their integration in the city and its life, because, it increases the possibilities of access in the job market, it creates visibility in the public space and it deters the growth of biases and fear syndromes that feed racism, it encourages the common use of both public and private services. We can point out that the common use of private sector services, with exclusively economic criteria, facilitates also tolerance in the common use of public services of health and education that is also taking place to a large extent successfully. Thus we consider that the characterization of these areas as "melting-pot of social and economic integration" is justified.