

Reviving the historical memory and promoting the understanding among different cultures: The consolidation and transformation of two refugee settlements in central Athens.

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Abstract

The first half of the 20th century was a milestone in the historical, social and cultural development in Greece as it involved changes that still affect current policies. Among the most significant changes has been the massive influx from the East of refugees of Greek descent who had to be urgently accommodated in housing complexes like the ones in Alexandras Avenue in Athens. The modern architectural approach of the specific buildings, their symbolism, but also their prolonged abandonment, created the need for the development of an appropriate proposal regarding their preservation, reuse, rehabilitation and their reintegration in the surrounding urban fabric.

The paper proposes the preservation and the rehabilitation of this settlement in consolidation with the neighboring “Stegi Patridos” refugee housing complex. The two complexes will create a cultural route and thematic park, the key elements of which will be the revival of historical memory, along with the promotion of the common elements among the different cultures involved, such as the Greek, the Anatolian and the Islamic culture of the present and past.

The approach is based on the ever-increasing need for more qualitative living environment in large urban centers. It incorporates actions, such as:

- *the enhancement of the area’s public space, as a field of interaction and social participation,*
- *the preservation and restoration of architectural heritage and*
- *the integration of the new cultural pole as a living organism in the city’s everyday life.*

The intervention is anticipated to improve the image of Athens, while avoiding forms of gentrification in the area.

1. Introduction

The accommodation of refugees in Greece has been a milestone in the history of the country. It contributed to a range of social and urban transformations, such as the approach to social housing, which has been one of the most ambitious components in the development of the Greek social welfare state. These transformations still affect the country today. The refugee housing complex in Alexandras Avenue constitutes a significant scheme which is characteristic of the refugee accommodation campaign of the 1920s. Its architectural approach (modern movement), its symbolism, but also its abandonment for years, led to an extensive controversy and research regarding its maintenance, re-use and reintegration in the Athens urban fabric.

The result of this research is the proposal for the integration of refugee settlements in the Alexandras Avenue with that in Stegi Patridos in the neighbouring Lycabetus Hill along with the development of a

thematic park. The main objective of this proposal is the revival of historical memory and the understanding of different cultures.

The present study comprises three sections. The first section describes the theoretical background, while the second the historical background. The third one describes the study area along with the proposed urban regeneration. In more detail, the first section develops theories regarding public outdoor space, cultural routes and city branding, while its following part is dedicated to the protection and enhancement of the architectural heritage, along with the ways that historical listed buildings can be restored and reused. The second section refers to the historical context and the social and urban impact of the refugees' accommodation in Greece. The third section starts with a short description of the area and its historical development along with the analysis of its individual focal points, and presents the proposal for an urban regeneration and the concerns relevant to its implementation.

2.1 Urban Regeneration

The term *urban regeneration* is associated with an ideological approach, the objective and the type of intervention in urban problems. It is adopted in degraded areas with problems both in the building stock and their uses, such as urban densities, deficient public facilities or lack of protection in the historical, archaeological and cultural assets and in the activities within the region (Karavia, 2006, pp.9-10; Moschidou, 2011, pp.19-20; Bampouka, 2013; Chatzopoulou et al, 1995, pp.25-36). It consists of any type of intervention associated with the existing built urban environment. It is determined by a multitude of parameters relating to the social and economic conditions of the areas and their relationship with the wider environment. At present, urban regeneration constitutes the most appropriate approach to improve urban development and ensure social cohesion (Mitoula, 2002, p.177 Bampouka, 2013; Chatzopoulou et al, 1995, pp. 26-29).

Urban regeneration interventions may either be radical, eg. involving radical transformations in the areas where it is applied, or mild, aiming to improve the built and communal urban areas by small scale interventions. The radical type of regeneration also tends to involve 'gentrification' as it may promote the expulsion, voluntary or compulsory, instantaneous or gradual, of the existing population of the area and its replacement with more affluent new residents. This form of interventions can constitute a risk in an urban regeneration scheme (Aravantinos, 2007; Karavias, 2006, pp.6-8; Mitoula, 2002, p.177; Moschidou, 2011, p.15). A way to overcome gentrification is through the engagement of wider social groups in the decision-making process, even from the early steps of the planning, introducing the approach of the participatory planning (Aravantinos, 2007, pp.89-90).

2.2 Urban open space

Urban open space is the terrain where the urban population experiences everyday life in all its variety and activity. It is a field of action, interaction, a field of exchange of ideas and viewpoints as well as, a point of social life reference. Gehl (2002) among others even believe that humans' presence in public space is their most important social activity. The way people perceive open space depends both on the built environment around it as well as their personal background, their beliefs and their approach to issues such as democracy, discrimination, marginalization, political action and memory and symbolism (Belavilas & Vatavali, 2009, p. 21). According to the Greek legislation, public space is the entire space within the urban fabric that is collectively used regardless of its size, area, materials or arrangement (Giannakou & Eppas, 2011; Zourna & Danadiadou, 2011). Public space is a part of the city which may be used individually or collectively without being dominated or subjected to claims. Public space is directly available to all users irrespective of their social, economic, political, religious or national identity provided they do not deny to anyone else the right to use (Gehl, 2002, p. 229).

Urban open space constitutes a very important element that contributes to the shaping of the urban environment and its influence in the city. Thus, according to its use, it may be classified as local, supra-local or metropolitan space, as public or non - public, and may be classified as green space or meeting space according to its function. More specifically, it comprises squares, streets, pavements, urban parks, kindergartens, public or private gardens and natural formations in and around the city fabric. Still it may include space that is necessary for urban development such as a deserted plot in the center of town or an abandoned camp. Green space is the space of which the largest section is covered by vegetation (Belavilas & Vatavali, 2009, pp. 19, 86; Belavilas et al, 2010, p. 210; Pouliou, 2007). In many European countries like England, public space is treated in a paradigmatic manner while concrete incentives and policies are provided for its creation and management. One of the reasons that led to this has been the problematic quality of life during the industrial revolution (Pouliou, 2007, p. 39).

2.3 City branding and Cultural routes

Kavaratzis (2004) and others suggests that city branding is an appropriate approach to promote a city thought its focus on building and communicating a unique city image. Brands can serve as sources of identification and differentiation (Mommaas, 2002). At the same time, the practice of employing arts and culture as urban regeneration tools and as a means to enhance local distinctiveness is not a new phenomenon (Evans, 2003). Branding a city through heritage sites and places of cultural interest implies that city attributes and symbolic values will be mainly based on the cultural and architectural 'capital' of the area. The process of branding may seek to associate the city with specific assets or elements, like the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao and the Barcelona Gaudi buildings, or it can aim for a more pluralist set of cultural representations, as for instance in London's 'multi-themed' branding strategy.

A potential way of increasing the city attractiveness and diversifying its brand and tourism offer is by developing cultural routes or culture trails (Puczko & Ratz, 2011). Cultural routes provide a platform for linking different assets together - such as historic buildings, monuments and museums - encouraging synergies and creating 'magnets' for visitors to experience the built environment and intangible heritage of a place (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2003). Their purpose is also to protect and enhance the cultural heritage (Khovanova-Rubicondo, 2011). The integration of archaeological sites and other places of cultural interest on cultural routes may also increase the number of visitors to less popular and more distant points of cultural interest (Moulin and Boniface 2001). Such routes are more commonly theme-based, for example Dublin's literary walking tour or Boston's Freedom trail, although the subject and type of heritage that they highlight can vary greatly. The latter suggests that cultural routes are both flexible and suitable for promoting city uniqueness and distinctiveness. Thus, their development within a city, as part of its city branding policy, allows for bringing together the different pieces of the local urban landscape puzzle.

Cultural routes are flexible tools in their design, and they can be used and adapted to different spatial scales. In practical terms, that means that there is a large freedom in determining the extent of travel, depending on the specific territorial characteristics of the place (Hayes and MacLeod, 2008; Murray and Graham, 1997). Their success is based on the organization of the signaling, the information facilities for the visitors, the public information through upgraded publications, the view of the route's topic, events, etc. (Augerinou, 2009).

2.4 Protection and enhancement of architectural heritage

Architectural heritage constitutes an important component of cultural heritage. It has been acknowledged since the 19th century that the conservation of the historic fabric of cities and their architecture has been of singular significance even when it is merely related to the preservation of ancient structures (Pendlebury, 1999). Nowadays, the protection of architectural heritage relates to a system of social, economic, cultural and political issues including elements of the community that hosts them, while it may also operate as the means to reestablish its cultural identity and symbolism (Nomikos, 2004, p. 3). It may involve actions such as reversing the modern interventions to older building stock and urban space, securing their structural integrity as opposed to pure ‘facadism’ that appears particularly popular recently. The enhancement of architectural heritage improves urban space and allows its community and visitors to re-experience fundamental principles of the past while the rehabilitation of specific building stock may offer opportunities for novel cultural activities. Alternatively, its demolition is considered as annihilation of human culture and disturbed succession of the past into the present, causing the alienation of society from its historical memory (Stamatiou, 2002, p. 750).

2.5 The international scale initiatives and the Greek approach

The significance of architectural heritage and its relevance to urban design has attracted a lot of consideration in the beginning of the 20th century and specifically during the Charte d' Athènes in 1933. No international scale consensus on the manner to treat historic structures had been achieved prior to the end of WWII, when the need to keep and promote the links between the present and the future was expressed. Based on this, historic sites have been approached in the Charte of Venice (1964) as sites of particular historic, cultural and aesthetic significance that must be protected, in contrast with isolated historic buildings which have been identified earlier as such. Later, the declaration of Amsterdam (1975) enlarged the notion of architectural heritage to involve building complexes, neighborhoods and even villages of historic or cultural interest that need protection. In addition, the historical periods that are characterized as heritage were expanded to include modern architecture followed by the refurbishment of old structures with novel uses to meet contemporary functional demand. Today the issue of protecting and enhancing architectural heritage is approached holistically aiming at the development of the area in question in a sustainable manner (Stefanou, 2003).

At a European level, the UK is a country with a developed and precise system of rules and legal instruments relating to the protection of architectural heritage. The “Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas” 1990 Act classifies historic buildings in two categories, Grade listed I and Grade listed II, according to their respective interest. It is noted that during the 1990s the British legal framework has extended the issue of protection of cultural heritage so as to include social housing estates, similar to the refugee settlements in Greece.

There are three different approaches on the issue of protection and enhancement of architectural heritage are outlined by Pendlebury (1999) i.e., (a) the approach of “The Society for Protection of Ancient Buildings” (SPAB), the approach of the geographer MR Conzen and the basically aesthetic Urban Design approach. The first approach tends to center on the protection and occasionally even preservation of heritage, Conzen on the other hand is interested in preserving the entire historic area and not just the buildings, while the third approach promotes “facadism” leading to the cultural consumption of the city.

2.6 The legal framework of the protection of heritage in Greece

The interest in protecting ancient, Christian and medieval heritage in Greece through a number of generally fragmented legal instruments dates from the foundation of the modern Greek state in 1830. The first law directly pertinent to the issue was issued in 1950. The article 24 of the Greek Constitution of 1975 relates to villages and building complexes of exceptional architectural character, the protection of which has been reinforced by several more recent legal instruments. Nevertheless the urban sprawl of the recent past, which involved excessive demolition, has had a negative impact of any attempt to conserve and renovate. For several decades after WWII the protection of heritage mainly aimed at preserving ancient remnants and specific buildings of historic or aesthetic value but nothing else. The relevant European legislation and directives were adopted by the Greek state many years later, as in the case of the Granada Convention of 1985 that was incorporated in Greek legislation in 1992. Greece focused on protection of cultural heritage only since 2002, although the law still does not adopt the terminology of the Granada Convention, as it confuses ancient with architectural heritage (Charkiolakis, 2003; Doris, 2002; Nomikos, 2004, pp.1-2; Chatzopoulou et al, 1995, pp.171-175).

2.7 Protection bodies and means

As provided by article 24 of the Greek Constitution, the body responsible for the protection of heritage is the Greek state and the Ministry of Culture and the Archaeological Agency, which has been the authority in charge until 1968. Nevertheless many heritage issues relate directly to the Ministry of the Environment which has sometimes expressed opposing approaches with the Ministry of Culture as in the case of the refugee settlement of Alexandras Avenue in Athens. There have been other interesting modern heritage cases that have not been satisfactorily covered due to the lack of integrated protection and enhancement programs (Doris, 2002, p. 678; Stamatiou, 2002, p.759).

In other European countries like the UK, central and local governments cooperate through “English Heritage”, a non-governmental organization. Similarly in France the body responsible is “Monument Conservation Office”, yet it is apparent that the owners of historic buildings surely play a significant role in this. Italy has developed a wider network of heritage protection bodies both at central and at local level by the relevant Ministry of Culture and bodies such as the “Centro di Restauro” in Rome and the “Istituto delle Pietre Dure” in Florence respectively (Tsaoussis & Sakkas, 2009, pp.35-54).

Cultural heritage protection mechanisms in Greece are either regulative or monetary in character. The existing planning framework consists of a number of regulations that control building construction without hindering the expression of creative architectural approach. Likewise measures of economic character comprise loans, development incentives and tax relief mechanisms aiming to promote the protection and enhancement of architectural heritage.

3.1 Historical context

The period after the Greek disaster in Anatolia in 1922 and the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923 was characterized by the urgent need of the Greek state to accommodate 1.2 million refugees of Greek origin who had been forced to vacate the Turkish Middle East. The task to provide proper housing for these people within Greek territory, either urban or rural, had proven to be a particularly difficult burden for a state of only around 5 million inhabitants and of limited social, economic and organizational capacity. Newcomers exerted excessive pressure in the exploitation of land and increased the population of existing urban communities while also acted as catalyst towards the development of these communities. The dramatic boost in the country’s population generated a

number of urban and social transformations (such as the urban block of flats), the *antiparohi* system (in which small businessmen cooperate with small scale landowners to develop urban land) and, lastly, the phenomenon of illegal building that characterized the urban sprawl of the 20th Century in Greece (Gizeli 1997, pp.42, 47; Baltas, 2002, pp. 3, 11; Polyzos 1984, p.51; Filippidis 1984, p.149).

3.2 Organizations responsible for the accommodation of refugees

The accommodation of refugees was carried out by chiefly three statutory bodies. Firstly, the Refugee Care Fund (RCF) which was founded in 1922 to cater for the immediate needs of refugees providing urgent accommodation and medical supplies during the initial phase of their settlement in Greece (Georgakopoulou 2002; Gizeli 1984, p.136). The second body was the Refugees Rehabilitation Committee (RRC) which was established in 1924 with the task of housing the refugees (Vlachou et al 1978, pp. 117-8). After 1927 the RRC activity was replaced by the third body the Urban Refugee Settlement Agency of the Ministry of Welfare, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, which dealt with the accommodation of refugees in the rural areas. In addition to the statutory bodies, the private sector was also involved in to the refugees' rehabilitation, such as the National Bank of Greece, as well as, a number of organizations of the voluntary sector, the American and the Swedish branch of the Red Cross, the 'American Near East Relief' and the migrant clubs of Greeks living abroad especially in the US (Vlachou et al 1978; Georgakopoulou 2002; Baltas 2002, pp. 6, 14; Papadopoulou & Sarigiannis, 2006, p. 9).

3.3 Social impact

The neighborhoods of the new settlers functioned as the space needed for the economic and psycho-social rehabilitation of refugees. Still their settlement there allowed a twofold social discrimination to develop: first between them and the indigenous population and, second, among the refugees themselves. This impact has been generated by the inconsiderate locational parameters of the settlements, as well as, the procedure adopted for the distribution of dwellings that discriminated well-off from poor settlers. In addition to the above, most neighborhoods suffered from unemployment or underemployment experienced by the majority of refugees who often lived below the threshold of poverty line similar to the condition of the British working class during the industrial revolution as described by Engels (Polyzos, 1984, pp.39, 43).

3.4 Urban impact – Legal concerns

The accommodation of refugees has not only influenced urban development in the large urban centers but also the housing policy and building typology. It also provoked questions concerning the employment of these policies for housing vulnerable social groups in general. The legal framework relevant to town planning and housing after 1922 amended the existing legislation of that time in issues such as the building requirements for housing, for the need for safety in construction works but also urban development in general and building settlements in the periphery of the urban fabric in particular (Gizeli, 1984, p.265). During that period, new legal instruments were directed to the housing of specific social groups such as the disabled by war, the 'poorest social classes' and the pensioners. On the other hand, it is noted that the decision to develop extensive refugee neighborhoods in the periphery of cities had adverse consequences to the development of big cities like Athens as it neglected redevelopment needs of a number of central districts such as Patissia and Kypseli. Moreover, the state tolerated the phenomenon of urban sprawl mostly in the form of self-housing involving excessive illegal building without any city plans and relevant infrastructure works (Gizeli, 1984, p.277; Biris, 1997, pp.50-2).

4. The study area¹

The history of the area is more than 100 years old, with a key milestone to be the period after 1922. At the beginning of the 20th century, a significant section of the area had been planned and new buildings, along with some important public buildings and the stadium of football club of Panathinaikos, were constructed. In addition, in the area adjacent to the stadium, one of the first organized refugee settlements was set. Today, there are un-built sites, municipal sports halls and school buildings. During the '30s, the first complex of blocks of flats, both on Alexandras Avenue and in the area of Lycabettus Hill was constructed. After the WWII, the area gradually downgraded, while just after 1985 a qualitative regeneration program for the refugee housing complex in Alexandras Avenue and the surrounding area was developed. However, until the present times there are no actions towards this regeneration.

4.1 The identity of the focal points

Towards a better understanding of the study area and the urban problem that the proposal is called to resolve along with the benefits for the region and the city of Athens, it is appropriate to describe in some detail the focal points of the proposed urban regeneration intervention.

4.1.1 The residential complex of Alexandras Ave.

The residential refugee complex in Alexandras Avenue is part of the wider installation in the area of Ampelokipi. It was built between the years 1933-1935, based on the designs of the architects Dimitris Kyriakou and Kimona Laskari, by the Welfare Ministry and it was funded by the State. The complex, as a whole, displays excellent urban quality and represents the concept of relationships between the volume and the free space of that era (Gizeli, 1984, p. 267; Demertzis, 2010, p.90). It represents an important moment in the history of Greek architecture and the modern movement of the '30s in Greece. Designwise, it was influenced by the Bauhaus movement (Fillipidis, 1984), while, its unique "decorative" element, the traces of the December 1944 street fighting on its walls, reflects the country's recent history. It also marks the use of buildings as a solution to the refugees' housing rehabilitation, for the first time since precarious accommodation forms had been practiced.

The complex is situated in 14.5 acres, 30% of which is built, while the remaining 70% is characterized as public space. It consists of 228² apartments, divided into eight rows of block of flats. Each one of these block of flats has three levels, with two apartments per floor, 45sqm each, with a central staircase for every 6 apartments.

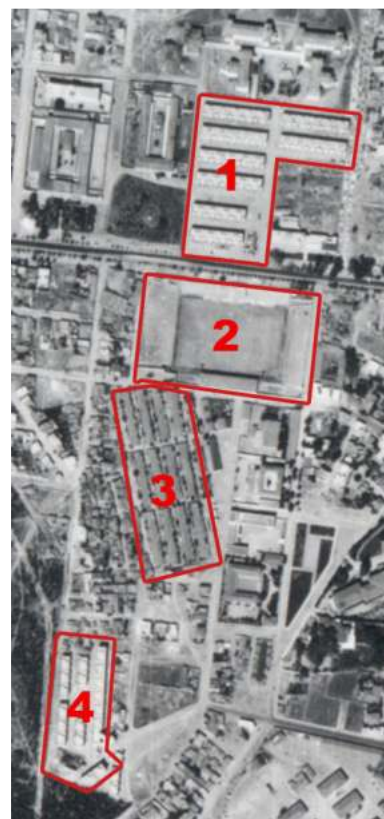


Figure 1. Areal Photo from 1937

1. Alexandras Av. refugees' complex
2. Panthinaikos football stadium
3. Kountouriotika refugees' camp
4. Stegi Patridos refugees' complex

¹ The 'Ampelokipoi' estate

² In the present days only 51 of them are legally inhabited, while the remaining 177 have passed to the state privatisation fund 'TAIPED'

Their construction method was indicative of the interwar era, using domestic materials and reinforced concrete plates, along with off-white stonework. Currently the apartment buildings have obvious damages, but these are not related to its structural competence. Furthermore, there are no irreversible deteriorations (Papadopoulou – Sariyannis, 2006, p.41; Bersis, 1936, pp.607, 611; Filippidis, 1984, p.225). In 2009 the complex has been characterized as a historical monument by the Ministry of Culture.

4.1.2 Apostolos Nikolaidis stadium in Alexandras Ave.

The story of the stadium began in 1922, when a few acres of the wider Ampelokipi estate were given to the team of Panathinaikos. In 1928 the first wooden seats, towards the side of Lycabettus Hill were build. Since then, there were several periods when the stadium was transformed and expanded, increasing its capacity and its uses as the swimming pool and the indoor basketball court were constructed. The area is characterized as a public urban space by the strategic plan for Athens in 1985.

4.1.3 'Kountouriotika' refugee settlement

Apart from the refugees' complexes, within the study area, one of the first refugee settlements was created. It was consisted of booths that were arranged in four rows. It was funded by the Greek immigrants of America, in collaboration with the R.C.F. There is no evidence of the construction method or the materials that had been used; however, it was probably constructed by cement blocks. The settlement was maintained until the early 70s, when the last residents were evicted, by the Greek coop (Papadopoulou-Sariyannis, 2006, p.122). In 1974, according to the urban plan of Athens, the area had been gradually planned in urban blocks; however, since 2006 the area was included to the wider urban regeneration plan of Athens – Attica 2021 (Strategic plan for Athens - Attica 2021).

4.1.4 The residential complex of Stegi Patridos

This complex constitutes yet another exemplary of work of K. Laskaris. It has been constructed between 1933-1936 in the same design, style and way of construction, as that of the Alexandras Avenue³. It consists of seven, three-storey buildings, with 120 apartments. It is arranged into rows, where the central row it is split and a small square is fitted. Today the complex is in a good condition, having no structural problems (Papadopoulou – Sariyannis, 2006, p.176).

4.2 SWOT Analysis

Table 1: Swot Analysis table

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The location of the area in the urban fabric • The refugee complex of Alexandras Ave. is characterized as a historical monument. • The historical memory of the wider region • The un-built area, which can be 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The visual condition of the refugees' complex, especially of those in Alexandras Av. • The isolation and marginalisation of the present residents in refugee complex in Alexandras Ave. • The considerable cost of investing in

³ According to Papadopoulou and Sariyannis (2006) is likely similar designs with the Alexandras Ave to be used, with slight variations

<p>redeveloped - based on the (Strategic plan for Athens - Attica 2021)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to renovate and re-use the existing building infrastructure • The majority of the Alexandras Ave. refugee complex belongs to the Greek estate. 	<p>existing economic conditions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The necessity of expropriations for the completion of the regeneration
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The area is incorporated in the Strategic plan for Athens - Attica 2021 • The ecological route between Lycabettus hill and Tourkovounia hill • The cultural route of Toyrkovounia hill, Lycabettus hill, Ardittou St. and Pedion areos Park • the ability to install new uses in the area • The urban regeneration funding or the lending programs by resources from NSRF, the European Refugee Fund and the Deposit and Loans Office • The residents' and organizations interest for an urban regeneration and the rehabilitation of the refugee complex. • The relocation of the stadium of Panathinaikos 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The declassification of the listed refugee complex due to its privatization by the State • The constant efforts from the Greek state to demolish the existing settlement and allow the construction of new buildings based on the current building regulations and site coverage • Interventions on the buildings' envelope • The economic environment of Greece • the potential cancellation of the relocation of the stadium and the redevelopment of the area • the abandonment and the deterioration of the area's urban environment

The opportunities for the wider urban regeneration in the area, such as those described in Table 1, along with the strong points, such as the location in the urban fabric and the preserved building infrastructure, can contribute significantly to the elimination of the weaknesses. However, the current economic condition, along with the prevailing policies on the “reclamation” of the area's public property and the efforts towards the demolition of the refugees' complex in Alexandras Av., may cause delays or even cancellation of the regeneration plan, allowing other forms of “exploitation” to be chosen.

4.3 The proposal

Given the relationship between the focal points of the area and its history, as well as advantages and the disadvantages of the area, this study proposes *'an urban regeneration plan which incorporates the consolidation and transformation of two refugee settlements in central Athens, the revival of the historical memory and the promotion of the understanding of different cultures'*.

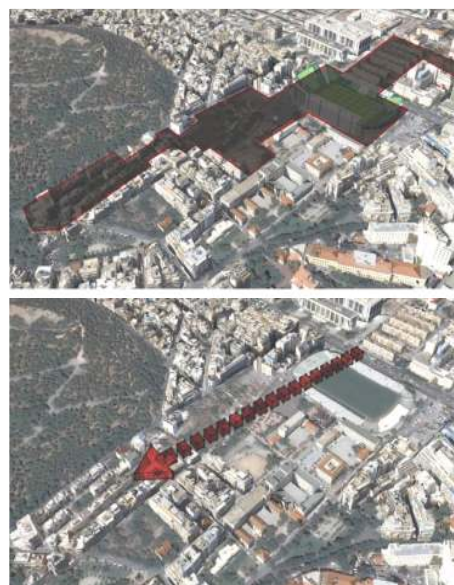


Figure 2. Areal photo. It shows the study area and the consolidation among the two complexes

The proposal aims to solve problems in the infrastructure and the land use of the area, along with its cultural and aesthetic enhancement. This intervention constitutes a mild urban regeneration scheme aiming to transform the selected area into an attractive urban space, utilizing the abandoned social housing stock of the refugees' settlement of Alexandras Ave. and reintegrating it in the city's urban structure, improving both built and open urban space. Its key elements are the revival of the historical memory, the understanding of different cultures and the cultural enhancement. The aim is to inform and bring in to sight the collective memory, along with the history and the interpretation of the phenomenon of exile. Furthermore the redevelopment will aim to relate directly to the issue of incoming migration from the East and South which is currently becoming particularly critical. Thus the project will be addressed to people who are interested to know the cultural, the historical and the social aspect of the refugees' life. Moreover and as the area may provide information both about the past and the present, it is suggested it will function as a "new" city hub, bringing back to life this currently desolated area. This regeneration scheme becomes more important presently as the area is included in the cultural route linking Tourkovounia and Lycabettus Hills, being part of the wider ecological path of Tourkovounia Hill, Lycabettus Hill, Ardittou St. and Pedion Areos Park outlined in the draft document of Strategic plan for Athens - Attica 2021. Its building stock and intermediate public space are the focal points of this route, in which a series of cultural activities and mixed uses are included.

Overall, the proposal deals with the redevelopment of the study area, including the recovery and re-use of the building shells, the land uses and the protection and enhancement of the environment, with simultaneous protection of the owners of the refugee residences. Besides, a proposal aiming to revive the historical memory of refugees must not ignore the existing situation and problems faced by current immigrants. It should also be noted that this proposal does not foresee any addition of new homes or the exploitation of the complex of Alexandras Ave. for residential use, in order to avoid the phenomenon of gentrification and commercialization of the building stock. The proposal also aims to avoid extensive harassment activities that are often expressed in the areas of refugee settlements, uses that could however be placed in the outdoor urban park area, such as refreshment facilities and Bazaar in certain days and hours, which will attract visitors to the area. The proposal for the broader redevelopment of area fulfils the most of the requirements described in the Greek law of 1997.

The main interventions in the study area will be:

1. The restoration and the re-use of buildings of Alexandras Ave. which includes:
 - Interventions which bring buildings back to their original condition, with the smallest possible change in its internal arrangements, in order to avoid altering its internal plan, while preserving its architectural value and the traces of the Athens history embedded on its walls.
 - An anti - earthquake reinforcement and an upgrade for energy saving.
 - The configuration of access and parking spaces for the disabled in the wider area of the settlement and the formation of public spaces.

An important approach to this intervention is the way in which we demonstrate the historicity of the settlement and the cause for its construction. It is important to note that all actions must be decided and implemented in collaboration with the remaining residents.

- Besides the exploitation of existing buildings, the intervention promotes the reintegration of the settlement in the urban fabric.

It is also important that before any restoration, rehabilitation and reuse, the urban design plan of the area is needed to be revised, as the existing one was approved back in 1975. In addition before any intervention, a modification of the land uses in the region must be promoted, in order for new uses to be allowed, especially in the Alexandras Av. complex, such as:

- the establishment of a Museum and Archives of the refugees' accommodation
 - a library for the Technical Chamber of Greece and the Technical Documentation Unit (Demertzis, 2010, p.89)
 - guesthouses for the patients' relatives of the adjacent hospital
2. The restoration of the external building envelope of the Stegi Patridos refugee settlement
 3. The demolition of a part of the football stadium. The remaining part will be used as a space for events and conceivably as a 'border' to the Avenue. Furthermore, a museum for the athletic team of Panathinaikos, along with a cafeteria and recreation areas will be placed.
 4. The integration of the 'Kountouriotika' area, along with the demolished section of the stadium, where a theme park will be planned. This urban intervention includes new paving, planting, outdoor setting areas and street lighting.

The park will provide samples of the architecture and the daily life of the refugees from the past or the present, in to a single outdoor module and it may operate as a follow-up to the museum. It will also provide an integrated and multidimensional perception of the collective memory, the promotion of the understanding of the different cultures and the history and interpretation of the phenomenon of exile (Bounia, 2004; Nikonanou, 2005). In addition, its goal is the recognition of the migrants' contribution to the local society, as well as the defense of the cultural identity and diversity.

Furthermore, through the emphasis on the present, the proposed intervention will have additional targets, such as, the information and the awareness of the problems of immigrants in modern Athens, the degradation of stereotypes, along with the improvement of the social and multicultural cohesion. The above interventions are also in line with the international initiative of Unesco (2006)⁴ for the creation of the museums about immigration throughout the world, a program in which the proposal could be included. It should also be noted that in order to proceed with this project, the urban plan in the area should be amended, as it is currently split in urban blocks.

- The construction of an underground car park in the area below the current football field with an urban park on top. The car park will serve both visitors and the inhabitants of the area.
- Traffic changes around the current football stadium, as well as, the wider redeveloped area

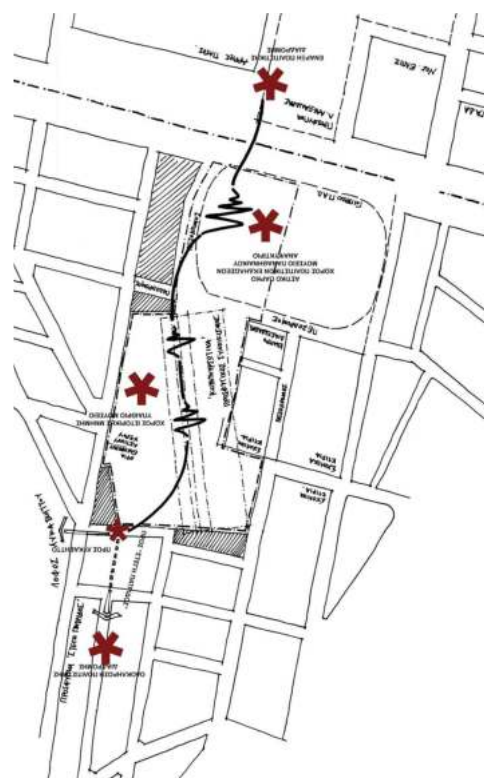


Figure 3. Schematic representation of the proposed regeneration and the cultural route

4 <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/projects/unesciom-migration-museums-initiative/> - <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/SHS/pdf/Final-Report-Migration-Museums.pdf>

should be planned.

With regards to the proposed route consolidation, the starting point is the complex of Alexandras Avenue. Then, through a pedestrian bridge the visitor will pass to the opposite side of Alexandras Avenue, where the transformed section of the current football stadium and the remaining seating is. This area will also serve as a reception and a transition to the main part of a public outdoor area, the thematic park. This area, in correspondence with the theme park, will include tourist and leisure facilities, creating an integrated pole which attracts visitors (Sikka 2006). The aim of the park is to promote multi-cultural activities, freedom of expression and to serve as a place where the people can interact. More specifically, this space will:

- provide information for the periods of the refugees' settlement
- stimulate the historic memory, taking advantage of the memories of people who have experienced similar circumstances
- contain reference points which will inform the visitors on key events of the accommodation campaign
- illustrate the living conditions of the refugee, through a reconstruction of a small representation of the former refugee camp

It is extremely important, that the historic documentation of these events should be presented beyond any emotional or biased approach and beyond any political and ideological pressures (information gathering, oral testimony, governmental sources, etc.). The cultural route will end at the refugee settlement of Stegi Patrudos from where the visitors, the residents or the walkers, will have the opportunity to continue their walk up to the Lycabettus Hill.

4.4 Control and management

The control of this urban regeneration and the consultation between the citizens and the institutions of the project will be achieved through an online platform, which will allow access to the information, communication and exchange of ideas among the groups that are involved. It should be noted that the success of such urban regeneration schemes, according to Stergiou (2008), depends on the political will and the acceptance of the intervention by the majority of the citizens. Finally, the project will be managed by a management agency once it is completed, so as to assure the viability of the regeneration.

4.5 Ways of financing the proposal

In order to implement this proposal, a plan regarding the financial resources is needed. This plan should take into account costs such as:

- the acquisition of the privately owned land in the area Kountouriotika
- the refinement of the area, the land restoration and the configuration of the theme park
- the demolition cost of the selected part of the football stadium
- the restoration cost of the buildings in the refugees complex
- the costs related to the establishment of the Panathinaikos museum in the remaining part of the stadium
- the cost to construct the walkways and the underground car park

The financial resources that could fund the above costs are:

- The EU programs such as: the ECAC or the Jessica program for sustainable investment in urban centers, with the participation of private capital
- The Urban Development fund
- The European Refugee Fund

- The Fund depository and loans. This source of funding is widespread in France and it provides loans and guarantees or even makes investments for urban regenerations in residential cooperatives, municipalities and individuals. Through this source the urban redevelopment in the area of Tauros in Attica was funded (Dimitrakopoulos 2006, pp. 24, 49).

With regards to the owners of the refugee settlements in Alexandras Avenue and Stegi Patridos, the reconstruction and the upgrading of the building envelopes will join the redevelopment program, while regarding the internal repairs some incentives in form of tax relief, low-interest loans or grants may be given. The sale of the commercial uses of the urban park i.e. the snack bar or the underground parking, could still provide part of the required financing.

5. Conclusion

In the recent years, the need for high quality living environment in large urban centers becomes imperative, making the actions for its upgrading a necessity. In an ideal state, the protection and enhancement of urban outdoor space is a primary concern, having recognized the importance of the field of action, interaction and social participation. At the same time, the cultural and architectural heritage of the site must be maintained and integrated into the urban daily life as a living organism, as a free thinking zone, a field of memory and emotions and a core of experience within the city. In addition, all the conservation activities and rehabilitation of historical records must be related to their urban and architectural dimension. These actions are also aiming to improve the buildings stock, the urban equipment, the network traffic and the local activities, without altering the identity of the region or causing unacceptable economic, social, cultural or environmental harm. Furthermore, a basic principle for every rehabilitation and inclusion of new uses in historic buildings is the respect and enhancement of the typological and morphological characteristics, as well as the preservation of the building's authentic integrity, in order allow the new users to enjoy the original historic and aesthetic values

Taking into account all the above, this study proposes an urban regeneration of the wider region of the refugee complex in Avenue Alexandras avenue in Athens, the site of Panathinaikos football stadium, the former refugee camp adjacent to the football pitch and the Stegi Patridos refugee complex in Lycabettus hill. In the above regeneration, the refugees' complex in Alexandras Avenue has an significant role as it is an important testimony of the establishment of refugees of 1922 as well as an integral part of the historical memory and the identity of the location. Accordingly, the preservation of the region seems to be particularly important, as the accommodation of refugees of 1922 in Athens has been a milestone for its historical, social and cultural development. It is also an excellent example of the influence of the modern movement in Greece.

However, until now, there is not any comprehensive program for the implementation of this objective. Thus, the present study seeks to fill this gap, by proposing a realistic solution to this existing problem. The present proposal is essentially a mild urban regeneration project aiming to transform the region to an attractive area through the exploitation of abandoned housing stock and the reintegration of the region into the city's structure.

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