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ID 1603 | PROGRESSIVE CONVERGENCE BETWEEN PRIVATE AND PUBLIC INITIATIVES IN CITY PLANNING AND URBAN POLICY: THE CASE STUDY OF KERAMEIKOS

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1 INTRODUCTION

Urban rehabilitation is defined as a process of improving deprived urban environments through enhancing the physical structure and varying the density established within urban areas. Major initiatives have been introduced to attract residential, transport, economic and leisure uses and activities, resulting in mutations of the spatial, social and economic structure of urban spaces (Nobre, 2002).

During the last decades a great amount of urban and social studies has started to acknowledge the significant role and useful experience of these processes in cities on specific case-studies across the world. The de-industrialization and the loss of manufacturing employment in many urban areas have led to the prevalence of consumption-based, arts-led forms of economic regeneration intended to tackle urban problems (Raco, 2002). Extending this discussion to the Athenian context, this paper examines the strategies of urban rehabilitation-regeneration and gentrification in relation to arts-led regeneration, as well as the effects of the progressive co-ordination between private and public urban development initiatives in Kerameikos. This case study serves towards an optimum understanding of the phenomenon, analyzing the practices followed by local authorities and private investors in the regeneration scheme alongside their spatial, social and economic implications. More specifically, the study approaches urban governance policies, focusing on urban enhancement practices and particular policing measures which aim at the extraction of "social pollutants" from certain city neighbourhoods (Urry, 1995).

International competition among cities has led to the implementation of policies favoring investors and private capital to the detriment of the local population (Harvey, 2000). Further to a brief assessment of the evolution of urban policies in the Athenian context over the last thirty years, the paper interrogates the social and spatial landscape of Kerameikos, taking into account the obstacles posed by the financial crisis in implementing and evolving the gentrification agenda and, consequently, in developing the real estate market. Urban enhancement interventions regarding both the physical environment and the social composition had been made in the pre-crisis period, however the outburst of the economic crisis put an end to an era of soaring land prices and to the "intrusion" of higher income groups. It is worth noting that the population composition has been partially dominated by distinct cultural groups of middle-low social strata.

This paper consists of three parts. An analysis of gentrification and urban regeneration practices is provided in the first part, followed by a description of the urban policies and tactics exercised in Athens, and particularly in Kerameikos. The concluding section provides insights into the prospects of participatory planning to encompass and express the voices of all the social groups living in Kerameikos.

2 URBAN REHABILITATION AND GENTRIFICATION

Since the 1980s, emphasis has been laid upon the potential of cultural policy to function as a tool for achieving urban economic regeneration objectives. The policy framework regarding urban governance has undergone significant changes. The convergence between culture and economics in urban policies since 1990 has been characterised by an expansion of city marketing techniques and city branding strategies (Garcia, 2004). Nowadays, the urban policies are re-directed by emphasizing on cultural forms and symbols as dominant elements of the productive strategy, whereby culture is increasingly commercialized. Due to the developments and needs of the economy, and to the rapid cultural penetration in many fields of production, policy focus is shifting from production to consumption and from material to culture (Scott, 1997, Harvey, 1989). Kong highlights an impressive surge in private-public partnerships (PPP), whereby developers, banks and companies of national and international significance join forces to administer urban issues of cultural economic policy (Kong, 2000:387).

Consequently, cities adopt cultural policies as a means to transform the physical and aesthetic aspects of space – along with their meaning, aiming at its sanitising in the interests of capital accumulation. Additionally, policy discourse now targets the urban historical fabric and the rearrangement of buildings and roads (Uzun, 2002). Along with the ongoing urban regeneration, residential transformation processes have been an important issue in the political agenda. This process leads to the spatial exclusion of impoverished groups, as places are gentrified in the interests of property-led regeneration. Urban policy aims to encompass the new middle-class preferences boosting public-private partnerships in housing regeneration. The underlying principle of these policies is to reduce the abandoned and dilapidated aspects of the inner-city neighbourhoods, attracting the middle classes instead of involving a wider social base (Atkinson, 2010).

Therefore, urban rehabilitation practices in many urban areas go along with the gentrification process. The gentrification phenomenon concerns the physical change in tandem with the socio-cultural capital in living spaces (Holcomb and Beauregard, 1981). Furthermore, gentrification involves the displacement of lower social strata, leaving room for the upper social groups to take over the inner-city areas. Many theorizations of regeneration highlighted the role of culture and capital as the main drivers of gentrification trends. This paper emphasizes the role of public-private partnerships on the implementation of gentrification, as an engine of urban regeneration. This incorporates the use of cultural facilities and practices sponsored by local authorities and private agents as promoters of regeneration projects and associated gentrification phenomena. Stressing the cultural factor, Ley describes artists – whose habits and practices constitute the immense expression of the 'post-industrial civilization' – as the 'stalking horse' of gentrification and revalorization of the city neighborhoods (Zukin, 1988:5, Ley, 1996).

3 URBAN POLICY IN THE ATHENIAN CONTEXT

Being the Greek capital, the metropolitan area of Athens concentrates half of the national population, accounting for the multiplicity and the differentiated tensions within its urban fabric. Similarly to most European metropolises, especially in Southern Europe, the inner city centre of Athens is socially mixed: the particularity of its socio-spatial morphology is linked to the vertical form of social segregation due to the multi-storey buildings of the antiparohi system¹.

Since the 1990s, urban policies in Greece have activated mechanisms and promoted regeneration projects for the enhancement of derelict historical heritage sites through land use conversion. The declining center of Athens has undergone a significant transformation, being subject to urban regeneration

¹ "Antiparohi system is related to the system where promotion is co-exercised by small owners and small construction firms in ad hoc joint ventures to produce small condominiums "(Alexandri, 2012:18)

initiatives. Like many cities of rich historic background, Athens has been the epicenter of urban regeneration mechanisms for reviving the declining inner urban areas. Over the past thirty years, Athens has attempted to foreground its history and culture as the key-driver in urban policies, in order to stimulate regeneration interest. A rising awareness of historical and cultural importance forced public administrators to proceed with the implementation of projects that aimed to promote its international role. History and culture were identified as key to Athens regeneration. Although the state and the local authorities put forward proactive planning, putting Athens to the 'European cities' map, they often disregarded the social and cultural needs of the local community.

The 1985 Regulatory Plan of Athens defined the boundaries of its Historic Centre. Historic buildings, which preserved their original attributes and presented an architectural interest, were listed. Historic and ancient monuments were protected with regeneration schemes, also reinforcing the cultural aspects of Athens. The Regulatory Plan of Athens has changed by virtue of the law 1515/1985, in order to promote projects for reshaping Athens in the vision of the 2004 Olympic Games, and to boost the city image that required its spatial, social and economic mutation.

The Municipality of Athens and the Unification of Archaeological Sites S.A – a private company owned by the Ministry of Culture – proposed the creation of pedestrianisation "Great Walk", linking

Acropolis to other important archaeological sites in the city centre. This regeneration action aimed to highlight the history of the city by intervening on the public spaces, archaeological monuments and sites, buildings of neoclassical architecture, green spaces and traditional neighbourhoods. Simultaneously, urban policies were carried out to improve and maximize infrastructure use in the urban core. The construction of a series of subways and tram lines minimised distances and had a significant impact on the spatial structure of land uses, as well as the trajectory of adjacent neighbourhoods. In addition, the museum of Acropolis, launched in 2009, is a flagship project aimed to boost the city image and to attract tourism, having a "Guggenheim effect". The museum of Acropolis represented the potentially exclusionary and polarizing nature of gentrification effects (Moukoulis, 2008:50). As an outcome of the urban rehabilitation of past decades, the interest in the historic centre housing stock has been increasing since the mid-2000s. The urban regeneration strategy promoted by the municipality and the state has had severe impact on land uses and values. In particular, the "Great Walk" conducted to the rise of land values in areas of immediate proximity, and to the creation of cultural uses – especially in old industrial districts – improving the prospects of gentrification.

According to Maloutas (2011:38), "there is no evidence of significant gentrification in Athens central neighbourhoods", given the structure of the housing stock and small-scale ownerships, as well as the absence of large-scale urban interventions. However, the affluent population never abandoned the city centre due to its historic value: the impact of this choice can be largely observed on smaller-scale infrastructure regeneration through locally induced social upgrading of certain traditional working-class neighbourhoods (Maloutas, 2004; 2011). It is indeed the case that "inner city enclaves are experiencing gentrification processes: Artists, higher income groups of affluent suburbs, young households "have established themselves in the Historic Center (Alexandri, 2011:9). In the more recent years the rhythms of gentrification have decelerated and land prices have diminished to the pre-crisis levels.

3.1 KERAMEIKOS

Although Kerameikos falls under the jurisdiction of Municipality of Athens, its geographical confines are defined differently by the institutions and urban studies. In this paper, it is considered the area which is bounded by Avenue Piraeus, Iera Odos, Konstantinoupoleos, Achilleos and Deligiorgi streets. These axes are chosen to include a district with uniform socio-spatial characteristics, several areas of which were subject to interventions made by public and private initiatives. It is worth mentioning that many residents and urban studies of the area called it Metaxourgeio. We adopt the name of Kerameikos due to the archaeological site of Kerameikos, one of the largest local authorities of ancient Athens. According to the General Urban Plan of Athens (Government Gazette bulletin 80D/4.2.1988), the case study constitutes the district of Rouf. Additionally, the neighbourhood is in close proximity to the central squares Omonoia and Syntagma, and to important archaeological sites such as Acropolis (Taxiarchi, 2007).

The residents used to be immigrants Muslims of Thrace, who resided in derelict buildings whose former residents were immigrants from Bulgaria, Poland, Russia, Egypt and Albania settled in the area in the 1970s. Another proportion of the immigrants settled in the area came from Asia – mainly China. The former residents of the neighbourhood are mostly retired (Taxiarchi, 2007).

The morphology of Kerameikos is a result of its historical urban evolution, pre-war buildings, antiparohi buildings, vacant lots, brothels, Chinese community shops, derelict houses, restored buildings, neoclassical and post-modern architecture. Many former warehouses, workshops and craft industrial buildings have been converted into postmodern leisure, art and cultural sites. Attracted by its multiculturalism and its history, many old and new residents and tourists wander in the streets, visiting the alternative cafes, wine bars and artistic spaces. At the same time, undocumented immigrants, drug addicts and other vulnerable social groups have settled in abandoned buildings of the district. During the 2000s, the neighbourhood was characterised as a centre of illicit drug and sex trade activities accommodating people under miserable and de-grading conditions.

After mid-2000s new spatial and socio-economic patterns are being shaped in the district, changing its identity and character. The study area is in state of transition, subject to public and private initiatives as well as to the economic crisis effects. Nonetheless, many researchers, media, politicians and residents refer to the social mutation of the neighbourhood through gentrification as a mean to boosting the image of a European metropolis.



Figure 3.1: The neighbourhood of Kerameikos Source: : National Technical University of Athens, Own Elaboration

3.2 PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INITIATIVES IN KERAMEIKOS

In terms of planning policies and strategies, the interventions of state and local authorities have determined the evolution of the area of Kerameikos and accompanied the process of socio-spatial transformation. The gentrification took place in Kerameikos mainly via private practices, forced by the partnership between public and private sector. The study area is affected by the practices of public institutions – Municipality of Athens, Unification of Archaeological Sites of Athens S.A, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Environment and Energy, and the Ministry of Citizen Protection – that have developed programs of re-imagining and regenerating the city of Athens through cultural activity and special events.

The neighbourhood of Kerameikos constitutes a part of Athens historic centre as defined by the Presidential Decree –Government Gazette bulletin nr. 567D/13.10.1979-which provides for development management policies to avoid the substitution of the housing stock from the antiparohi system. Furthermore, during the 1980s the Ministry of the Environment and Energy listed thirty buildings. As a result, the study area was abandoned, due to the inability of many households to cope with the

improvements and conversion of listed buildings. Thus, many buildings are abandoned and demolished by their owners due money scarcity, in fear of any compulsory maintenance of their house as listed. In the 1980s, many fires had broken out probably because many owners wished to exploit their property through the construction of new, more profitable buildings. The Presidential Decree of 1984 -Government Gazette bulletin nr. 33/A/84-prohibited the disturbing uses, the renewal of their operating licenses, the increase of horsepower and the establishment of new industries. Most of the traditional industries of Kerameikos were forced to leave. The expulsion of disturbing uses such as garages and engineering workshops resulted in the desertification of the building stock and the progressive change of the productive base of Kerameiko (Taxiarchi, 2007)..

The Local Plan -approved by Government Gazette, bulletin nr. 80/D/1988-describes the district as degraded and anticipates the reduction of construction factors and the restoration of interesting buildings facades and housing stock. That is, the study area is included in the districts intended for "purification". This policy aimed to stimulate residential uses and to improve quality of life. It also included interventions in shaping the historical physiognomy of the centre, the improvement of its image and its functionality through imposing stricter traffic regulations, implementing building renovations and retrofitting and pedestrianisation. Furthermore, the local plan proposed to include the district to the gridded archaeological sites of Athens. It was also proposed to revitalize the archaeological site of Public Sign – the ancient graveyard of Athens, and to turn it into a park (Alexandri,2014).

In the begging of 1990s, many planning proposals and public intervention acts suggested the urban regeneration of Kerameikos. The Council commissioned planning consultants to undertake a number of urban environmental improvement plans. Between 1990 and 1995, the Environmental Study Corporation undertook the upgrading survey of the area. The first plan of urban environmental improvement described the district of Kerameikos as "the most deprived district of the city centre where its extensive habitation is still conserved.

This district is very interesting due to its traditional and historical elements as part of the Athenian history" (Municipality of Athens,1993:10). It was also proposed to transform Kerameikos into a residential center and an area of trade and history. In other words, "it was suggesting its transformation into a cultural hub" (Alexandri, 2014: 5). In addition, the enhancement of the urban environment launched the reduction of roads' lanes, the establishment of parking spaces and selective pedestrianisation, as well as the installation of two metro stations, a tram line and bus lines to serve particularly the inner of the district (Municipality of Athens,1993: 122).

The social infrastructures are not estimated with regard to the current population but with the prospect of a social recomposition that will emerge through the rehabilitation programs (Municipality of Athens, 1993:91). That is, the current societal context of the neighbourhood isn't taken under serious consideration. This highlights the role of regeneration schemes as to the displacement of old residents and underprivileged social groups by the influx of middle-class newcomers. The future population is expected to be more stable and homogenous than the current one, since upgrading programmes lead gradually to the removal of a significant number of the impoverished population, specifically the undocumented immigrants. On the other hand, it was believed that immigrants who would remain as permanent residents would ultimately be integrated into the local population. (Municipality of Athens, 1993:90-91).

Public Sign, Iera Odos and the Silk factory were designated as special urban regeneration schemes related to the improvement of neoclassical houses, the demolition of abandoned houses and the amelioration of local public spaces through pedestrianisation, unification with other archaeological sites and through the creation of a square. The Silk factory, as the neighbourhood's landmark of architectural heritage was turned into the municipal gallery of Athens in 2010, after five years of renovation and in reference to the area's history.

The plan of urban regeneration-rehabilitation placed particular emphasis on the protection of historical and traditional elements of the neighbourhood, aiming to revitalize the traditional neighbourhood in tandem with the "back to the city" movement. Thus, the central and local state enacted the plan of urban regeneration by a presidential decree of 1998 -Government Gazette, bulletin nr. 616/D/98. The latter established the use of the area as "general residence" (Taxiarchi,2007). Therefore, it led to the creation of surplus value in many central areas, satisfying the speculative interests of investors (Alexandri, 2014).

At this point, it is worth noting the systematic trend towards delaying, regarding the adoption and implementation of decrees and local plans in Greece. In the case of Kerameikos, the local plan was elaborated in the 1980s, the survey of urban regeneration and the presidential decree in the 1990s, while throughout this period the characteristics of the neighbourhood had been changing. The regeneration projects are either implemented partly or not implemented at all. However, some projects already announced have been implemented gradually and only with the support of private sector initiatives, namely of Oliaros company. The pedestrianisation of Iasonos street has been implemented by Oliaros after the pressures for further regeneration actions.

Since the 2000s, various programs and actions of urban policies were designated to encourage the improvement and upgrading of historically interesting neighbourhoods, and to provide suitable conditions for the attraction of private capital and for the rehabilitation of Kerameikos. Public and private partnerships were formed to attract private capital and to get involved in the urban rehabilitation process. Gentrification was the consequence of public urban regeneration policies and incentives to private investments, leading to the replacement of working-class and underprivileged social groups by the "new middle class" in Kerameikos. The increase of the rent gap brought about a rise in exchange land values (Smith, 1996) that caused the spatial "ostracization" of lower income groups and, overall, of the "marginal" population (Alexandri, 2014). Entrepreneurial urban politics towards investors and developers have been implemented in Kerameikos, as in many European cities (Harvey, 1989). As an outcome of the urban upgrading process of the last decades, the interest of the entrepreneurs and realtors in Kerameikos housing stock increased. Thus, housing investment was redirected to Kerameikos neighbourhood, thereby entailing a rent gap. The investors have taken advantage of surplus value created in Kerameikos due to the beautification projects. Mostly, the private investments in the neighbourhood were closely related to a vision of middle-scale projects.

In 2001, the state's interest was focused again in Kerameikos by the "Survey of recognition and proposals for interventions for the district of Metaxourgeio" undertaken by the company of A. Karydi. This survey was a part of regeneration proposals and beautification practices of the historic center of Athens and the preparation of the city for the Olympic Games of 2004.

Since 2001, the state took a step back and let the private capital, cultural NGOs and artists to form and gentrify the study area. The AthensX4 was an initiative of Unification of Archaeological Sites SA in line with the Ministry of Environment and Energy that had been approved for the neighbourhood of Kerameikos in 2010 in the context of an architectural competition. AthensX4 competition aimed to promote a city block and the elimination of the intermediate streets by increasing the green spaces.

Nowadays, the "Great Walk" is implemented in parts. The last part was added in 2007 at Pireaus Avenue, opposite to the study area. In addition, the Unification of Archaeological Sites SA was abolished in 2014. It is worth noticing the rise of exchange land values in the adjacent neighbourhoods of "Great Walk." The AthensX4 project, as an urban regeneration action for the promotion of Athens, testifies the cooperation of the state (Ministry of Environment and Energy and the City Council) with banking institutions (National Bank) and the European Union, whilst promoting private and public partnerships (Ministry of Environment and Energy, site).

The Oliaros S.A, a property development company, has shown interest in the potential of gentrification in Kerameikos. The Oliaros S.A is the owner of 4,5% of building stock in the area, namely 65 estates. "OLIAROS believes that with the right approach and collaboration with both private and public sectors KM can become a leading socially inclusive model neighbourhood" (Oliaros Blog)⁹. Its vision is to re-energize Kerameikos by introducing a new urban cultural identity. Oliaros proposed a partnership with local state and relative "stakeholders to adopt a common vision, and create the right conditions to attract occupants and investors back to the City Center" (Oliaros Blog). A part of newcomers, gentrifiers and Oliaros co-founded a non-profit organization in 2006, called KM (Kerameikos-Metaxourgeio) Model Neighbourhood, seeking to change the identity of Kerameikos and to create a model neighbourhood.

KM Model Neighbourhood has taken a series of initiatives to transform Kerameikos into a socially inclusive model neighbourhood, putting pressure in Municipality of Athens to achieve its objectives. One of their actions was a 'guerilla gardening' demanding more public and green space as well as better quality of everyday life in the city centre. They transformed many plots into green spaces and allotments. They also participated to the revitalization of Public Sign supported by the municipality of Athens (Oliaros Blog).

In 2007, the company GEK TERNA S.A built a block of expensive apartments similar to "lofts" that attracted the new residents and the upper middle-class gentrifiers. As the company claims "the construction of this complex was intended to give a special and refreshing character in the area and to be an attractive alternative to creative people who are looking for creativity and quality in the centre of Athens" (GEK TERNA Site). The apartment prices in the GEK complex are high, compared to the average selling prices in the rest of the study area. The design of the block is considered to be out of keeping with its surroundings. The prices target the middle and upper social classes, attracting new residents. Thus, GEK implemented this project in order to invest in the area and to create a new real estate market.

Additionally, Oliaros and artists co-founded a not-for-profit organisation ReMapKM and launched for the first time Remap in 2007. ReMap is a biannual art exhibition in abandoned and derelict buildings in Kerameikos, hosting projects of artists and galleries from all over the world. ReMap provides maps of the installations to the visitors who can freely access buildings in Kerameikos. "ReMap has collaborated with the Athens Biennale, Kunsthalle Athena, Deste Foundation, the Museum of Cycladic Art, as well as with smaller institutions and initiatives, altogether introducing a higher and broader level of engagement with contemporary art in Greece" (ReMAP Blog). Nevertheless, the economic crisis and the generalised social uncertainty has prevented the organisation of this art international platform in Athens since 2013.

Immigrants and gypsies who used to live in the abandoned housing stock were evicted by the buildings of ReMap, as the landowners wanted to sell them or conceded them to Oliaros. The impoverished population has been evicted and displaced directly by this art exhibition. It is obvious that the neighbourhood cleansing from underprivileged groups was provoked by the artists and non-profit organisations (Tzirtzilaki, 2009). KM Model Neighbourhood implemented the street regeneration of Iasonos streets by pedestrianisation which was presented to the Municipality Council.

Oliaros was invited to present the main aspects of KM projects in a meeting hosted by the Deputy Minister of Development Mr. Notis Mitarakis and Invest in Greece, and attended by several government officials and administrative executives. (Oliaros Blog). The Athens Mayor Kaminis and the Deputy Minister of Development Mr. Mitarakis expressed their commitment to cooperate closely and proposed the integration of three urban development plans of Oliaros to Urban Development Fund for Attica under the JESSICA Initiative for the Region of Attica (Joint European Support for Sustainable Investment in City Area) – a separate block of European Investment Bank (EIB). In the region of Attica, the investments of integrated plans for sustainable urban development are delivered to urban projects via the National Bank of Greece in its capacity as the Urban Development Fund for the Attica Region. The proposals of Oliaros are the construction of '18+ Student Housing', a specialized market of Greek and international creative products (Street Market), and the creation of creative entrepreneurship (Oliaros Blog).

The implementation of these projects will create suitable conditions for attracting "creative" people of the middle and high class, and the interest of investors and other realtors, resulting to the rise of land values and the change of land uses (Smith, 1996). Therefore, the socio-spatial change of relations and characteristics consist the future vision of the private initiatives over the study area. In this context, the gentrification process in Kerameikos is the outcome of private and public partnerships. The company Oliaros did not implement any of the previous projects, expecting the right investment opportunity in terms of the potential of gentrification. In addition, these projects have been put on hold because of the current financial and political status of Greece. Oliaros promised to commence activities "as soon as tax circumstances become more favorable and the State takes action towards the reversion of the continuous depreciation of the City's center" (Oliaros Blog).

In 2011, the Ministry of Environment adopted an urban regeneration program and the neighbourhood of Kerameikos was characterized as a 'zone of special regeneration' providing tax incentives related to the restoration and reuse of buildings in the historical center. The guiding principle of this decision was therefore to encourage building rehabilitation and to establish favourable conditions for the attraction of private promoters interested in upgrading the area of Kerameikos. In particular, a tax exemption related to the costs of building restorations was provided to the owners or to the tenants of buildings who wanted to proceed to the restoration of residences, listed buildings, building facades, shops and offices. These incentives concerned the owners and investors who had the financial resources and the capital to rehabilitate or purchase the estates and enabled them to better establish themselves in the area. This philosophy of tax benefits has played a strategic role in getting the realtors, private promoters and middle class to invest and settle in Kerameikos.

The Ministry of Citizen Protection had a significant role to play, drawing middle-class people back to the city centre on the expense of lower social, ethnic and racial groups. In the mid-1990s, the police station of the study neighbourhood was merged with one of the Omonoia area. The delinquent behaviours were increasing due to the absence of state in terms of policing the area, resulting to the stigmatisation of the area. The police surveillance project "Xenios Zeus" – in the context of rehabilitation of Kerameikos – proceeded to massive arrests of migrants who had settled in Kerameikos by "cleansing" the urban space from unconventional people or behaviors. This strategy has excluded marginalized population, projecting them as a problem of the city centre (Pain and Smith, 2008). The new waves of immigration of the past years, mostly undocumented, added to the context of the economic crisis and threatened the safety of the new middle class.

In fact, the private initiatives approached the issues of the neighbourhood in the vision of a "model neighbourhood" based on investors' interests by promoting social exclusion practices and creating specific local conditions to the inflow of investment capital. The collaboration between private and public sector engage strategies seeking to create an artistic and "creative" environment, encouraging the potential of gentrification while ignoring the socio-spatial inequalities.

The absence of the state in terms of social policies leads to the progressive sovereignty of gentrification by allowing the urban transformation and the mutation of social structure for the sake of economic benefit. In other words the artists were the "stalking horse" for the needs of promoters, investors and local authorities to revalorize Kerameikos.

4 CONCLUSION – DISCUSSING THE NOTION OF PARTICIPATIVE PLANNING IN KERAMEIKOS

Nowadays, two kinds of gentrifiers co-exist in Kerameikos. Members of upper-middle class and the marginal gentrifiers – artists who created urban NGOs, immigrants, homosexuals, students. The upper class gentrifiers – through their initiatives and their participation in the aforementioned urban projects – put pressure on the authorities to regenerate the neighbourhood. However, the actions mentioned above did not embrace the participation of all the social groups that settle in Kerameikos (Alexandri, 2014). It seems that the gentrifiers participated formally or informally to the elaboration of the regeneration projects. On the other hand, the marginal gentrifiers experience similar realities. They organize a street carnival on spring seeking to project themselves as the alternative voice of Kerameikos (Alexandri, 2012). Hence, it seems that the participation of the citizens in the urban planning may slow down the eviction of the marginalized groups, thus creating a more sustainable and successfully mixed community.

In this sense, participatory planning-participative politics-is a notion-paradigm included in urban planning that aims to harmonize the different points of views among all the participants-citizens, as well as the marginalized groups of society (McTague, C. and Jakubowski, 2013). In addition, it involves the participation of the entire community in the strategy and management of urban planning processes (Lefevre et al, 2000). Participatory planning aspires to fill to the gap between all levels of governance and the local communities. The idea is that the government and the local programs such as urban regeneration move towards a reticular model using the bottom-up approaches (Smith, 1973). Consequently, the planners combine a diversity of interest groups in the process of decision-making by measuring the public opinion.

In Athens, the tools of 'urban governance' concerned mainly the public-private partnerships and quangos were implemented in the Athenian urban policies. These partnerships used extensively in large scale projects decreasing the civil society's participation in the decision-making process of urban policies (Maloutas et al, 2014).

Additionally, participatory procedures take place exclusively at the local level, as:

- " The legal process, which derives from the right of citizens (or institutions) to object before the Municipality regarding planning regulations imposed on their properties.
- The public participation process, with the so-called Neighbourhood Planning Committee (NPC), which is designated and elected by the inhabitants of the area. -The internet (e-government forums etc)" (CEMAT, 2014:70).

In 2010, the local administration reform introduced more independent sub-national decision-making processes (Chorianopoulos, 2012; Souliotis, 2013) providing the Metropolitan Government of Athens with multiple responsibilities of developmental and planning nature. It was an initiative to adapt the Greek local government system to the EU's 'multi-level governance system' in order to benefit from the EU's funding (Maloutas et al,2014).

However, the sovereignty of the economic crisis 'cancelled' these strategies due to the reduction of the financial resources and led to a declining number of privatization programs controlled by Hellenic Republic Asset Development Fund. The greek urban policies are fully aligned with EU policies as the EU funds presented the only source for public investment. Additionally, the participation of the citizens organisations in municipal policies took place through a consulting body, rupturing the relations of political authorities and citizens. The result of these processes is the development of local movements and NGOs which try to cope with the consequences of the economic crisis (Arampatzi and Nicholls, 2012). Nevertheless, these social movements have limited access to formal processes of decision-making and urban planning (Maloutas et al,2014).

Eventually, the challenge of this case study is to stress that the different needs and preferences of different groups can be identified, and that all the groups of the area can proportionally fulfill their needs; further, to cope with the lacks of economic resources to actually implement the plans.

In conclusion, the participatory aspect in this case necessitates the use of a workshop format to ensure that all citizens(Levevre et al, 2000) – mainly the most disadvantaged – should be able to assess their current situation and to engage the participation of individual knowledge in the urban problems while keeping the representation of all involved groups well balanced. This model could engage the participation of the groups or individuals in planning of participative activities and interventions corresponding to the objectives and criteria defined by the planners and the citizens' groups.

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