

AFFECTIVE GEOGRAPHIES OF SOCIAL REPRODUCTION: THE CASE OF
ATHENS UNDER AUSTERITY

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Preface

This is a complex digital dissertation consisting of the main text (seven chapters) and a series of digital interactive components, hosted on two ArcGIS StoryMaps pages:

(a) ArcGIS StoryMaps for Chapter 4: Spatialities of social reproduction against austerity urbanism

This page is available at

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/69a5a2558ecc4bf887ffea5912228ac5>

and contains the following ArcGIS StoryMaps:

ArcGIS StoryMap 4.1: Socio-political geographies of Athens in the emergence of the crisis, 2005-2008.

ArcGIS StoryMap 4.2: Grassroots infrastructure, solidarity spaces and neighbourhood assemblies in downtown Athens.

(b) ArcGIS StoryMaps for Chapter 5: Affective geographies of social reproduction

This page is available at

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/42ae3140b5914d62ab4dc0b9a8297640>

and contains the following ArcGIS StoryMaps:

ArcGIS StoryMap 5.1: Affective spatialities of everyday life and social reproduction in downtown Athens.

ArcGIS StoryMap 5.2: 'My own Athens', participants' significant everyday places and routes in downtown Athens.

ArcGIS StoryMap 5.3: Sound-walks and field recordings: sounds of everyday life in the city.

Additionally, the page contains four sound clips that are embedded in the ArcGIS StoryMap page and are hosted on Youtube in private links:

Sound clip 5.1: Eleftheria's stroll at the Kallidromiou Street farmer's market, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QW_3t3F0YHY

Sound Clip 5.2: Katerina's morning stroll in Eksarchia, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RG8oJe2ICJU>

Sound Clip 5.3: Aliki's morning stroll in the Historic Centre, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q5z4ipl1XSA>

Sound Clip 5.4: Aggeliki's field recordings of everyday moments, available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TFBmAsGWZkM>

The ArcGIS StoryMaps provide context on the interview excerpts presented in each chapter, and map the data collected from all the methods, including the GPS-tracked Photovoice, soundwalks and field recordings as well as the pictures provided by the participants and the ones I have used from my own collection. Screenshots from the StoryMaps are embedded in the main text of the dissertation along with the links to the ArcGIS StoryMaps pages and the sound clips.

The ArcGIS StoryMaps pages are private and password protected. In order to navigate them the reader has to login to <https://www.arcgis.com/home/index.html> (username: manthak, password: \$3Y?G5VMGK%5fRf) and then follow the links provided earlier for each ArgGIS StoryMaps page.

Abstract

This dissertation titled “Affective geographies of social reproduction: the case of Athens under austerity”, explores the ways women’s and feminized subjects’ socially reproductive labor, in the context of everyday life and solidarity organizing in Athens, is socio-spatially performed, organized, and experienced under austerity. The dissertation introduces Athens as a locus of original knowledge production, centering social reproduction and affect in research on the affective dimensions of the austerity ‘crisis’, and on spatialized processes of resistance and anti-capitalist commoning against austerity urbanism. The dissertation covers the period from 2005 to 2021, providing an alternative, expanded timeline of austerity in the Athenian context, focusing on the lives of women and feminized subjects living, working and organizing in its underprivileged downtown neighborhoods: Omonia, Exarcheia, Sepolia Agios Panteleimonas, Gkyzi, Kypseli, Ano Patisia and Kato Patisia. Through its research questions, the dissertation addresses: the ways everyday socially productive labor, performed by women and feminized subjects, is vital to placemaking and the right to the city in Athens; the way women and feminized subjects navigate, process and produce the Athenian urban through affective, emotional, relational, and embodied understandings of the self and community in the city-in-crisis; and the ways women’s and feminized subjects everyday struggles for survival over social reproduction, and against austerity and neoliberalism, inform expanded understandings of the political and of the right to the city. Within the context of feminist and critical urban geography, the dissertation answers these questions by synthesizing a theoretical framework of social reproduction and affect in a context of decolonial knowledge production and critical historiography, utilizing digital geohumanities methods to analyze primary data from fieldwork conducted between June 2021 to April 2022.

Dedication

To my mother, Stratoula.

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I would like to thank my supervisor Linda Peake for all the support, care and mentorship she offered me during these six -not so easy- years in Canada. I would like to thank the members of my committee Tricia Wood and Ranu Basu for their support, feedback and encouragement both in relation to the writing of the dissertation as well as through our graduate seminars during the first years of the PhD.

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q5z4ipl1XSA>

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Growing up, while my mother was working long hours, my grandmother, Rina, was the one to raise my brother and myself, after our older cousins before us, cooking us food, keeping us clean, telling us stories, walking us around the neighborhood. She would live with us, going back and forth between our house and my uncle's house whenever an argument broke in the family, always carrying plastic bags with her medication and candy for us. Up to her death, when I was a teenager, I had never seen my grandmother wear coloured clothes, since, in the small society of the village, the death of her husband, back in her twenties, only allowed her to wear black.

Over the years, as a kid, after big family meals, I would go to the kitchen and listen to my mother and aunty commenting on the latest news of the village life but also telling family stories from the past, in which my grandmother and her sisters were protagonists, always standing up to male figures and authority, always getting in some kind of trouble. These fascinating stories told over dirty dishes and left over food, during the cigarette breaks from cooking and cleaning, took a different meaning when I started realizing the collective histories and momenta behind them, as well as the meaning attached to such activities in the times they took place. It turns out that during the country's Civil War¹ (1944-1946), my grandmother's brothers fought on the side

¹ After the end of World War II and the liberation of the country, in October 1944 (much of which was achieved by the communist party's military wing EAM-ELAS), the tension between communists (the communist party had been banned from 1936), on the one side, and the government, the King, the army, and the police, on the other side, over the governance of the country, climaxed in a series of clashes that lasted four years (from 1944 until 1946). The Greek Civil War started with the Battle of Athens (Δεκεμβριανά), on December 3rd 1944, during which EAM-ELAS clashed with the conservative Greek government, the army and police, who were also supported by the British army. The Greek Civil War resulted in many deaths and the persecution, exile, and marginalization of communists and dissidents and the banning of the communist party KKE until the fall of the military Junta (dictatorship), that

of the communists, leaving her and her sisters, to deal with the needs of the family. Grandmother and her sisters used to work in the fields, while the men were fighting. When her brothers were being arrested by the police, the sisters would shout and cry all night and all day for them not be executed, getting beaten up themselves in their efforts to save their brothers. When the Civil War ended, my grandmother was married and had my mother and my uncle, becoming a young widow a few years after, in her twenties, raising them by herself, in an extended family that was dealing with the traumas of war and then the dictatorship, but also just getting by in a small rural community.

It then made sense when my mother was telling the story of how her aunty bought her one of the first bikinis to be seen in the village, or how later on, when my mother was living in Italy, my grandmother, travelled on a commercial truck of a neighbor from the village to see her, without knowing a word of Italian or English or even being able to read or write. It, then, made sense that no one from my mother's family ever went to church, that heated political discussions would always take over our extended family dinners. It also made sense that when I was a bit older, before my grandmother died, one day while I was brushing her hair, she asked me to always do all my homework in order to not need anyone, and to be able to leave, and do whatever I wanted to. My grandmother and her sisters hardly knew how to read, had never read Marx or any feminist theory, nor did my mother or my aunts, but their lived experiences, worldviews, and choices of navigating the world around them were crucial to my own desire to leave, to know more, and care. They were crucial to me choosing my own political paths, when later on, I found myself within the political mobilizations of my generation, amidst a 'crisis' and a chaos that impacted any ability to dream about the future.

lasted from 1967 until 1974. For more details on the historical context of the Civil War and the military Junta see Section 1.4.

Fast forward, decades later, in 2022, after the 9-hour flight from Toronto to Athens, I take a taxi-ride to Gkyzi, a central Athenian neighborhood I call home, mostly populated by working- and middle-class families, students, and immigrants. The taxi driver updates me on the latest news in politics, commenting on poverty, the bad state of the roads, and the incompetence of politicians, sighing loudly and cursing, amidst the never-ending downtown traffic and construction. While he talks, in an equally high volume as his voice, the radio plays popular ‘laika’ (λαϊκά) songs about heartbreak and unfaithful women, I have grown up listening to in old movies and on the radio. Stuck in traffic, I look out of the window, searching for familiar places I have spent much time in with friends, family, and strangers; streets and routes I have followed, and specific small details in the surfaces of buildings that always drew my attention, only to find many parts of ‘my own’ Athens missing.

With its sloping streets, non-existent sidewalks, high density of buildings that allows one to hear almost all the daily conversations of their neighbors, Gkyzi has somehow escaped the curse of Airbnb, while its surrounding neighborhoods, like Exarcheia and Kypseli, have not. Driving through the downtown I see new boutique hotels and brunch spots (a ‘foreign’ culinary trend of the last seven years), sophisticated (and expensive) tourist memorabilia shops, bars, and cafes. They seem to be taking over the neighborhood corners almost in clusters, along with crowds that don’t feel familiar, and the surveillance by police forces, that linger and observe, on every other block.

A few hours later, during a warm spring afternoon, near Victoria Square, I am waiting for my friend outside a closed down fast-fashion store, its windows covered with layers of faded and new posters of strikes, protests, anti-authoritarian fundraising for legal expenses, some bank adverts, graffiti tags, political slogans. I am standing on Patision Street, once designed as the ‘boulevard of Athens,’ filled with boutiques and department stores, now surrounded by the most vulnerable downtown neighborhoods. The familiar smell of downtown of gas emissions,

cigarette smoke, the overflowing garbage bins, and food from the small spots; the sounds of traffic and people chatting, coffee making machines and orders, delivery scooters trying to make it to their destination, some belly-dance music playing on a man's phone; all remind me that I am home.

In this central neighborhood of Athens, people seem to be caught up in the frenzy of their own worlds and routines: lost tourists trying to find their way back to the hospitable city centre, looking confused at their phones; people rushing in and out of buses, while others are still waiting; and houseless people sitting at their makeshift beds in the corners of the streets and in the entrances of abandoned buildings. More than half of the people I see are women of different ages and races, walking along the narrow sidewalks, waiting for the bus, rushing in and out of taxis and cars. Some of them are holding grocery bags or little kids, or both; some are standing smoking, looking at their phones, while others are getting their coffee: all of them going on with their day. And while some seem to be in a good mood—an older woman comments on the flowers another is carrying—others look tired and annoyed by the usual delays and traffic, and some look absorbed in their thoughts, walking fast, rushing to get to their destination.

In the meantime, I am waiting for one of my long-time friends, who I haven't seen in a while. E., who took me to my first protest and held my hand amidst tear gas attacks and overall panic, is on her way to meet me, after attending a neighborhood assembly, in between 'extra' jobs, waitressing, and tutoring kids. When she finally makes it, news of an impossible apartment search, abusive working conditions, tensions and arguments in the union and the emotional weight of caring for others, take over our conversation. My friend, like many other women we know, is exhausted.

Amidst dealing with employment insecurity and the precarity of prolonged austerity, organizing solidarity initiatives, striking, and protesting, as well as taking on care for one's family members and friends, always asking for some help that never really comes, this state of

exhaustion has become the default mode of existing for many of the women we know. Adding anger to exhaustion at being harassed in public transport, followed at night by strangers, hit by the riot police during a protest, being cat-called by a cop—all instances of violence that women face in everyday life in downtown Athens—are topped by news of women of all ages being killed by fathers, brothers, husband and boyfriends, a phenomenon all too familiar in Greek society.

Under these conditions, in the ebbs and flows of social and political everyday life in the city, over the last 15 years, multiple ‘crises’ have emerged within an intensely neoliberalizing Athens, crushing the ability to survive and thrive, of many precaritized women and various dispossessed ‘Others’. Through these processes, in a deeply patriarchal culture and capitalist formations that extract caring, emotional, and physical labor to make profit and establish their power, precaritized women and dispossessed ‘Others’, find the bodily capacity—mental, emotional and physical—to dream for a city that is lived ‘otherwise’. What makes living and producing the ‘otherwise’ possible, in this case, are the practices of care that enable survival and that create places of belonging, in squares and squats, on the streets, in the neighborhoods, and in the various ‘homes’, where care unfolds in the urban.

Made invisible within the grand narratives of austerity, this socially reproductive labor of enabling both survival and resistance is naturalized as a task that is not important enough to be included in the analyses of transformative politics and of the right to the city. This labor, though, is felt and practised, every day, and intergenerationally, across the city, from public spaces to small rooms, through material tasks and emotions, by and for bodies that know, remember, and teach how life in the urban is made and re-made. So, what does social reproduction, and care do in relation to precarious urban livelihoods under austerity, and in the mobilizations against it? How can urban anti-capitalist processes of placemaking be understood through the lived experiences, affects, knowledges, and caring praxis of feminized subjects in

the urban? What do their affective experiences, and emotions tell us about the way the urban is experienced through the caring roles of social reproduction?

These were some initial thoughts that triggered my desire to explore and make visible an ‘otherwise’ account of the various ‘crises’ that have emerged throughout the years in Athens and that have impacted the livelihoods of people who were either born or moved there or ‘got stuck’ in its central neighborhoods along the way. These thoughts, led me to conduct this research, bringing to the centre of theory-making the life-stories, feelings, affective practices, and everyday experiences that were also part of my own world, in the city I call home. In this research, the individuals I interviewed, come from different places and life journeys that brought them to Athens, where they found and created community and ‘home’, for themselves and others. Many of them, like myself, grew up in families with mothers and grandmothers who taught them the political significance of care through caring beyond profit, and who pursued their own ‘otherwise’, like my grandmother, across difficult historical conjunctures.

For some, their road to finding their current home in Athens, came through journeys of migration, periods of unemployment, informal work, and on-going precarity, personal, and collective joys, and struggles, but most importantly through a praxis of carving out their place in the urban, and setting the grounds for a different possible city. This dissertation, being a product of all the above, explores these affective geographies of social reproduction in Athens under austerity, through the everyday caring labor of precaritized women and feminized subjects who live, work, and organize in the downtown Athenian neighborhoods.

1.2 Rationale and research questions

The 2008 onset of the Greek austerity ‘crisis’ and the decade-long austerity measures and ongoing economic recession they caused, triggered a series of socio-political ‘tensions’, transformations and historical ‘moments’, both on a domestic and on an international level,

attracting the interest of scholars, politicians, activists and the press. Often framed as the ‘problematic’ and ‘failed’ Other of the European Union in political debates, Greece’s fiscal ‘disaster’, brought to the surface issues of uneven development and integration within the European Union, as well as anxieties around belonging, ‘European-ness’, cultural legacies of ‘Otherness’ and state sovereignty. From blaming the ‘crisis’ on the country’s ‘delayed’ development and ‘lagging’ welfare system, to the ‘undisciplined’ character of ‘lazy’ Mediterranean lifestyles and its supposed Ottoman legacy of corruption, parts of international press hardly ever addressed the historical, structural and systemic roots of the Greek national debt. Along with other ‘problematic’ Southern European countries,² Greece became a terrain for the implementation of ‘new’ emergency governmentalities of austerity and fiscal discipline in the European context, since the various 1970s ‘crises’ of national debt and projects of fiscal restructuring in countries of the Global South.³

In this context, Athens, Greece’s capital and largest city, fostered a flourishing of grassroots anti-austerity protesting, organizing, and alternative solidarity economy projects, revealing the potentialities of collective responses to the ‘crisis’ and of the formation of alternative imaginaries of democracy. Furthermore, along with the anti-austerity organizing, the city’s activist networks contributed to the emergence of Athens as the country’s urban epicentre of refugee solidarity, during the 2014-2015 so-called ‘refugee crisis’, amidst the rise of the far-right (as in other countries in Europe), both issues that extended outside its borders.

In the rich body of work that has emerged during the last 15⁴ years, triggered by the austerity ‘crisis’ in the context of Greece and the impact of the consecutive fiscal austerity and

² Greece along with Italy, Portugal, Spain and Ireland were characterized as ‘PIGS’ in mostly right-wing European press (Van Vossle, 2016).

³ Austerity measures were first implemented in Global South countries through the World Bank’s (WB) and International Monetary Fund’s (IMF), Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) were first implemented in the 1970s and 1980s (Powers & Rakopoulos, 2019. For more of the historical context of SAPs see Chapter Two, Section 2.2.

⁴ Athens started emerging as a regular theme in the analysis of urban social movements and urban austerity particularly following the 2008 December uprising, triggered by the murder of 15-year-old

debt restructuring programs that followed, the dominant representation of Athenian urban livelihoods is that of the celebration of grassroots responses and commoning practices as an urban laboratory of anti-capitalist interventions against neoliberal urbanism. Besides notable exceptions⁵, this dominant body of literature discussing the impact of austerity and the grassroots practices, and resistances in Athens, often adopts a gender-neutral tone. The significantly gendered, raced, classed character of austerity in the Greek context, as well as the gender roles and intersectional hierarchies that organize social relations within Greek society have been left out of discussion. Instead, they are cast outside the realm of the political and viewed as non-integral to the “main problem” (Vaiou, 2014, p. 534). At the same time, while scholars such as Athanasiou (2012) and Carastathis (2015) have addressed affective structures and entanglements of power and (un)belonging during the ‘crisis’, the affective dimensions of precaritized urban livelihoods and of the feminized socially reproductive labor that enables survival and various forms of resistance remain peripheral to dominant debates around Greek austerity ‘crisis’.

Within this context, social reproduction, the embodied and affective practices individuals and communities adopt to enable their survival in life but also as workers within relations of production (Katz, 2001), has been a rather obscured theme within human and political geographic analyses. The overall lack of engagement with the concept of social reproduction has resulted in a lack of theorization of the gendered, racialized, and classed, material and non-material labor that women and feminized subjects perform both, within Greek society at large, but also within solidarity and anti-austerity organizing. In using the term ‘feminized subjects’ I discuss not only the experiences of precaritized women at the intersections of their identities

student Alexis Grigoropoulos, by a policeman, in downtown Athens. The uprising that lasted almost a month and its political significance in the Greek context, became the focal point of analysis and theorizing around collective endeavors of the right to the city and urban movements (see Hadjimichalis, 2013; Stavrides, 2012; Xenakis & Cheliotis, 2016).

⁵ See for example: Athanasiou (2014); Daskalaki et al. (2017); Pettas & Daskalaki (2022); Kouki & Chatzidakis (2021); Vaiou (2014; 2016; 2023).

and embodiments but also those of marginalized individuals and communities that Greek society, the state and supranational institutions place at the bottom of socio-political hierarchies. Feminized subjects in the context of this research thus include refugees, immigrants, queer folks, Roma communities, sex workers, drug users, the homeless, but also activists, who are seen as not ‘properly’ belonging to the nation (and to the European Union) and thus do not align with the ideas of an ‘ideal’ and financially ‘productive’ citizen under austerity.

In this context, this lack of engagement with the concept of social reproduction in mainstream urban theory literature that addresses issues such as the right to the city and the production of space within austerity, has resulted in the following patterns:

- (a) social reproductive and caring labor are theorized as peripheral to political struggles or as by-products of solidarity;
- (b) even when these are addressed as vital to organizing, they are presented as gender-neutral labor that is performed outside of the heteropatriarchal character relations that dominate Greek society;
- (c) socially reproductive labor and practices are not theorized as integral to processes of everyday placemaking, organized solidarity, or to anti-capitalist space production, and appropriation in the city;
- (d) there is no theorizing on the impact of performing such labor on the bodies of women and feminized subjects that also perform additional socially reproductive labor outside organized solidarity; and
- (e) there is no theorization on the overall context of heteropatriarchy, dispossession, and violence that particularly women and feminized subjects who engage in organizing, face within Greek society at large (including within activist spaces).

Despite calls of Greek feminist geographers for analyses that take into account “the particular bodies which put in time and passion to keep these initiatives going” (Vaiou, 2014, p. 536), and

under what conditions, such questions remain peripheral to the research agendas that have dominated knowledge production in Greece. To perplex things further, even in the cases where socially reproductive practices are addressed, either by Greek or foreign scholars, social reproduction is framed within the dominant North American context of the nuclear family, with little or no theorization on the particularities of the Greek case.

Through my own participation within the solidarity anti-authoritarian milieu in Athens, Greece, as well as my embodied experiences, living as an adult throughout the austerity ‘crisis’, in a downtown Athenian neighborhood, reading this body of work often created a sense of erasure. This erasure did not only involve my own experiences but also those of the women around me and various marginalized ‘Others’, within the city and its solidarity networks and spaces, triggering many questions about the knowledge production of the ‘crisis’, a process I was part of, through my academic trajectory.

Reading the ways solidarity was analyzed in the literature, often being portrayed as a genderless process of commoning and space-making in the city, and the caring labor of women and feminized subjects being trivialized, both within and beyond organized solidarity, within a seemingly effortless collective process of ‘experimentation’, often brought in my mind the lived realities myself and others were facing every day. Street harassment, police brutality, precarious working conditions or unemployment, and everyday witnessing of human suffering and political corruption caused for many around me anxiety, exhaustion, depression, anger, and a feeling of uncertainty, all intertwined with the empowerment of protesting and hopes about the future.

Thus, through my doctoral research, I investigate the affective geographies through which women’s and feminized subjects’ socially reproductive labor, in the context of everyday life and solidarity organizing, is socio-spatially performed, organized, and experienced under austerity, contributing to anti-capitalist placemaking in the city

and to the formation of livable futures. Drawing on theories of feminist affect, feminist and critical urban geography, decolonial knowledge production, critical historiography and the use of digital geohumanities methods, this research provides expanded understanding of the affective and embodied dimensions of the political, the 'right to the city,' and the subversive possibilities of social reproduction, through the investigation of its affective geographies. The research deploys the use of feminist affect (Ahmed, 2010; Berlant, 2008; Hemmings, 2005) in order to provide an analysis of the impact of the 'crisis' on the urban livelihoods of feminized and precaritized 'Others', by placing social reproduction at its centre as an embodied relational socio-spatial praxis that both enables the formation of collective affective attachments of belonging and 'fights back' against affective structures of oppression and violence.

Thus, this research explores the affective geographies of social reproduction in Athens, under austerity, post-2007, through women's and feminized subjects' embodied and affective experiences of the urban. Through these experiences, the urban is felt, lived, and shaped through their everyday affective geographies of care, solidarity, placemaking, and anti-capitalist commoning, revealing obscured dimensions of the austerity 'crisis', and the invisibilized spatialized processes resistance against capitalist accumulation, and austerity urbanism.

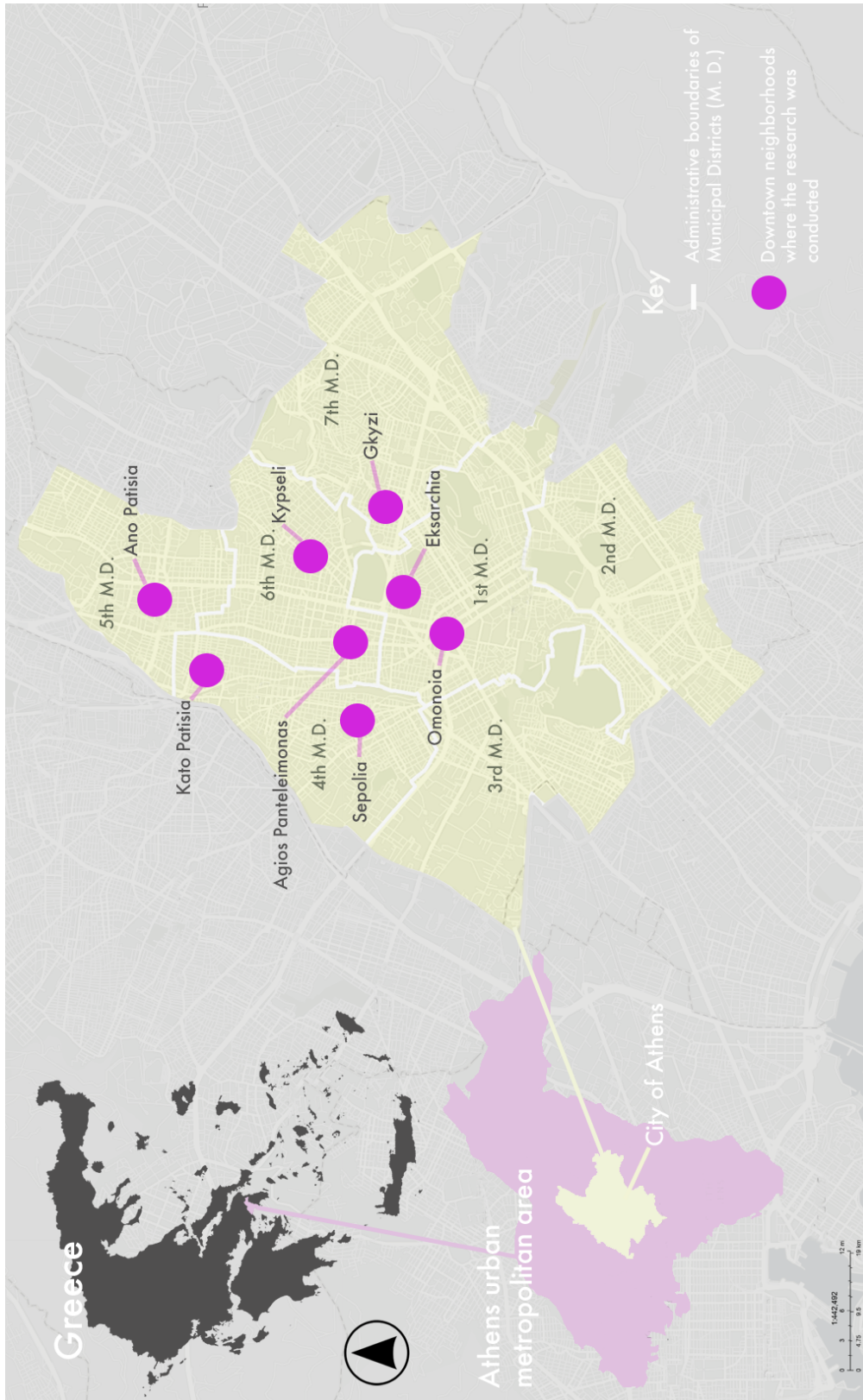
In this context, the specific research questions that arise from this rationale are:

- (a) In what ways and through what practices is everyday socially productive labor, performed by women and feminized subjects, vital to placemaking and the right to the city in Athens?
- (b) How do women and feminized subjects navigate, process, and produce the Athenian urban through affective, emotional, relational, and embodied understandings of the self and community through their everyday socially reproductive practices in the city-in-crisis?

(c) How do everyday struggles for survival over social reproduction, against austerity and neoliberalism inform expanded understandings of the political and of the right to the city, in Athens?

The above questions are explored through my research with women and feminized subjects who have been active in anti-fascist, queer, feminist and solidarity organizing but who also reside and participate in small-scale grassroots initiatives in the central Athenian neighborhoods of Omonia, Eksarchia, Sepolia, Agios Panteleimonas, Gkyzi, Kypseli, and Ano Patisia and Kato Patisia⁶ (see Map 1.1). These neighborhoods, being on the forefront of both grassroots activity and a terrain of clashing political and socio-spatial imaginaries of belonging, have been represented, within Greek politics, media, and urban planning processes, as problematic areas in need of regulation and urban renewal (see Appendix B for a brief history of the neighborhoods). Being a home, and a meeting point for the most vulnerable and diverse populations of Athens (including the urban poor, immigrants, refugees, sex-workers, drug users, the homeless and activists), these neighborhoods face both the pressures, and neglect of neoliberal austerity urbanism, as well as the violence of the far-right, border regimes and state suppression.

⁶ The neighborhoods belong to different units of administration called Municipal Districts within the city of Athens with Omonia and Eksarchia belonging to the 1st Municipal District, Kypseli belonging to the 6th, Sepolia and Agios Panteleimonas to the 4th, Ano Patisia and Kato Patisia to the 5th and Gkyzi to the 7th.



Map 1.1: The downtown neighborhoods where the research was conducted (Katsikana, 2024).

The research was conducted through remote fieldwork (due to COVID-19 restrictions), with a total of 24 participants, all of whom lived and organized in the downtown neighborhoods, and deployed the methods of online interviews (including a mental mapping exercise), soundwalks and audio field recordings, GPS-tracked PhotoVoice, and fieldnotes (all adjusted to remote fieldwork). These methods were chosen in the context of a feminist multimodal approach (Gupta, 2021), based on different types and formats of qualitative data, in order to capture the affective and embodied dimensions of socially reproductive practices of the participants, and of their experiences in the urban through the interplay and synthesis of text, sound, and image. Following, a grounded visualization approach (Knigge & Cope, 2006) to organize, code, and analyse the data, as well as feminist mapping approaches that prioritize embodiments and affective dimensions of lived experiences in space (Kwan, 2007), I engaged in creative mapping and representations of the data creating a series of interactive ArcGIS StoryMaps and soundscapes.

The first research question aims to provide an understanding of where and how socially reproductive labor is performed within the city, in the context of everyday life, and organized solidarity, and to showcase in what ways it contributes to anti-capitalist place making. The second research question addresses under what circumstances, characterized by affect, emotions, traumas, relations, and bonds, socially reproductive labor is performed within the context of geographies of neoliberal dispossessions, police brutality, far-right violence, and heteropatriarchy. It aims to showcase the ways particular gendered, racialized, and classed bodies experience, and navigate the urban through their caring practices and roles and the types of knowledge they develop while doing so. The third research question aims to showcase the ways this socially reproductive labor offers an opening for the expansions of ideas of the political and of the right to the city, through investigating the subversive potentiality of social reproduction.

Aiming to highlight the participants' embodied, affective, and lived experiences of the urban, through the spatialities of their social reproduction practices, networks and everyday urban encounters, the research has deployed participatory and qualitative methods of data collection and knowledge production, collaborating with my own communities. Within this context, I engaged in a feminist and decolonial praxis of knowledge production, including a citational praxis that prioritizes the works of Greek and South-Eastern European critical and feminist literature.

Overall, socially reproductive labor and care have been undertheorized within the urban theory literature that discusses anti-austerity and solidarity organizing, and its role in the production of anti-capitalist placemaking and reclaiming the right the city under austerity. The lack of engagement with the embodied and intersectional dimension of caring and socially reproductive labor, within solidarity spaces and in the everyday context of austerity and its contribution to the production of space, and processes of anti-capitalist place making, indicated an opening for theorizing.

Thus, through the above approach, and research questions, this research aims to advance research agendas in feminist urban geography and in decolonizing knowledge production on the urban, while providing a feminist analysis of the spatialities and embodied affective experiences of urban livelihoods and resistance under austerity.

1.3 Originality of the thesis and its contributions

Through the concept of the affective geographies of social reproduction, this dissertation introduces a theoretical framework that synthesizes transdisciplinary bodies of work, including feminist and critical and postcolonial urban geography, decolonial feminism, and feminist historiography and Black studies, bringing together the concepts of social reproduction (Katz, 2001), affect (Ahmed, 2004), resistance, resilience and reworking (Katz

2004), placemaking, the 'right to the city' (Lefebvre, 1996), and people as infrastructure (Simone, 2004). In doing so, it highlights the role of socially reproductive labor within the anti-capitalist production of space and the embodied and affective dimensions of such practices, as well as providing expanded understandings of the political.

Overall, the originality of this dissertation is that it positions social reproduction, through everyday practices of care, at the heart of processes of placemaking, anti-capitalist commoning, claiming the right to the city, building relations beyond profit, and contributing to the formation of oppositional consciousness, all through a South-Eastern European feminist lens. The dissertation takes the above concepts, which have theorized the ways individuals, and communities survive, make, and re-make their lives in the urban, zooming in on these processes and their spatialities to show the ways they are experienced by the bodies and psyche of the political subjects that perform socially reproductive, and caring labor, using them as a source of knowledge production and an entry point into new geographies of theory (Roy, 2009).

Through this approach and the research questions it poses, this research builds on the calls of Greek feminist geographers to “put women in the picture” (Vaiou, 2016, p.120), expanding geographies of theory in urban geography, producing knowledge “from elsewhere” (Robinson, 2016). Thus, the dissertation adopts the analysis of social reproduction in the urban, in the Greek context, not as an empirical version of established theories and concepts but in terms of producing theoretical knowledge. Important in this respect is that this research emerged not through a relationship with the field that developed because of the dissertation, but through a desire to work with my own communities towards reparative knowledge production, bringing visibility to their everyday struggles, experiences, hopes and dreams.

Regarding the choice of methods of data collection as well as the ways data were represented, this research engaged in a multimodal feminist approach (Gupta, 2021), combining text, sound, image and cartographic data, as well as in creative mapping through the creation

of interactive ArcGIS StoryMaps and soundscapes, that provided a more-than-textual approach, for the representation of affective and embodied socio-spatial practices and experiences of the urban. Through the choice of methods of data collection and representation, the research prioritized knowledge production through collaboration and feminist praxis. Additionally, as the COVID-19 restrictions posed many challenges, conducting ‘remote’ fieldwork and adjusting the methods accordingly, provided insights in the possibilities of remote collaboration in feminist research. Finally, the novel use of ArcGIS StoryMaps in the context of this dissertation offered the possibility to experiment with multimodal presentations of qualitative data including the critical and careful engagement with issues of privacy and anonymity.

1.4 Contextualizing Athens beyond the ‘crisis’

Athens, the capital city of Greece, is a South-Eastern European metropolis, located on the west coast of Greece, in the Attica region. In 2021 the Athens Metropolitan Area was recorded as having a population of 3,814,064 (out of a total national population of 10,482,487) while the municipality of Athens, comprising seven municipal districts, had a total population of 643,452 inhabitants, 18,000 of which are third-country nationals (European Union Census, 2021) in addition to approximately 200,000 refugees⁷ (United Nations Refugee Agency-UNHCR, 2023).

Athens emerged as a focal point within political and theoretical debates regarding the Greek austerity ‘crisis’ (post-2008) and the imposition of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), the (2014-2015) so-called ‘refugee crisis’, as well as the grassroots solidarity and anti-austerity responses that emerged post-2008. While this ‘crisis’ has been framed in politics and popular debates as a schism or an exception to the country’s previous ‘success story’ (often

⁷ The municipality of Athens has hosted over the years large numbers of transitory populations peaking during 2015, with approximately 860,000 arrivals (Operetional Data Portal, n.d.).

related to the country's European Union trajectory and the organization of the 2004 Olympic Games), this supposed correspondence jars with its modern history. As Mantouvalou (1988) argues, the history of the Greek nation (founded in 1830 after the 1821-1827 war of independence from the Ottoman rule) has been characterised by a long history of "crises and discontinuities" (p. 15), that were crucial for the development of Athens as its capital. Throughout the first half of the 20th century, the (geo)politics in which the country has been entangled, its Westernization and 'democratization', have been pursued by foreign intervention through collaboration with nationalist and fascist regimes, intertwining with Athens' urban development as well as with the on the ground collective endeavors for socio-spatial justice in the city, that still linger in some collective memories.

Thus, considering historical difference not just as an empirical variation (see Roy, 2016) but as crucial to the shaping of Athenian urbanism and to that of the socio-political geographies of the city, this dissertation moves beyond 'exceptional' accounts of the 'crisis' and instead positions it in the long history of geopolitical, socio-political, and urban transformations. Below I provide an historical overview of the urban development of Athens beyond the austerity 'crisis', presenting the urban development trajectory of the city from its appointment, in 1834, as the capital of the Greek nation state to the current era. It addresses the socio-political context within which urban transformations occurred, grounding the austerity 'crisis' within a long history of (supra)national geopolitics and socio-spatial transformations in the urban.

In this contextualization, the city's urban development trajectory is presented through the political and socio-spatial transformations that contributed to its formation, with attention to the downtown neighbourhoods that the research was conducted in. This development and socio-political trajectory of Athens is presented in relation to five periods: (a) the creation of Athens as the new capital and construction of the nation-state, from 1834 to 1939; (b) the decade of two successive wars, World War II and the Civil War that followed, from 1940 to

1949 ; (c) the post-war urban boom to the rise and fall of the military Junta, from 1950 to 1974; (d) the restoration of democracy and the country's European Union accession, from 1975 to 2000s; and (e) the emergence and upholding of the austerity 'crisis', from the early 2000s to the present.

(a) Athens as a new capital within the nation-building project (1834-1939)

In the process of nation-state building, Athens has been re-invented as a capital, mostly through the donations of “wealthy Greeks of the Diaspora ... who desired to offer a part of their fortunes for the glory of their country and, why not, their own as well” (Roubien, 2016, p. 1069). By the late nineteenth century, internal migrants from the countryside provided a cheap workforce of “merchants, artisans, construction workers, and free labourers” (Leontidou, 1985, p. 56) that was “earning its livelihood from the consumption of the richer urban classes” (p.56).

During World War I, in 1917 Greece aligned with the great powers of “Entente” (Great Britain, France, Russia, Italy) (Vaiou, 2002), who decided that Greece would undertake an expedition to Asia Minor to claim certain territories. The failure of this expedition resulted in the 1922 Asia Minor Catastrophe, with Athens receiving almost 1.5 million refugees, doubling its population overnight and aggravating an already-existing housing crisis (see Vaiou, 2002).⁸ As a result of these infamous populations exchanges, which took the form of ethnic cleansing (see Korb, 2016), “a mass of displaced populations of diverse ethnic backgrounds and varied geographical origins” (Erol, 2023, p. 15) arrived and tried to find shelter in Athens as its population grew, formal and informal practices of housing production gave shape to the city.

The settlement of the refugees was challenged by the lack of previous experience in planning and of a lack of funds and was, thus, carried out through the construction of

⁸ The Asia Minor Catastrophe of 1922 refers to when Athens had to absorb almost 1.5 million refugees including Greeks from Antolia, Armenians, Assyrians and Russians, in the interrelated projects of nation-building and ethnic cleansing (Erol, 2023).

emergency housing supervised by the League of Nations (Myofa, 2023). In the interwar period, refugees built “shacks,” often through mutual aid, overnight (see Vaiou, 2002), joining native working classes who engaged in this practice of “semi-squatting” through the “illegal use of land” (Leontidou, 1985, p. 64), forming slums in the outskirts of the city, all of which were tolerated by the state as an immediate solution to the housing crisis of the capital. The residential needs of the booming urban population were also covered through the mechanism of ‘antiparochi’ (αντιπαροχή), a land-for-flats system, between private constructors and landowners (Oikonomou, 2016). In order to regulate the resultant urban sprawl, the government introduced the 1923 city planning law of “the town boundary” (Vaiou, 2002, p. 215), within which “property boundaries, land uses and building regulations were set” (p. 215).

At the same time, the conditions refugees and other subordinated populations were facing in the city, gave rise to workers movements but also to communism, with the founding of the Socialist Labour Party of Greece in 1918 (see Grigoriadis & Moschos, 2023). In the aftermath of World War I, and the economic recession of the 1930s, the dominance of bourgeois elites started becoming unstable, with popular classes often expressing oppositional sentiments (Leontidou, 1985), leading to an anti-Communist dictatorship from 1936 to 1941 (Demertzis, 2015).

(b) The decade of war and the rise of anti-communism (1940-1949)

Despite the anti-communist sentiments of the ruling classes, the invasion and occupation by Nazi Germany (and later, Italy and Bulgaria) during World War II in April 1941 was resisted by the National Liberation Army (EAM-ELAS), within which many communists fought, creating a conflict with nationalists, who had largely collaborated with the Nazis on the basis of gaining power in the country against the spread of communism (Kassimeris, 2009). Germany occupied Athens, while much of the surrounding region was occupied by Italy. In October 1944, the USSR forced the German army to withdraw but then gave up its support for

the Greek communist fighters and allowed the country's passage under the British sphere of influence, marked by a series of conflicts known as the Battle of Athens (Δεκεμβριανά) from December 1944 to January 1945 (Kassimeris, 2009) among communists on the one side, and the state, the army and the British army on the other. After this battle the country was brought under the American wing, that provided support and funds to the Conservatives in order to eliminate communism, a goal that was eventually achieved and resulted in a state that resembled much of an oligarchy of conservative U.S.-backed elites.⁹ The banning of the Communist Party in 1944, the re-installment of the King in 1946 and anti-communist sentiment, prevailed particularly in the armed forces and the police, turning into heroes (by the state) those who had collaborated with the Nazis during the occupation (Kassimeris, 2009).

During the post-WW2 period the state executed, exiled, and imprisoned a large number of communists, ethnic 'Others,' and those perceived as supportive of communism (Stefatos, 2011). In the aftermath of ten years of war, public infrastructure in the country and its economy were in very poor condition, and a significant part of the rural population had been displaced due to the conflicts, resulting in approximately 700,000 people being homeless within cities, and particularly Athens (Demertzis, 2015).

(c) From the post-war urban boom to the rise and fall of the military Junta (1950-1974)

During the post-WW2 period, Athens underwent rapid urbanization and capitalist restructuring processes, through the mechanism of 'antiparochi' (αντιπαροχή), which gave the downtown core its current form, a densely built environment with mixed land uses and the absence of public amenities and green spaces (Papatzani & Knappers, 2020). This process provided access to small-scale ownership to the working and middle classes, transforming them

⁹ While after WW2, European countries received money according to the U.S. Marshal Plan, aiming at "reconstruction of productive structures and cities and the incorporation of technologies that developed during the war" (Vaiou, 2002, p. 217), in the Greek case, the \$2 billion that the country received were used for the Civil War against the communists.

into a *petit bourgeoisie*¹⁰ and promoting new patterns for consumption patronized in large parts of society through clientelist relations that favoured the “winners” of the Civil War (Markantonatou, 2012).

The post-war years were dominated by political instability the political persecution of communists, but also by protest and mobilization regarding the living conditions of poor urban classes and workers’ rights, leading to the popularity of the socialist party (Markantonatou, 2012). Communism was still a concern to the U.S. who became “a major protagonist in Greek politics and, soon enough, openly expressed its preference towards a particular electoral system and proceeded with the installation of governments favourable to Washington” (Kassimeris, 2009, p. 690). This eventually resulted in a military coup and a dictatorship that lasted from 1967 to 1973, aided by U.S. interventionism under the justification of the communist threat.

In the city of Athens, in 1973 a massive anti-dictatorship protest escalated in the occupation of the Athens Polytechnic and the intervention of the regime, killing 20 students. As Klapsis (2020) notes, the fall of the dictatorship was a result of an international crisis, combined with the failure of the regime to restructure the country’s worsening economy, as well as losing the tolerance of foreign powers such as the U.S., Britain and the NATO¹¹ (see Palieraki, 2023; Pedaliu, 2016; Vickers & Vouloukos, 2007). Klapsis (2020) recounts the dictatorship’s last moments:

On 15 July 1974, the Greek military junta instigated a coup in Cyprus in order to overthrow the President of the Republic, Archbishop Makarios III, and unite the island with Greece. The coup gave Turkey the pretext to invade Cyprus five days later. Unable to respond to this great challenge, the dictatorship was self-dissolved (p. 216).

¹⁰ Tsavdaroglou and Makrygianni (2013) argue that Athens’ rapid urbanization and transformation was a socio-spatial extension of the Marshall Plan (p. 24) and its goals of “post-war elimination of communist visions...by promoting a liberal ideology of economic development” (p. 24).

¹¹ Greece joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1952, after the end of the Civil War, during which communists were defeated and the communist party was outlawed. In the effort to contain communist threat away from Europe, the alliance collaborated with the dictatorship, whose foreign policy especially in regional politics caused serious issues and led to their gradual loss of support and tolerance from foreign powers (Klapsis, 2020; Pedaliu, 2016)

Following the dictatorship's collapse, with the country being at the brink of a war with Turkey and with heightened public anti-American sentiments (Klapisis, 2020), Konstantinos Karamanlis, a conservative pro-Western politician, resumed office, forming a national unity government, marking the beginning of transition to democracy.

(d) The restoration of democracy and the road to the European Union (1975-2004)

The fall of the military dictatorship in 1974 and the beginning of democratization was marked by intense social movement activity, the legalization of the Communist Party, the efforts to establish a welfare system along with the undertaking of neoliberal policies, but also the consolidation of past collective traumas.

By the 1980s Athens had turned into a “capitalist mega-machine” (Tsavdaroglou and Makrygianni, 2013, p. 25) but without the necessary infrastructure and declining living conditions, leading to a mass exodus of more affluent classes to the suburbs (Papatzani & Knappers, 2020). When the country joined the European Union in 1981, the access to new economic markets and resources gave rise to consumerism, in an effort to catch up with “the West” and another construction boom that centered on the urban sprawl around central Athens. In 1985, the Operation for the Reconfiguration of the Urban Plan (ORUP) and the 1985 Master Plan of Athens constituted an attempt to regulate Athens' urban development, through the legalization of unlicensed buildings and the allocation of land to the city's surrounding towns (Pagonis, 2019). In the following years and though the early 1990s, the country underwent a harsh neoliberal transformation with the downsizing of the public sector, the privatization and deregulation of banks, clashes with unions, and wage cuts.

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Union resulted in immigration waves from neighboring Balkan as well as Eastern European countries. These

migrants settled in the still affordable, run-down and abandoned (by the upper classes) downtown neighborhoods, mixing with remaining locals, internal migrants, students, artists and the urban poor (Alexandri, 2015; Maloutas, 2007). As Vaiou (2002) notes, in the downtown neighborhoods, that were characterized by vertical segregation in the same building, “owners remained on the top floor flats of the 6 or 7 floor apartment buildings” (p. 222), while lower income families, students and office spaces took over the middle floors, with newcomer immigrants renting lower floor and basement flats.

The infrastructural “modernization” of the 1990s and early 2000s (Souliotis, 2013) became the major driving force of the economy and included the expansion of Greek industries to the Balkans (Tsavdaroglou and Makrygianni, 2013) claiming its inclusion into “European Westernness” (Dalakoglou and Kallianos, 2018, p. 84), the joining of the European Union’s Economic and Monetary Union in 2001 and the organization of the 2004 Olympic Games. Previously working-class neighborhoods became entertainment districts, while urban tourist development became the priority of urban planning agendas.

(e) Athens in ‘crises’ (2005-present)

The rapid neoliberalization of the Greek economy and the infrastructural boom of the 1990s-early 2000s created ‘new’ uneven geographies of urban development and precaritized populations that could not participate in the ‘dream’ of consumerism. Urban planning interventions post 2004 focused on beautification of public space and small-scale projects without any social policy to accompany them, prioritizing tourist development. The needs of the marginalized populations of downtown neighborhoods were neglected, enhancing the perception of ‘decline’, which was then ‘blamed’ by the state and the press on these populations, under the label of the “ghettoization of the city centre” (see Siatisa, 2023; Koutrolikou, 2016)

The 2008 global financial ‘crisis’ triggered a further ‘crisis’ within the Greek economy, already building on the impact of harsh neoliberal policies further cementing uneven urban development and leading to massive lay-offs, the closing-down of businesses and factories, foreclosures, and the violation of collective agreements (Dalakoglou, 2013). The securitization policies that had been implemented to suppress protests, strikes, and anti-authoritarian activity (accompanied with the long tradition of anti-radical violence in the Greek right and police forces) escalated in the mobilizations of December 2008. The murder resulted in a month-long uprising, in which anti-authoritarians clashed with the police in downtown Athens, spreading solidarity occupations of public administration and education buildings across Athens’s municipalities. In 2011, the anti-austerity movement of Indignant Citizens (Αγανακτισμένοι)¹² occupied the Syntagma square in front of the Parliament, protesting austerity measures to which the state responded with severe violence (Pettas & Daskalaki, 2022).

The aftermath of the occupation, along with the legacy of the December 2008 uprising and mobilizations of the previous decades, was the diffusion of solidarity with occupations and popular assemblies in neighborhoods and social centres, and the flourishing of an alternative solidarity-based economy (Leontidou, 2020; Arampatzi, 2017). The xenophobic, anti-radical sentiment that was perpetuated by zero tolerance policies in the downtown core, led to the emergence of the neo-Nazi party, the Golden Dawn, that seized the political momentum of dispossession and won a seat on the Athens City Council in 2010, and then won 21 seats in the the Greek Parliament in 2012. The state tolerance and instrumentalization of far-right violence of the Golden Dawn in the downtown neighborhoods resulted in the murder in 2013 of the

¹² The movement was inspired by similar demonstrations that were taking place in Spain during the same period. It was organized mostly through social media calls for mobilization, in different cities around Greece, with the biggest protests in Athens reaching 30,000 participants (see Kaika and Karaliotas, 2016; Simiti, 2015).

Greek anti-fascist rapper Pavlos Fyssas in Athens, eventually leading to the arrest of Golden Dawn members.

At the same time, and while austerity had “frozen” many of the large-scale urban regeneration projects that had been proposed in the previous years (Cappuccini, 2020), the large numbers of refugees that arrived in Athens between 2014-2015, led to the rise of a refugee solidarity movement, that squatted unoccupied buildings in the downtown core, to offer shelter and mutual aid. During the summer of 2019 the then-newly elected conservative New Democracy government started evicting squatters and activists from solidarity spaces, targeting specifically the central neighborhoods of Athens, in order to implement new urban renewal agendas, guided by the creation of a new metro line, passing through the heart of Eksarchia (Tsavdaroglou & Kaika, 2022)

The COVID-19 pandemic in early 2021, accelerated social and class inequalities that had been accumulating during the 10 years of on-going austerity, leaving a significant part of the population precariously employed and in poverty (Lalioti, 2023). Far from addressing their needs, urban planning interventions ignored completely them, prioritizing planning ‘another’ Athens, as an imagined Western-European city (Vaiou and Kalandides, 2020) and the securitization of public space as a preventative measure of public health resulting in excessive police brutality (Apostolopoulou & Liodaki, 2021). Finally, the deregulation of short-term rentals and the property-for-visa program (already launched from 2013) gradually led to the (desired) touristification of downtown neighborhoods, with many residents being employed in precarious positions in hospitality and entertainment or being displaced by the rising rents and evictions (see Pettas et al., 2024)

To conclude, the socio-spatial and political transformations that were presented in this overview, tell the story of a city that has been formed through complex interwoven formal and

informal practices of producing and regulating space. Athens has been populated by multiple ‘Others’, over the decades, under extreme conditions of violence and dispossession, forming the city’s social fabric and the threads that connect (or separate) its different parts. The imprint of Athens’ social and political struggles have contributed to the formation of collective memories, traditions and spatialities of opposition in the urban, that while obscured in broader narratives, have been crucial to the conflicts and transformations of the ‘crisis.’

1.5 Historicizing social reproduction practices and feminized dispossession in Greece

This section provides an historical overview of social reproduction practices and feminized dispossession in the Greek context over the last century, during the long and turbulent process of “the integration of Greek society into the capitalist system as part of modernization” (Bada & Hantzaroula, 2017, p.18) and particularly in relation to the urban development and socio-political transformations I present the main practices, governmentalities, gender hierarchies and belief systems, as well as the regimes of violence, exploitation and heteropatriarchy, around which social reproduction has been performed in Greek society throughout the 20th century to the contemporary period.

Social reproduction, “the fleshy, messy, and indeterminate stuff of everyday life” (Katz, 2001, p. 711), through which individuals and communities produce themselves and the ability to work daily and in the long-term, is a terrain of conflicts, social and political regulation and intergenerational, gendered trauma within Greek society. The naturalization and moralization of ‘woman’s role’ within the household has been a mode of cementing familial exploitation, dispossession and violence against women and feminized others who have not complied with the rules and demands of the institutions of the Greek extended family, the paternalistic nation state, the Orthodox Church and a broadly heteropatriarchal society. Within this context of post-

Ottoman geographies, in Greece, the Western Balkans, and the Caucasus (post-1830), “before and after the Western colonial encounter of capitalist modernization” (Tsibiridou, 2022, p. 3), patriarchy has emerged as “a matrix of coloniality”, “generating socio-cultural justifications of superiority/supremacy for dominant gender statutes (i.e., patriarchs and matriarchs), as well as modalities of consent for female and other minor/subaltern bodies” (p. 3). This patriarchal matrix of coloniality, in the Greek context, is based on male honor “that works at the intersection of overlapping old and new patriarchies, imposed by patriarchs within the family, the state, ethnic conflicts, and the market...a justification for the control and appropriation of female labor and reproduction” within the “Modern European colonial sexist bourgeois patriarchal order of labor” (Tsibiridou, 2022, p. 3).

The aim of this historicization is to move beyond understandings of social reproduction and its trajectory that have developed within Northern American and European contexts. Instead, it aims to contextualize struggles around social reproduction and feminized dispossession in Greece, as two interconnected processes through which the family, the state and the church have attempted to control and exploit women and feminized ‘Others’ within processes of nation-building and profit making. This historicization, positions social reproduction in the Greek context, in the center of national and (supra)national colonial governmentalities and the development of Greek 'familistic capitalism,' “a type of national political economy where the family plays a double role both as the main provider of welfare to its members and as a key agent in the reproduction of its politico-economic institutional arrangements” (Papadopoulos & Roumpakis, 2013, p. 204) and which has relied on the unpaid labor of women and feminized subjects within the extended family and network of kin.

In the first decades of Athens as a new capital (post-1830), rapid urbanization brought many rural women into the urban arena, where they provided cheap labor for factories,

manufacturing, and services that covered the consumption needs of the elite bourgeoisie (Leontidou, 1985; Vaiou, 2002). Within the processes of nation-building, the socially reproductive roles of women revolved around being the carriers of the nation and culture—through the family, their participation in the church, and as guardians of national morals through their discipline and purity (Anagnostopoulou, 2001). The rapid development of Athens as the new capital, resulted in the expansion of the city’s middle and lower bourgeoisie, and created a new urban lifestyle that organized urban family life and social reproduction, where the number of maids employed by a family not only demonstrated its wealth but also kept the female members of the household “protected” within the home overseeing the domestic labor it needed (see Bada and Hantzaroula, 2017).

In the 1920s after the inflows of refugees displaced from Anatolia, the state, in the absence of any welfare policies, directed refugee children and women into domestic labor, along with women and girls from rural Greece, and the islands, and poor children and orphans (Bada & Hantzaroula, 2017; Hantzaroula, 2012). As this practice involved the “rehabilitation” of underprivileged women and children, it became a vehicle for bourgeois women to connect with the public sphere they were detached from, through charity and philanthropy (Bada & Hantzaroula, 2017). As Layoun (2001) stresses, the process of ‘Othering’ dictated by the population ‘exchanges’ articulated hierarchies, exclusions, and displacements around ‘rightful’ belonging to the nation state:

The founding documents, but even more explicitly the reports and recommendations of the Refugee Settlement Commission (RSC), established in 1923 with the cooperation of both the League of Nations and the Greek state, suggest both predominant Greek and international notions of “native” and “refugee” and of the “proper place” of each (p. 49).

In this context, the nationalist bourgeois feminist movement of the time played a contradictory role in the processes of minoritization (and often criminalization) of deviant femininities in their ‘civilizing’ mission (Vickers & Vouloukos, 2007).

At the same time, the urban poor lived in slums that were built overnight through mutual aid, including the help of women and children. Vaiou (2002) notes that during that period domestic work was hard, requiring significant manual labor since the houses (and especially the refugee shacks) had no amenities, including electricity or running water. Poor and refugee women were often “directed” by the state and philanthropic institutions towards home work (paid by the piece), especially in the garment and textile industry, a tendency intensified through the widespread use of the sewing machine (Papastefanaki, 2021), further limiting their time outside the house and the neighborhood.

The devastating impact of World War II was aggravated by the Civil War that followed immediately. Athens was turned into a battlefield, with the support and participation (and loss) of civilians, including radicalized refugees, working-class and rural populations (Grigoriadis & Moschos, 2023). Among them, women, and children had a significant role in this battlefield, against the conservatives, and British troops, acting as nurses for the wounded, preparing food but also transporting ammunition, functioning as bait to distract opponents, and spreading false information (Delis, 2017, pp. 221-223). Feminist historiography of this period has indicated that both rural and urban conflicts led women out of the domestic sphere to engage in both the armed struggle and cover the social reproduction needs of the fighters and those left behind (Sklavou, 2024).

The defeat of the communists in the Civil War (1945-1949) resulted in decades of anti-communist persecutions, mass imprisonment, and the torture and exile of men, women, and children, including the displacement of communist families from their local rural communities to urban centers. Under the pretence of sharing humanitarian aid and expertise, through the

introduction of international social work, from 1947 the U.S. established a mechanism for the pursuing of American government agendas within Greek politics, society and culture (Ioakimidis, 2011). The profession of social work, which was to become conducted exclusively by women of middle-upper bourgeois classes trained by American professionals in Athens, focused on the ‘reformation’ of rural, slavophone, and communist women and youth¹³.

The post-war period was characterized, again, by rapid urbanization, the modernization of the older apartment buildings, the creation a large petit-bourgeois class, and the expansion of rights for women, who obtain the right to vote in 1952. As a large part of the population was displaced migrants (from the Civil War), their settlement in particular neighborhoods in Athens followed patterns of common place of origin, leading to the creation of community and associations that often organized around local needs (Vaiou and Kalandides, 2016).

With the military coup, and the establishment of the dictatorship in 1967, the freedoms of women and their role in the family became, once again, a terrain of regulation, since the regime centered its core beliefs and propaganda around the triad of the nation, Orthodox Christianity and the family. Therefore, women who engaged in anti-dictatorship activities, intellectuals, and anyone opposing the regime were persecuted as communists (the Communist Party being outlawed since 1949). Thousands of people were imprisoned, exiled, and subjected to torture and sexual violence (Stefatos, 2011), in the long lineage of anti-communist hatred dating back to the beginning of the 20th century. Female protestors and members of anti-authoritarian organizations were targeted specifically on the basis of their gender, as their engagement with politics did not align with the traditional role of women, and their ‘communist’ identity was taken as an indicator of their immorality, and promiscuousness.

¹³ This included the creation of “children’s colonies” (holding an estimated 30,000 children from 1947 to 1948), 23 of them based in Athens, under the supervision of Queen Frederica, where children from communist families were abducted and placed, being subjected to systematic brainwashing and torture (Ioakimidis, 2011).

The fall of the military dictatorship in 1973, and the beginning of democratization, was marked by intense social movement activity and the flourishing of a feminist movement, whose mainstream components were tied to political party activity and followed party agendas (Vickers & Vouloukos, 2007). Autonomous feminist groups in the anti-authoritarian milieu were active but not incorporated into mainstream feminist endeavors since the latter were associated with state, and mainstream political party feminism reformist practices introduced in the early 1980s (Kyriakidou, 2010)

The country's entry into the European Union in 1981, required a series of changes regarding equality between women, and men as prerequisites for the country accession, though on the ground the reality of women's lives did not change drastically (Lyberaki, 2010). Amidst the developments of Greece's 'Europeanization' was the entry of women into the labor force accompanied by the creation of flexible working hours for women as well as the creation of more daycares to facilitate working mothers in the city. In 1983, the practice of the dowry, an amount of money, livestock or property paid by the bride's family to the groom, which had been a serious social problem for decades especially for poor populations, was banned permanently in a series of family law reforms that sought to make family life a more egalitarian place for women. Many of these reforms addressed inequality between men, and women especially within marriage and domestic life, and led to the emergence of new dynamics in gender relationships, and roles. Abortions were legalized in 1986, with the support of the mainstream feminist movement, but with the church and conservative politicians 'protesting' women's new freedoms through the supposed emergence of Greece's 'demographic issue' (of low birthrates), framing women's reproductive rights into a national issue (Kyriakidou, 2010).

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, women from Eastern European countries, and later from East Asian countries, migrated to Greece, taking on paid domestic labor in middle-to-upper-class (often suburban) families, work that had traditionally been performed by Greek

working-class women. These immigrant women formed their own communities, settling in apartments of the downtown neighborhoods (Vaiou & Lykogianni, 2006) along with immigrants and refugees from African, middle Eastern and the neighboring Balkan countries. Many of them undertook care-work for the elderly and children, resulting in the development of relations of everyday life that aided their transition to their new life in the city. And their everyday practices of survival and care contributed of the revitalization of the downtown neighborhoods, through the repairing of the aging housing stock, the re-population of public schools, the emergence of local shops and extensive uses of public spaces (Vaiou, 2002, p. 224).

Papadopoulos and Roumpakis (2013) recognize the period up to the 1990s as one in which families, and their extended networks of kin often tried to maximize their family resources through formal, and informal practices tied to patronage and clientelism. The harsh neoliberalization and the deregulation of markets within the period of European modernization in the late 1990s, aspired to “transform families from stakeholders of the traditional family-contained low risk collectivism to shareholders in emerging markets pursuing high risk strategies while relying on credit-funded consumerism” (Papadopoulos & Roumpakis, 2013, p. 2010).

With the onset of the austerity ‘crisis’, the impact of reforms and cuts was downloaded onto households, which resulted in the undertaking of debt by Greek households (Placas, 2021). With major cutbacks on welfare provisions, women, many of whom were participating in unpaid labor within small family businesses, found themselves under the pressure of the threat of unemployment. Within households with children, the extended family, and especially older female members contributed to the raising of children, taking on daily routines, often sharing their pensions, as having a domestic worker or a nanny was a luxury the families could not

afford (Kazassi & Karamessini, 2018). Turning towards grassroots solidarity, women became active members of collectives, assemblies, squats, and on the street mobilizations. The 2014-2015 so-called refugee ‘crisis’, made visible the lack of welfare policies towards refugees, a task that was undertaken instead by activists in the abandoned building public spaces of the downtown core, facing the violence and suppression of the state.

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the impact of a decade of austerity with a health care system being unable to cover the needs of Athens’ residents, but also the extent of social inequalities heteropatriarchal violence within Greek society. Vaiou (2023) stresses that “the bulk of material and emotional work that keeps everyday life going and the physical individuals – the women – who (have to) undertake it are missing from common understandings of the pandemic and how to cope with it” (p. 225). The collapse of support mechanisms during the pandemic as well as the excessive policing of public spaces, left women responsible for the routines, needs, and anxieties of entire families, often within the limited space of small Athenian apartments.

This overview reveals the interplay between social reproduction practices in the household and beyond with traditions of familial exploitation of women as well as processes of regulation and moralization by a heteropatriarchal state and its various actors. It is a context that reveals social reproduction, and the roles attached to it as a political terrain of conflict that women and feminized subjects navigate every day and is characterized by a long history of oppressions and resistances, that impact to this day the ways feminized ‘Otherness’ is experienced in the Greek context.

1.6 Dissertation overview

The structure of the dissertation is organized through seven chapters and its three research questions. In the chapters that each research question is addressed in, I present empirical evidence to support my arguments, drawing from the data collected during the fieldwork.

In Chapter Two, the theoretical framework of the dissertation is presented, through the synthesis of three interrelated fields of theory in relation to (a) urban neoliberalism and austerity urbanism, as well as practices of anti-capitalist commoning and the right to the city; (b) the concept of social reproduction and its relationship with the urban; (c) the relationship between affect, social reproduction and the urban. Building on these three interrelated theoretical fields, the chapter then presents a synthesis of theoretical concepts for the study of the affective geographies of social reproduction within the Greek case. Additionally, it proposes a theoretical framework for the study of Athens as a South Eastern European city that takes into account the geopolitical and geohistorical configurations in which Greece has been entailed.

Chapter Three focuses on methodology, presenting the issues of feminist knowledge production that are addressed by the dissertation in the context of new geographies of urban theory, the use of social reproduction as a method, and how reflexivity and collaboration have been employed in the context of a decolonial feminist praxis in the field. The chapter goes on to present the research design of the dissertation, focusing on the use of qualitative geohumanities methods for conducting feminist urban geography research. The choice of research area and participants are explained along with the timeline of the research and the challenges and opportunities of conducting remote fieldwork during the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, the methods of primary data collection are presented followed by a description of the data analysis process and the presentation of data within the dissertation.

Chapter Four addresses the first research question of the dissertation, i.e. the ways socially reproductive labour of women and feminized subjects in the context of everyday life and organizing contribute to anti-capitalist place making against austerity urbanism. The chapter is organized into three main sections. Section 4.2 focuses on the emergence of the ‘crisis’, within the period post-2004 up to December 2008, investigating how struggles over social reproduction and belonging emerged in that period in the everyday lives of participants, in relation to harsh neoliberal policies, exclusionary urban planning agendas, and regimes of political violence in the city. Section 4.3 addresses the period from 2008 to 2021, to showcase the role of social reproduction as a modality and a cause around which anti-capitalist place making and collective claims around the right to the city were organized. Finally, section 4.4 presents the way socially reproductive labour performed in the context of the neighbourhood and of informal everyday encounters, along with city-wide organized solidarity and mobilizations, creates constellations of care that contribute to anti-capitalist place making in the city, through the creation of spatialities of care.

Chapter Five addresses the second research question, asking how women and feminized subjects navigate, process and produce the urban through affective, emotional, relational, and embodied understandings of the self and community through their everyday socially reproductive practices in the city-in-crisis. Initially, the chapter showcases the extreme conditions of violence that participants faced in the context for their everyday life and organizing, highlighting the ways these affective economies spatialize in the city. The chapter then goes on to introduce the concept of the *affective topoi* of social reproduction as an oppositional praxis in order to showcase how the transformative capacities of social reproduction emerge through affective encounters in the urban, transforming space and transgressing its hegemonic constructs. The chapter then presents the affective spatial strategies and knowledge that the participants accumulate while navigating the city, based on sensory

registers of feelings, encounters, collective history in the city, in order to survive and be able to resist in the urban.

Chapter Six addresses the third and final research question of the dissertation, focusing on expanded notions of the political and the right to the city that stem from the everyday socially reproductive labor of women and feminized subjects in the urban. The chapter introduces the concept of the *urban caring undercommons*, in order to describe the ways dispossessed women and feminized subjects form relational embodied infrastructures of care under conditions of extreme hostility and violence in the city. The chapter presents the political functions of social reproduction in the urban through a two-fold embodied socio-spatial praxis that consists of *social reproduction as resistance* and *social reproduction of resistance*. Building on these concepts the chapter engages affective pedagogies of social reproduction in order to describe the ways communities accumulate knowledge that enables them to survive over time and to organize around their demands of survival in order to achieve intergenerational transformation through embodied praxis. Finally, the chapter explores the expansion of the understanding of the right to the city through centering social reproduction as essential to the role of forming the relations and embodied capacities that enable the claiming of the right to the city and the pursuit of future socio-spatial imaginaries.

The dissertation closes with Chapter Seven that summarizes the findings of the research and provides conclusions regarding the affective geographies of social reproduction in Athens during the austerity ‘crisis.’

Chapter 2: Affective geographies, social reproduction and the urban in times of neoliberalism: a theoretical framework

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present the main concepts that frame the dissertation's theoretical approach as well as the synthesis of concepts that I have developed and deployed throughout the analysis of the empirical data. I analytically frame my research discussing the relationship between the urban, neoliberalism, austerity, affect, and social reproduction in the formation of strategies of resistance and transformation and anti-capitalist futures, bringing into focus the subversive potentialities of social reproduction. Furthermore, this framing is grounded to the realities of the Greek austerity crisis, framing social reproduction as embedded within Athens' particular regimes of violence and oppression, urban development trajectories and socio-political cultures, and the ways these impact upon precaritized urban communities and feminized subjects.

The structure of the chapter is as follows:

Initially, I present (see Section 2.2) a synthesis of the concepts that address the relationship between urban space, collective struggles, and the politics of neoliberalism, focusing particularly on the fiscal austerity and austerity urbanism, and grassroots resistance to the latter. Departing from the above concepts and critiques, I then move on to define social reproduction, its transformative potentiality, and its relation to the urban (see Section 2.3). I frame the relationship between social reproduction and urban and the role of the everyday in the analysis of women's lives in the city, and particularly in the context of austerity urbanism.

Social reproduction is performed in the urban, exposing power relations of oppression and violence that embodied subjects experience through encounters and interactions and the urban environment. Thus, I turn to the concept of affect (see Section 2.4) and its embodied,

relational, and spatial dimensions in order to discuss the interplay between social reproduction, urban space and the ways power, violence and oppression are felt and contested in the urban.

Finally, I ground the above theoretical framework in the context of Greek austerity and on the empirical context which the research unfolds (see Section 2.5). I suggest that theorization from and for Athens, as a place of original knowledge production, is necessary to frame social reproduction in the context of Greek familistic capitalism and local patriarchal regimes of oppression and violence. Lastly, I discuss grassroots mobilization in relation to Greek austerity urbanism, and the socially reproductive labor of women and feminized subjects.

2.2 The urban, neoliberalism and austerity urbanism

Urban livelihoods across the world have received increasing attention from critical scholars within the field of urban geography, as cities, in various forms and contexts, have emerged as sites of (g)local struggles, manifestations of capitalism, and past and present colonialisms, impacting upon the conditions people live, work, and move in to create community and make sense of the world. In the geographies of the neoliberal urban, the various manifestations of capitalism and its crises take form in the “very material and tangible situation that has appalling effects on the weakest population: foreclosures, lack of social assistance, increasing waiting times, environmental degradation, urban stress” (Benach, 2015, p. 71). Individuals and communities, across the lines of race, gender, class, (dis)ability, citizenship status and other axes of difference, are forced to seek mechanisms of survival but also to respond collectively and individually to the challenges of the urban, building communities and carving out spaces of alternative modes of co-existing and co-operating in the urban. This ability of the urban to shape and forge social bonds, bringing together social practices, beyond its use as an engine of capital accumulation, can be found in the conceptualization of the urban as a relation.

Similarly, from a feminist perspective, Ruddick et al. (2018, p. 13) argue that: “Urbanization is an open process determined through praxis, by actual people making the world they inhabit.” In the context of capitalism and its neoliberal formations, the capacity of urban life to continuously be reshaped in ever-evolving ways, can be seen as a response of life-making processes in the neoliberal urban. These responses are formed and renegotiated while capitalism also changes and evolves in search of new grounds for capital accumulation and profit, giving rise to new necessities, demands and spatialities of survival and resistance.

In this context, the urban nurtures the responses of people and communities against capitalism through what Simone (2010) refers to as “cityness” (p. 5), i.e., the capacity to “continuously reshape the ways in which people, places, materials, ideas, and affect are intersected” (p. 5), and interact with each other. Within “cityness” Simone (2010) discovers the ways in which the urban’s capacities “engage complex combinations of objects, spaces, persons, and practices”, becoming “an infrastructure—a platform providing for and reproducing life in the city” (Simone 2004, p. 408). Within “cityness”, precaritized urban residents improvise and negotiate collective strategies in order to make and re-make life in the urban with relations within this reproductive platform being understood as “materials themselves to be articulated in various forms in order to construct circulations of bodies, resources, affect and information” (Simone 2015, p. 18). These “relational infrastructures” function then as “vehicles of movement and becoming, ways of mediating the constantly oscillating intersections of various times, spaces, economies, constraints and possibilities making up city life” (Simone 2015, p. 18), involving decisions about the division of labor and reciprocal transactions that “link up various livelihood projects” (p. 33). In the same vein, in Purcell and Marcuse’s readings of Lefebvre’s work, the urban is a relation that manifests in spaces of encounter, connection, play, learning, difference, surprise and novelty (Purcell 2013, p. 149), at “the intersection of everyday life with the socially created systemic world about us”

(Marcuse, 2009, p. 185). What these authors have in common is an understanding of the urban as formed and transformed through capitalist processes that affect the way production and reproduction are organized within it, as well as the way governmentalities and associated relations of power attack and clash with the urban's radical potentialities.

It is capitalist processes of neoliberalism that have dominated the work of critical urban researchers as a neoliberal conventional wisdom by many international organizations, multilateral donors, corporate actors, and think tanks has further helped consolidate and legitimate a global neoliberal urbanism (Theodore 2020, p. 1). In large part, it has been through the politico-institutional reorganization of urban economies that the ideological hegemony of neoliberalism has been achieved (Theodore, 2020). The transformation of the urban under processes of neoliberalization are approached here through Brenner and Theodore's (2005) theorization of neoliberalism as a modality of urban governance, as a spatially selective political strategy, and as a form of discourse, ideology, and representation (p. 103) that impacts upon contemporary urban formations.

These elements combine in the central neoliberal strategy of austerity. Austerity (often associated with the restructuring of national debts through minimizing the social state, national budgets, and privatization), serves to highlight the ways that austerity measures are implicated in the institutional redesign of governmental functions (Theodore, 2005). Austerity reorganizes the institutional matrix of the state, with long-run, socially regressive consequences for welfare state provision, the distribution of economic risks and hardships, and the scope of social rights (Theodore, 2005).

Austerity was widely implemented through the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) and stabilization programs of the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF)

(Powers & Rakopoulos, 2019), in the 1970s and 1980s across countries of the Global South.¹⁴ As postcolonial governments in the 1960s undertook large-scale projects to transform their national economies and enhance development to “catch up”, a debt crisis spread throughout the Global South, shifting the World Bank’s philosophy “away from poverty reduction and toward neoliberal policy principles” (Powers & Rakopoulos, 2019, p. 2). “Adjustment” emerged as a “panacea” (Powers & Rakopoulos, 2019, p. 3) for these economies, as a cross-cultural, geographical, and temporal “remedy” applied initially to vulnerable economies in the Global South before it reached Southern Europe in the 2010s. At the level of urban governance, the various policies and politics that were informed by the implementation of SAPs emerged as “austerity urbanism” (Peck, 2012), manifesting in “budget cuts and welfare reforms introduced by the national state and implemented at the urban scale” (Gillespie et al., 2021, p. 1714) as “necessary for deficit reduction” (Montgomerie & Tepe-Belfrage, 2019, p. 315).

As neoliberalism and austerity take different forms across geographical and socio-political contexts (see for example Davies and Blanco, 2017; Di Feliciano, 2016; Martínez Alonso, 2022; van Lanen, 2020; Tulumello et al., 2020), austerity urbanism takes different shapes depending on (g)local and regional histories and geopolitics, legacies of colonialism and development agendas. Furthermore, the shape of austerity urbanism strongly depends on the on-the-ground urban politics and social mobilizations around housing, provision and access to resources, welfare, public space, surveillance, public infrastructure and belonging in the city as well as state suppression, securitization and police brutality.

In the context of urban austerity, feminist urban geographers have highlighted the importance of moving beyond positivist, macro-analyses of national debt restructuring, towards the everyday, lived, embodied and relational geographies of survival and resistance that

¹⁴ Schui (2014) traces austerity as a policy in 1920s and 1930s Britain, when the British government at the time implemented cuts to the wages of industrial workers in order to combat the post-war inflation.

marginalized and dispossessed women are entangled in, navigating the hostile neoliberal urban in times of austerity (Hall, 2020; Vaiou, 2016). As feminist scholars have indicated, the impact of global capitalism, the dismantling of the welfare state and deficits of care provision (Fraser 2016) have disproportionately affected women.

In the current conjuncture, the fight against the neoliberalization of the urban has manifested in local uprisings as well as national and transnational social movements. Local and everyday small-scale projects are surrounded and often perplexed by international flows of forced migration, displacement and refugee mobilities, severe securitization of borders, internal and regional conflicts, rising nationalisms and authoritarianisms, and environmental degradation, all of which further deepen dispossession through the accumulation of spatialized injustices and inequalities, particularly evident within the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Recent transnational movements (such as, for example the global Occupy movement or the anti-austerity movements in Europe, both during the 2010s), have given rise to processes in which urban politics materialize, “mobilizing from, acting on and making urban spaces” (Dikeç & Swyngedouw, 2017, p. 15) rooted in opposing “injustices in the workings of everyday urban life” (ibid). Urban uprisings and insurgencies have generated paradigms for exercising the “right to the city” (Lefebvre, 1996), one that is not defined by the legislative framework of citizenship but articulated in the right to inhabit, to appropriate urban space and participate (Purcell, 2002) in the everyday. The 'right to the city' “holds particular promise for resisting the disenfranchisement associated with urban neoliberalism” (Purcell 2002, p. 103), through temporalities, rhythms and routines in space that give shape and form to the city as an oeuvre (Lefevre, 1996), created by and in the livelihoods of its inhabitants. While the “right to the city” has been a prominent concept through which urban politics and lives have been analyzed, feminist scholars (Fenster, 2005; Vacchelli and Kofman, 2017) have indicated the gaps in Lefebvre’s work. They argue the right to the city has disregarded gendered subjects, with many

mainstream approaches subsuming “gender within the urban citizenry rather than theorizing gender as a structuring dimension of peoples’ identities” (Beebeejaun, 2017, p. 325).

Simultaneously, the collective demands and mobilizations in the urban have been analyzed through the concepts of the urban commons (Villamayor-Tomas et al., 2022), as a response to the dismantling of public infrastructure and welfare provision, and to the intensifying privatization of cities in the name of capitalist profit. While the urban commons are often framed as rising out of necessity, participation in their creation and maintenance can create anti-capitalist paradigms and imaginaries of collectiveness, based on values of collaboration through and across difference (Stavrides, 2016). Thus, Caffentzis and Federici (2014) theorize the anti-capitalist commons not only as material spaces or resources but as “social relations, constitutive social practices” (p. 101) that function as “the seeds, the embryonic form of an alternative mode of production in the making” (p. 95) and that are transformative of socio-spatial relations and counter enclosure. For Stavrides (2016), the transformative capacity of the commons lies in porosity and “opening the community of those who share common worlds, opening the circles of sharing to include newcomers, opening the sharing relations to new possibilities through a rethinking of sharing rules and opening the boundaries that define the spaces of sharing” (p. 3).

Feminist scholars have showcased how central to the production of anti-capitalist commons is the work of care and the creation and sustaining of community “done to reproduce the commons and regenerate what is taken from them” (Caffentzis and Federici, 2014, p. 102). Since the work of care in its material and immaterial dimensions has been naturalized as women’s inclination and role in broad societal contexts, the labor of creating and maintaining the anti-capitalist commons is piling on to the already existing caring workload of women and feminized subjects.

As this labor entails the everyday work of resisting the socio-spatial implications of austerity, it is crucial for maintaining the emotional and embodied capacities of communities to sustain their spaces of belonging in the urban and their ability to create new ones, counter-producing a city of their own. Despite the significance of this labor in the everyday lives of people in cities across the world, abstract macro-analyses of debt and its governing policies, of neoliberalism and austerity along with all-encompassing universalizing theories about the urban, such as planetary urbanization (Brenner & Schmid, 2014), fail to grasp the conditions that surround women's and feminized subjects' survival and resistance in the urban.

Departing from this blind spot of dominant analyses of the urban, in the following section, I frame the caring, material and immaterial labor performed by women and feminized subjects within capitalist societies through the concept of social reproduction. I discuss the concept in the context of women's and feminized subjects' everyday livelihoods and routines of survival in the urban, showcasing social reproduction's transformative and subversive potentiality.

2.3 Social reproduction and the urban

In this section I frame the relationship between social reproduction and the urban, particularly in the context of neoliberal austerity as well as in relation to the transformative and subversive potentiality of social reproduction in the context of resisting and opposing urban capitalist expansion and dispossession. Furthermore, I focus particularly on social reproduction and austerity urbanism, considering the challenges and attacks it poses for the survival of marginalized populations in the urban.

2.3.1 Social reproduction and its transformative capacities

The concept of social reproduction in feminist research has developed through various disciplines including sociology, political economy, and development studies as well as

geography. Coming from critiques of Marx's lack of consideration of the gendered aspect of the unpaid labor of women to reproduce waged and non-waged laborers, but also the conditions for life more broadly, initial debates on social reproduction, from the 1970s onwards, initially focused on the issue of unpaid domestic labor and its invisibility in theories of production and capital¹⁵. The development of feminist analyses of social reproduction was informed by "practical experience and political elaboration" (Arruzza and Gawel, 2020, p. 3), stemming from different experiences of feminist struggles and mobilizations all over the world¹⁶. Furthermore, Tanyildiz et al. (2021), suggest that the concept of social reproduction¹⁷ is not "a coherent stable construct over time and place, but an historicized and spatialized construct, speaking to multiple layerings, subject to its own internal dynamics as it is buffeted between the use of labour and resources needed to live everyday life" (p. 9).

Following Norton and Katz (2017), social reproduction is defined here as the production and reproduction of the capitalist and laboring classes, and the physical and discursive conditions needed to maintain the production and reproduction process over time and across space. It is "the fleshy, messy, indeterminate stuff of everyday life" Katz (2001, p. 711) that

¹⁵ The debate around social reproduction can be dated back to Rosa Luxemburg's 1902 critique of capital accumulation and productive and un-productive labour (Čakardić, 2017), seen as the basis for the latest development of Social Reproduction Feminism. During the 1970's and the 1980's there was a proliferation of feminist works addressing unpaid domestic labor such as those of Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James (1975), and Silvia Federici (1975), that co-existed with grassroots feminist formations (some within socialist feminism) such as the Global Women's Strike/Wages for Housework, or the Black feminist group, The Combahee River Collective (with their influential 1977 statement). For a more detailed account of Social Reproduction Feminisms and their lineage, see Arruzza (2016); Ferguson (2019); Winders & Smith (2019); Weeks (2007).

¹⁶ Arruzza and Gawel (2020) note the multiple political and theoretical lineages of the concept of social reproduction through: "Workerist Italian feminism, Western European, US and Canadian socialist and Marxist feminisms, autonomous and indigenous political currents in Latin America, Eastern European and postcolonial considerations of the socialist transformation of everyday life, and anarchist formations in the US, Europe, and Latin America" (p. 2), as well as, more recently, "the international feminist strikes movement, which has joined together countries as diverse as Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, and Poland" (p. 2).

¹⁷ Definitions of social reproduction have varied, coming from different approaches and disciplinary backgrounds, building on previous critiques and expanding according to broader societal-economic and geopolitical changes such as the globalization of the capitalist economy and the dominance of neoliberalism, but also due to the expansion of political and knowledge production agendas towards intersectional and decolonial lenses.

makes up everyday reproductive material and social practices, but also survival strategies that individuals and communities employ in order to survive in their everyday life and long-term, and that have been mostly undertaken by women and feminized subjects.

Gibson-Graham (2006) define capitalism “as a social relation, or class process, in which nonproducers appropriate surplus labor in value form from free wage laborers” (p. xxiv). It is through this process that the “appropriated surplus is then distributed by the appropriators (the capitalist or board of directors of the capitalist firm) to a variety of social destinations” (p. xxiv). Capitalism has an inherent contradiction though in its inability to renew its laboring workers and thus its need to rely for this on waged and unwaged invisibilized labor, performed mostly by women and feminized subjects:

As these comments highlight women work producing more than what is necessary for their own survival. In doing so they produce surplus labor which is appropriated by their husbands and children. The household is, thus, a site of an exploitative class process which involves the production of use values and the appropriation of surplus labor in use value form. In that the performance and appropriation of surplus labor is unmediated by market transactions and does not involve collective appropriation of surplus labor, the class process taking place can be seen as noncapitalist and noncommunal” (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p. 212).

In the same vein, Dowling (2016) stresses, it is within feminist politics that “the hidden, unacknowledged and unpaid reproductive work predominantly carried out by women in the home, in communities and in gendered ways in the workplace” (p. 455), becomes visible, explaining:

Reproductive labour constitutes a cost for capital, but it is also a central source of capital’s surplus – the work that is done in society to produce wealth that goes unpaid and is privatised. Hence, the more capital can either commodify and marketise (and thus charge for) social reproduction, or the more social reproduction is made invisible by uncoding it as work, the more its cost can be externalised. Consequently, one of the core questions still at the heart of feminist activism and scholarship is precisely who is bearing the cost for the reproduction of labour power (p. 455).

But along with reproducing capitalist relations, feminist scholars have indicated how social reproduction is also a site of struggles against capitalism that is crucial to the formation

of alternatives imaginaries of living. In a more detailed and expanded definition, Tanyildiz et al. (2021) recognize social reproduction as including “the embodied labour (paid and unpaid) in conjunction with the resources, such as those of land, ‘nature’, time, technology, and increasingly capital, that enable human and non-human life to occur, the emotional and material needs of everyday life to be met, as well as hopes and dreams for the future, and the material social practices that constitute the organization of daily life and life over generations to take place” (p. 9). Thus, at the heart of the feminist theorization of social reproduction, lays “the conception of labor as broadly productive – creative not just of economic values, but of society (and thus of life) itself” (Ferguson 2008, p. 47).

In defining social reproduction, I follow the work of these feminist scholars that propose expansive articulations of the concept as a process and a set of practices and relations and not only as a category of labor, including indigenous and Global South feminist contributions that open up space for broader decolonial approaches to the concept (Tanyildiz et al., 2021). Such articulations challenge what Gibson-Graham (2006) have called the “capitalocentric” (p. 6) character of economic discourse, which theorizes capitalism as an “embracing structure or system” (p. 6), such that noncapitalist practices are simply accounted for as taking place within the confines of capitalism or in the peripheries of inadequate capitalist “development” (p. 6). Gibson-Graham (2006) argue that such capitalocentric discourse not only fails to acknowledge “other forms of economy” (p. 7) but also capitalism’s “global extensiveness, or its inherent tendency to dominance and expansion” (p. 7).

Rather, Gibson-Graham (2006) argue for a theorization of the economy that creates the “discursive conditions under which socialist or other noncapitalist construction becomes a ‘realistic’ present activity rather than a ludicrous or Utopian future goal” (p. 263), and that emerges alongside various site-specific “capitalisms” (p. 247). Following Gibson-Graham’s (2006) suggestion that “each economic site is constituted within a social and political context”

(p. 247), I align with Hall's (2016) articulation of an expanded concept of reproduction which, for example, aims to move beyond "an implicitly Eurocentric orientation that naturalises patriarchal nuclear household arrangements" (p. 94). This approach also relates to calls to provincialize analyses of social reproduction (Mezzadri, 2019; Rao, 2021) offering space for re-conceptualizations that best suits different trajectories of capitalist development (and resistance to it) as well as different sets of family and kin structures.

At the same time, Ruiz Cayuela and García-Lamarca, (2023) consider social reproduction "as a set of processes, and relations that form the material basis for the emergence of transformative alternatives (p. 2). Here, I situate the transformative and subversive capacity of social reproduction in its ability to enact responses of resistance, resilience, and reworking (Katz, 2004), to (re)generate anti-capitalist, anti-racist, anti-patriarchal and anti-colonial futures, and livelihoods.

These responses are "interwoven and mutually sustaining" (Katz, 2004, p. 242) strategies that work "off of and in response to one another" (p. 242). In the context of social reproduction, resistance, emerges as an exercising of agency, that actively opposes and subverts conditions of exploitation and domination within everyday life (Katz, 2004), while reworking entails the repurposing of resources and redistributing of social relations, focusing on the immediate needs of communities (Katz, 2004). Resilience in Katz's (2004) triad is defined as the responses that individuals and communities develop in order to survive, day to day, and to recuperate under adverse conditions, not necessarily aiming to subvert systems of oppression, but rather to recuperate from them. These resilient responses, interwoven with those of resistance and reworking, require and nurture the creation of oppositional consciousness and "offer the possibility of fostering something beyond recuperation" (Katz 2004, p. 246).

In this context, the enactment of resistance, resilience, and reworking leads to but also derives from, the formation of subjectivities and political consciousness through the everyday

practices of social reproduction in the urban in which women and feminized subjects engage. These processes of coming into consciousness (Katz, 2004) manifest in the ways dispossessed women and feminized subjects develop modes of feeling, knowing, and making sense of the world, of the places they live in, and their connections with people, animals, objects, buildings, and other elements. Therefore, as a set of practices that ensure and reproduce human survival but also hold the capacity for transformation, social reproduction is deeply political and prefigurative, laying the ground for desired futures.

In the following subsection, I frame social reproduction as an everyday embodied practice that informs and is informed by urban space, focusing on the challenges posed for the ability of individuals and communities to be able to reproduce themselves in the context of neoliberal and austerity urbanism.

2.3.2 The spatial dimensions of social reproduction in the urban

As a “profoundly spatial phenomenon” (Winders & Smith 2019, p. 872) in its material manifestations and cultural formulation, social reproduction has emerged as crucial to the ways feminist geographers produce knowledge around the ways life in the urban is transformed, maintained, and reproduced throughout capitalism. Feminist geographers have showcased how women’s everyday socially reproductive routines in the city are not place-bound to the “private sphere” of the home, or the surrounding neighborhood, but can also span across different urban spatialities and scales (Winders & Smith, 2019). Scale, here, is not defined by a hierarchical relationship but rather by a relational one (Rodríguez-Rocha, 2021, p. 7), formed by women’s and feminized subjects’ navigation of urban space, crossing spatialities through their different roles within networks of kin, communities, institutions. Rodríguez-Rocha (2021) highlights that the work of feminist political geographers in relation to social reproduction, particularly, over the last ten years “engages the body as a site of power and (re)production as well as a scale at which the operations of global capital can be felt and known” (p. 11) pulling “invisible threads

that connect the intimacies of everyday life, with institutions, corporations, markets, states and circuits of global capitalism in ways that are highlighted at this critical moment in human history” (p. 11).

Socially reproductive subjects in the urban perform “continuous adaptations” (Lykogianni, 2008, p. 35) through time and space, developing coping strategies and negotiations of space, through daily, ephemeral, and long-term arrangements, in order to survive. As political subjects they have to manoeuvre the city in order to carry out their everyday tasks of survival, their urban livelihoods experienced in ways informed by their embodiments, identities, and social locations. Here, I follow the work of Black and postcolonial feminist scholars (Hill Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1991; Mohanty, 1984) and grassroots collectives (such as the Combahee River Collective) on intersectionality, that articulates how interlocking systems of oppression and “intersecting power relations of race/class/gender/sexuality shape individual and group based social locations” (Hill Collins, 2012, p. 452):

In essence, systems of power (such as race, gender, class, sexuality, ability, age, country of origin, citizenship status, etc.) cannot be understood in isolation from one another; instead, systems of power intersect and co-produce one another to result in unequal material realities, the distinctive social experiences that characterize them, and intersecting belief systems that construct and legitimate these social arrangements. Stated differently, racism, sexism, class exploitation, and similar oppressions mutually construct one another, drawing upon similar practices, forms of organization, and ideologies (Hill Collins, 2012, p. 455).

Drawing on the aforementioned body of work, Sultana (2020) proposes the concept of “embodied intersectionalities”, in order to interrogate the interplay of systems of oppression, embodiment and access to urban infrastructure that is vital to the survival of communities and their social reproduction. Sultana (2020), exploring the everyday struggles of marginalized women for access to water in Dhaka, Bangladesh, reveals “how the constructions and lived experiences of urban citizenship...are complicated by connections between intersectional

socio-spatial differences (e.g., gender, class, and migrant status) and materiality” (p. 1409). Thus, in their efforts to survive, women and feminized subjects, inhabit, appropriate, and (re)produce the urban, through their embodied, intersectional, individual, and communal endeavors of social reproduction, while at the same time creating attachments to place, building relations, and place-based networks. Everyday life in the urban “brings” embodied subjects face-to-face with global and national regimes of power, including violence, but also with urban governmentalities, and hegemonic constructions of space, while the adaptations they engage in, are informed by their intersectional positions within a “spatially and temporally structured society” (Lykogianni 2008, p. 141).

Within the multiplicity of the urban everyday, social reproduction emerges as infrastructure, “responsible” for building relations, i.e. social reproduction is the foundation of what makes and remakes “cityness” (Simone, 2010) as the essence of the urban. Simone’s concept of “people as infrastructure” has been critiqued for its gender-blindness, with Hall (2020), stressing that “to equate social infrastructure with community space and the activities therein is reductive; and it also disregards the gendered labour and processes of social reproduction that constitute, maintain and sustain these spaces and relations” (p. 87). Far from occurring in a void, the labor of social reproduction as infrastructure unfolds through daily encounters with systems of power, governmentalities, barriers to access, urban neglect, and regimes of violence, such as heteropatriarchy and racism. Women and feminized subjects, through their embodied intersectionalities (Sultana, 2020) thus develop strategies in order to navigate and renegotiate power configurations and hierarchies, exercising embodied spatial agency that can actively reshape the urban. Their negotiations of everyday spaces contributes to an accumulation of knowledge within their place-based communities around the challenges of social reproduction and the ways these can be resolved (Martin et al., 2007) by organizing collectively, engaging in place-based urban activism, claiming participation in decision making

(Miraftab, 2006) and building and rebuilding the urban environment (Narayan, 2023). These collective endeavors allow women and feminized subjects to engage in appropriations of space for their collective needs, in participation, and in inhabitation, all aspects of the 'right to the city' (Purcell, 2002). In doing so they often disrupt hierarchies within space, as well as transcend supposedly “fixed” boundaries, enacting feminist reconceptualizations of the 'right to the city' (Beebeejaun, 2017; Fenster, 2005).

In the following subsection I focus on austerity urbanism and the challenges it poses for the socially reproductive needs of urban populations, including collective commoning responses. Drawing on the transformative potentiality of social reproduction and its relational, infrastructural character, I frame the relationship between social reproduction and anti-capitalist commons.

2.3.3 Social reproduction as a commoning labor against austerity urbanism

As Rodríguez-Rocha (2021) stresses, moving through the “compounded crises of social reproduction, neoliberalism, and environmental devastation—worsened against the backdrop of a global pandemic” (p. 11), “new normalities” (p. 11) have posed challenges for both those who perform care, at home or beyond it, even at the risk of their own lives. In this context, the above crises, in conjunction with local manifestations of their impact, have led women and feminized subjects in different socio-political and geographical contexts to undertake the tasks of survival of both themselves and their communities.

During these times, that have been characterized by precaritization, fiscal austerity programs and the collapse of the welfare state, social reproduction as a necessity has emerged as an inclusive and politically committed theoretical project. As Nancy Fraser states the current conjuncture of capitalism is characterized by what she terms “a crisis of care” (Fraser, 2017, p.21) highlighting social reproduction as comprising:

...grassroots community movements for housing, health care, food security, and an unconditional basic income; struggles for the rights of migrants, domestic workers, and public employees; campaigns to unionize those who perform social service work in for-profit nursing homes, hospitals, and child-care centers; struggles for public services such as daycare and eldercare, for a shorter work week, and for generous paid maternity and parental leave (p. 35).

In this context, Dowling (2016), poses depletion to be at the core of “what is understood as a crisis of social reproduction, that is, the inability of people to adequately reproduce their livelihoods” (p. 455). I situate Fraser’s “crisis of care” and Dowling’s crisis of social reproduction within what Ezquerro (2014, np.) frames as a “new enclosure of the reproductive commons”, which allows the state, through the politics of ‘crisis’ and austerity, “to get rid of part of its share of social reproduction and return it to the invisible base where it originally resided: women’s unpaid labor”¹⁸ (np).

While the harsh form of austerity, characterized by cutbacks, foreclosures, housing ‘crises’ and the offloading of care to the individual and the household, impacts the way social reproduction practices spatially unfold and resist capitalism, austerity also turns “the spheres and activities of social reproduction” into “a significant terrain for market expansion and new rounds of accumulation, especially financial” (Dowling, 2016, p. 456). Hence, I situate the collective organizing of women and feminized subjects around issues of social reproduction as a response to capitalist dispossession and harsh austerity, in the form of an anti-capitalist reproductive commons (Caffentzis and Federici, 2014; Federici, 2018). The creation of reproductive anti-capitalist commons evolves around the idea of an “emancipatory decommodification of care” (Dengler & Lang, 2022, p. 13), “as forms of responsibility, of sharing, of reciprocity, of democratic organisation and of welfare” (p. 13).

In this context, commoning labor is a socially reproductive labor that produces socio-spatial relations beyond profit and that relies on the bodily and emotional capacities of women

and feminized subjects in order to collectivize care, as well as to maintain the material conditions within which the reproductive commons operate (such as spaces and material resources) (Ruiz Cayuela and García-Lamarca, 2023). As Singh (2017) stresses, processes of anti-capitalist commoning “can foster subjectivities of ‘being in common’ with others” (p. 754), that contest the impact of Marx’s concept of alienation, creating the relational conditions through which political subjects are developing commoning caring subjectivities. These subjectivities are formed through praxis, as political subjects care, organize, collaborate by applying their anti-capitalist political values and imaginations, in everyday life.

As the urban is a place where different people co-exist, interactions between emotions, embodiments but also between people and space, have an impact on the ways embodied political subjects experience, navigate, and (re)produce the urban. Thus, the following section presents a framework that showcases the relation between affect, social reproduction, and space, and that contextualizes this relation particularly within the urban and the transformative capacities of social reproduction as a set of embodied, felt practices and a form of affective labor.

2.4 Affective spatialities of social reproduction in the urban

In order to analyze the affective geographies of social reproduction in the context of Athens under austerity, this section draws on feminist theorizations of affect and presents a framework that synthesizes them within the concept of the *affective spatialities of social reproduction in the urban*. This framework deploys the concepts of Sarah Ahmed’s affective economies as well as the feminist reading of Anderson’s (2009) “affective atmospheres” by Bille and Simonsen (2021) in order to capture the ways socially reproductive practices in the everyday lives in the urban, expose women and feminized subjects to both intimate caring encounters as well as to systems, actors and conditions of dispossession and violence. In this

context, this framework turns to social reproduction as conducted through embodied, relational, and spatialized practices and encounters that entail the emergence and transmission of emotions, motivations, sensations, and gestures, impacting upon people's experiences and the production of space in the urban. The section initially presents the debates around which feminist theorizations of affect have been developed and thus provides a definition of affect that will be deployed within the analytical framework of this research. It then proceeds to present a theoretical synthesis that centers the relationship between social reproduction and the production and experience of the urban through affect in order to demonstrate how place-based encounters in the urban foster the circulation of emotions, motivations, and sensations, and form *affective spatialities*. It showcases the affective, spatialized and embodied processes that are vital to the experiencing of power and oppression but also the 'triggering' of the transformative and subversive capacities of social reproduction in the urban. Through the concept of affective labor this framework also contextualizes social reproduction as the vital labor for the creation of anti-capitalist commons and the enactment of responses of resistance, resilience, and reworking, forming relations and subjectivities beyond profit. Finally, this section considers the specific manifestation of affective spatialities in the context of Greek austerity, through the concept of 'affective economies of hostility' (Carastahis, 2015).

2.4.1 Defining affect

Affect has taken shape across cognitive psychology, communication studies, political science and geography, with the 'affective turn' in the social sciences marked by an increasing interest in the personal (and collective) experiences of people with their surrounding material and social environments, with affect framed as transgressing cognitive knowledge and

signification. Drawing on feminist theorizations,¹⁹ I prefer Pedwell and Whitehead's (2012) description of affect as relational but also as spatiotemporally situated, as "a material intensity that emerges via the 'in-between' spaces of embodied encounters" (p. 116). Affect relies on the openness of the body towards other bodies and is, thus, transpersonal (residing not just within a single body but between bodies) (Pile, 2010). Affect in this sense, can manifest in different intensities, and can be transmitted between human and non-human bodies, objects, and places, through encounters, interactions as well as through social and cultural practices, discourses, symbols, meanings and other inscriptions.

The development of the literature around affect (and emotions) emerged through the renewed interest of scholars critiquing "poststructuralist perspectives on power, which are mainly framed as an analysis of social structures rather than as an understanding of interpersonal relationships" (Albuquerque and Pischetola, 2024, p. 433).²⁰ Works on affect such as those of Sedgwick and Massumi, that framed affect as circulating freely (Sedgwick, 2003) and as being autonomous (Massumi, 2002), were critiqued by feminist scholars because of their reproduction of cartesian duality and their separation of affect and emotions (Vogler, 2021). Thus, theorizations of affect, as Bille and Simonsen (2021) stress, have been "separated" between two different lines of thought, one that perceives affects as abstract, flowing, and pre-contextual, pre-personal, and the other based on theorizations that align affect with the social and place it within societal power structures and relations. Bille and Simonsen (2021) argue, that the former approaches rely "on a distinction between the notions of affect, feelings, and emotions" (Bille & Simonsen, 2021, p. 296), reducing affect to a purely physical/biological

¹⁹ See, for example, the theorizations of Ahmed (2001, 2004, 2010); Berlant (2008); Cvetkovich (2012) and Hemmings (2005; 2011).

²⁰ This literature drew on the works of Spinoza, Deleuze and Guattari and Bergson (Bazinnet & Van Vliet, 2020).

process and emotion to a cognitive representational one, ultimately reinforcing “the distinctions between body and mind, or between object and subject” (Bille & Simonsen, 2021, p. 297).

While this interest in affect, emotions, and embodiment was presented as a novel “turn”, feminist scholars like Hemmings (2005), in providing a critique of notions of autonomous and free flowing affect along critical race, post-colonial and feminist theory through the works of Frantz Fanon, Audre Lorde and Jennifer Biddle, suggested a long history engaging the interplay between affect, emotions, embodiments, and regimes of power and oppression. Thus, aligning with other feminist scholars such as Lauren Berlant and Sarah Ahmed, Hemmings (2005) suggests that affect travels along already defined lines of cultural investment, impacting gendered, raced, sexed and classed subjects differently as they are entangled in relations of and encounters with power, oppression and violence.

As the separation of affect and emotion unfolded in the literature through debates around whether affect emerges prior to cognition and social meaning, interpreting Deleuze (and critiquing Masumi’s interpretation of Deleuze as a misreading), Hemmings (2005) further elaborates on the relation between affect, emotions, and the body, through the idea of “affective cycles” (p. 564):

To pursue this interpretation of Deleuze further, these affective cycles form patterns that are subject to reflective or political, rather than momentary or arbitrary judgement. Such affective cycles might be described not as a series of repeated moments / body /affect /emotion / a self contained phrase repeated in time, but as an ongoing, incrementally altering chain / body /affect /emotion /affect /body / doubling back upon the body and influencing the individual’s capacity to act in the world” (Hemmings, 2005, p. 564).

In a similar line of thought, Ahmed argues that, while we can theoretically separate emotions and affect, that “does not mean they are separate” (Ahmed, 2014, p. 210). Emotions have an imprint on the interactions with and the bodies of others, they can create immediate bodily and psychological responses, and they can “bring people together or move them apart, but they can also be based on judgements that are held or become agreed as shared perceptions”

(Ahmed 2014, p. 208). In Ahmed's conceptualization, the relationship between emotions and affect lays in the ability of emotions to be transmitted and to form attachments, with affect being the process of this circulation of emotions between bodies, objects, environments, and the world.

Bodies, though, are not neutral entities free of meaning; rather they become knowable through gendered, sexualized, ableist, objectified, animist, and racialized categorizations and entanglements. Hence:

...some bodies have greater ability to affect and be affected than others because of their entanglements and categorizations through processes of racialization, sexualization, animalization, and more.... without reference to the conditions of their historical emergence: through colonial, gender, and racial relations" normalizing "a type of universality in which the unconscious of the socially privileged is left unmarked and considered the neutral state of unconsciousness (Bazinet & Van Vliet, 2020, pp. 50-51).

Ahmed's (2004) concept of "affective economies" explains how political subjects become invested and disinvested in affective and emotional relations of power in the context of everyday encounters, attachments and affective contact with the world. The concept refers to the ways in which emotions are transmitted and circulated as manifestations of affective flows between individual and collective bodies and signs, challenging the privacy of emotions, highlighting the ways they create "the very effect of the surfaces or boundaries of bodies and worlds" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 117), binding subjects together, working as a form of capital across social and psychic fields. Thus, affective economies do not only refer to dominant manifestations and expressions of power but also instances and possibilities of resistance; they constitute an embodied circuit (Pedwell, 2012) through which power is felt, negotiated, and opposed.

As emotions are not contained in the individual body but require the transpersonal process of affect between bodies and the worlds, emotions become shared rather than individual

experiences (Berlant, 2004) and “public practices” (Wood, 2017, p. 69), impacted upon by the political, cultural, social, and historical contexts around them. Here, I follow Berlant’s (2011) work on personal and collective affective attachments, theorizing affect as a ‘structure of relationality’ (p. 13) and as a signal of ‘a common historical experience sensed but not spoken’ (p. 65) when a ‘historical moment appears as a visceral moment’ (p. 16). As these affective attachments and historical experiences are informed through embodied intersectionalities (Sultana, 2020) and collective and individual interactions of political subjects with systems and structures of power, the body emerges “as a site of labour, embodied history and political action” (Hickey-Moody & Willcox, 2020, p. 7). In this context, Walkerdine (2016) argues for a consideration of “affective histories” (p. 699) related to the trajectories of communities and the formation of identities around belonging, through “the ways in which embodied responses to historical events are transmitted to the bodies of descendants” (p. 700) passed down through generations.

Therefore, affect, experienced and circulated through bodies is tied to how power circulates through emotions within “the embodied and psychological legacies of colonialism and slavery, as well as the emotional politics of contemporary forms of nation building, migration and multiculturalism” (Pedwell & Whitehead, 2012, p. 116), as well as the motivations and mobilizations against them. Here, the concept of “affective citizenship” (Ayata, 2022) reveals how attachments to belonging and the state form ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’, revealing “how feelings of comfort, unease, anger, empathy, (mis)trust, (dis)respect, love, and hate towards an imagined ‘us’ and ‘others’ are regulated and reproduced in official policies, discourses, and practices” (p. 52). Governing through affect, thus not only impacts the relationship between states and subjects but also the one among subjects and different communities, through “forms of resistance, contestation, compliance, or adaptation expressed in acts of affective citizenship” (Ayata, 2022, p. 52).

In the context of this research, I define affect as a transpersonal, embodied and spatially emplaced intensity that can be transmitted through encounters between humans as well as between humans and non-humans, including objects and the built environment, but also through sound and other sensory experiences and the social meanings attached to them. I consider affect as interconnected to emotions and the body, through non-linear processes of circulation that are spatially emplaced. To discern between affect and emotion, I define emotions as a set of socially and culturally recognizable gestures and expressions of bodily sensations and feelings that can be triggered by affective intensities but also can trigger affects themselves. I differentiate between affect and emotions, considering the first to unfold as the experiencing of feelings and sensations through embodied processes of interacting with others, with the surrounding environment, and the events that take place within it, along with sensory elements (such as sounds, smells, vision) these foster, as well as the social meanings attached to them. Thus, affect does not correspond to collectively recognizable sets of feelings and bodily responses that describe a specific emotional state, but rather to the process of the circulation of these feelings and bodily sensations through human and non-human encounters in space. Thus, I consider affect, emotions and embodiments as crucial elements through which urban space is experienced through everyday practices and encounters as well as through which collective and personal histories and meaning foster connections to place in the urban.

In the following subsection, I synthesize the relation between the spatial dimensions of affect and social reproduction, particularly in the urban, building on the embodied and relational capacities of both concepts. I focus of the relation between affect, social reproduction and space as one that can transform spatial configurations of power and ideas of place. I also discuss the subversive processes of knowing that are entailed within social reproduction as an affective practice as well as the types of affective labor that are crucial to the formation of affective spatialities, especially in relation belonging, solidarity and resistance.

2.4.2 Affective spatialities of social reproduction

Drawing on feminist and critical theorizations of affect that center embodiment, spatiality, and relationality, I highlight the ways affect and socially reproductive practices (as affective practices) are not only socially but also spatially embedded, triggered within affective encounters in the urban. I then explain how these encounters foster the transformative and subversive potentiality of social reproduction, as well as the production of embodied and felt knowledges that contribute to urban processes of belonging, negotiations with power and resistance, reworking, and resilience.

In a patriarchal culture where social reproduction is normalized as women's 'natural' tendency for care, in the (extended) family, interpersonal or romantic relationships and community, women and feminized subjects often take up the tasks of domestic work, emotional labor and care, all of which require interactions with others and with the environment around them. It is in these interactions that spatially embedded social reproduction practices unfold, between gendered, raced, classed bodies. Within those practices bodies affect each other but are also affected by the space that surrounds them, its material and social dimensions as well as the meanings, sensations, and imaginations it triggers.

In order to describe the relation between embodiment, affect and space, I follow a feminist interpretation of Anderson's (2009) "affective atmospheres" as formulated by Bille and Simonsen, (2021) through the concept of spatially embedded "affective practices." Anderson's (2009) concept of affective atmospheres²¹ describes the ways that affects emerge in collective

²¹ Thibaud (2015) also uses the term "ambience", as not fundamentally different from "atmospheres". He argues that the choice of term is rather "a question of stressing particular aspects of subject-object relationships: ambience tends to emphasize more the situated, the built and the social dimensions of sensory experience while atmosphere is more affective, aerial and political oriented" (Thibaud, 2015, p. 40).

ways through the interaction between bodies in space. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's work, Andersson argues that these collective affects spread in space in a sphere-like spatial form that creates a sense of "envelopment" (Anderson, 2009, p. 80). Emerging in "quasi-autonomous" ways, "atmospheres are a kind of indeterminate affective 'excess' through which intensive space-times can be created" (Anderson, 2009, p. 80). Within them, affects "suffuse a space as it is taken up, heard, and felt" (Fontaine, 2022, p. 634), including sonic and other sensory registers that affect can mobilize.

Bille and Simonsen's (2021) critique argues though that affective atmospheres are not autonomous processes that emerge from bodies that interact with each other, and neither do they simply circulate in space, independently of these interactions and relations. These affective practices are related to embodiment in that affect is not only transmitted between people but also within their socio-material contexts, i.e. their surrounding environment. Thus, Bille and Simonsen (2021) propose using the concept of affective "atmospheric practices" (p. 296) as the relations "between people, place, and things" (p. 296), that are spatially embedded and felt phenomena, and that highlight "the constant attunement to atmospheres through the human body" (p. 296).

Drawing on the above theorization, I frame affective spatialities as the different ways that affective practices inform and are informed by affective atmospheres, triggered by and unfolding through encounters and interactions in particular spaces. In this context, I consider affective economies as embedded within space and particularly affective atmospheres, through the spatialization of the circulation processes of emotions (and their meanings and imaginaries attached to them) between bodies, objects and space. In this context, I consider socially reproductive practices as embodied, affective practices that are embedded in urban space, and that inform and are informed by affective atmospheres and the economies they emerge from. Thus, in my synthesis I consider not just how and where social reproductive practices unfold

but also by whom, and how it feels to perform them in specific spaces and places, and what type of political responses these feelings trigger.

Crucial for the definition of affective spatialities is the idea of encounter, especially in the context of the urban. Encounters are not just the meeting points and processes through which bodies come together, but they emerge as articular space-times where bodies, objects and spaces in the urban become entangled in affective practices, that inform and are informed by the affective atmospheres that these encounters unfold in. Therefore, the urban is not just a container of encounters, but it is made from encounters (Wilson, 2017), by the affective practices they are part of and the affective atmospheres they unfold in. Encounters are crucial for the formation of both affective practices and spatialities, as for Wilson (2017), they show the “different ways in which subjects and objects are formed, remade and given meaning, but also on how extensions of power are both undermined and enacted” (p. 464).

Thus, as relations of production and reproduction unfold in spaces of affective encounters (Gutierrez-Rodriguez, 2014), both through ephemeral instances and their everyday routines, women and feminized subjects, experience and impact upon the affective economies and their spatialities that emerge in the city. As women and feminized subjects develop strategies to navigate, contest and transform these relations, as affective sites of political struggles, their motivations “(re)ground them in suffering and the emotional, not purely the rational, collective and analytical” (Wood, 2017, p. 18).

In this context the labor of social reproduction is an affective labor, crucial to social reproduction’s capacity to form and transform social relations beyond profit; it is “the labor of human contact and interaction, which involves the production and manipulation of affects” (Oksala 2016, p. 292). Oksala (2016) argues that affective labor’s “products [are] relationships and emotional responses” (p. 292), that cannot be monetized but rather can be counted as

“positive externalities” (p. 292). Thus, I consider that the capacity of social reproduction for Katz’s (2004) notions of resistance, resilience, and reworking, is that of the affective labor of networks of care, attachments and desires that forms the bases for alternative and anti-capitalist modes of commoning, subjectivities and relations (see also García-López et al., 2021). Through affective practices of social reproduction, spaces can be (re)produced through alternative spatial and social relations, creating the capacity for the subversion and decommodification of social reproduction (Ruiz Cayuela and García-Lamarca, 2023).

Therefore, affective and relational practices that unfold within the context of social reproduction enable the maintenance and the “spreading” of resistance, resilience, and reworking through collective and individual acts of care, emotional support and organizing (García-López et al., 2021; Katsikana, 2021). These practices are rooted in affective experiences that function as knowledges (Hemmings, 2012) about the world, about injustices as well as collectively shared and acquired ‘wisdom’ about navigating them, highlighting the potentialities of “affect as pedagogy” (Albuquerque & Pischetola, 2024, p. 434) that informs subjectivity. Affective solidarity, therefore, relies on coalitional conceptualization of identities (Carastathis, 2013; Hill Collins, 2017) across difference rather than ‘sharing’ of ‘uniform’ struggles.

In the context of Greek austerity, the affective spatialities of social reproduction refer to both the spatialization of embodied affective practices and affective atmospheres, which unfold through the various human and non-human encounters in which women and feminized subjects engage in the Athenian urban. These occur within place-based “affective economies of hostility” (Carastathis, 2015, p. 75) that perceive precaritized and politically ‘unruly’ women and feminized subjects as failed neoliberal subjects, outsiders and ‘enemies’ to the nation, which places them at the bottom of social hierarchies of power and belonging, and enables the exercise violence against them. Thus, within the affective spatialities of social reproduction

while feminized embodied subjects encounter the power relations, structures, and hierarchies of the urban that further precaritize them, they also engage in affective practices that have the potential to disrupt and oppose them.

In the context of the Athenian anti-austerity and refugee solidarity communities that developed in the city post-2007, I consider the affective labor of social reproduction as vital to the disruption of the affective economies of hostility and their spatialities in the Athenian urban. This affective and relational labor is essential for the creation of community, for reclaiming public spaces of everyday life from profit, and for the sustaining of the grassroots communities that engage in solidarity. Thus, it becomes crucial to the organization of collective claims around survival, as well as vital to the processes of anti-capitalist commoning as both a social and spatial relation beyond profit and across difference. A more in-depth discussion of how these affective processes unfold and how affective spatialities are formed in the context of the Athenian urban under austerity, is presented in Chapter Five along with the analysis of the research data.

In the following section, I present a framework for theorizing the affective geographies of social reproduction in Athens. I contextualize the ways socially reproductive practices unfold in the Athenian urban, informed by neoliberal urban development agendas, securitization and border regimes, heteropatriarchal and racist violence, as well as austerity politics.

2.5 Social reproduction, affect and urban struggles of the austerity crisis

Drawing from the literature presented in the previous sections, I synthesize a theoretical framework for the study of the affective geographies of social reproduction under austerity in the Athenian urban, suggesting the adoption of lenses that move beyond reductionist theorizations of the European ‘periphery’. In doing so I consider Athens as a South-Eastern European city (Leontidou, 2004), contoured by (g)local processes of capitalist expansion and

neoliberalization (Hadjimichalis, 2014), that organize socio-spatial relations of production and social reproduction within urban austerity. In this context, social reproduction is framed within the heteropatriarchal regimes and capitalist familial exploitation that have historically developed in Greek society under familistic capitalism (see also Chapter 1). Following from this, the dispossession by familistic capitalism of feminized bodies as well as the spatial manifestation of “affective economies of hostility” (Carastahis, 2015) are seen as crucial to the formation of fugitive consciousness and to trigger oppositional responses. Thus, this framework places social reproduction at the center of socio-spatial processes within urban austerity and its impact on the ability of precaritized populations to survive and exercise the right to the city, as well as practices of resistance, resilience and reworking that make alternative futures possible.

The remainder of the chapter develops this framework along two lines: theorizing from Athens as a genuine place of knowledge production, beyond the periphery; and by centralizing social reproduction within affective manifestations of heteropatriarchy and dispossession in the urban under austerity, but also within transformative and subversive practices of placemaking and community building against capitalist accumulation.

2.5.1 Theorizing from and for Athens

Drawing on post-colonial and feminist urban theory, decolonial and post-socialist feminism, as well as the work of Greek decolonial urban geographers, historians, and anthropologists, I synthesize a theoretical framework for the analysis of the urban livelihoods of women and feminized subjects in Athens during the austerity ‘crisis’. This framework aims to redirect theoretical dialogue beyond Eurocentric, positivist, developmentalist and reductionist theorizations of the European ‘periphery’.

Furthermore, I construct this framework by taking into account Athenian urban development, transformations and livelihoods as historically entangled with long-standing

geopolitical constellations, successive imperialisms and colonialisms (Tsibiridou, 2022), as well as Athens' position within global capitalism and regional politics, an approach that considers "historical difference as a fundamental constituent of global urban transformation" (Roy, 2016, p. 821), with the urban having its own historical geography and a historical category in itself (p. 813). This historical difference, tied to (g)local urban trajectories and transformations, is also entangled in the ways gender, race, class (and other axes of difference) have been constitutive of, not only, embodiments and subjectivities but also the ways bodies affectively experience belonging through the intimate, the political and the everyday.

Thus, Athens is approached through layered and multi-scalar topographies of historical difference, embedded in certain socio-historical and geopolitical spatialities and geometries of power (Massey, 1993), that have impacted upon and formed its urban development trajectories. The everyday lives of its inhabitants, their generational stories of belonging and memory, have been fundamental to the formation of collective narratives and ideas of identity, difference and the self, and technologies of urban governmentality, but also the urban's geographies of production, social reproduction, and resistance.

These socio-historical and geopolitical spatialities and geometries of power are articulated through Athens in at least five ways:

- (a) as a distinct urban Mediterranean formation (Leontidou, 2004), with a type of urbanism rooted in spontaneity and informality, manifested in the creation of communities, commons, social innovation as well as in developing practices of resistance and survival (Leontidou, 2014, pp. 558-559), often grouped with Italy, Portugal, Spain;²²

²² In this spatiality, Greece is often grouped with Italy, Portugal and Spain on the basis of their proximity to the Mediterranean and certain common characteristics in the realms of lifestyle, production (belated industrialization), political trajectories (from dictatorship to liberal democracy), as well as governance. In these South European countries, welfare regimes are characterized by different degrees of familism and social protection, but also clientelism and patronage (Arbaci, 2019; Balampanidis et al., 2022).

- (b) as a testing ground for debt restructuring policies and politics including testing the limits of national sovereignty, as well as capitalist accumulation processes but also as “a space that continuously develops through top-down/bottom-up dialectic conflicts.” (Tulumello et al., 2020, p. 73)
- (c) as a regional node (central or not , during different historical eras) in the geographies of successive colonialisms, imperialisms and often obscured (neo)colonialisms within the Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman, Habsburg and Austro-Hungarian empires, but also in its recent history, through foreign interventionism, international conflicts and the securitization of borders along with their technologies of governance and infrastructures;²³
- (d) as an urban formation vital to the “borderlands” between the East and the West, the South and the North, an area extending from Greece to the Balkans and the Caucasus and characterized by a set of post-Ottoman common legacies crucial to the formation of gendered, racialized, and classed Otherness (Tsibiridou, 2022);
- (e) and as part of the liminal geographies of a Europeanization always ‘in transition’, along with the Balkan countries of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia (categorized as the Western Balkans) with neighboring conflicts, rising nationalisms and political systems under the need of ‘reform’, ‘catching up’ with the EU and finally accomplishing modernity as confirmation of being European (Gropas et al., 2013; Zocchi, 2023).

Along with cultural stereotypes, these elements were considered instrumental to the development of national debt crises, sidelining the systemic roots of the global financial crisis.

²³ Kirtsoglou and Tsimouris (2019) argue that the current European border regime is based on “state and policy-conceived racialized taxonomies...congruent with racialized geographies, establishing a firm connection between racialization and colonial histories of the past” (p. 135) and along with extractive economic relations in the context of Europe as a “racial supra-state” (p. 135).

In the current conjuncture of prolonged austerity, Athens as an urban formation falls within the geographies of borderlands both on the Syrian-Balkan corridor but also the Mediterranean routes of refugee flows, within what Chambers and Cariello (2022, p. 10) call the “African-Asian-European matrix of the Mediterranean” (p. 10), giving recognition to further obscured histories and cultures in its geo-historical constellation.

Using this framework as an entry point for a decolonial feminist approach to the urban geography of Athens during the years of ‘the crisis’ (including the COVID-19 pandemic), in the rest of this section I frame the interplay of social reproduction, affective geographies and economies as well as resistance in the urban. I consider socio-spatial geopolitical entanglements and historical continuities and difference, along with technologies and lineages of power and domination that impact the lives, routes and practices of the various vulnerable and marginalized Others that cross and inhabit the city.

2.5.2 Athens as the epicenter of the austerity ‘crisis’ and affective struggles around social reproduction

The Greek austerity ‘crisis’ has been the focal point²⁴ of debates around European sovereignty (Markantonatou, 2012), collective imaginaries and identities (Balampanidis et al., 2022; Souliotis, 2013; Varvarousis, 2019), EU integration, urban uprisings, national

²⁴ Athens as the epicenter of the austerity crisis has been analyzed in an extensive body of literature, especially in political and human geography. Some dominant themes include: the concept of accumulation by dispossession and land grabbing (Hadjimichalis, 2014); protest, movements and the right to the city (see Apoifis, 2017; Boukalas, 2011; Cappuccini, 2017; Daskalaki, 2018; Kallianos, 2013; Makrygianni & Tsavdaroglou, 2015; Rakopoulos, 2015; Siapera & Theodosiadis, 2017; Vaiou, 2018; Vradis & Dalakoglou, 2011; Vradis, 2020); the rise and activities of the far right in central Athenian neighborhoods (Kandyliis & Kavoulakos, 2011; Triandafyllidou & Kouki, 2014); the impact on urban germanane, policies, planning and infrastructure (Alexandri, 2015; Dalakoglou & Kallianos, 2018; Karadimitriou & Pagonis, 2019; Koutrolikou, 2016; Pagonis, 2019); and ethnographic approaches studying the organization of anti-austerity grassroots mobilizations in the urban as well as processes of commoning, solidarity and the creation of new subjectivities (Arampatzi, 2017; Arambatzi & Nicholls, 2012; Cappuccini, 2017; Dalakoglou, 2012; Daskalaki, 2018; Daskalaki and Kokkinidis, 2017; Hadjimichalis, 2013; Kapsali 2023; Kapsali & Tsavdaroglou 2014; Kioupkiolis & Katsambekis 2016; Kotouza, 2019; Leontidou, 2020; 2012; Mantanika & Kouki, 2011; Petropoulou, 2010; Stavrides, 2010; Tsavdaroglou and Makrygianni, 2013; Tsilimpounidi, 2012).

sovereignty and the right to the city, neoliberalism and capital accumulation processes, and the so-called ‘refugee crisis’,²⁵ as well as solidarity and grassroots initiatives related to urban common and alternative economies. I follow the framing of ‘crisis’ not only as a chronological period emerging with the onset of the 2007-2008 global financial crisis but as “encompassing a regime of truth and a more diffuse matrix of social intelligibility, which includes particular modalities of power, subjectivation, governance, self-governance, and self-formation” (Athanasidou, 2014, p. 73) as well as geopolitical and socio-spatial relations, and affective spatialities and temporalities.

Austerity ‘crises’ in southern Europe have been attributed to “national exceptionalities and pathologies” (Featherstone & Karaliotas, 2018, p. 294), dismissing the role played by governments and banks in a global context and reducing the ‘crisis’ to cultural stereotypes²⁶ of laziness, non-productivity, corruption, wasteful spending, and “lagging” welfare systems (Arbaci 2019; Balampanidis et al., 2022; Katsanidou & Lefkofridi, 2020). In the context of austerity, European institutions pushed for and launched a set of reforms targeting Southern European national spatial planning systems and territorial governance, with homogeneous rationales irrespective of the different crisis trajectories and policy traditions of different countries (Tulumello et al., 2020).

²⁵ This involves an extended body of work that intersects with geographical themes and ideas of space, especially in relation to city governance, border regimes and embodied “Otherness” in the urban (Dalakoglou, 2016; Maroufouf & Kouki, 2017; Papatzani, 2021; Raimonidi, 2019; Tsavdaroglou, 2018; Tsavdaroglou et al., 2019; Tsavdaroglou and Lalenis, 2020; Tsoni, 2013 ; Vourloumis, 2014), as well as spatial representation of the refugee crisis (see Carastathis et al., 2018; Spathopoulou & Carastathis, 2020).

²⁶ This public discourse, that is often expanded towards the (Western Balkan) countries in the process of EU accession, draws on colonial ideas of Otherness linked to the region’s Ottoman and Byzantine traditions as opposite to those of the Western European Enlightenment and incompatible with modern democratic institutions (Kouki and Liakos, 2015).

Furthermore, Athens as well as other Balkan cities, have been characterized by the idioms of informal urbanism (Roy, 2009) and urban improvisation (Müller & Trubina, 2020). This type of urbanism unfolds through practices positioned between legality and illegality, formality, and spontaneity, and are found at “the heart of the uncertain and precarious city ... as ways of creating somewhat liveable niches where there were none” (Müller & Trubina, 2020, p. 665) but also as tactics of elites in the neoliberal city (Roy, 2009).

In the various trajectories of transition in the EU for some countries, and for the financial recovery through austerity for others, urban planning systems were under pressure to reform as well as still providing welfare. In the case of Greece this meant a reduction in public spending including the reorganization of care and social reproduction through the downloading of care and survival to the individual, the extended family, networks of kin and the grassroots (Chatzidakis, 2014).

As Greece’s capitalist model relied on the extended family as an informal welfare provider, dispossession (which describes the ways bodies have become instrumentalized and worn out within neoliberal frames of financialization and management of ‘crises’, along the lines of their intersectional identities), in the Greek austerity context, disproportionately affected women and feminized subjects whose socially reproductive roles and exploited unpaid labor were central to the maintenance of such a model and its adaptation to austerity. “Greek familism” (Papadopoulos & Roumpakis, 2013; Chatzidakis, 2014) refers to the tradition of Greek families gradually accumulating and consolidating resources related to their roles both as welfare provider and as economic agent, through developing clientelist networks—individually but also as part of socio-professional groupings – as well as through semi-legal or illegal practices tolerated by the state in order to benefit from the redistribution of public resources. The family (in the form of an extensive network of kin) takes centre stage to firefight

the gaps left by the dramatic cuts in standards of living and the demise of the welfare state,²⁷ with women performing most of the intergenerational care and socially reproductive work. It is important to note that the familialist capitalism model has been mostly exercised by the middle-upper classes (in the context of the white Greek heteronormative extended family) that had already access to land and labour markets, as well as to the tolerance of the state towards their semi-illegal practices. Thus, classes excluded from this model, people who intentionally have not participated in it due to their political beliefs or estrangement from their family, as well as various newcomers (immigrants and refugees) and marginalized ‘Others’, have been the ones left to face the harshest implications of austerity.

At the same time, it is important to contextualize dispossession in the Greek austerity context not as a ‘new reality’ for women and feminized subjects, but in relation to their socially reproductive roles within Greek society, as formed and embedded in the post-Ottoman “patriarchal palimpsest coloniality” (Tsibiridou, 2022, p. 14):

In the modern context, the state and its mechanism of justice continue to blame women, thus justifying male domination based on the female modesty transgression of moral values in the way of their independence and emancipation. This paternalist modality shapes a continuum—a palimpsest tool tank for hegemonic masculine domination based on morality. Today, we still discern the power and dynamics of this palimpsest hierarchy under the conditions of male honor, protection, and domination (Tsibiridou, 2022, p. 6).

Tsibiridou (2022) traces the dispossession of women and feminized subjects in the current conjuncture, not only in Greece but in the broader Western Balkans and the Caucasus, within the post-Ottoman condition²⁸ and violent encounters with capitalist monetary modernization. The impact of this has been felt in the lived experiences of women marginalized Others (such

²⁷ The family institution has been vital to the survival of the lower-middle classes, and those who were affected by downward mobility during the crisis. It translated to adults moving back with their parents and grandparents, having extended family meals, sharing salaries (and pensions), making second-hand purchases and participation in the Social Solidarity Economy (Chatzidakis, 2014).

²⁸ Greece was part of the Ottoman Empire from the fourteenth century until its declaration of independence in 1821.

as the Muslim and Roma populations) manifested through intercultural conflicts, and “multiple broader minoritization processes...through the lens of overlapping patriarchal dominations” (Tsibiridou, 2022, p. 4). While analyses of familistic welfare capitalism highlight the particularities of the Greek case and the centrality of the extended heteronormative family as a socio-economic institution, they have not theorized non-heteronormative, non-familistic forms of kinship as well as the role of women and feminized subjects as primary socially reproductive actors in the context of interpersonal relationships and broader socio-political networks of kinship and mobilization.

Women and feminized subjects that engage in everyday social reproduction practices in the context of the household, the neighborhood, the community, the city as well as in solidarity movements, do so within atmospheres, public discourses and affective encounters of hostility, hatred, harassment and general systemic violence and precarity, within what Anna Carastathis (2015, p. 75) defines as “the affective economies of hostility” and which impact the ways they navigate and experience urban space. The normalization of hate discourses and the violence generated by police brutality and the rise of the far-right during the crisis have normalized and intensified sexism, misogyny and violence against women, both domestic and public, that affect urban life (Vaious, 2014). Carastathis (2015) further argues that the violence and oppression generated in the neoliberal city during the crisis creates an “affective economy of hostility” (p. 75) within which some bodies “are rendered vulnerable, precarious—even socially dead; [while] others assert an entitled relation to national space—even as they may be economically disempowered by austerity measures” (p. 75).

As women and feminized subjects’ dispossession within the austerity crisis intersects with their everyday experience of facing heteropatriarchal violence, racism, border regimes, as well as police brutality and the structural violence sanctioned by the Greek state, I use the concept of 'fugitivity' to frame the development of their particular oppositional consciousness

and praxis against institutions, sources of violence and dispossession. Rooted in Black thought and the study of marronage, i.e. the creation of maroon communities of Black people who escaped plantations, across the Americas (Houdek, 2023), 'fugitivity' is framed by Gross-Wyrtzen and Moulton, (2023) as a method of “knowledge-making, kin-making, and placemaking” (p. 1261). Here the undercommons function as a relational and spatial expression of fugitivity, which have been framed by Harney and Moten as commons²⁹ that have been organized under the radar of systems of domination and oppression by those who have been dispossessed (Harney and Moten, 2013). While geographies of fugitivity have focused primarily on marronage and the escape from the plantation of the colony, Gross-Wyrtzen and Moulton (2023, p. 1261) call for an expansion towards the study of fugitive placemaking “in other spaces of colonial and racial capitalist domination” (p. 1261). They emphasize:

Black, Indigenous, colonized, illegalized, and otherwise racialized, gendered, or sexualized people produce(d) alternative knowledges of history and geography, create(d) subversive communities and grammars of belonging, and transforme(d) spaces of violence into ephemeral or durable places of refuge. At their most capacious, fugitive methods are not about escape from the world but a practice of making the world otherwise (Gross-Wyrtzen & Moulton, 2023, p. 1268).

Thus, fugitivity emerges as political practice that incites a certain orientation to freedom and the future while remaining rooted in the past and present” (Gross-Wyrtzen & Moulton, 2023, p. 1266), through which dispossessed communities refuse the conditions of their oppression through “a fugitive way of knowing/being/feeling” (Houdek, 2023, p. 355). In the Greek context, I place fugitivity as a method of knowledge-making, kin-making, and placemaking that is deployed by dispossessed women and feminized subjects who face the violence of multiple systems of oppression in Greek society. Here, I adopt Hill Collins’ (2017) conceptualization of violence as a “saturated site of intersectionality where intersecting power

²⁹ While Harney and Moten (2013) have developed their framing of undercommons in the context of resistance within the neoliberal university they urge the use of the concept within different types of oppressions and marginalizations.

relations are especially visible” (p. 1464) and where practices of violence emerge as “a malleable conceptual glue that both structures the forms that violence takes within distinctive systems of power and that facilitates their smooth interaction” (p. 1464). These systems of oppression, intertwined with everyday experiences of fugitive subjects in the urban are rooted in long-lasting “hierarchies and social inequalities, modernization and colonial bordering, and ethnic and racial technologies for state apparatus administration” (Tsibiridou, 2022, p. 4). Thus, fugitivity emerges in the context of affective economies of hostility (Carastathis, 2015) within and against which women and feminized subjects perform practices of social reproduction in the city, forming and being informed by an oppositional fugitive consciousness and the desire to resist and transform.

Thus, in the Greek context of austerity crisis, I situate social reproduction as the everyday practices that reproduce capitalist relations, that maintain life, including the physical and emotional wellbeing in the context of the household, the extended family, interpersonal relationships (both heteronormative and non-heteronormative) and social and solidarity networks, but also in the reproduction of resistance and survival as a response to the neoliberalization of urban livelihoods and the securitization of borders and cities, as well as against austerity and the rise of nationalisms.

I situate the subversive potentiality and role of social reproduction in the daily and long-term struggle rooted in feminist, anti-capitalist, and anti-racist praxis, developed through local, national, and transnational solidarities. This subversive potentiality in the form of socially reproductive practices can be found in grassroots responses, “softening” the city ‘from below’ (Tsilimpounidi, 2012, p. 548; Vradis & Dalakoglou, 2011) including both capitalist enclaves as well as in-between spaces for the development and practicing of commons, which are experienced in the process of being collectively used, defined, conceived and communicated (Stavrides, 2016).

In this section I have presented a feminist decolonial framework that I employ for the analysis of affective geographies of social reproduction, in the context of the Greek austerity ‘crisis’, and that considers the importance of historical difference as vital to Athens’ urban development trajectory. This framework places social reproduction at the center of anti-capitalist placemaking practices and affective experiences of the urban, emphasizing its transformative potentiality and its relation to fugitivity, as an affective, driving force behind it. Additionally, I have contextualized the lived everyday realities and subjectivities of the gendered and marginalized Others that inhabit the Athenian urban, through the socio-spatial configurations of social reproduction, care, resistance, and affect in the city.

2.4 Conclusion

Synthesizing three interconnected bodies of literature, that discuss social reproduction, affect and emotions, and conceptualizations of the urban, I have presented a theoretical framework that guides my analysis of the affective geographies of social reproduction during the austerity ‘crisis’, in Athens, Greece.

I initially discussed the urban as consisting of relational and embodied infrastructures through which people “make up” city life and its spaces. Since capitalism and neoliberal dogmas have been crucial for urban development and processes of dispossession around the world, I proceeded to frame the urban in relation to neoliberalism and particularly austerity urbanism, as well as in relation to grassroots responses in the form of anti-capitalist commoning. As the ability of people and communities to survive has become another ground of capitalist enclosure and dispossession, social reproduction did not only emerge as the strategy through which the capitalist workforce is reproduced, along with life in general, but also as fostering the possibilities of resistance from within.

Budling on the transformative potentiality of social reproduction as well as on processes of the production of space and its appropriation that women and feminized subjects engage in, I then developed a framing of the relation between affect, social reproduction, and urban space. Through this framework, I presented the concept of affective spatialities, discussing the ways emotions and sensations are created through encounters in the urban, circulating between bodies, objects and space through affective practices and affective atmospheres. I then proceeded to frame social reproduction and affect specifically in the context of the urban, emphasizing both how the affective qualities of the urban are felt and embodied through the spatialities of social reproduction, as well as the role of socially reproductive affective labor in anti-capitalist commoning.

With Athens emerging as the epicenter of Greek austerity policies post-2010, its urban populations and particularly those who perform the majority of socially reproductive roles and tasks in Greek society, faced precarity through harsh fiscal measures, amidst a collapsing welfare state and the downsizing of public resources, services, and assets. At the same time, the affective regimes of violence and (un)belonging that already existed within Greek society and manifested in the everyday lives of Athenian populations, intensified and expanded under austerity, in the form of ‘unruly’ Others, ‘public threats’ and ‘enemies’ of the nation. Thus, austerity’s regimes of violence and unbelonging manifested in intensifying the urban’s role as a terrain of clashes and contestations of power, where women and feminized subjects mobilized to be able to cover their socially reproductive needs but also to transform the city against neoliberal dogmas, racism, and heteropatriarchy. Here, the formation of a fugitive consciousness, stemming from the various systems of violence and dispossession women and feminized subjects face in Greece, is framed as the main driving force behind subversive and transformative social reproduction practices, in knowledge-making, kin-making, and placemaking through care, in the Athenian urban.

Lastly, in this context, overall, I have placed social reproduction at the centre of anti-capitalist, anti-racist, and feminist grassroots claims and struggles in the city, enabling both the survival of precaritized populations and sustaining the very movements and grassroots infrastructures that pursue change, through an embodied urban praxis.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodological and epistemological lenses that are adopted in this dissertation, its research design and the choice of research area and participants, as well as the selected methods of data collection and the processes of data analysis, coding, and (re)presentation. It starts with a discussion of the methodological and epistemological lenses through which knowledge production, researcher positionality, and research agendas were approached. The primary objective of the dissertation's knowledge production is a response to the calls for the formation of "new geographies of theory" (Roy, 2009, p. 820) about and for the urban.

In answering this call for new entry points for the theorization of urban development it introduces the lived geographies in South Eastern Europe, as these are embedded in globalized economies, histories and legacies of colonialism and imperialism as well as in the current phase of dispossessive capitalism. The chapter then presents the adoption of social reproduction as a method for decolonial knowledge production in urban geography, synthesizing the concepts of affect, knowledge and the urban palimpsest as a basis for the formation of the aforementioned new geographies of theory. My scholar-activist positionality and my relationship with the communities involved in the research are discussed, as well as the ethics of knowledge production, formed through constant reflexivity and collaboration, and forming a decolonial feminist praxis in the field.

Finally, the chapter moves on to the research design of the dissertation, arguing for the use of qualitative geohumanities methods in feminist urban geography. It outlines the choice of the participants and the field site, as well as the challenges and opportunities that emerged through conducting the fieldwork during the COVID-19 pandemic, in a hybrid (online/offline) mode. The chapter ends by presenting the methods and tools of data collection that were used in the research, followed by an account of the processes of data analysis, coding and (re)presentation, through soundscape compositions as well as creative mapping

3.2 Feminist knowledge production for new geographies of urban theory

As outlined in Chapter 1, this dissertation aims to provide accounts of the ‘crisis’ that places at the forefront and centre of analysis, the obscured experiences of women and feminized subjects that remain invisible amidst macro-economic analyses and inadequate concepts that fail to correspond to the on the ground realities of embodied intersectional subjects. I start by presenting the methodological and epistemological framing of the knowledge production and research agendas, outlining a feminist decolonial framework for the study of the Greek case and the need to adopt social reproduction as a method for feminist urban geographic research.

3.2.1 Moving beyond the periphery in ‘crisis’: towards a feminist decolonial framework for the study of the Greek case

The ways “Greece” has been written about and represented by both Greek and foreign scholars in current dominant paradigms and theoretical debates, as a periphery or semi-periphery, has often developed in relation and in response to the European Union (that is often conflated with Europe). The common entry and reference point for these approaches is Greece’s 1989 accession to the European Union, with the discussion of historical difference filtered through developmentalist lenses and reduced to the Ottoman legacies of clientelism and an ‘underdog’ culture,³⁰ as well as references to a lagging economic development and absence of industrial revolution, which are used as signifiers of its peripheralization. This particular methodological approach to understanding the Greek context impacts upon the concepts, theoretical frameworks and politics of knowledge production about and in the area, prioritizing Eurocentric timelines and spatialities and to the uncritical adoption of theoretical trends and of seemingly universalized concepts produced in European and North American

³⁰ According to Glynos and Voutyras (2016) dominant representations of Greek political culture adopt the cultural dualism lens of modernization versus the ‘underdog’ culture, associating the latter with populism, corruption, clientelism and backwardness, all seen as obstacles to European modernisation.

contexts. Furthermore, it exercises a methodological nationalism and exceptionalism that isolates Greece from broader histories and developments that transverse the surrounding area - the Eurasian borderlands between the Global South, North, East and West – while homogenizing its socio-political trajectories and socio-cultural heterogeneity within an assumed monolithic European identity (Tlostanova, 2010).

This methodological choice is due to certain local scholars' own investment in belonging to a Euro-centric epistemological community,³¹ but also to the need for academic relevance (and professional survival) through an uncritical alignment with dominant research agendas and concepts, often dictated by the current power geometries of globalized academic knowledge production. In the Greek context, Vaiou also notes that local scholars came to be shaped as “expert/authentic knowledge-providers about the Greek other, as facilitators of fieldwork and, sometimes, as producers of case studies” (Vaiou, 2004, p. 2). This power dynamic, that has determined “how Greece was (re)presented, as well as from where and how “others” might speak in these spaces, as marginal, less important voices” (Vaiou, 2004, p. 2), has been documented by other feminist scholars in South Eastern Europe and Central East Europe (Kancler, 2021; Kašić, 2016; Tlostanova et al., 2019). However, scholars and thinkers from South Eastern Europe, drawing on postcolonial and decolonial frameworks and the lived experiences of international and local academic and grassroots communities, have questioned the power geometries of knowledge production that have repeatedly constructed them as “inappropriate subjects of theory-making” (Vaiou, 2004, p. 2).

In recent years, the geopolitics of border regimes, the policies of austerity and European Union integration, extractive capitalism and various rising nationalisms, have indicated the

³¹ Boletsi and Papanikolaou (2022) argue that the complicated relationship of decolonial frameworks and agendas in relation to theories for and about Greece “range from culturally, ideologically or even racially motivated attempts to keep Greece exclusively attached to a (white, superior and ... northern) Europe to critical approaches that are sometimes too quick to attach the tags of (self-)exoticization or neo-orientalism to attempts by Greek or non-Greek scholars and artists to think Greece through imaginaries of the south” (p. 133).

inadequacy of geographical classifications such as Global North vs Global South, or West Europe vs East Europe. In the long histories of violence, interventionism, and capital accumulation in South Eastern Europe, the contour lines and counter topographies of resistance emerge, reveal the grounds for new topographies of theory, requiring new historical geographies, entry points and frames of reference (Boatcă, 2013; Chambers and Cariello, 2022). What is also highlighted is the significance of acknowledging the role (and often compliance) of nations and their elites, through global colonial projects as well as in local processes of nation-building and European integration, in the oppression of various ‘Others’³².

Building on these critiques, this dissertation proposes the overall framing of urban theory and geographic research regarding South Eastern Europe, and in this case particularly, the affective geographies of social reproduction in Greece during the austerity ‘crisis’, through a decolonial approach that is characterized by a critical and careful engagement with concepts in their particular historicity and difference. These are formative to the ways gendered, racialized, classed, and other regimes of minoritization and Othering have developed.

Such an approach not only proposes different entry points for the production of urban theory but also provides the grounds for the critical engagement and expansion, re-formulation, or rejection of concepts and paradigms that are often transplanted in research on South Eastern Europe. Particularly in the case of Athens, concepts such as social reproduction, intersectionality, racialization, urbanization, informality, resilience, and resistance (among others) as well as the processes that they are realised in, need reworking. This reworking does

³² Scholars from the area such as Boletsi and Papanikolaou (2022), Bjelić (2023), Rexhepi (2022), and Gržinić et al. (2020) among others, have highlighted in their work that nation-states and imperial formations in South Eastern Europe and Central Eastern Europe build their supposed proximity to Europe and national identity on the grounds of Othering, racialization, and minoritization of various groups based on gender, ethno-racial identity, class, religion, and sexuality resulting in genocides, extreme marginalization, displacement, and dispossession.

not involve just an empirical variation but forms the grounds of new geographies of theory, expanding their epistemological and ontological framings.

3.2.2 Social Reproduction as a method for decolonial knowledge production in urban geography: affect, knowledge, and the urban palimpsest

Building on the agendas for decolonial frameworks within Balkan feminist geographies and the work of feminist scholars on the possibilities of social reproduction for generating different ways of knowing and researching the urban, I develop a decolonial feminist methodology, in the context of Greece as a South Eastern European country. Such an analysis requires considering the historicity of concepts and the lived—historically and geopolitically—situated experiences from which these are developed, as a way to produce alternative entry points and avenues of theorization, rooted in local knowledge production and collaboration and decolonial feminist citational praxis. To achieve this, this dissertation combines approaching social reproduction as a methodological entry point (Tanyildiz et al., 2021) alongside the metaphor of the palimpsest (Alexander, 2005) in order to go beyond assumed universalisms to an historicization of the everyday practices of social reproduction and resistance within urban development, capitalist formations and oppressive regimes as they have emerged and formed in Greece and South Eastern Europe.

In the context of theorizing from and for Athens, such a decolonial feminist approach takes into account that the urban socio-political and socio-spatial processes through which Athens has transformed are a result of successive imperialisms, interventionism and supranational configurations of power, and not just a simplification of its political past through the demonization of Greece's Ottoman legacy. Additionally, it takes into account the particular ways that configurations of power and domination shape the ways intersectional identities manifest in the oppression and exploitation of women and feminized subjects, (along the lines of gender, ethnoracial background, class, legal status, political beliefs, sexuality and religion,

among many other axes of difference). Thus, the ways everyday livelihoods unfold in the Athenian urban are seen through this decolonial feminist approach as impacted upon by broader colonial and imperialist processes, which are connected to past collective struggles, regimes of power and notions of national belonging.

Here, social reproduction is the key framework for understanding capitalism's inherent contradiction: the sustaining of both the working labor that fuels production but also the caring and survival practices that enable life and resistance against it, embodied in the material, affective, emotional, and collective labor of women and feminized subjects. In this context, social reproduction is approached "as a real object of knowledge – that is as a conceptually generative construct and productive way of knowing the urban, and of understanding how urbanization is being reorganized and resisted" (Tanyildiz et al., 2021, p.b3).

Central to using social reproduction as a methodological entry point is the historicization of social reproduction practices across gender, race, class, ability, and location, along with the consideration of historical difference as constitutive of the urban, as well as constant reflexivity over concept formulation. To engage in this historicization, I employ the metaphor of the palimpsest to analyze the layered intergenerational collective and interpersonal experiences in the urban, and the ways these generate spatialized and affective knowledges that are embedded in the practices of social reproduction. The palimpsest, "a parchment that has been inscribed two or three times, the previous text having been imperfectly erased" (Alexander 2005, p. 190), has been used as a metaphor in various disciplines (such as historical geography, literary studies, history, studies of architecture and urban space), as well as by feminist scholars to study processes of memorialization and collective identities, trauma, temporalities, and belonging as well as the blurring of past and present in collective narratives in built environments and landscapes (see, for example, Huyssen, 2003; Pirker et al. 2019; Turgut,

2021; Uricchio, 2012), as well as also regimes of power and obscured colonial legacies (Avramopoulou, 2020; Tsibiridou, 2022).

In the context of this research, the element of “imperfect erasure” (Okello & Duran, 2021, p. 1) as characteristic of the palimpsest is used as a vehicle to synthesize lingering affects, individual and collective memory, spatial formations, and practices, and ideas of place and belonging that are always in flux, aligning with the processes of “becoming urban” as always incomplete (Roy, 2016), constantly re-worked and re-negotiated through encounter and through “the relational connectedness of social reproduction” (Tanyildiz et al., 2021, p. 3). This combined methodological entry point thus provides the ability to investigate affective layers of meaning within spatialized practices of care and social reproduction in the city, as well as the re-inscription of that meaning through the formation of subjectivities. Through such processes and practices, communities actively produce the palimpsest of social reproduction through their everyday life in the city, through the making of lives, belonging, crossings and attachments.

Furthermore, a critical palimpsest reading of social reproduction in the urban, enables a decolonial approach by moving away from dominant paradigms of knowledge production that homogenize and reduce knowledges from “elsewhere” into simplified variations, and that form totalizing narratives about the social, the urban, and various ‘crises’. In the Greek context, such an approach brings up issues of the very framing of the ‘crisis’ within political debates and (supra)national governmentalities as a narrative of emergency and exception but also as part of a lexicon of neo-colonial sovereignty³³.

³³ Carastathis et al. (2018, p. 147) argue that the notion of a monolithic territorialized austerity ‘crisis’ is placed on the top of the hierarchy of other “nesting crises” that are seen as less important and often as byproduct of the latter but also as nationalized pathogenies, obscuring colonial legacies and their lingering mappings in place.

Overall, this dissertation proposes a feminist decolonial approach to urban austerity, its socio-spatial formations and resistances to dispossession through the combination of social reproduction as methodological entry point and a palimpsest reading of its practices, in order to produce new geographies of theorization beyond the Eurocentricism of dominant paradigms and the gendered blind spots of macro-analyses.

In the following section I discuss how my own positionality as a Greek scholar-activist and immigrant in Canada, and as a member of the communities I work with in the context of this research, has shaped and has been shaped by my choices of frameworks, research objectives and the pursuit of feminist praxis, within academia and beyond.

3.2.3 Reflexivity, collaboration and decolonial feminist praxis in the field

Feminist scholars work towards research relationships that are egalitarian, nonauthoritative and intersubjective and have thus been negotiating for decades the power dynamics of conducting fieldwork, the privileges researchers have over participants/informants, but also the politics of “difference and the (im)possibilities” (Nencel 2014, p. 77) that unequal positions create. Concepts such as positionality, situated knowledges and standpoint theory (Haraway 1988; Harding, 2001; Hartsock 1998; Hill Collins, 1990) have emerged to describe the always partial and unfinished character of “knowing”, based on the perceptions and lived experiences that come from specific social and geo-historical locations. Reflecting on such issues has been crucial to the formation of my research agendas.

My activism and engagement in feminist praxis, which is located mostly in the intersections of the anti-authoritarian, queer and antifascist solidarity milieu in Greece, and especially Athens, have always intersected with my academic work. My ethics, praxis, and research agendas have been informed by lived place-based experiences, most importantly

living most of my adult years in Athens, under austerity, witnessing the impact of police brutality, state violence, racism, misogyny, homophobia and precariousness in the city's downtown neighborhoods and my own communities.

All the above resulted in my desire to pursue doctoral research through which I could explore and highlight the taken-for-granted aspects and unheard voices of the Greek austerity crisis (that I myself had experienced and had been impacted by). My aim was to make more space in globalized academia for local knowledges, new entry points for theorization, and different academic dialogues, as an absolutely necessary and politically relevant task that keeps the debate also in the context of “our own linguistic and (multidisciplinary) intellectual community” (Vaiou 2004, p. 3). Most importantly I wanted to conduct research with the communities I belong to and with whom I share worries, desires, dreams, and hopes, to “retell the stories” of the everyday, but also the histories that make and unmake Athens amidst conflicting socio-spatial imaginaries and contested geographies. I followed Nagar's (2019) articulation of this desire as:

a shared hunger for an intense transformative engagement with social worlds that can inspire intellectual and political agitation by remaking how we locate ourselves in relation to the bodies, battles, wisdoms, and worlds among which we move, and that we represent and reimagine (p. 22).

As an “insider within” (Hill Collins, 1990), but also as an “intimate insider” (Taylor, 2014), following scholar-activist principles of feminist praxis, I prioritized a collaborative knowledge production process that addresses my accountability towards the communities and individuals that I worked with during my fieldwork. Drawing again from Nagar's (2019) collaborative praxis, I followed a critical feminist reflexivity process in order to let go of the role of “the academic-as narrator” as “the principal teller who controls the story/ies”(p. 22) and

engage in an analysis that pushes for “new forms of co-constitutive (re)theorising, (re)strategising, (re)calling, and (re)telling” (p. 21).

The dissertation aims to explore the healing possibilities of feminist participatory research to deal with the traumatizing and alienating experiences of extractive and exploitative relationships that often emerge in fieldwork in the context of transnational research, interrogating my own privileged position and the access and trust it granted me, along with the differences and tensions that emerged with participants despite our shared experiences and standpoint. As the research was designed and conducted at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and after a stressful period of losing loved ones and dealing with the bureaucracy of migration policies, many of these differences and common threads were amplified along with feelings of longing and belonging, turning the remote fieldwork into a place of care, connection and togetherness for myself and the participants (based on their own feedback).

In the following subsection, the research design process and methods used for the collection and analysis of data are presented in detail, including their relation to the research questions, as well as the challenges and opportunities that emerged within the fieldwork.

3.3 Research design

Using social reproduction and palimpsest as methodological lenses to interrogate the affective geographies of social reproduction in the urban, I show how I chose qualitative and participatory methods that aligned with feminist values and praxis. Given that the COVID-19 pandemic ‘interrupted’ my initial fieldwork plans, I also elaborate on the necessary adjustment and the ways I proceeded with the methods in a hybrid (online/offline) remote mode, reflecting on the challenges and opportunities this presented.

3.3.1 Feminist geohumanities: qualitative methods for feminist urban geography

As an aim of this research is to provide an affective account of the lived experiences of the Greek austerity crisis in Athens, the research design focused on finding the appropriate methods and processes to articulate affective, emotional and relational geographies and corporealities through the critical lenses of the everyday and social reproduction. Thus, a feminist multimodal ethnographic approach (Gupta, 2021) based on the interplay and synthesis of different types and formats of qualitative data was developed, aiming beyond mere documentation and focusing on the spatiality of affect and emotions, as well as on the conditions and processes of the construction of affects, emotions, subjectivity formation, violence, resistance, and survival in the urban.

This led me towards qualitative methods and to deploying two separate and interrelated approaches. One approach directly involved interaction with the participants through the following methods: individual interviews, including a mental mapping exercise; small group discussions utilizing GPS-tracked Photovoice; audio field recordings; and participatory observation. The other approach focused on non-participant-based methods, primarily observation and the collection of secondary data.

When the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic created challenges for conducting in-person fieldwork and travelling, the privilege of being an intimate insider (Taylor, 2014), having close on-going ties and extended embodied knowledge and experiences with the field, as well as the flexibility of digital tools, allowed for the transition into a remote hybrid fieldwork. Thus, the chosen methods for the collection of knowledge production, after their adjustment to a remote fieldwork were as follows:

(a) Hybrid/remote methods for primary data collection involved:

- Online ethnographic interviews (including a mental mapping exercise, sharing of pictures, and archival material).

- Soundwalks and field recordings online.
- Hybrid GPS-tracked PhotoVoice (online focus groups meetings).

(b) Secondary data collection and remote observation (online) involved:

- Collecting secondary data (e.g. legislative documents, research reports, media reports, personal artifacts, archived activist grey matter).
- Taking fieldnotes and keeping a field diary before and after my interviews with the participants.
- Using online communication tools to adjust to remote observation. The recruitment process and the research were mostly conducted remotely online, using emails and messaging apps (such as Viber and Zoom), while certain methods (such as GPS tracked PhotoVoice and sound field recordings) were partially conducted in person (via participants in location collecting data that was then shared with me through email and discussed in Zoom meetings).

These methods were chosen building on the long history of feminist engagement with geohumanities and critical feminist cartography (Elwood & Leszczynski, 2018), but also through my own experiences working with communities as an a sound artist using both analog and digital tools to prioritize participatory sensory and embodied processes of knowledge production. In using these methods, this dissertation creates a hybrid ‘vocabulary’, a collaborative product of local knowledges as well as of individual and collective memories that critically approaches the possibility of healing through the acts of listening and sharing during the research process, but also through amplifying the visibility and audibility of experiences that have been obscured or devalued in broader public, political and academic debates.

The decision to include non-textual formats for the production and representation of data is a choice rooted in the values of a decolonial feminist praxis as articulated in the work of Richa Nagar (2019) through the desire, responsibility and requirement

to retell stories with an acute awareness of the tones and textures, memories and feelings, logics and poetics, traumas and hauntings—of people, places, and times as well as the seemingly mundane truths of life that remain distant or insignificant in the imagination of mainstream academia (p. 22).

In the context of this project, the need to retell the stories of women’s and feminized subjects’ everyday lives under austerity, aims to disrupt dominant heteronormative, Euro-centric narratives, as well as to move beyond the dis-embodied, positivist language through which the ‘crisis’ and its impact have been discussed and theorized.

The chosen methods are themselves vital to the political character of the research and to the access and usefulness of the knowledge produced for and by the communities involved. Thus, accessibility, familiarity, and usefulness were some of the main criteria in the choice and adjustment of methods and tools used in relation to the participants and their communities, enabling engagement in creative skill-sharing and collaborative processes of knowledge production. Indeed, many of the participants pursued using the various methods in their own community and grassroots-based projects, to record local histories and struggles, to convey visualized demands to the public and officials as well as to create content for online DIY archives.

In the following section the choice of the research area and participants is discussed along with the timeline of the fieldwork.

3.3.2 Choice of participants and of research area

For the purposes of this research participants were chosen who lived or worked in the neighborhoods in the downtown Athenian core (including Omonoia, Eksarchia, Kypseli, Sepolia, Agios Panteleimonas, Ano Patisia, Kato Patisia, and Gkyzi) (see Map 3.1). The

neighborhoods belong to different units of administration called Municipal Districts within the city of Athens with Omonoia and Eksarchia belonging to the 1st Municipal District, Sepolia and Agios Panteleimonas to the 4th , Ano Patisia and Kato Patisia to the 5th a Kypseli to the 6th , and Gkyzi to the 7th.

Although these neighborhoods vary in the degree to which they have been targeted for and incorporated into urban development agendas that envision Athens as an international competitive urban tourist destination, they all have rich histories of political organizing and solidarity building, refugee and immigrant settlement and cultural production. These neighborhoods, due to their centrality, concentration of diverse ethnic communities (see Table 3.1), and old building stock, have been a welcoming and affordable place for the settlement of various marginalized groups, including refugees, both Greek and foreign newcomers and low-income classes.

Population of residents holding foreign citizenship in Athens 2021/2011
344.851 (-15,0%)

10 most predominant countries of origin	2021		2011	
		%		%
Albania	140.146	40,6	193.521	47,7
Pakistan	21.323	6,2	23.340	5,8
Romania	14.105	4,1	19.627	4,8
Georgia	13.819	4,0	12.205	3,0
Bangladesh	11.284	3,3	8.662	2,1
Bulgaria	11.128	3,2	18.640	4,6
Egypt	10.015	2,9	7.799	1,9
Ukraine	9.869	2,9	10.424	2,6
Philippines	9.618	2,8	8.697	2,1
Cyprus	7.402	2,1	7.852	1,9
Other countries	96.142	27,9	95.064	23,4

Table 3.1: Population of residents holding foreign citizenship in Athens, 2021/2011 (ELSTAT, 2022).

Being subjected to the pressures of the real estate market fueled by urban regeneration agendas and speculation, and experiencing the deepening of social inequalities and injustices caused by austerity and migration policies, the residents of the downtown neighborhoods have been organizing at various scales, within collectives, and political organizations, neighborhood meetings and solidarity initiatives in order to produce more livable urban lives and to fight displacement. My personal ties to the area, as I was myself a resident of these downtown neighborhoods (2012-2023) (in the Gkyzi neighborhood), and my long involvement with grassroots communities, already provided the knowledge of how and where I could start to recruit participants living and organizing in these neighborhoods.

3.3.3 Method of recruitment

The recruitment and participant selection processes were guided by the intention of representing the diversity of the population in these areas as well as the solidarity of the communities within them. Through personal networks and by using the snowball method I recruited 24 women and queer individuals who have been living, organizing and spending a significant part of their everyday life in the downtown core, often combining work, leisure, and political activity, and who had been actively organizing in various degrees in the solidarity, feminist-queer, far-left and anarchist political milieux in Athens, pursuing anti-authoritarian, anti-racist, anti-patriarchal and anti-capitalist causes.

3.3.4 Description of participants

In Table 3.2 the participants' demographic descriptors are presented including their age, occupation, the area they are based in, the years they have been in the area as well as their degree of activist engagement. Pseudonyms have been used in order to ensure anonymity and privacy.

	Participant	Age	Occupation	Area/ base	Years in the area	Degree of activist engagement*
1	Maria	26	Substitute teacher	Exarcheia	6	Consistent, organized
2	Anna	36	Substitute teacher	Exarcheia	10	Non-consistent, peripheral
3	Fei	30	Urban planner	Gkyzi/ Exarcheia	30	Non-consistent, peripheral
4	Katerina	32	Hospitality employee	Exarcheia	14	Non-consistent, peripheral
5	Aliki	47	Unemployed	Omonoia	29	Non-consistent, unorganized
6	Tzenni	33	Substitute teacher	Kato Patisia	33	Consistent, organized
7	Spiridoula	36	Retail/sales	Kypseli	7	Consistent, organized
8	Nafsika	43	Teacher	Sepolia	43	Consistent, organized
9	Xristina	33	Designer	Kypseli	15	Consistent, peripheral
10	Giorgia	62	Unemployed	Kypseli	62	Consistent, organized
11	Eleftheria	36	Substitute teacher	Patisia	15	Consistent, organized
12	Eleni	36	Factory worker	Patisia	10	Consistent, organized
13	Toula	38	Teacher	Patisia	16	Consistent, organized
14	Aggeliki	29	Writer/ tutor	Petalona	10	Occasional, peripheral
15	Gazia	28	Writer/ tutor	Patisia	8	Occasional, peripheral

16	Areti	36	Fitness instr.	Patisia	6	Occasional, unorganized
17	Vasia	39	Actress	Panormou	12	Occasional, peripheral
18	Margarita	34	Actress	Pangrati	34	Occasional, peripheral
19	Filio	36	Curator/historian	Pangrati	36	Occasional, unorganized
20	Sasa	56	Therapist/ teacher	Liosia	38	Consistent, organized
21	Varvara	34	Architect	Iraklio	34	Consistent, organized
22	Eirini	33	Factory worker	Peristeri	24	Consistent, organized
23	Kaiti	37	Therapist	Piraeus	37	Consistent, unorganized
24	Natassa	25	Unemployed	Omonoia	5	Occasional, peripheral

Table 3.2: Demographic characteristics, ties to the area and degree of activist engagement (Katsikana, 2024)

*Key: The difference between non-consistent and occasional types of participants is that the latter refers to individuals who participate in certain open calls for mobilization and participation without participating consistently in specific collectives or organizations, while the former refers to individuals who engage in organizing in both a consistent and in an inconsistent way, while also being members of collectives or organizations, depending on their workload, emotional and physical capacity and other responsibilities. The difference between types of peripheral and unorganized participants is that the former refers to individuals who live in close proximity to solidarity spaces and are part of solidarity networks but do not take on any organizing roles, while the latter refers to individuals who participate in open calls in their neighborhoods and within city, but are not attached to any specific organization or collective.

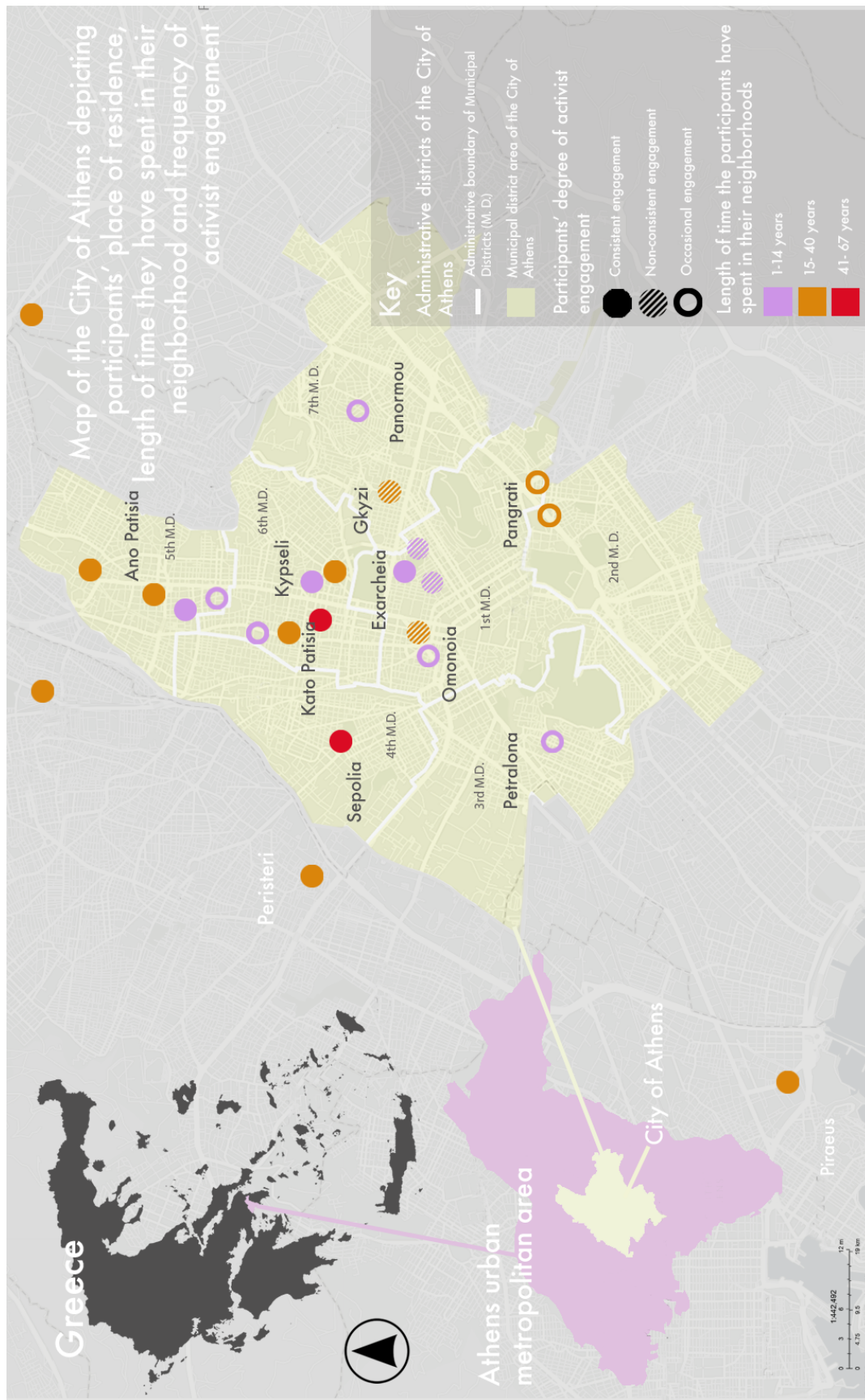
The spatial distribution of the participants is presented in Map 3.1, which depicts the neighborhoods in which the participants are based, along with the administrative borders of the Municipal Districts that make up the City of Athens, within the broader Athens urban metropolitan area. At the time of the research four of the participants were living in neighborhoods outside the downtown core (as seen in Map 3.1) due to financial difficulties that forced them to relocate or ‘move back in’ with their parents, maintaining though their everyday activities, jobs, political organizing and networks of friendships within the downtown core. The map also indicates the age group of the participants and the length of time they have lived in their neighborhood.

The participants range in age from 25 to 66 years old, identify as women or queer individuals, are of low-to middle income, from different educational backgrounds, in a range of professions, in various living arrangements (with friends, partners or family members), with different degrees and types of involvement in grassroots organizing and length of ties with their neighborhood. Most of the participants live in the downtown core (n=18), most of whom were living in the downtown core neighborhoods they were born and raised in (n=10), while some had relocated recently to more peripheral areas, usually based on family members already residing there (n=6). Nevertheless, all participants, have been consistently frequenting and spending a significant amount of time every day in the downtown core neighborhoods often crossing at least two of them during the same day for socializing, leisure, work, political activism, education, and access to public services.

While the participants are in different professions, many are employed in education and childcare, social services, and mental health services, as well as art-related professions. All these professions in Greece are dominated by women, who rely heavily on state employment (for example, public schools or harm reduction programs) and are thus dealing with severe

precaritization and major austerity cutbacks. The embeddedness of these professions within social reproduction practices and institutions, characterized by infrastructural deterioration and budget cuts, intensified the offloading of labor and responsibility to individual workers, including the teaching of and caring for refugee children (and often for their families) most of whom reside in the downtown core as well.

The participants' involvement in activist initiatives and political organizing was categorized based on their degree of engagement in terms of consistency (consistent, non-consistent, occasional) and but also, based on the type of commitment and membership (organized, peripheral, unorganized) in initiatives and collectives. The various degrees of engagement related to the participants' everyday lives and their mobilities in the city, as well as the challenges that arise from their workload and socially reproductive labor practices.



Map 3.2: Map of the City of Athens depicting participants' place of residence, length of time they have spent in their neighborhood and frequency of activist engagement (Katsikana, 2024).

3.3.5 Fieldwork timeline

I conducted the fieldwork from June 2021 to April 2022, through a remote hybrid mode, whereby the participants engaged with each method in person in their location, and then shared the data with me online, or they engaged solely online. The restrictions of COVID-19 challenged the degree to which participants had the capacity to engage with the methods. The main issue revolved around access to technology, especially a reliable connection to the Internet, privacy (especially in the context of isolation and living conditions), as well as available time and energy. Such limitations are not considered coincidental or trivial but are seen as expressions of various degrees of privilege across the intersections of gender, race, class, ability, and citizenship status and relate to the ways participants navigate and built their life and networks in the city, under precarious conditions.

After recruiting the participants and explaining the research project through emails, chats or an informal zoom video call, dates were set for each method to be conducted. The consent forms were then sent to the participants, which were signed and sent back to me (through email) before conducting the methods. As COVID-19 travel restrictions were eventually lifted, I was able to travel to Greece and meet with the participants in a non-research context, a crucial point in my engagement with my communities, discussing ways the methods and skills could be shared in grassroots and artistic projects, as well as in their own work.

The confidentiality of participants was secured through the use of alphanumeric coding for their names and all information that could lead to the identification of participants was excluded. All data were encrypted, stored in a secure server, in password-protected storing devices and folders, and will be deleted ten years after the completion of the research. Below, I outline the challenges and opportunities that emerged through the transition to remote fieldwork.

3.3.6 Remote fieldwork during the COVID-19 pandemic: challenges and opportunities

In the context of academic life and research, the isolation of scholars, students, and educators from in-person academic communities and their physical spaces on campuses, intertwined with issues of international migration, visas and the closing of borders, as well as the intensification of workload while teaching ‘remotely’, created many challenges for scholars at various career stages. At the same time, it created a shift in the ways feminist academics engaging with the ‘field’ conducted and experienced their research, either removing or limiting the aspect of groundedness in fieldwork as well as in-person contact with research participants and the place-based affective and emotional experiences of research locations.

More particularly, feminist research during the pandemic required adjustment, flexibility, re-evaluation and reflection on ethics, care, safety, collaboration, and privilege. In this research project, adapting to pandemic-adjusted fieldwork meant developing new and resourceful ways to conduct qualitative research ethically; to develop, nurture and maintain new or already existing relationships with research participants; but also, to deal with isolation and pandemic-related anxiety, while ensuring ‘safety’ and care within fieldwork beyond the COVID-19 restrictions. At same time, the digitality of methods and their requirement of online connectivity, posed questions of access to such technologies, but also issues of infrastructure on a local and national level, raising issues of inclusivity, agency and infrastructural justice.

As in many other places around the world, in Athens the governance of the pandemic revealed already existing issues of lack of access to health care, including mental health support, inadequate housing conditions, lack of access to technology and connectivity, intensification of surveillance, displacement and police brutality as well as further precaritization of women, marginalized groups and feminized subjects many of whom worked as frontline workers

(Apostolopoulou & Liodaki, 2021; Perkins, 2022; Sikaras et al., 2021; Vaiou, 2023). All the above elements were not only a part of the participants lives but also impacted the ability of certain initially recruited participants (in terms of technological access, privacy, time, and energy) to participate in the research, revealing a relative privilege of those who were able to participate, even in their own precariousness.

This resulted in a reduced availability of participants in precarious living conditions (such as refugees), whose time and energy were limited due to the heavy workloads and emotional exhaustion (especially of front-line workers), and those whose extended family commitments did not allow them to also commit to scheduled meetings, especially for individuals who were caregivers. Such limitations resulted in a research sample that is characterized by the participants ability to access technology and a stable internet connection, their ability to navigate that technology, the space and privacy to participate in the research methods, as well as the time energy and emotional capacity to conduct the tasks that these methods required.

During the times I was not able to travel to Greece and conduct my fieldwork for public health safety reasons, my familiarity with and active ties to the field and the communities I worked with, greatly facilitated the transition into hybrid (online/offline) remote fieldwork, that besides the obvious use of technology, relied on memory, affective perceptions of place and activist archival material (such as grey matter found in forums, websites and social media accounts), as well as critical reflection on the tools and the technological infrastructure the research relied on.

At the same time, my own positionality as a scholar-activist and as a member of the communities I worked with, and my physical isolation from them and from the experience of the fieldwork as a milestone in the process of doctoral dissertation, created significant anxiety and a feeling of ‘numbness’. This feeling was intensified when during the interviews some of the participants who had significant experience and capital in the community initially adopted a

condescending tone towards me due to my position in academia and my physical absence from organizing and protesting since I moved to Canada.

At the same time, my interactions with some of the participants that I have known since my early 20s had a healing impact and created a valuable sense of community, especially during the overall isolation and anxiety of the pandemic. At the same time, for many of the individuals I collaborated with, their participation in the research was seen as a creative break from the routine of isolation but also as a way to express their ideas, experiences, and thoughts on the everyday struggles under austerity. During this process a feminist ethics of care was adjusted to fit the remoteness of the fieldwork, expanding to problematizing the role and histories of the technology and the tools that enable this type of research (a critique that has been engaged in by feminist and critical scholars in the geohumanities and critical cartography, technoscience histories and the digital humanities (Losh and Wernimont, 2018).

Reflecting on the challenges and possibilities of this remote fieldwork, this project contributes to the dialogue around the various ways in and tools of transnational feminist politics can be developed across different locations and contexts, and across various differently lived everyday routines, while transmitting ideas, feelings, atmospheres and lived histories tied to place. It also led me to contemplate on how a feminist ethics of care can be implemented using technology and mediated to counter the violence of remoteness, creating a sense of feminist resourcefulness, and how this contributes to the creation of emancipatory imaginaries.

In the following section the methods and process of data analysis are discussed.

3.4 Methods

This section describes the process that was followed for each method of primary data collection in the context of remote hybrid fieldwork. It also describes the process, tools and software used for

the analysis of the data and production of audio-visual and text-based representations. Additionally, the relation of the methods to the research questions is showcased.

3.4.1 Primary data collection

For the purposes of this research, in order to capture the affective and embodied qualities of socially reproductive practices in the urban in collaborative ways and through feminist decolonial lenses, as well as to be able to conduct the fieldwork remotely, I relied on qualitative methods that used digital tools in hybrid (online/offline) ways. Drawing on feminist literature on collaboration and feminist praxis (Nagar, 2013) as well as feminist interventions in geohumanities and critical feminist cartography (Elwood and Leszczynski, 2018; Kwan, 2002; Pavlovskaya & Martin, 2007), I developed a feminist multimodal approach that combined text, image, sound and mapping, in order to produce a different “vocabulary” for the austerity crisis, based on “small data” (Giesecking, 2018) of everyday lived experiences, with a “decolonial sensibility” (Fraser and Todd, 2016). The methods I used were adjusted to the remote mode of conducting fieldwork including online ethnographic interviews, soundwalks and audio field recordings, GPS-tracked Photovoice, and fieldnotes.

In the context of the research I analyzed the following types of secondary sources: legislative documents and reports and urban planning proposals (provided by the state and the City of Athens, available publicly online); blogs and forums that document and support grassroots organizing; and personal artifacts provided by the participants, such as photographs from their own collections. Analyzing such sources provided additional context to the narrations of the participants as well as to the events they referenced.

For each method, an introductory discussion relating to the methods was conducted in the phase of recruitment (usually through email or instant messaging on social media or messaging

apps). When dates for the conducting of the methods were set, the consent form was explained to the participants, and they were asked to provide the signed form (through email) before the start of the methods. Interviews were conducted fully online through Zoom meetings and the rest of the methods were conducted in hybrid mode, partly in-person by the participants, and partly online through a Zoom meeting. Considering that the topics discussed could cause distress to the participants, a volunteer mental health counselor was available during the duration of the fieldwork in case participants felt the need for support.³⁴

The methods of primary data collection were as follows:

(a) Online interviews (20 participants, approximately 2 hours each)

I conducted 20 semi-structured online interviews (Clandinin & Connelly, 2006; Linabary & Hamel, 2017), using open-ended questions as focus points, encouraging participants to talk about their everyday life in the context of the austerity, post-2007. The interviews were conducted in 2–3-hour meetings through Zoom or Viber and were recorded with the participant’s consent. The questions (see Appendix A) focused on the participant’s own perception, definition, and timeline of the ‘crisis’ as well as their various experiences within solidarity communities and grassroots organizing, on how austerity and its socio-spatial outcomes have affected their lives and communities as well as how the austerity has impacted the city and their neighborhoods and particularly, on how they navigate and resist austerity’s impact.

Participants were encouraged to discuss their own meaning of care and to describe the places, times and routines that related to their individual and collective practices, solidarity and organizing. They were also asked to expand on the emotions and moods that emerge within these

³⁴This is a person who has been already volunteering as a counselor in solidarity initiatives and has professional experience working with vulnerable communities also in the context of public education.

practices as well as their emotional perception of the surrounding environment. They also talked about the places that were significant to their everyday life and about the public collective events that have been crucial to their own histories in the city, post-2005. Participants were also asked to expand on their own histories of settling in the city as well as their history of engagement with local neighborhood and broader solidarity organizing. They were encouraged to discuss their interactions with the state, the municipality, and the police, and to expand on how those interactions were impacting their perception and navigation of urban space. Finally, they were asked about their future vision of their communities and social justice in the city, and what that future vision of the city would look and feel like to them.

Each interview also included a mental mapping exercise, drawing on the concept of mental mapping as a feminist visual methodology (Jung, 2014). The participants were asked to depict ‘their own’ Athens, under their own interpretation and choice of tools. Some individuals drew on paper with colored marker during the interview and later provided comments on their map (which was sent to me online) and others chose to ‘guide me’ to their ‘own’ Athens through Google Maps during the online interview, providing commentary. These maps provided particular kinds of spatial knowledge and geographical imaginations about their everyday life in the city and the spatial imprint of their socially reproductive practices, as well as place making in the context of their communities. Fortunately, most of the challenges that emerged in conducting this method were of a practical nature, including the difficulty of finding privacy to complete the task and to commit to a scheduled meeting, leading to re-scheduling (numerous times).

(b) Soundwalks-Audio field recordings (4 participants, approximately 1 hour each)

Soundwalks and audio field recordings (Rice et al., 2018) were conducted by four participants, some of which included a one-time soundwalk recording with others consisting of

shorter audio recordings, lasting approximately up to an hour each, made using smartphones and through the use of a handheld recorder (which was sent to Greece for the participants to use). Once the mp3 files were completed they were sent via email in the form of a password-protected Zip file along with the written commentary.

Through a short online meeting, participants were asked to indicate places, routes, and paths in the city that were important to their everyday practices of social reproduction and organizing and record a soundwalk through them while providing commentary in the recording, on the significance of those places and routes and how they were embedded in their everyday life. Such routes involved walking around different parts of their neighborhood or the city while trying to complete everyday tasks such as grocery shopping, caring for others (family members, friends, community members) as well as their solidarity activity.

As predicted during the research design phase, this was challenging for some of the participants, who were given the option to provide shorter recordings and written commentaries. The recordings offered a representation of the participants' everyday practices through different tasks and practices, such as domestic work performed in the context of the household as well as the surrounding noises that emerge in the background of the Athenian apartment, a unique characteristic of life in the densely built and populated central neighborhoods of Athens, where sounds of the street but also from the surrounding apartments inform a particular auditory and affective experience.

(c) GPS-tracked Photovoice (2 focus groups of 4 participants each, 2 hours per group)

A combination of the method of Photovoice (Liebenberg, 2018; Wang 1999) alongside GPS-Tracking was employed and run through two separate groups of four participants each. Photovoice is a participatory tool for a community-based approach to documentary photography, including

critical reflection and dialogue that enables communities and groups to be in charge of their representation of the issues that are important to them in their narration of their history and experiences. This method allows participants to put their own meanings on the photographs they have created, without forcing them into pre-existing theoretical frameworks (Wang, 1999).

There were two groups of four participants, based on their proximity to a place-based community and its collective practices of grassroots politics and social justice. Group 1 was based on an informal group linked to a political collective of primary school teachers teaching and living in the schools of the downtown municipal districts. Group 2 was based on women living around the area of Exarcheia and participating in local solidarity, anti-racist, feminist and neighborhood initiatives.

The participants in both groups were asked, through email group discussions, to take pictures of their community life and the locations in which this takes place, as well as of collective experiences in the neighborhood and the city (up to 30 pictures per participant). When this was not possible, participants provided pictures from their own personal archives (given that the research addresses a longer period, post-2007) (n=4, from both groups). Participants were asked to keep a GPS location record for each picture on their smartphone or to provide a location for archival photos. Prior to taking the pictures, participants were asked to sign consent forms for the use of visual images and send them to me via email.

In a group meeting that was conducted approximately three months after the initial email were instructions were provided, each group discussed their relation to specific places in the city, their relations to each other in the context of community, solidarity, and organizing, as well as collective routines, significant events, experiences, and places in the city that were important in their work and their community. Participants expanded on their everyday life and on interpersonal

connections, feelings, and their sense of belonging. Along with the discussion, the participants viewed the collected photographs (in digital form) and selected those that best represented their experiences, and then gave commentary on them including in relation to how the location relates to their idea of place in the city. The photographs and their commentary were then synthesized and mapped using the software ArcGIS, Adobe Photoshop, and ArcGIS Story Maps.

The online meetings (through Zoom) were recorded and transcribed. Some of the challenges faced with this method were the difficulty of coordinating meeting up as a group as well as participants not always activating the location function for their photos, resulting in my providing the location (since I was very familiar with the area) and then confirming this with the participants. The method's final product provided a series of geo-located photographic representations along with recorded commentary in the voice of the participants.

(d) Fieldnotes

Throughout the duration of the fieldwork, I took notes in the form of a field diary, especially before or after conducting the methods, reflecting on the dynamics with the participants, as well as the affective and embodied impact of the interactions with the participants, and the overall experience of remoteness in the context of feminist praxis and transnational feminism. Since my fieldwork was remote and my interaction with the field was mediated mostly through the internet my initial plans to take fieldnotes based on participatory observation in communities and their neighborhoods, were interrupted. Being very familiar with the research areas and the communities the participants were involved in, I immersed myself into audio-visual material from my preliminary fieldwork before the pandemic (mostly voice memos recorded on my smartphone, photographs of public spaces, videos and sound recordings).

Additionally, I spent a significant amount of time studying online archived material (such as photographs, videos, public social media posts, digital zines, blog posts, radio shows, and news coverage) related to Athens and the particular neighborhoods I focused on, as well as to various events of collective significance for the grassroots communities. Thus, instead of a photo-diary of my time in the field, I engaged in the documentation of the remote fieldwork process in affective, embodied and creative ways resulting in text-based diary entries, voice memos, screen recordings of my own PC, photography, and the archiving of material found online. Through this process I also negotiated and described my own South European queer feminist positionality and the complicated experience of migration and in-betweenness of conducting research on my own communities, while studying and working in a Canadian university, exercising reflexivity and accountability towards the communities and the participants.

3.4.2 Data analysis and (re)presentation

Through the theoretical framework presented in the previous chapter, affect, emotions, embodied experiences, relations and ideas of place emerge as crucial to the study of the affective geographies of social reproduction in the urban. Thus, the methods presented earlier were chosen in an effort to generate data that will move beyond text-based representations and analyses. Instead, through the synthesis and analysis of text, image, sound, and cartographic information, this dissertation engaged in a geospatial practice that could “emphasize the importance of the corporeal, affective, and unwritable dimensions of existence” (Kwan, 2007, p. 23), and that could be “attentive to the effects of emotions, which mediate the social and political processes through which our subjectivities are reproduced” (p. 23).

Here, I relied on what Knigge and Cope (2006) proposed as a grounded visualization as a methodological process for building theories, through qualitative data grounded in everyday experiences, practices and actions often involving multiple stages of collecting data, coding and

analyzing them. In the case of this dissertation, the data emerged through the everyday experiences, embodiments, feelings and affects that emerged within social reproduction routines, process of place making, and urban encounters.

After the collection of the data, I started the transcription and translation process, which I performed through the use of the software NVIVO Transcription. This software provided a ‘rough’ transcription in Greek, and each interview was then translated into English by me, with each translation taking approximately 3 hours. Then, I started developing the themes and criteria based on which I was going to code and analyze the data. Here, I followed Knigge and Cope’s definition of coding as “a way of evaluating and organizing data in an effort to understand meanings in the text (or images) and helps the researcher to identify categories and patterns” but also “a process of both data reduction (for example, making hundreds of pages of notes easier to grasp) and data analysis (that is, by evaluating data, looking for internal consistencies or inconsistencies, and identifying patterns, the researcher is analyzing her or his findings)” (Knigge & Cope 2006, p. 2025). It was in the time spent in the processes of organizing the data, including pictures, field recordings and mental maps, as well as prior to that, in the time translating and transcribing the data, that themes started to emerge. This guided my data coding process, which was based on the following criteria/themes:³⁵

- a) A close relation between the data and the theoretical framework concepts and the research questions, meaning that some codes were immediately known to me, including, for example: “social reproduction”, “affect/emotions”, “collective practices”, “resistance”, “the self”, “the urban”, “the neighborhood”, “public space”, “home”.
- b) Specific locations and dates, linked to events that were referenced in the data.

³⁵ Dedoose and Nvivo are very similar software for the analysis of qualitative data, but Dedoose is a much more affordable option, and that is why it was preferred.

- c) References to emotions, feelings, sensations (vision, smell, touch) as well as, any description of an emotional state (for example, periods of anxiety).
- d) Historical and cultural references as well as events of collective significance in the city.

These criteria often overlapped, helping to solidify how concepts developed, helping to synthesize my arguments or confirm my analytical understanding of the data. For example, choosing to see all excerpts that corresponded to the first research question, regarding how social reproductive labor is contributing to anti-capitalist place making in the city, revealed the dominance of two specific spatialities, the neighborhood and the city.

Although the ability of the qualitative analysis software is to provide emerging themes and patterns that can be used in the analysis, my extensive knowledge of the field and the context, as well as my familiarity with the data, that I had transcribed and translated, already provided me with insights I needed to perform the analysis. The time spent transcribing, translating, and organizing the data, including pictures, field recordings and mental maps, led to already having a sense of emerging themes. In this context, I ultimately used the software for the organization, coding and navigation of my data, in a relatively fast and easy way, something that was possible because of the small number of the participants and the relatively small scale of the research.

I used the codes to also organize the data from the interviews but also the photographs field recordings, cartographic information and mental maps according to my research questions. Navigating and studying all the data through the software Dedoose, along with the study of the literature, enabled me to structure my theoretical arguments and write each empirical chapter, incorporating the images, sounds and maps through the following forms of presentation:

- (a) *Stand-alone photographs and photography-collages (including scans of the mental mapping exercise) with commentary.*

Through this form of visual representation, photographs taken by the participants, as well as photographs from their personal archives and my own archive are embedded within the text, along with captions and commentary that contextualizes them within the main text. In this form of representation are also included the scans of the metal mapping exercises that the participants conducted and commented on.

(b) Sound clips embedded through links

Sound clips that were recorded by the participants are hosted on private Youtube links and then embedded within the ArcGIS StoryMap page dedicated to Chapter 5, as well as in the main text of the dissertation.

(c) Maps, made using a combination of software ArcGIS and Adobe Photoshop

Two maps were constructed based on the cartographic information that emerged through the data collection. One showcases the location of the neighborhoods within the City of Athens (see Map 1.1). and the other showcasing the location of the participants at the time of the fieldwork within the City of Athens, along with their degree of activist engagement and the length of time they have lived in their neighborhoods (see Map 3.1).

(d) Interactive maps using the cloud-based software ArcGIS StoryMaps

Interactive maps were made using the cloud-based software ArcGIS StoryMaps, combining cartographic material, text-based commentary, embedded sound clips and photography. These are embedded in the text of the dissertation through ‘screenshots’ and links. The interactive maps were organized in two separate ArcGIS StoryMap pages, one for Chapter 4 and one for Chapter 5:

- The ArcGIS StoryMaps page for Chapter Four contains two maps, one depicting the political geographies of Athens during the period 2005-

2008 (see ArcGIS StoryMap 4.1), and one depicting grassroots infrastructure, solidarity spaces and neighbourhood assemblies in downtown Athens, post 2008 (see ArcGIS StoryMap 4.2).

- The ArcGIS StoryMaps page for Chapter Five contains three maps that depict: the affective spatialities of everyday life and social reproduction in downtown (see ArcGIS StoryMap 5.1); five participants' significant places and routes that they follow in their everyday life and socially reproductive routines in the centre of the city (see ArcGIS StoryMap 5.2); and sound-walks and field recordings of everyday moments in downtown Athens of four participants (see ArcGIS StoryMap 5.3).

In order to ensure the anonymity of the participants, along with the use of different names I ensured that no exact locations were included in the process of mapping, providing instead a more general location (for example the neighborhood) in cases where participants discussed their place of residence or their job. In this context, the maps only include the exact locations of public spaces and known community spaces that are referenced by the participants in the interviews. The ArcGIS StoryMap pages are both 'private' and password-protected.

In the case of sound clips from the field recordings and the soundwalks, besides the information provided in the informed consent form, I confirmed with the participants who directly talked in their recordings that they are comfortable with their voice being heard and used in the dissertation. The sound clips are hosted in private YouTube links that were embedded in the private ArcGIS StoryMap pages as well as within the main text of the dissertation. In the case of GPS-tracked PhotoVoice, the voice clips of the participants were transformed into transcriptions, and these were incorporated into the dissertation and the ArcGIS StoryMaps, enabling anonymity.

In the remainder of the section, I address the process of analysis, synthesis, and representation of the qualitative data through the composition of soundscapes and through feminist

creative mapping, drawing on the methodology of grounded theory. These interconnected processes have a double function. Firstly, they allow for the synthesis of the data in relation to their aural and spatial dimensions, contributing to the analysis and the formation of arguments in relation to the research questions. Secondly, these representations of the data and their analysis were both integrated into the empirical chapters and were vital to the formation of the arguments presented. I consider both those functions as part of storytelling about embodied practices in space and the lived experiences they are affected by. In the remainder of the section, I outline the processes of analysis, synthesis, and (re)presentation, soundscape composition and creative mapping.

3.4.2.1 Soundscape composition and analyzing field recordings and soundwalks

The sonic data that were collected in this research were produced through what Ouzounian, (2006) calls “situated listening”, a process through which the subject listens through the body “in relation to other bodies within social, physical, and psychic networks; revealing, in the process, how space, place, sound, and embodiment can be understood to produce and constitute one another.” (p. 73). The sonic data, and its linked commentary can evoke meanings around place, identities, community, the past, and the city (Iscen, 2014).

The audio field recordings were processed with the sound editing software Ableton Live and Adobe Audition, in order to synthesize soundscapes³⁶ as a way to present the affective, sensory, and embodied perceptions of the participants’ lived experiences in the urban. The soundscapes consisted of a synthesis or sound collage of the field recordings that the participants conducted, providing a representation of the sonic affective ambiances that the participants encountered in

³⁶ I adopt methodologies and concepts of soundscapes, sonic geographies and field recordings based on Ellul-Knight (2019); MacDonald (2014); Wargo (2018) and Welch et al. (2019).

their everyday life. These soundscapes correspond to specific locations or routes and were also mapped through the commentary that the participants provided during or after the recording.

3.4.2.2 Creative mapping

Creative mapping was conducted through the synthesis of the qualitative data as well as the cartographic information that was provided during the interviews by the participants, such as references to specific locations where socially reproductive activities took place, sites and routes of protesting, and neighborhoods and locations of everyday routines. The use of ArcGIS Story Maps offered a tool that can combine cartographic information with qualitative data, that the reader can explore and interact with. This provided the opportunity to synthesize all the different types of data in order to create (re)presentations of the affective spatialities that emerged in the context of the socially reproductive labor participants performed in their everyday lives.

These interactive maps, which are embedded through links in the main text of the dissertation, provide certain “snapshots” of everyday experiences in the urban, through sound, photography, and text-based commentary. For example, soundwalks conducted by the participants, were represented in ArcGIS Story Maps, through the mapping of the route they followed, the embedding of the field recording of the soundwalk and the text-based (translated) presentation of commentary within the map. Similarly, the data collected from the method of the GPS-tracked Photovoice, were represented in ArcGIS StoryMaps through the mapping of the location of the selected pictures, the embedding of the pictures in the map, along with the commentary that the participants gave during the meeting on which they explained their choices of photos and how they represented vital places and moments of their collective everyday life in the city.

The choice these particular methods of data collection and well as the choice of feminist multimodality and creative mapping as a way to represent and synthesize the data, aligned with my desire to highlight the affective and embodied dimensions of socially reproductive labor in the

Greek context. The synthesis and combination of different types of qualitative data provided the required insights that helped me answer the research questions but also develop novel approaches to urban feminist research as well as to produce novel concepts for theorizing affective geographies of socially reproductive labor and anti-capitalist place making in the city.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented the epistemologies and methodological lenses and choices of methods that framed my approach towards knowledge production and the contributions to the field made by this dissertation. The chapter introduced new theoretical entry points for the study of feminist urban geography for Greece and South Eastern Europe, building on decolonial feminist theory, post-socialist feminisms, critical and post-colonial urban theory.

Guided by these entry points, engaging in a South-Eastern European feminist decolonial citational praxis, the chapter introduced social reproduction and the metaphor of the palimpsest as the methodological lenses for investigating processes of social reproduction, urbanization, resistance, and survival while accounting for historical difference, relationality and locatedness. The guiding principles of feminist praxis along with my own positionality as a researcher were discussed, which rely upon a feminist decolonial praxis of constant reflexivity and collaboration. The chapter went on to present the research design of the dissertation framed in the context of feminist geohumanities methods for urban geography, along with the rationale behind selecting the field sites and the participants, whose characteristics were outlined, and the timeline that the research followed.

Since the research was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, the chapter also discussed the challenges and opportunities of conducting hybrid (online/offline) fieldwork. Finally, the chapter presented in detail the methods of data collection, their hybrid fieldwork

adjustment, as well as the process of analyzing, coding, and creating (re)presentations for the qualitative data, that were adopted, drawing on grounded visualization.

Chapter 4: Social reproduction and its role within anti-capitalist placemaking, under austerity

4.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the first research question of this thesis, i.e. the ways in which the socially reproductive labor performed by women and feminized subjects, in the context of everyday and solidarity organizing, is vital to anti-capitalist placemaking, expressed through the spatialities of care and grassroots infrastructure that form against austerity urbanism. I answer the above question through three main portals: the struggles over social reproduction and belonging that took place during the austerity ‘crisis’ (2005-2010); the significance and role of social reproduction as an organizing modality within the pursuit of anti-capitalist socio-spatial imaginaries and enactments of the right to the city; and the ways in which socially reproductive labor and care form spatialities of care and grassroots infrastructure that contribute to anti-capitalist placemaking against austerity.

Challenging the narrative that dominated Greek political and public dialogue of the ‘exceptional’ character of the ‘crisis’ as a ‘rupture’ in normalcy, I provide an alternative timeline for the emergence of the political and collective struggles of the austerity ‘crisis’, focusing on the everyday lived experiences of the participants who live in downtown Athenian neighborhoods (Section 4.2). I argue that these struggles are the result of socio-spatial processes and transformations that had been already unfolding in the city over the previous decades (from the mid-1980s up to the early 2000s), evolving around the emergence of Athens as a city of various dispossessed ‘Others,’ the formation of geographies of uneven urban development as result of the neoliberalization of economic and urban planning agendas, the emergence of socially reproductive struggles through precaritization and unemployment, and the escalation of securitization agendas and state suppression leading to the December 2008 uprising.

I argue that the struggles around social reproduction and belonging in the city were crucial to the formation and clashing of the socio-spatial neoliberal imaginary ‘from above’, with one of solidarity and belonging enacted ‘from below’ (Section 4.3). In this context, I discuss how grassroots solidarity and anti-capitalist placemaking in the city, are organized around various aspects of social reproduction—the creation of networks of care and grassroots infrastructure; the defending of local communities and marginalized ‘Others’ from state and far-right violence; the reclaiming of participation against infrastructural neglect and privatization; and protesting against resisting touristification and displacement—leading to the collective endeavors of the right to the city and the socio-spatial imaginary of solidarity ‘from below’.

Following from the above, I discuss the ways these socially reproductive practices create spatialities of care that contribute to anti-capitalist placemaking in the city, enacting responses of resistance, resilience, and reworking (Katz, 2004), and the grounding of political agendas in the everyday. I argue that these practices are achieved through two main overlapping and interwoven spatialities of care in the urban: (a) the neighborhood and the place-based community, and (b) city-wide organizing and mobilizations. The socially reproductive labor of women and feminized subjects performed in these spatialities of care, entails the commoning of embodied and relational labor that is instrumental to the survival of communities and to the creation of place-based bonds, as well as to the sustaining of anti-capitalist commons and grassroots infrastructures—all contributing to anti-capitalist place making in the city.

4.2 Struggles over social reproduction and belonging in the emergence of the ‘crisis’

In the Greek context, the austerity policies implemented in 2010, have been often depicted within mainstream political debates as the primary cause of the socio-spatial, financial, and political transformations and contestations that occurred during the ‘crisis’ as an exceptional

“schism in normality” (Tsilimpounidi, 2012, p. 548). Showcasing how struggles over social reproduction, belonging and power in downtown neighborhoods, had emerged already prior to the implementation of austerity policies in 2010, this section provides a timeline of the ‘crisis’ beyond its perception as a breach in normality. This alternative timeline is crucial for moving beyond the ‘exceptionality’ of the ‘crisis’, and understanding the socio-spatial transformations, reconfigurations and contentious politics that emerged within the years of austerity, in the context of long (g)local processes of capitalist expansion, neoliberalization and mobilities (Maloutas et al., 2014). I argue that in Athens, and particularly in the everyday lives of precaritized women and feminized subjects, four interrelated socio-spatial processes of reconfiguration had been occurring in the Athenian urban (see Figure 4.1 and ArcGIS StoryMap 4.1: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/69a5a2558ecc4bf887ffea5912228ac5>). These processes evolved around: the emergence of Athens as a city of various disposed ‘Others’, who have been fighting against their exclusion from public sphere and Greek society; the formation of geographies of uneven urban development as result of the neoliberalization of economic and urban planning agendas; the emergence of socially reproductive struggles through precaritization and unemployment; and finally, the escalation of securitization agendas and state suppression leading to the December 2008 uprising. Having a tremendous impact on the everyday livelihoods of the participants, depending on their intersectional positions within Greek society, these processes manifested in their everyday livelihoods in the city, in different ways.

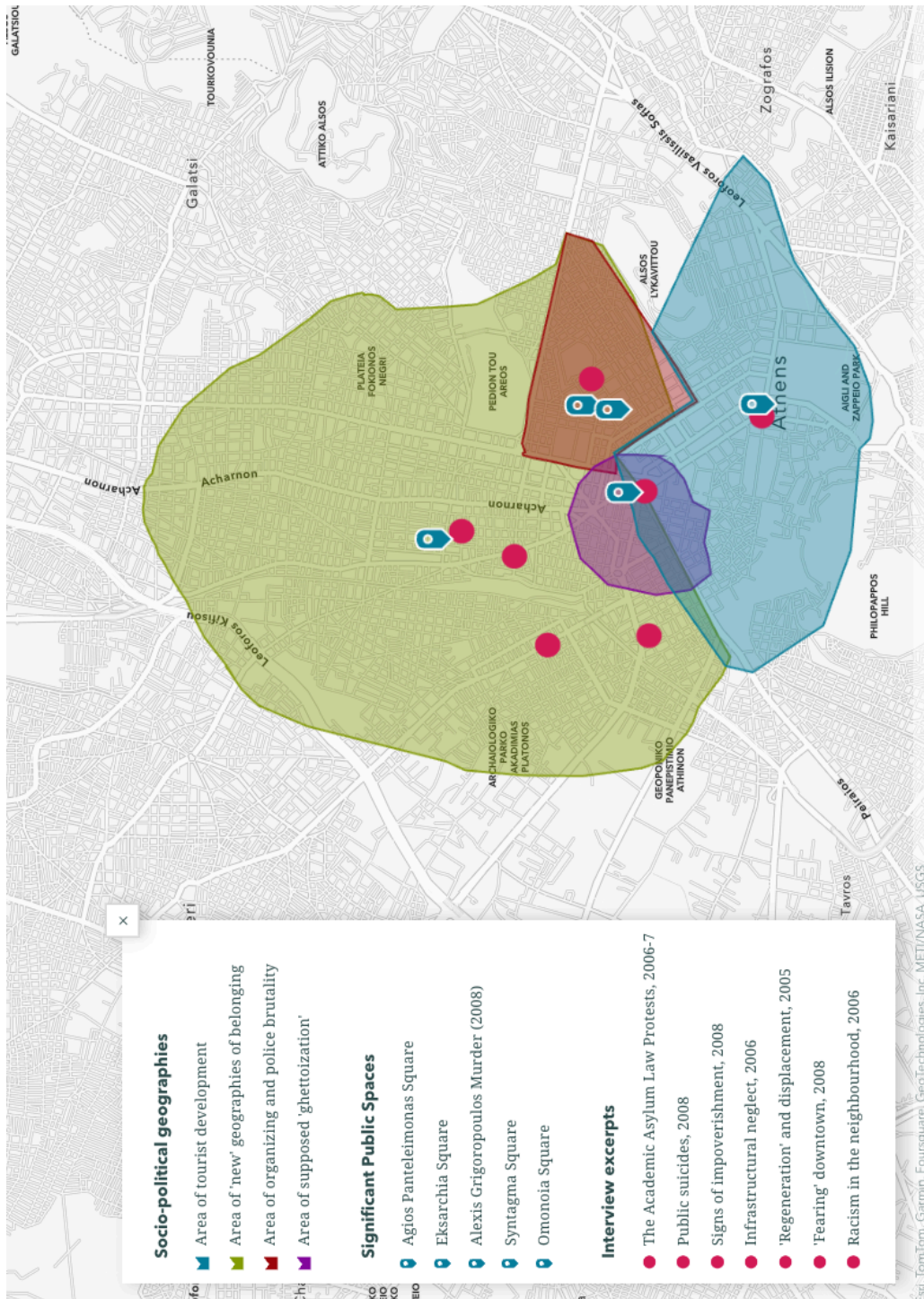


Figure 4.1: Screenshot of ArcGIS StoryMap 4.1, showcasing the socio-political geographies of Athens in the emergence of the crisis (2005-2008), along with the mapping of the interview excerpts presented in the section 4.2 (Katsikana, 2024). Access the ArcGIS StoryMap 4.1 at <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/69a5a2558ecc4bf887ffea5912228ac5>

This alternative timeline emerged in the analysis of the participants' interviews and covers a period starting from 2005³⁷ up until the signing of the first memorandum in 2010, a period that the participants perceived as what I call here the *emergence of the 'crisis'*. The 'crisis' appeared much earlier for the interviewees, "having always been poor" (Toula, online interview 2021), through a gradual deepening of already existing injustices and spatialized inequalities, impacted upon by the intersectionality of their positions, and experienced not only individually but in the context of their extended family and community.

4.2.1 Athens as a city of Others

By the 1990s, the downtown neighborhoods of Athens had been 'abandoned' by the Greek middle and upper classes for the suburbs (see Chapter One). These downtown areas, characterised by high density and an aging housing stock, offered an affordable housing solution for waves of internal migrants as well as people from the Balkans and Asian and African countries, many of whom were women (Vaiou, 2012). The concentration of ethnic communities in the downtown areas, with poor Greek families, middle-class elderly people, students, artists, and various marginalized communities, contributed to re-configurations of belonging across difference. Since the 1990s Athens and its downtown neighborhoods have been re-formed by processes of placemaking, through everyday routines of survival and encounters in a city of 'Others', that has revitalized the spaces of everyday life (Vaiou & Kalandides, 2009). At the same time, the urban poor, "fuelled" by their precaritized labor, proffered a vision of Athens as an international destination, as amidst the fever of the Olympic Games, the needs of everyday life in the

³⁷ Some of the broader processes I am refining to started occurring already from the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, such as the neoliberalization of the Greek economy and the changing of demographic composition of the downtown Athenian neighborhoods (Maloutas, 2007, Souliotis, 2013).

neighborhoods were bypassed by the city's and the state's neoliberal agendas creating "new spatialities of uneven development" (Arampatzi, 2017, p. 2157).

Since the downtown had to host large numbers of tourists during the Olympic games of 2004 as well as continuing to attract tourists after the completion of the mega event, the presence of immigrants, drug users, sex workers, and homeless people created anxieties around the supposed degradation of the urban environment and the safety of tourists (Dalakoglou, 2012a). Increasing levels of racism, for example, were already evident in neighborhood dynamics, including in schools, and towards social groups that had been 'Othered' and marginalized in Greek society, such as the Roma, and Albanian and Pakistani immigrants:

It was the people who were too vocal about the Roma. For example, they would spread rumors that in this house the Roma have a girl and rape her for days. And then a group of Greeks would go there and beat them up, send them to the hospital ... Suddenly, there was more of them, in my high-school too and the targets were mostly the Roma, Albanians too, and Pakistanis. A lot of these immigrants worked in the shops in the area for the Greeks, they cooperated, and they were part of the neighborhood (Margarita, online interview, 2021).

At the same time the rhetoric of the "ghettoization" of the city centre had started emerging in the press and political debates, depicting an atmosphere of fear, criminality and "anomie" caused by the presence of immigrants, which escalated in 2008 with protestors and rioters also being included under the umbrella of "criminals" (Koutrolidou, 2016).

Varvara remembers how this rhetoric "ghettoization" of the downtown neighborhoods created distorted perception among the inhabitants of the city:

I think it is different when you live downtown and you can see what is true and what is not, when they say whatever they want in the news. They don't say how they have abandoned these people with no help from anyone. And then when something happens it is blown out of proportion. There were colleagues, who lived in the suburbs and they hadn't been downtown for years, besides going for shopping. I would say to them 'come, let's get drinks' and they didn't want to because of the 'ghetto' (Varvara, online interview, 2021).

The rhetoric of ghettoization was thus instrumentalized politically, from the normalization of violence to the intimidation of the unruly and undesired ‘Others’ who were depicted as the source of the ‘crisis’ of the city centre’s economy (Koutrolikou, 2016).

4.2.2 ‘New’ spatialities of uneven development in Athens

Since the early 2000s, certain social groups including working-class and Roma families, immigrants and sex workers started experiencing the impact of precaritization as well as that the “regeneration” projects (that took place in the wake of the 2004 Olympic Games), leading to an increase in property values through real estate investments, the introduction of new land uses and entertainment zoning, as well as a gradual demographic shift in marginalised areas (Alexandri 2015). Areti remembers that the beginning of the ‘crisis’ for her family occurred in 2005, when her father lost his job and the family had to move out from their home in Kolonos (Κολωνός), a working-class neighborhood near the Metaksourgeio (Μεταξουργείο) area that was already undergoing the changes of ‘regeneration’ (see Figure 4.2):

My dad lost his job and we stopped being able to pay the bank for the new house we had got in Kolonos. We moved into [an area in] the boundary of Metaksourgeio, that had started changing slowly. Roma families, I remember, had started leaving and you started seeing all the cafés and bars [...] Then I started noticing, year after year, that others were being laid off. There was a lot of unemployment, things were difficult, there was a lot of debt. You’d hear everywhere about people getting in debt because of the credit cards. And some left to go to areas where rent was even cheaper (Areti, online interview, 2021).



Figure 4.2: Aerial view of Metaksourgeio and Omonoia, adapted from Google Earth (Katsikana, 2024).

In contrast to the ‘shiny image’ of a tourist-filled Athens, the interviewees living in the downtown core mentioned that post-2006, a sense of abandonment that had already started emerging in the heart of their neighborhoods, due to the lack of proper planning and design of public space but also increasing infrastructural neglect. Interviewees faced this neglect in their day-to-day routines, which were tied to their socially reproductive practices in the city, particularly for those in parenting and care-giving roles. Nafsika, who was raising her children in the neighborhood of Kato Patisia recalls:

Even in the better days, the parks were abandoned and with no one to take care of them from the municipality. Neither [was anyone looking after] the playgrounds. If you didn’t have money to go to the private playgrounds, the kids would play next to the garbage. Greeks who had money those days wouldn’t step foot in the square or the park...(Nafsika, online interview, 2021).

Thus, the infrastructural neglect by the municipality, that residents experienced in their neighborhood highlighted that access to public amenities and provision of maintenance and cleaning of public spaces, were emerging as place-based issues tied to intersectional identities and the de-prioritizing of low-income neighborhoods by the state and the municipality.

4.2.3 Socially reproductive struggles in the emergence of the ‘crisis’

These signs of impoverishment were also evident to participants in other aspects of everyday life in the downtown neighborhoods, such as education and housing. Eleftheria a schoolteacher who had been working in downtown schools during those years, recalls the ways that parents’ unemployment started to affect their students, leaving their care in the hands of underpaid struggling teachers, in highly neglected public-school buildings:

You started seeing a huge amount of unemployment among the children’s parents...too much poverty, too much poverty... There were children who didn’t have anything for their school lunch, not even a snack. Children who were growing and didn’t have money to get bigger shoes, and you would see them, they could not play and run at the break. We had to find ways to secure those kids, to provide for them (Eleftheria, online interview, 2021).

The state of unemployment, that had already ‘hit’ many families living in the downtown core, had led to the shifting of their housing conditions as well as their ability to access resources resulting in the widespread practice of “returning back home” (Chatzidakis, 2014). As Karamessini (2013) points out, while Greece, up to 2008, had one of the lowest employment rates of women in the European Union, although women have always been unpaid workers in small family-owned businesses, taking care of the socially reproductive needs of the family. Between the onset of the ‘crisis’ in 2008 and 2012, the female unemployment rate increased from 11.1 to 27.5 per cent (Karamessini, 2013, p. 17). At the same time, welfare state retrenchment, with cuts in provision of financial aid and reforms that caused lower pensions and an older retiring age, and the closing down of municipal public care children’s services, led to women of all ages becoming significantly precaritized, with many also becoming the breadwinners of the family (Karamessini, 2013). For many ‘moving back’ was the only choice, living with their close relatives, as well as the sharing of housing and financial resources with their extended family and networks of kin:

We had to explain to the kids why we would stay with the grandparents for a while and what happened to our home. And we were lucky because we are living in the neighborhood I grew up in. My parents live here too so we didn't have to move far away (Nafsika, online interview, 2021).

As expected, under these conditions the work of social reproduction continued to be by women (despite many men becoming unemployed), including those who helped raise young children in the family, as grandmothers or aunts. The decision to 'move back in' was often surrounded with desperation and anxiety by interviewees who identified as queer, since the patriarchal 'home', due to homophobia and misogyny, was a space of conflict, violence, and rejection (Manesi, 2020; Eleftheriadis, 2015) and often of different political beliefs for those coming from conservative families.

Not everyone had the resources and emotional capacity to deal with sudden unemployment, indebtedness, and downward mobility. The interviewees mentioned, for example, the increasing number of homeless individuals in the streets, evidence that poverty was spreading. Another tragic symptom of the desperation people were experiencing during this period, as eight of the interviewees noted, was the realization that the 'crisis' was not only marked by unemployment in their communities but also by the witnessing of a wave of evictions and suicides (Christodoulou et al. 2017) in central city places as well as within their own neighborhoods:

Apart from all the suicides that we saw quite often in Syntagma, in the metro, I remember that man that had set himself on fire under a tree in Syntagma, in the square. We went and left flowers etc., and then every week they would stop the subway because there was always somebody jumping on the tracks (Eleni, online interview, 2021).

The deepening of already existing social inequalities, turned the city in to a site of public suffering, were people chose to make their struggles public, often in tragic ways, creating an sense of desperation to the rest of society that had been witnessing such acts. This condition would be later normalized through the implementation of austerity and border regimes that brought many vulnerable 'Others' in the streets of Athens.

4.2.4 The escalation of securitization and state violence

The 2006 attempt of the conservative government to abolish the Academic Asylum Law³⁸, crucial for grassroots, anti-authoritarian and anarchist organizing within the buildings of the National Polytechnic School and the area of Exarcheia, led to the 2006-2007 student movement that occupied university buildings and held large marches in downtown Athens (and other cities). The student movement, in which seven of the interviewees participated, faced violent clashes with the police, foreshadowing a future of increasing suppression, surveillance and police brutality. Anna, who participated in the protest as a student remembers:

It was kind of ...like a rehearsal for December, looking back at it now. Abolishing the law would allow them to send cops in the university, and especially in Athens in all the big protests, this meant people would be arrested, especially those clashing with the police...If you were in Exarcheia during that period you could feel it, the atmosphere was very loaded and I think if it wasn't Grigoropoulos³⁹ it would have been someone else. The cops in Greece always think no one can "touch" them, no consequences for them (Anna, online interview, 2021).

State suppression, police brutality and tolerance towards extreme cases of far-right violence, along with everyday manifestations of precarity, led to an atmosphere of discontentment and insecurity. The city 'exploded' during the December 2008 uprising (Dalakoglou, 2013), triggered by the murder of the 15-year Alexis Grigoropoulos in Exarcheia (Tsavdaroglou and Makrygianni, 2013) and later the acid attack on the Bulgarian trade-unionist, Konstantina Kuneva (Kambouri & Zavos, 2010). It is important to note that the rise of the far right in the years post 2008 and the activities of the neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn (Χρυσή Αυγή) in many of the downtown areas of

³⁸ This law had forbidden the presence of the army or the police within the buildings of public universities since the fall of the dictatorship in 1974 (Vradis, 2020).

³⁹ Alexis Grigoropoulos was a 15-year-old student who was murdered by a policeman in the downtown neighborhood of Exarcheia, an epicenter of anti-authoritarian and grassroots activity, that has been highly securitized over the years (Tsavdaroglou and Makrygianni, 2013).

Athens, which primarily targeted leftists, anarchists and ethnic minorities, was a direct ‘response’ to the protests and solidarity mobilizations that developed in the downtown area after the December 2008 uprising.⁴⁰

The following section discussed how social reproduction emerged as a modality around which anti-capitalist placemaking has been organized in the city post-2008 via neoliberal and grassroots socio-political imaginaries. It discusses how the socially reproductive responses performed in the context of the everyday and solidarity organizing, enabled the survival of precaritized and marginalized ‘Others’ while opposing the neoliberal appropriation of the right to the city.

4.3. The subversive role of social reproduction within the socio-spatial urban imaginaries of the ‘crisis’

This section explores the emergence of social reproduction as a terrain of contestation between the state, urban governance and precaritized and marginalized groups, as well as a modality of “resistance, resilience and reworking” (Katz, 2004) around which anti-capitalist placemaking has been organized in the Greek neoliberal urban. Drawing on Cindy Katz’s (2004) resistance, resilience and reworking as “creative strategies that people used to stay afloat and even reformulate the conditions and possibilities of their everyday lives” (p. x), and the narrations of the interviewees, the four main aspects around which practices of collective social reproduction unfolded in the city, contributing to anti-capitalist placemaking, are outlined: (a) the creation and maintenance of networks of care and their material infrastructure in the city; (b) the defending of local communities and their grassroots spaces in the city from state repression, racist violence and

⁴⁰ This far-right resurgence in public space, mostly organized around the political party of the Golden Dawn, was part of a lineage of far-right activity in the country, that seized the momentum of the ‘crisis’, and the discontentment with the dominant parties to gain support, through populist, xenophobic and murderous tactics (Vrakopoulos & Halikiopoulou, 2019).

police brutality (c) claiming the right to participate in decision making, against infrastructural neglect and privatization; (d) and protesting the touristification of downtown neighborhoods. In doing so it further showcases how social reproduction as a modality of “resistance, resilience and reworking” (Katz, 2004) of “undesired” and marginalized ‘Others’ disrupted the exclusionary socio-spatial imaginary of Athens as a neoliberal European city as well as the neoliberal appropriation of the “right to the city” (Makryganni and Tsavdaroglou, 2015). Conflicting socio-spatial urban imaginaries, from “above” and “below”, show how the enabling of survival of ‘Others’ in the city and their enactment of the right of the city, were targeted by the state, the far-right and the police, placing social reproduction at the centre of the analysis of urban contentious politics of the ‘crisis’.

Here, a socio-spatial urban imaginary is defined as the collective imagination of life- and placemaking developed by a community (such as a grassroots community) or actors (such as the state or the municipality) that envisions a desired way to live in the urban. It entails the organization of relations of social reproduction and production, as well as the ways these are entangled in processes of placemaking and space production in the city. A socio-spatial urban imaginary is a collectively formed desire that guides placemaking through specific politics, values and types of relations and a vision of the future that are vital to the enactments and grounding of the right to the city and of acts of resistance, resilience, and reworking (Katz, 2004) in the present.

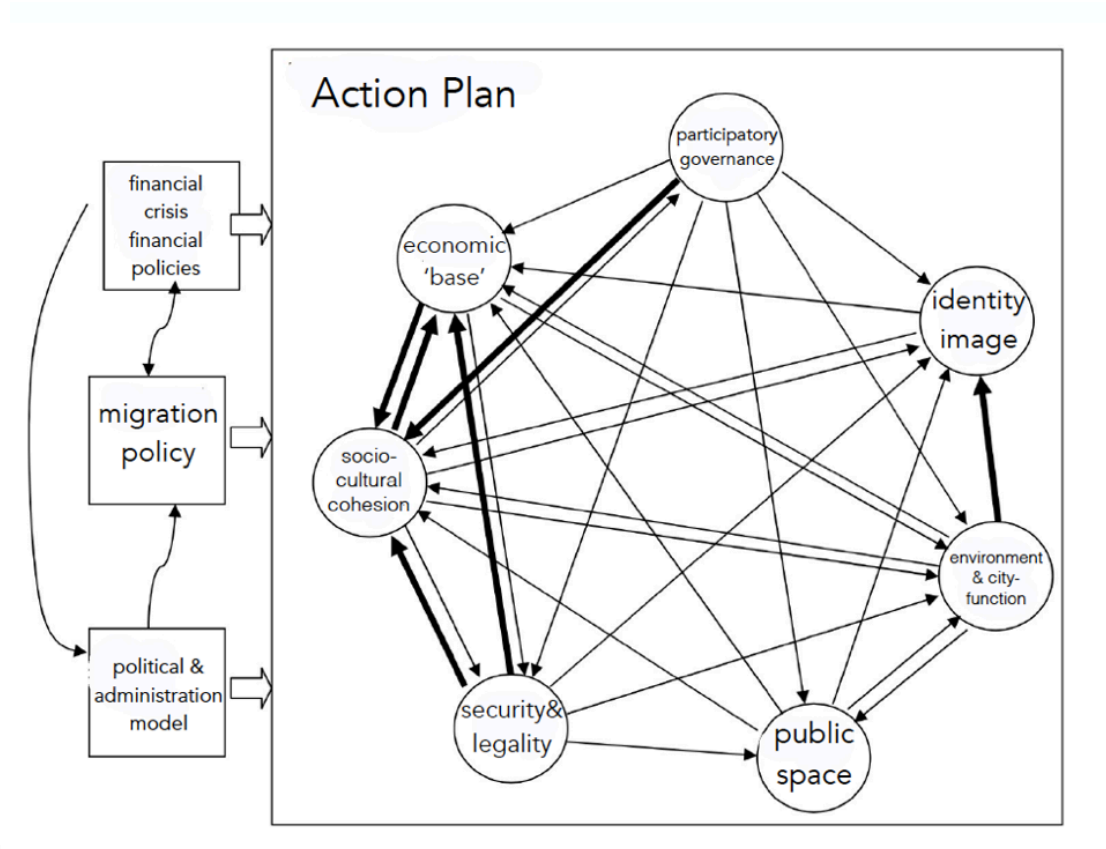
Within the post-2008 ‘crisis’, the socio-spatial urban imaginary ‘from above’ evolved around recovery from the debt and the sovereign ‘crisis’ through the development of Athens as a “European” tourist and entrepreneurial metropolis, that would be inhabited by affluent Greeks, the creative classes, tourists and investors and the exclusion of ‘threatening’ ‘Others’. On the other hand, the socio-spatial urban imaginary ‘from below’, was rooted in the emergence of Athens as a city of solidarity and revolt, where survival and belonging is achieved through commoning care, anti-capitalist placemaking and mobilizations against dispossession, neoliberalism and border

regimes. I situate the conflict between these two socio-spatial urban imaginaries within Varvarousis' (2019) analysis of the 'crisis' as triggering a decolonization of "social imaginary significations" (p. 495) that dominated mainstream collective representations of Greek society and politics especially after the country's accession into the European Union and the economic and infrastructural growth of the 2004 Olympic Games, as 'belonging to the European West'.

With the implementation of austerity policies in 2010, salary and pension cuts, the deregulation of labor, privatization, and the shrinking of public and welfare budgets (Karamessini, 2016; Kaika, 2012) led many urban poor residents to participate in grassroots and solidarity alternatives, that had been diffused to the level on the neighborhood post-2008 (Arampatzi, 2017). The visibility of such grassroots initiatives and their spaces within the 'heart' of the tourist city, disrupted tourist and commercial activity in the downtown core, leading to the further targeting of activists and vulnerable groups. The urban poor, immigrants, refugees, anarchist, protesters, the homeless, sex workers and trafficking victims, and drug users, became those from whom Greek society, the Greek family and their financial recovery had to be protected (Athanasίου, 2014).

This road to recovery envisioned Athens as a 'European' and internationally competitive city and became the focal point of central and local government (Pagonis 2019), who introduced the concept of the 'return to the city center' by the then mayor George Kaminis, who appropriated the 'right to the city' to implement exclusionary neoliberal agendas for the city. One of the main

goals of the plan was “social cohesion” (see Figure 4.3) (drawing from the EU Cohesion Fund),



which

Figure 4.3: Diagram showcasing the Action Plan on which integrated area regeneration (SOAP) proposal was based, as it was presented to the public in 2015, translated in English (Katsikana, 2023).⁴¹

was linked to the removal of marginalized groups from the city center under the umbrella of their supposed “illegality” (Koutrolikou, 2016), and their replacement by middle- and upper-class Greeks, a young creative class, tourists and foreign investors. This project of removal and replacement was attempted through the dogma of “law and order” (Kouki & Liakos, 2015, p. 52) that was supposedly developed for the safety of investors, businesses and tourists, that further marginalized ‘Others’ in the city, who were “scapegoated” (Siatitsa, 2022, p. 24) and framed as the cause of the ‘crisis’ (Markantonatou, 2015).

In this context, the four main aspects of social reproduction, around which anti-capitalist placemaking was organized in the city, can be understood as enactments of the right to the city,

⁴¹ See Odigostoupoliti (2015) for a full version of the plan (in Greek).

rooted in the development of everyday caring relations beyond profit in the urban. The remainder of this section, drawing on the participants' narrations, discusses the four main aspects of social reproduction around which anti-capitalist placemaking was organized in the city, demonstrated through Katz's 3Rs and the ways these aspects provided "the groundwork for stronger responses" (Katz 2004: 242). The creation of networks of care as well as grassroots infrastructure for the collective pursuit of socially reproductive needs are emerging here as what Katz calls "the two interconnected aspects to the material social practices of reworking," "redirecting" and "reconstituting available resources", and "people's retooling themselves as political subjects and social actors." (Katz, 2004, p. 247).

(a) Networks of care and grassroots infrastructure

The development of solidarity during the austerity 'crisis' relied on already existing networks and newly emerging ones (especially after the December 2008 uprising), that often overlapped and intersected, catering to the everyday needs of survival, protested and mobilized in solidarity with vulnerable groups and impoverished populations. Interviewees were often participating in different assemblies and solidarity initiatives, in different neighborhoods while at the same time participating in broader organizational structures such as unions and professional associations. Based on their professions they were also often contributing to grassroots communities through transferring their skills, knowledge, and services as well as through providing access to those who could not afford services through their professional networks from legal aid, health care, and housing. These networks emerged as instances of "reworking", to "recalibrate power relations and/or redistribute resources" (Katz 2004, p. 247), often resisting from "within" and establishing place-based relational processes of mutual caring and reciprocity.

Interviewees utilised their key positions in their neighborhoods and communities to further organize mechanisms for the support of those in need, either from within already existing informal

networks of care or from within public institutions, such as schools. Nafsika, who as a long-time resident, unionist, local organiser, and teacher at the public primary school in the neighborhood of Agios Panteleimonas, one of the most diverse and disadvantaged neighborhoods, organized with other teachers and local networks to provide resources at school for children who faced the challenges of poverty:

In a school here in Agios Panteleimonas, which is purely an immigrant school, myself and other colleagues, everything we had we took to the school's basement...we had clothes for everyone...I told all my friends and relatives that if they wanted to give us anything... they gave it away and we stored it there. So, when a child came and didn't have a school bag or sneakers, didn't have a jacket, we gave them one immediately and if I didn't have it here, I would ask others [teachers] in the school, and we would find it...(Nafsika, online interview, 2021).

Often times, such key positions, combined with participation in broader networks of solidarity organizing, functioned as nodes offering access for marginalized groups, such as refugees, to allied professionals and others who could help them, while also keeping in mind their vulnerable state (of being undocumented or semi-documented).

Maria recalls how her connections with the members of the Migrants Social Centre (Στέκι Μεταναστών)⁴², where she taught Greek, in her neighborhood of Exarcheia, managed to help the parents of one of her refugee students:

I remember some years ago we had a kid from Afghanistan whose dad was arrested during the “sweepers” and they had taken him to a refugee camp to get deported. We were scared and were trying to figure what had happened, because our little guy was telling us that his dad is in prison. Then, I asked for help from the Στέκι Μεταναστών (Migrants Social Centre) because Asim there, is Afghan too. They took me to Kurtovik⁴³, and Kurtovik got the dad out with a phone call... (Maria, online interview, 2021).

⁴² Στέκι Μεταναστών (Migrants Social Centre) is social center in Exarcheia operated by locals, activists and immigrants, that hosts many of the activities of local collectives as well as regular voluntary services (collective, cooking, legal support, language lessons, cultural activities) for refugees, immigrants and anyone in need. It is a hub that has both neighborhood- and city-wide significance for the social and solidarity movements in Athens.

⁴³ Ioanna Kourtovik (Ιωάννα Κούρτοβικ) is a well-known Exarcheia-based lawyer who has taken on the defense of many activists and protestors in the broader anti-authoritarian and solidarity milieu.

As Tsavdaroglou (2018) notes, the impact of the ‘crisis’ which had left many public buildings such as schools, private houses and hotels in an abandoned state in the inner-city core, provided the opportunity for solidarity networks and refugees to occupy them and create a constellation of refuge housing squats and social centres, each with each own demographic and political affiliations, under the umbrella of solidarity, horizontal organization and anti-racism. At the neighborhood level, organizing diffused into local self-organized spaces called ‘στέκια’ (hangouts), operated collectively by groups for multiple solidarity-related purposes (Vaiou & Kalandides, 2016; Makrygianni & Tsavdaroglou, 2015). These hangouts hosted many collective practices of social reproduction (including soup-kitchens, the gathering and distribution of essentials, language classes, legal aid, health care etc.) as well as serving as the organizational meeting places of collectives.

(b) Defending local communities and marginalized ‘Others’

The urban planning interventions of the period 2010-2018, mostly funded by the European Union, the Ministry of Environment and large private foundations (such as the Niarchos Foundation and the Onasis Foundation) (Souliotis, 2013), were guided by the idea of “re-occupying” the city center (Siatitsa, 2022). The idea of “re-occupying”⁴⁴ implied that marginalized groups, refugees, leftists and anarchists had “taken over” the city center from its supposedly original (Greek) citizens and aimed to attract and ‘restore’ citizen participation in governance. In these projects, most of which aimed at small-scale interventions, the desired form of the city center was imagined as a pedestrian securitized ‘oasis’ of a “controlled multiplex for tourism, entertainment, consumption, and innovative entrepreneurship” (Makrygianni & Tsavdaroglou

⁴⁴ As Alexandri (2015) stresses, the obsession with the idea of “re-occupying” and the restoration of a supposed “better” past of prosperity and democratic participation, was mirrored in the names of the programmes with names such as “Re-map Athens”, “Rethink Athens”, “Re-launch Athens”, “Reactivate Athens”.

2015, p. 27), and where ‘Otherness’ would be allowed to exist only under the condition of ‘ethnic’ shops and restaurants, as a sign of an aspirational European ‘progressiveness’.

In this period, populism expressed through the discourses of hate and scapegoating practices of the far-right and Golden Dawn supporters, in areas like Agios Panteleimonas, Metaksourgeio and Petralona,⁴⁵ led to immigrants, refugees and leftists/anarchists being targeted in public spaces. Amidst the violence and the threat of such attacks, participants engaged in the defending of grassroots and marginalized communities, an act of resistance that aimed to resist, subvert, and disrupt “conditions of exploitation and oppression” (Katz 2004, p. 242), as racist attacks aligned with broader agendas of securitization, state suppression and xenophobia. Nafsika, who is a long-time resident of Agios Panteleimonas, and active both in the broader solidarity movement and local neighborhood assemblies, recalls how the local community resisted far-right violence:

Here in our neighborhood, we had one of the biggest issues with them. They destroyed the offices of the Assembly, they had attacked our people who were distributing leaflets etc. Mostly women who were alone...when they found women alone, they attacked. We also had the Pakistani school here, every Sunday. The Pakistani community was coming for classes and they attacked the school. They wanted to shut it down. [...] We went to guard the school where the Pakistani community was giving classes, we went and guarded in shifts [...] They wanted to open some offices here in our area and we prevented them. There was a lot of beating up. Young people and antifascist people clashed with them. There were so many people that defended all this. Everywhere, not just here (Nafsika, online interview, 2021).

Along with violence targeting immigrants, refugees, leftists, and anarchists, in the desperation of the austerity ‘crisis’ Golden Dawn enacted practices of exclusion in relation to social reproduction activities and places, often with the support of the Church and the tolerance of the state and the police. Golden Dawn supporters, claiming to be the original residents of the

⁴⁵ These central neighborhoods have been populated by lower-middle classes, immigrants and refugees, as well as Roma families, and are characterized by a densely built environment, with an aging and deteriorating housing stock, lack of green spaces and of sidewalks. Metaksourgeio underwent a ‘regeneration’ in the 2000s through nightlife and hospitality zoning, while Petralona has recently faced the pressures of short-term rentals.

downtown core, would shut down playgrounds and organized to provide food and essentials, including blood transfusions, ‘for Greeks only’, targeting specifically low-income working-class neighborhoods (Kandyliis & Kavoulakos, 2011; Triandafyllidou & Kouki, 2014; Vrakopoulos and Halikiopoulou, 2019).

(c) Claiming the right to participation against infrastructural neglect and privatization

In 2013, Rethink Athens⁴⁶, a large-scale urban regeneration project was proposed through an international competition launched by the Onassis Foundation in collaboration with the Ministry of the Environment (and the winner of the competition, a Dutch urban development company, Okra) for the pedestrianization and redesigning of Panepistimiou Street (Cappuccini, 2020; Dalakoglou and Kallianos, 2018). The introduction of the project, seen as an anchor for the “Europeanization” of Athens, coincided with a shift in practices of local governance, which manifested in the regulation of urban and local affairs through highly exclusive and selective participatory governance projects. It also manifested in favoring the private sector and NGOs in order to generate and attract funding mostly through philanthropic institutions and European Union funds (Chorianopoulos & Tselepi, 2020).

Interviewees used their privileges of citizenship and residency in their neighborhoods to “participate” in such projects, obtaining a first-hand experience of what the municipality’s attempts at participatory governance looked like on the ground. Such practices are another response of reworking through which participants attempted to undermine the conditions of their exclusion from decision making, from within, “on the very grounds on which they are cast” (Katz, 2004, p. 247), through strategic engagement with city officials and processes of governance. Fei, a long-time resident of Exarcheia, remembers her experience in the participatory governance platforms

⁴⁶ The funding for the project (at a cost of €80 million) was officially rejected in 2015 by the European Union (Cappuccini, 2020).

such as ‘Reactivate Athens: 101 Ideas’ (Dalakoglou & Kallianos, 2018) which called for citizens to give ideas to professional urban planners:

That participation is a participation for the eyes of the world. They got the prize of 5 million euros for Syn-Athina to make this platform, and they come into the neighborhoods, and they make people design and compete...they said “come and design for your neighborhood and we will pay you for the materials and actions”. People would come and say, "The municipality has put garbage bins in front of playgrounds in my neighborhood and has blocked the entrance. I want to build playgrounds in my neighborhood." So, people would come there to get money to fix what the Municipality had destroyed a month ago... And of course, if you weren't an architect in these meetings, you were ignored. People were treated as if they had no clue. That was the participation... (Fei, online interview, 2021).⁴⁷

Grassroots self-run spaces, such as the occupation and assembly of the Kypseli Municipal Market, an abandoned marketplace in the heart of the neighbourhood (see Vaiou, 2018), were evicted and then turned into ‘creativity hubs’ run through public-private partnerships, where political discussions and self-organizational processes were not welcome, along with the grassroots communities that initially created them. At the same time, the declining infrastructure in the downtown neighborhoods that were not part of the tourist geographies of the city was leading to the deterioration of the quality of life and the ability to safely navigate public space, especially for those performing socially reproductive and caring roles, as well as for disabled individuals.

Interviewees, organized collectively through neighborhood assemblies and had attempted numerous times to intervene in the Municipal Council in order to directly express their needs and demands for improved infrastructure and public space, commonly to be faced with violence and threats and then removed from the municipality building:

Residents have been excluded from the municipality for years. The other day Bakoyannis came to the school and told us we are welcome to visit him at his office anytime, that it's open for us. After two months, we went to complain about the school underfunding and asked to go upstairs to the office and, of course, he forbade us to go up. [...] I was holding the protest banner under my arm and when I went

⁴⁷ Syn-Athina was a platform of civic engagement created in 2013, based in a small kiosk in the central Varvakeios Square in downtown Athens, close to tourist areas, which was eventually shut down due to the unwanted (by the municipality) visibility of precaritized groups it attracted.

to enter the council chamber, two guards came to get me [...] it is impossible. You have to have a lot of patience, to be fighting collectively in order to be able to enter and say your opinion...(Tzenni, online interview, 2021).⁴⁸

Free public spaces and parks became a great point of conflict and contentious politics, triggering local processes of mobilization as privatization of public assets was one of the main tools of austerity ‘planning’, with public infrastructure often left to deteriorate until it would be taken over by private investors. Such struggles emerged, for example, around Navarinou Park (see Figure 4.2) in Exarcheia (starting in 2009) (Stavrides, 2016), that became a symbol of community



Figure 4.4: Street view of Navarinou Park, taken from Google Earth (Katsikana, 2023).

resistance and placemaking against the neoliberal city, as Fei explains:

See the park on Navarinou, what would have happened to that space if the people didn't fight for it? They would have sold it and turned it into a parking lot. People demanded that it not be done, and it has become a very beautiful park. And at some point, they tried to sabotage it and close it down, obviously to downplay it. And again, it was the residents' committee and the neighborhood that supported it. There is a playground inside, we see plays, there are concerts... (Fei, online interview, 2021).

Similar struggles emerged around some of the few green spaces in downtown neighborhoods such as Strefi Hill (Λόφος Στέφη) in Exarcheia and Akadimia Platonos (Ακαδημία Πλάτωνος) in

⁴⁸ Kostas Bakoyannis was the right-wing-centrist mayor at the time, a member of the Mitsotakis family (leaders of the conservative part of New Democracy) and nephew of the conservative prime minister, Kyriakos Mitsotakis.

Kolonos or Drakopoulou Park (Πάρκο Δρακόπουλου) in Patisia which the municipality, attempted to privatize. Such places were vital spaces for many collective events of the broader solidarity milieu, but also organizational meetings of collectives, hosting non-commercial alternatives for entertainment and culture, contributing to the rejuvenation of neighborhoods, through placemaking from ‘below’.

(d) Protesting touristification and displacement

After 2015, the loosening of restrictions for short-term rentals⁴⁹ and the visa-by-investment program⁵⁰ led to a “market explosion” (Gourzis et al., 2022, p. 2550), along with the development of entertainment and hospitality uses that relied on and intensified the precarious labor of both Greeks and immigrants. This combination of touristification, gentrification and the lack of social housing policies resulted in the rising of rents and local low-income communities being displaced by a mix of affluent classes who wanted an alternative downtown lifestyle, including tourists and creative nomads with high incomes as well as foreign investors who acquired property through the Golden Visa program.

As a response of resistance, neighborhood assemblies held interventions in specific streets with high numbers of short-term-rentals, often bought and operated by large agencies, but also through actions targeted at housing blocks. In the latter, residents organized with others living in the same building to block the operation of short-term rentals:

⁴⁹ Gourzis et al. note that “after the government’s 2015 rescinding of the requirement that short-term rental operators have a licence from the Greek National Tourism Organisation, however, the market exploded, and residencies started being uploaded in large numbers to online platforms like Airbnb” (Gourzis et al. 2022, p. 2550).

⁵⁰ The Golden Visa program was introduced in 2013 and provided visa-by-investment, granting five-year residency rights to foreigners that have to invest a minimum of €500,000 into capital transfer, business, or property acquisition (<https://www.euronews.com/travel/2024/02/23/greece-inside-one-of-europes-last-golden-visa-programmes-and-whats-set-to-change>).

In the building my parents live in, some of the residents who owned apartments wanted to have an Airbnb. They asked for everyone in the building to pitch in to renovate the entrance, so that it looks better to tourists. There are people in this building who cannot even pay their electricity bill. My parents and others blocked it and it never happened, but this is the story of many buildings these days (Xristina, online interview, 2021).

Such responses were not only ones of resistance but also of resilience as participants engaged in them in order to be able to afford their rents but also the cost of everyday living in their neighborhoods, amidst pressures of an upcoming tourist-driven gentrification.



Figure 4.5: 'TOURISTS GET OUT' graffiti in the fenced-off construction site of the Eksarchia Square, summer 2023 (Katsikana, 2023).

Other times, these responses included the affective labor of having discussions with digital nomads about “how they should not accept the rent rates landlords offer them, but should negotiate, because these people pay amounts of money we can never afford” as stated by Xristina in her interview. After a wave of evictions that shut down almost all the downtown squats in 2019 (Tsavdaroglou & Kaika, 2022), the COVID-19 pandemic signaled another deep crisis of housing

and inflation, intensifying touristification and displacement, as foreign remote-workers and digital nomads found a cheap alternative life in Athens (by their own national standards and salaries).

Amidst the conflicting visions of the right to the city, the above four aspects of social reproduction, around which placemaking is organized in the austerity city, unfold as interrelated responses of resistance, resilience, and reworking (Katz, 2004). Not only they provided the “the groundwork for stronger responses” but also contributed to the formation of “restorative and strengthening acts” (Katz, 2004, p. 242), enacting a socio-spatial urban imaginary of solidarity ‘from below’. Thus, the following section is providing a more detailed account of the ways socially reproductive practices in the Athenian urban contribute to anti-capitalist placemaking through the grounding of the socio-spatial imaginary ‘from below’, into everyday life, from the neighborhood to the city.

4.4 The spatialities of socially reproductive affective and caring labor and their contribution to anti-neoliberal placemaking

This section is discussing the ways in which the embodied socially reproductive labor of women and feminized subjects, in the context of the everyday and of grassroots solidarity organizing, contributes to anti-capitalist placemaking through the production of spatialities of care in the urban. These spatialities of care are created both through the diffusion of political organizing in the level of everyday urban encounters and the production of anti-capitalist commons in the city, that both rely on the socially reproductive material and immaterial labor of women and feminized subjects who participate in them. The contribution of social reproductive labor to anti-capitalist placemaking in the urban operates within two interlocking spatialities of care : (a) the neighborhood and the place-based community, which fosters bonds and the creation of networks and grassroots infrastructure catering to the needs of place-based communities; and (b) that of the

city, which fosters the creation of larger networks of mobilization and commons, under city-wide, national or international calls for solidarity.

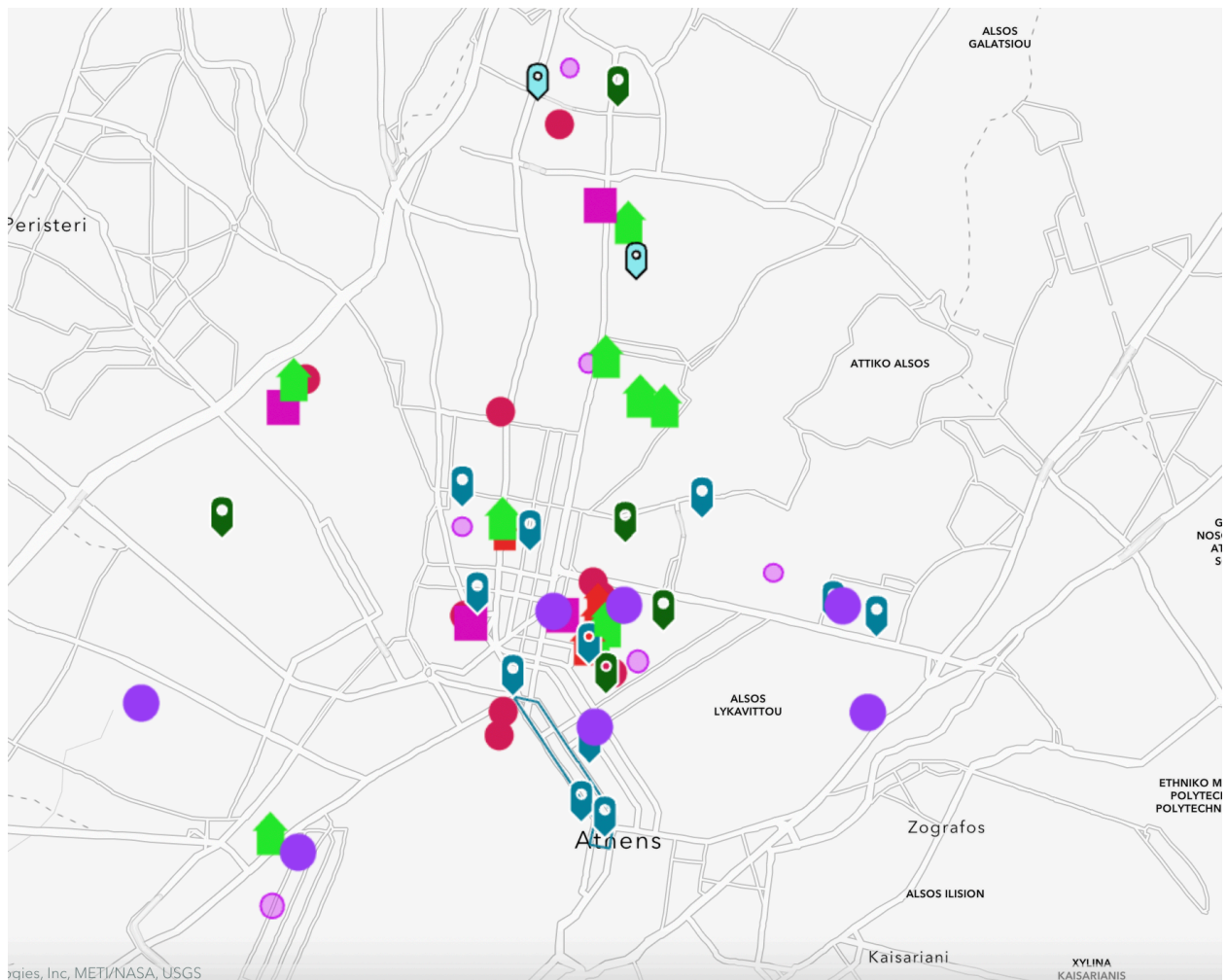


Figure 4.6: Screenshot of the ArcGIS StoryMap 4.2, showcasing grassroots infrastructure, solidarity spaces and neighbourhood assemblies in downtown Athens, along with the mapping of the interview excerpts provided in Sections 4.3 and 4.4 (Katsikana, 2024). Access ArcGIS StoryMap 4.2 at <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/69a5a2558ecc4bf887ffea5912228ac5>

The section argues that the embodied socially reproductive labor of women and feminized subjects is essential to anti-capitalist placemaking as it entails the reproduction of spatial relationships, capacities, and modes of dealing with common survival needs (Stavrides, 2016), while also maintaining local and city-wide communities of organized solidarity. This framing

moves beyond the idea of the commons as a specific resource or space but rather focuses on the commons as relations (Stavrides, 2016) and commoning as a form of socially reproductive labor, “particularly affective, care and convivial labors ... that produce our worlds and our capacities to make sense of them” (García-López et al., 2021, p. 1203). The framing of commons as relations, echoes Simone’s (2004) idea of “people as infrastructure”, through which the urban dispossessed develop relational strategies of survival and resistance, rooted in “cityness”, described by Simone as “the capacity of the city’s different people, spaces, activities, and things to interact in ways that exceed any attempt to regulate them” (p. 3).

As commoning labor is a particularly embodied, gendered, raced, classed socially reproductive labor, “cityness” as a creative, relational, socio-spatial capacity, in the Greek context, disproportionately relies on women’s and feminized subjects’ knowledges, skills and bodies within everyday strategies of survival and urban life-making. As “urban spaces are also lived in ways that disrupt hegemonic mappings” (Simone, 2010, p. 11), placing social reproduction practices at the heart of “cityness” reveals how the creation of spatialities of care contribute to anti-capitalist placemaking. In this context, the concept of people as infrastructure relies on the daily socially reproductive labor and spatial agency of women and feminized subjects, that actively produce, re-shape and appropriate urban environments, rather than merely negotiating them (Narayan, 2023). Furthermore, within these spatialities of care, not only public and private spaces in the city are appropriated for the needs of communities but at the same time, attachments between communities and places are forged. Moreover, bringing the labor of social reproduction to the forefront of urban living, transcends the “hegemonic constructions” (Lykogianni, 2008, p. 141) assigned to women’s roles in urban life.

In order to examine how spatialities of care were informed through everyday routines of social reproduction and organizing, the participants were asked to describe their socially

reproductive practices and the relations these unfolded in, their frequency and location in the city, the routes they followed in order to carry them out, as well as to contextualizing them in relation to their urban livelihoods. These questions were crucial for identifying both the role of women's socially reproductive practices in placemaking, as "a place is formed out of the particular set of social relations which interact at a particular location" (Massey, 1993, p. 168), as well as their role in transforming hegemonic spatialities. Thus, the description of the routines, spaces and relations, was key in identifying not only how hegemonic constructions of place impacted the participants' life strategies and attachments to place, but also how those were contested and transformed through their caring and commoning practices.

Additionally, this attention to the participants' place-based practices of social reproduction was important for understanding their experiences, subjectivities and perceptions in the context of "a specific, spatio-temporally structured society" (Lykogianni, 2008, p. 137) that contributes to what Sultana (2020) has termed "embodied intersectionalities of socio-spatial differences and materialities" (p. 1420). These embodied intersectionalities address the ways differently dispossessed bodies of women and feminized subjects are affected disproportionately by regimes of neglect and violence in the urban, but also how they navigate and subvert those conditions. In the context of this research, while participants, through their different embodied intersectionalities experienced varying degrees of privileges and dispossession, all of them participated in grassroots communities both through organizing and needing solidarity themselves.

Their embodied intersectionalities also meant that the participants' struggles are not uniform, but it was rather their desire to change the conditions of everyday life, their need for not dealing with issues 'alone' and a sense of injustice that emerged in different moments throughout the years that acted as a catalyst for their organizing: from police brutality, securitization and surveillance, to experiences of precaritization, impoverishment, exclusion from decision-making, to racism,

sexism and homophobia, to mention a few. Despite these ‘shared’ experiences that often led participants to ‘search’ for others to organize with, the everyday ‘realities’ of each participant as well as their subjectivities, ideologies, dreams and hopes informed by their social location, impacted their co-existence with other political subjects within collective political endeavors.

For example, many of the participants had attended over the years meetings and events of various political collectives within the anti-authoritarian and solidarity milieu but stopped engaging with certain collective due to lack of horizontal organizing and instead the reinforcing of hierarchies, that often unfolded around seniority and gender. Experienced cis male activists were often seen as more ‘valuable’ within certain collectives, resulting in the silencing of women and queer activists even in cases of sexism, homophobia and sexual harassment, attitudes that were reproduced by certain women too. ‘Tensions’ were also very evident in feminist organizing, with certain participants describing how they were not feeling welcome or accepted among certain feminist scholar-activists who regularly disregarded their political views as ‘not well read’ and who adopted U.S.-centric frameworks that didn’t align with the Greek context. Other times, participants stopped engaging with feminist collectives due to problematic articulations of certain views, that often included transphobic, xenophobic attitudes, making participants who were identifying as queer, trans or who were second-generation immigrants to feel not only uncomfortable but also unsafe. Similarly, certain participants departed from feminist collectives due to the adoption of victimization narratives towards especially women and children refugees. In other cases, a different perception of goals, demands and struggles, was informed by the caring ‘workload’ participants had been taking on in their personal lives, with those in care-giving roles feeling that there was no empathy and understanding from those who lived without such responsibilities and thus had more free time to pursue organizing. Lastly, particularly in the context of refugee solidarity organizing, some refugees had themselves extensive activist experience but

also different repertoires of resistance, leading to ‘clashes’ with local activists who wished to impose their own ‘know-how’ and ideas, revealing broader issues across different cultures of organizing.

Furthermore, the participants’ embodied intersectionalities are crucial to understand the main spatialities of care, within the two interlocking spatial scales of the neighborhood and the city that emerged from the analysis of their narrations. Here I follow Lykogianni’s understanding of the relationship between the two scales as “neither hierarchical nor reciprocal but rather as co-existing and complementary, since they are both the product and the component of multiple social relations and practices” (Lykogianni, 2008, p.134). Thus, rather than the metaphor of “scaling up”, these spatialities unfold as constellations of care, where solidarity is diffused and coordinated horizontally, with the participants criss-crossing (Brown & Staeheli, 2003) these non-hierarchical complementary scales. This criss-crossing was a result of the participants holding multiple and different roles and positions within networks and urban constellations of care, engaging in a variety of socio-spatial processes and routines, and using different sets of skills, often from ‘within’ public schools, unions, neighborhood assemblies, squats, networks of kin and friendships. Within these spatialities, the multiple socially reproductive activities and practices in which they engaged, developed through informal intersecting and overlapping networks of different types of organizing.

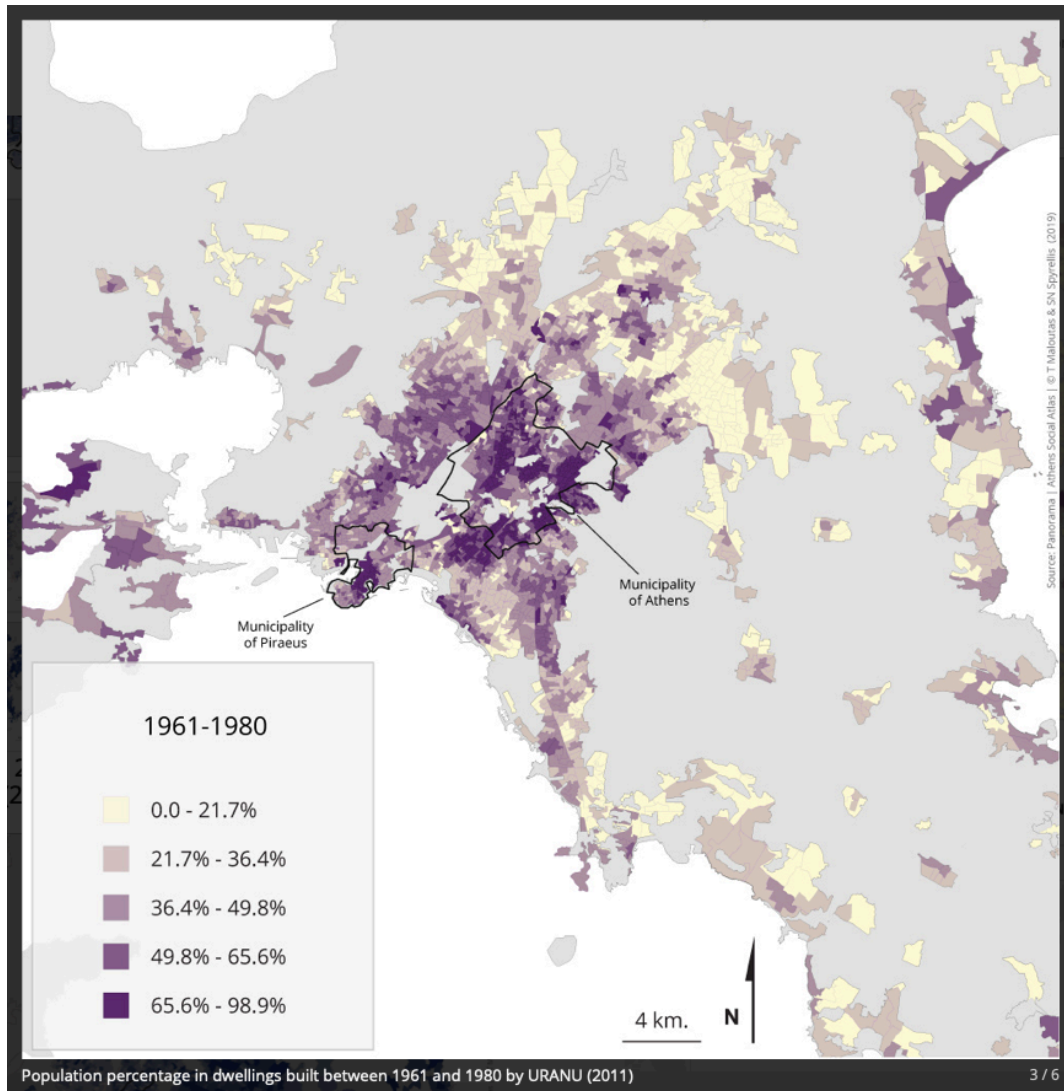
The remainder of the chapter discussing how women’s socially reproductive material and immaterial labor forms two main spatialities of care addressing the neighborhood and the city, that contribute to anti-capitalist placemaking through working against austerity urbanism and its exclusions.

(a) *The neighborhood and placed-based community*

The neighborhood emerged as a crucial spatiality for the social reproduction of community and resistance, fostering processes of placemaking against neoliberal and austerity urbanism. The immediate neighborhood, that included a typical Greek apartment building called *polykatikia* (πολυκατοικία)⁵¹ and its surrounding blocks and streets, was referred to in relation to everyday routines, the extended family and friendships, neighboring relationships and informal networks of care. The broader neighborhood, framed by a collective sense of place and by the administrative boundaries of the municipal districts, was often referred to in relation to mobilizing (via local hang-outs and neighborhood assemblies), public amenities and infrastructure issues, city governance, and to collective memory and public history.

All of the participants reside in rented apartments in the *polykatikia* (πολυκατοικία) buildings, built approximately between the 1960s-80s (see Map 4.1), living in close proximity to friends, while 10 of them also lived close to extended family, in the same block or neighborhood. As the majority of the participants faced financial challenges, proximity to friends, family, and local solidarity initiatives was crucial to their ability to cover their everyday socially reproductive needs for themselves and those they cared for.

⁵¹ The downtown neighborhoods were dominated by the typology of *polykatoikia* (πολυκατοικία), small apartment buildings, densely built through a “land for flats” mechanism mostly between 1960 and 1980 (Oikonomou, 2016). They are characterized by a lack of green spaces, wide pavements and streets as well as mixed uses at the street level. They are known for their vertical segregation (within the building), turning the housing blocks into spaces of inhabitation of different classes, and where post 1990’s various ‘Others’ co-existed and developed relations across difference with locals (Maloutas, 2007).



Map 4.1: Population percentage in dwellings built between 1961 and 1980, taken from the Athens Social Atlas.

Besides formal organizing, interviewees engaged in the formation of informal networks of care within their neighborhood through everyday interactions and friendships, that, while not informed by organizing agendas and strategies, were influenced by the interviewees' anti-capitalist, anti-racist, feminist, and queer politics. Thus, the neighborhood, became a place where not only community and solidarity were developed, but also a place where interviewees engaged in social reproduction practices that did not abide by the neoliberal, austerity and securitization

dogmas imposed by the state and supra-national institutions. On the contrary, these practices produced different imaginaries of belonging and living in the urban, enabling the social reproduction and survival of the self and communities, and creating a sense of place against the exclusions, neglect and different types of violence of neoliberal and austerity urbanism.

In their everyday routines, all the participants were responsible for the social reproductive tasks of the household, (such as cooking, cleaning, grocery shopping and laundry) (see Figure 4.6). For those in close spatial proximity to family and friends, the sharing of resources and household tasks was essential to their ability to survive under precarious conditions. Spiridoula, for example, who had been living with two roommates, explains:

My mother often cooks and brings over food for us, and we share it with my roommates in order to save money. And they do the same when their parents give them extra food. Sometimes, they will help us by making things for the house like cleaning products, or even giving us furniture they don't need... (Spiridoula, online interview, 2021).

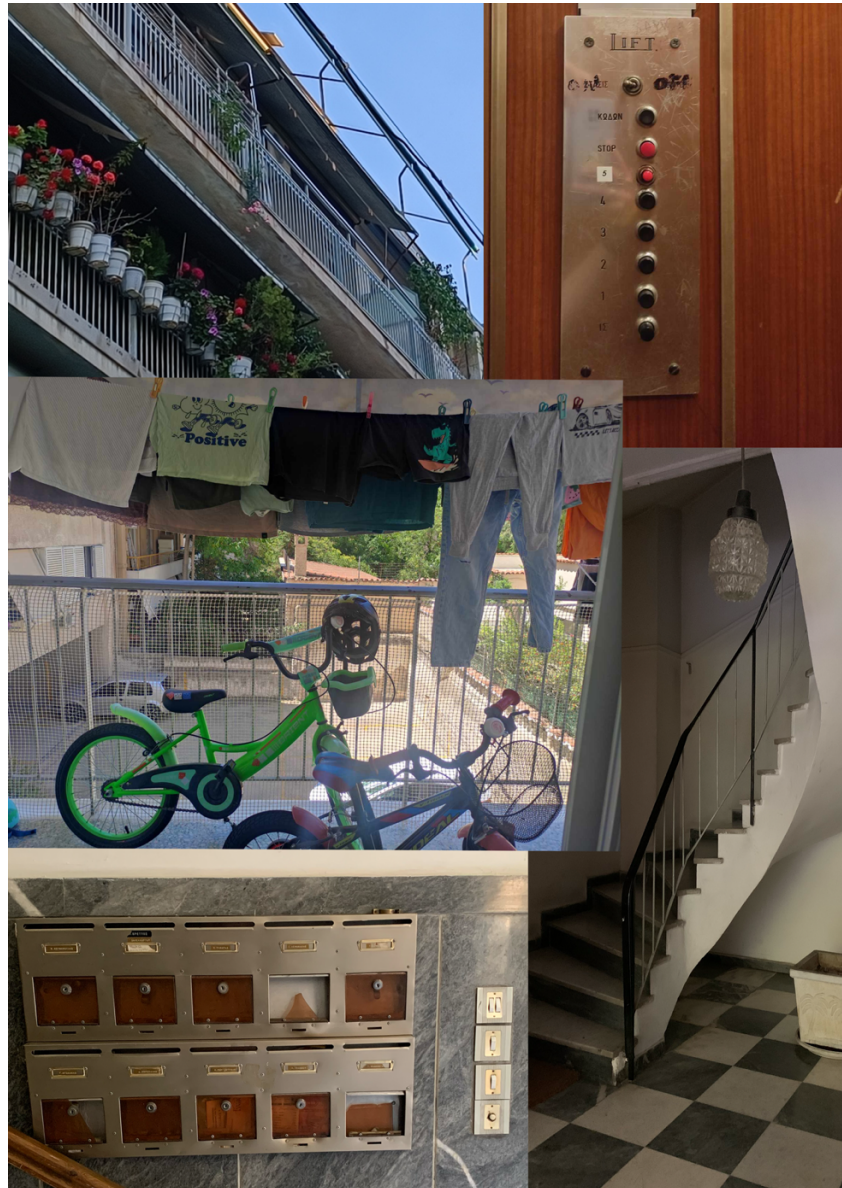


Figure 4.7: Semi-public spaces of the typical Greek polykatoikia, built in the 1960s (Katsikana, 2023).

Those networks of care and sharing resources were not exclusive to friends and family but also expanded through encounters with neighbors and everyday interactions fostered by the typology of the polykatoikia (πολυκατοικία), whose vertical segregation allowed for a mix of ethnoracial backgrounds and classes (Maloutas, 2020). In this context, while participants were organizing in city-wide and nation-wide solidarity initiatives, they also engaged in solidarity

within the building they lived in and their immediate neighborhood (see Figure 4.7), triggered by everyday interactions in the public and semi-public spaces of their quotidian routines.



Figure 4.8: Typical downtown neighborhood, built between 1960s-1980s (Katsikana, 2023).

Eleftheria recalls relationships of reciprocity and solidarity that developed in the apartment building where her family resides in Kato Patisia, especially by her mother, who was herself active in communist collectives for many years, before the ‘crisis’:

My mother has her own political spaces, she is more of a ‘traditional’ communist. Because of her, we grew up in a house where the doors were open for people. There was this family from Ethiopia, who we became family friends with. They had a kid who didn't speak and had autism, I tutored him for free and then after a while I did the same for their little one. A few years ago, there was a Syrian refugee family that moved downstairs, and my mother became friends with them, going downstairs to eat all together in the evenings, and they would give food to my parents too, because they had difficulties too. It was a real relationship (Eleftheria, online interview 2021).

Such relationships, triggered by the everyday encounters within the apartment building and the neighborhood (see Figure 4.8), helped both locals and newcomers to assign new meaning to their spaces of everyday living and to forge practices of ‘helping out’ that defied the neighbourhood’s infrastructural neglect and precarity, and subverted the exclusionary imaginaries of the neoliberal city. Standing up to racist residents and landlords in solidarity with marginalized individuals and families was a frequent practice interviewees had engaged in throughout the years, forming alliances and creating a more welcoming environment within their buildings.



Figure 4.9: An afternoon in Kato Patisia (Maria, 2020).

Thus, informal networks of care and solidarity, created through everyday encounters (see Figure 4.9), were crucial to the formation of placed-based communities for newcomers but also in creating spatialities of livability in everyday lives. As many immigrants eventually opened small businesses such as grocery and convenience shops in the neighborhoods, supporting them through everyday routines was an important aspects in the participants’ efforts to fight the pressures of austerity urbanism, touristification, gentrification and racist violence that threatened placed-based communities.



Figure 4.10: Leaving out food in the neighborhood (Nafsika, 2021).

For those who were caregivers to children, co-ordinating with friends or members of the extended family in the neighbourhood who could ‘help’ them, especially in emergencies, was essential to their ability to work and organize, making these informal networks of care (in)directly very important to the sustaining of participation:

When the kids were younger and I had to go to assemblies or there was much happening when they were home from school, my mother or my sister, would take over for me to go. And they never said anything about it, they understood. But there were women that could only do that when their kids got older and more independent (Nafsika, online interview, 2021).

Children's upbringing and creative activities and their commodification through the proliferation of services such as private playgrounds, child-care, and afterschool activities, that many couldn't afford, along with the lack of public amenities and neglect of existing infrastructure, was an important issue for interviewees in parenting roles. The interviewees rejected commodification and instead engaged in practices based on collective and non-commercialized activities and spaces. P. participated in the running of a grassroots activist-run hang out that offered creative play and recycled toys to children, while others like Toula, engaged in collective practices in the public spaces close to their neighborhood such as the Akadimia Platonos Park (Ακαδημία Πλάτωνος) (see Figure 4.10):

We gathered and went with our children to the park for free to sit. We were bringing food to eat and everything the kids needed. And across the street from the park, because people were going there, cooperative cafes opened. We did a lot of events for the children that played in the park for free, dances and theatre. All of us going there we would help organizing something each time. And that's why we want to defend that park...(Toula, online interview, 2021).

Such collective practices were seen as important by interviewees in parenting roles as a way to connect with immigrant and refugee parents through their children, and thus further help them through providing access to place-based networks of solidarity.



Figure 4.11: Aerial view of the Akadimia Platonos park, adapted from Google Earth (Katsikana, 2024).

Place-based networks of care overlapping with networks of organizing were essential for the diffusion of solidarity across the city, strengthening the capacities of grassroots communities to address the immediate needs of precaritized communities beyond large-scale centralized solidarity initiatives. This was manifested in assemblies and local *στέκια* (hangouts), informal social centres and community gathering spaces that catered to the needs of the neighborhood, providing help to the most marginalized and precarious residents, creating outlets for affordable entertainment, and enabling collective mobilization around various issues, from infrastructure, to protesting far-right violence and police brutality, fundraising, and the gathering of resources. Maria described some of tasks of socially reproductive labor she performed, in various solidarity structures:

In the hangout, we collected clothes and food, we put them in stacks here and children, women and men could come and get what they needed. We tidied up the

spaces that people would stay in and bring supplies for them... Then we also did a lot with the Antifascist Coordination in the neighborhood, either with festivals for fundraising, or with collective cooking. Around 2010, I remember we cooked and distributed food to the homeless and to poor people who lived below the poverty line (Maria, online interview 2021).

Neighborhood hangouts, engaged in solidarity skill-sharing activities or the voluntary offering of services from their members, many of which addressed the inability of parents to afford day-care, creative activities or tutoring for their children.

The maintenance of local hang outs, which were housed in rented spaces, was possible through fundraising weekly activities such as the running of an informal café, where locals could sit and talk and get beverages at a cheap price. The overall maintenance of such spaces was also performed by interviewees, such as Sasa who recalls "...I had to check that the electricity and water bills had been paid and if not, to go pay it, to know what was needed to be bought for specific events ...” (Sasa., online interview, 2021). Besides covering immediate social reproduction needs the hangouts also functioned as alternative outlets of free entertainment, education, and cultural production, also functioning as community meeting points and a place where various marginalized ‘Others’ and newcomers could participate in the social and cultural life of neighborhoods with locals, away from the commercialization of nightlife in the city where only specific “users” were welcome.

Along with the hang-outs, another important affect of neighborhood solidarity were the neighborhood assemblies (or popular assemblies). That mobilized to demand the proper maintenance of public amenities and infrastructure from the state and the municipality, as well as against the privatization of local infrastructure, such as parks or abandoned (or unused) public buildings. In coordination with other local networks of solidarity, they defended residents from evictions by bank foreclosures and prevented technicians from cutting electric power in households that were unable to pay the emergency taxation. Nafsika explains how in her

neighborhood the coordination between the local People's Assembly in Sepolia/Agios Panteliomonas/Akadimia Platonos (see Figure 4.11) parents' associations, and local political collectives mobilized for a new school building and kindergarten for disabled children despite the exclusion they faced by the municipality and the state:

One of our biggest achievements was the 6th Primary Special School of Athens and the special kindergarten below it, that is the only public one in Athens. In 2011 we asked, as teachers, to relocate the school from the old building and take all our children from there. It was in deep crisis, and the officials laughed at us, they told us we are out of our minds asking for a new building and they said no, all of them, the Municipality, the Ministry of Education, the Directorate of Education. Those schools are necessary. The kids end up staying at home, because the parents can't afford to take them to the private ones. This was for all the disabled children of the poor families who all live in this neighborhood. The building they had us in was hidden, with no yard for the kids. But there was this abandoned building in the middle of the park which was renovated by the municipality but was not in use. We went to the People's Assembly that was active at the time in the neighborhood, and who were holding their meetings in the park outside this building, we mobilized everyone, and we gave the officials a deadline. We said 'If you don't give us the building for the school until March we will occupy it!' We had this poster at the time that said 'squat where neglect is'. They were forced to give us the building, but they were not positive at all, only some of the municipality employees helped us...(Nafsika, online interview, 2021).

As in the case of the 6th Primary Special School, coordination on a neighborhood level was crucial for the successful claiming of a new building, a task that would have been impossible without the connective labor of interviewees who held positions in the community that enabled them to witness the everyday struggles of residents. Through this connective labor they 'activated' and brought together different networks of mobilization in order to collectively apply pressure to the municipality and the state.

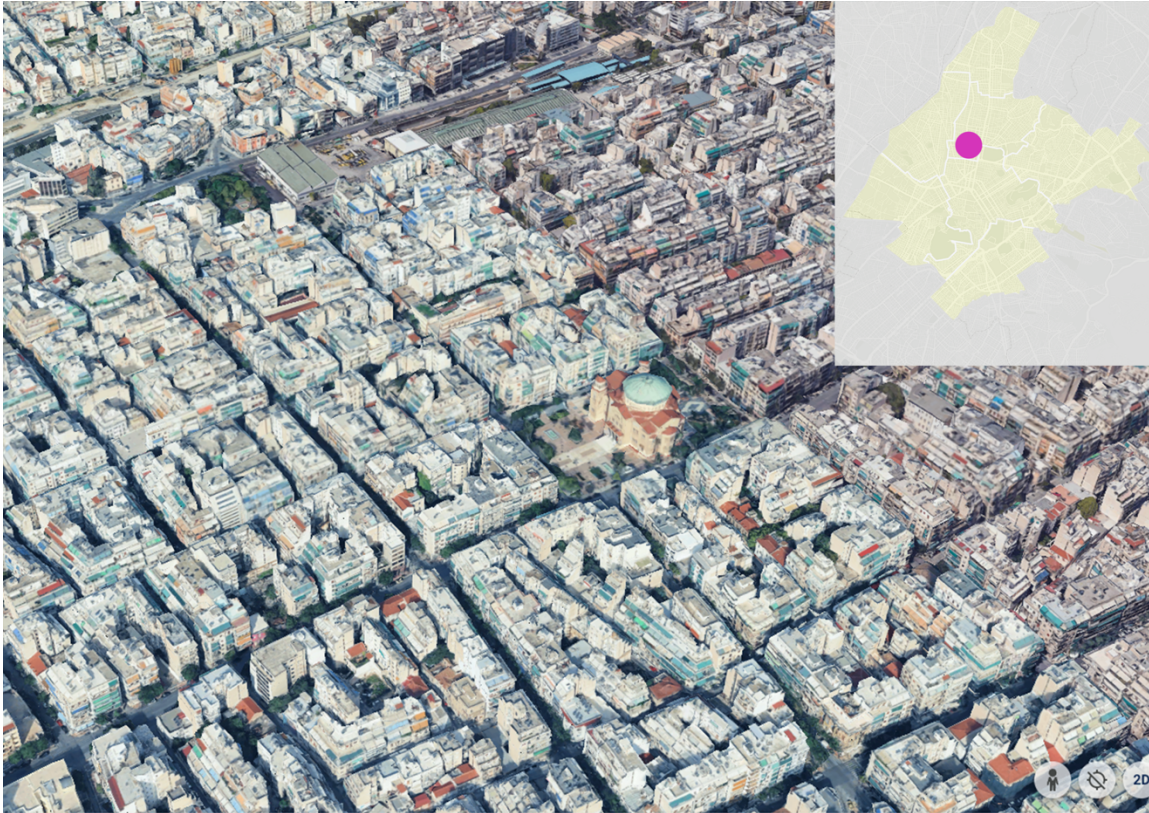


Figure 4.12: Aerial view of the neighborhood of Agios Panteleimonas, adapted from Google Earth (Katsikana, 2024).

Neighborhood-based networks of care and physical infrastructures of solidarity proved essential during the COVID-19 pandemic. Local hangouts and solidarity networks, contributed to the covering of the social reproduction needs of the local community through the collection and distribution of food and medication as well as protective supplies such as masks. As the mobility restrictions of the pandemic overlapped with already existing police brutality, the enforcement of measures by the police led to certain highly publicized incidents of police violence that fuelled local protests in various neighborhoods of Athens. Public spaces like parks became an important meeting point for communities during the period of safety and mobility

restrictions in the neighborhood⁵², and proximity to friends and family living close by contributed significantly to the wellbeing of interviewees, especially those who lived by themselves, as stated in one of the focus group interviews:

I spent the first quarantine at home, by myself, but when the measures were a bit looser and we could go for walks around the area, it helped that D. and T. were close. You could talk to a person you knew, away from all the screens, to keep sane. We sat in the park because there was nowhere to go, and that park brought a lot of people together during the quarantine (Toula, online GPS-tracked Photovoice discussion, 2021).

In these solidarity structures, the socially reproductive labor of women and feminized subjects, while often devalued and taken for granted in broader theorizations of social movements and anti-austerity politics, was the ‘backbone’ of organizing, without which the everyday ‘mundane’ aspect of solidarity would not have been possible. As these practices were rooted in day-to-day routines and they involved interactions with difference within the neighborhood, they contributed to placemaking processes from below, giving meaning to urban space through local struggles and collective claims.

(b) City-wide organizing and mobilizations

While, in the context of social movement literature, the city-wide mobilizations that emerged in Greece were often perceived as a result of ‘spontaneous’ grassroots organizing, Greek scholars have indicated that such organizing on a large scale could not have been possible without the contribution of already existing long-term and smaller scale day-to-day grassroots organizing of previous decades (Petropoulou, 2014). In the context of this research, it is clear that not only city-

⁵² At the peak of the pandemic strict measures restricted mobility and collective processes, imposing a curfew and a ban of all non-essential movements, imposed through excessive policing and unprecedented surveillance (Apostolopoulou & Liodaki, 2021).

wide mobilizations with a nation-wide and often supra-national significance were based on already existing structures of organizing but also that social reproduction lied at the center of such solidarity structures, often invisibilized under broader claims and spectacular acts of resistance.

It is important to note that the neighborhood of Eksarchia (see Figure 4.13) functioned both as a place-based community of solidarity but also as an organizational hub for the entire city (see Figure 4.12 and ArcGIS StoryMap 4.2 at: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/69a5a2558ecc4bf887ffea5912228ac5>), while at the same time being one of the first places that marginalized ‘Others’ found refuge from the violence and exclusion of neoliberal Athens (Cappuccini, 2018).

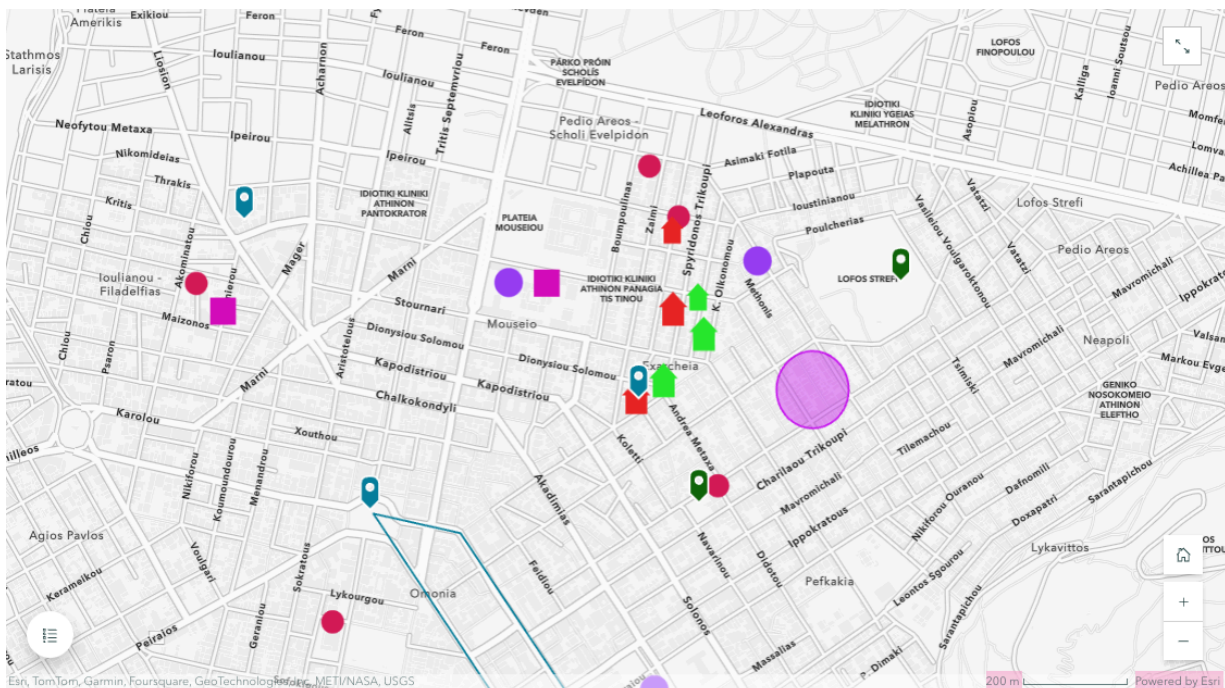


Figure 4.13: Screenshot of ArcGIS StoryMap 4.2, showcasing the different grassroots infrastructure with city-wide reach (Katsikana, 2024). Access the ArcGIS StoryMap 4.2 at: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/69a5a2558ecc4bf887ffea5912228ac5>



Figure 4.14: Aerial view of Eksarchia, adapted from Google Earth (Katsikana, 2024).

Besides the central role of Exarcheia, the historical and commercial city centre, where many public symbolic buildings sit alongside centres of decision-making and governance, such as ministries and the Parliament, became a place of symbolic appropriation for the reclaiming of public space and infrastructure.

Through symbolic and emergency occupations, the social reproduction of resistance was performed at the heart of the city, for everyone to witness, disrupting the exclusionary visions promoted by city branding, neoliberal authoritarianism, and EU securitization and migration policies (Raimondi, 2019). The central coordination, which was evident particularly through refugee solidarity, was achieved through multiple overlapping networks, as interviewees often functioned as connecting nodes for smaller initiatives with larger structures, facilitating the sharing of information, knowledge, and infrastructure and calls for support.



Figure 4.15: The urban landscape of Eksarchia (Katsikana, 2023).

In these networks the affective, connective labor of women and feminized subjects was crucial not only on an organizational level but also in the countless small interactions with those in need. Xristina explains how such structures functioned:

We focused on creating a network that helped migrants and refugees and especially the newcomers. All of us had also been active in our local assemblies or some squats, others had knowledge of legislation and were social workers or lawyers themselves, doctors too, immigrants who had been here and knew the language and could translate... So when people arrived, they knew who to turn to. They communicated needs and issues they might face with housing, other times it was women who faced abuse, who needed to be protected from their husband under these conditions (Xristina, online interview, 2021).

At the same time, city-wide co-ordination was also occurring through collective responses to instances of police brutality and hate crimes against marginalized individuals and activists, often following protests at the courthouses and the central offices of the police in Alexandras Avenue (Λεωφόρος Αλεξάνδρας), such as the trial of the Golden Dawn members. Interviewees had engaged in protests in cases of police brutality, hate-crime killings of activists and immigrants, the large-scale operation of squat raids and evictions⁵³, and marches and protests at the refugee camps in Eleonas, where many of the refugees evicted from the downtown squats were transferred by the police. These marches and protests were held in the same places where these incidents occurred, with activists gathering from all over the city after emergency solidarity coordination assemblies (calls shared through social media and portals) that were held in the Polytechnic School in Exarcheia. Gazia who participated in such emergency protests recalls two crucial moments:⁵⁴

I remember very vividly the marches for Fyssas in Keratsini. As soon as we found out, there was chaos, and a lot of people gathered and I remember that the cops had surrounded us in some very narrow streets in Keratsini and we were running. We ended up in some neighborhoods we had no idea of, and some old ladies came out and told us where to go. [...] And the other was for Zak, that took place the night of the murder. When we found out who did it...because for two days we had no idea...when it became known, people gathered in the Polytechnic School and a march took place (Gazia, online interview, 2021).

As highlighted in previous research (Katsikana, 2021) such city-wide protests and mobilizations, which took place in the broader anti-authoritarian, solidarity and feminist-queer milieu in which participants were participating, often brought up issues related to the repertoires of protesting and the roles gendered subjects held within these political ecosystems. The march

⁵³ A wave of evictions and raids took place in 2013, with many historic squats closing down and activists arrested. In 2019 in the wake of the pandemic, there was the targeting of refugee solidarity squats.

⁵⁴ The participant refers to the murders of anti-fascist activist and rapper Pavlos Fyssas in 2013 by members of the neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn, and the murder of Zak Kostopouous, an openly gay HIV+ activist and drag artist, in 2018.

in protest of the murder of Zak Kostopoulos in 2019, a few blocks away from Exarcheia, became a point of tension between feminist, queer and anarchist collectives regarding the use of violence and clashes with the police. Gazia emphasizes the political challenges of such co-ordination processes amidst differing repertoires of protesting:

What was at stake at that time was whether the march would be peaceful or not, whether there would be *bachala* (μπάχαλα),⁵⁵ and the debate that had opened afterwards about whether it would be general call for the march or not. [...]. There were anarchists who told feminists and queer people there ‘we are not like you, we have a different way’ and the discussions were very intense (Gazia, online interview 2021).

Thus, the affective labor performed by women and feminised subjects within the solidarity milieu also included navigating hostile, homophobic and misogynistic socio-political environments in an already hostile heteropatriarchal society. Their political interventions and presence against heteropatriarchal masculinities, harassment, and violence, with the introduction of feminist values, analyses, caring and accountability practices contributed to the social reproduction of resistance through the creation of safe spaces and the broadening of political agendas.

Additionally, through their participation in unions, interviewees would coordinate often in national calls for mobilization, occupying symbolic public buildings, using them as hubs for organizing and for the hosting of the social reproduction of resistance in the heart of the city. Eleni remembers her experience in the occupation of the building of Pritania (Πρωτανεία)⁵⁶ in 2019, in which eight of the interviewees participated, during the large strikes and demonstration

⁵⁵ “Μπάχαλα” (translated in English as ‘a mess’) is an expression used to describe clashes of protestors with the police, in which garbage bins, ATMs, banks and symbols of power are ‘broken’, in the city.

⁵⁶ “Πρωτανεία” is the Rectorate of the University of Athens, a public building in the heart of Athens that has been used for ceremonial purposes. The building has been occupied symbolically in the past as it also functions as a meeting point for pre-march gatherings, close to both Exarcheia and the Parliament.

held that year, demanding tenure for substitute teachers, teaching being one of the most feminized professions engaging the social reproduction needs of children and their families:

The occupation of the rectorate (Πρυτανεία), has stigmatized me. Athens was on fire and was set on fire by all of the teachers, not just the few of us who are in the collectives. People believed in this and our struggle and when we occupied the building we stayed there for a week. We slept there, organized our living and our tasks, others brought food, others cleaned, made banners, patrolled the building. We had daily assemblies with so many people. We knew that any moment the police could come and kick us out or arrest people. But every day I would wake up and look outside and see so many people gathering and supporting us (Eleni, online interview, 2021).

Such mobilizations have been part of long-term struggles in public education (see Figure 4.15), which has been increasingly attacked in the context of neoliberalization and privatization. Given the prominent role of those in education in these struggles, the latter are directly linked with the ability of precaritized populations and refugees to survive in the city and gain access to support and solidarity networks.



Figure 4.16: Substitute primary school teachers' national strike in downtown Athens in 2017 (Maria, 2017).

For those working in downtown primary schools, attended by the most impoverished and vulnerable children, city-wide mobilizations addressed both precarious conditions of labor and the severe infrastructural issues they face in their work environment (such as lack of teaching supplies and equipment, lack of heat and amenities and frequent floods).

To conclude, the socially reproductive labor of women and feminized subjects unfolded within the two interlocking spatialities of care, that of the neighborhood and place-based community and that of the city, is central to anti-capitalist placemaking in the urban. Within these spatialities the participants transformed hegemonic constructions of place and resisted the socio-spatial outcomes of neoliberal urban governance and of the austerity policies. Through their socially reproductive, affective and connective labor within anti-capitalist commons they coordinated and performed emergency solidarity responses across these two spatialities, involving

both city-wide and neighborhood-based networks, disrupting the socio-spatial imaginary of Athens as a neoliberal city.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has addressed the ways socially reproductive labor performed by the participants in the context of their everyday life and solidarity organizing is central to solidarity organizing and anti-capitalist placemaking in the city against austerity urbanism and its regimes of violence and dispossession. I provided an alternative timeline to the emergence of the ‘crisis’, post-2005 up to 2010, demonstrating, through the experiences of the participants, that political and spatial conflicts and claims around social reproduction and belonging were shown not to be a direct aftermath of austerity policies but rather a result of long processes of neoliberal restructuring, and its impact on the city level.

In this context, as these conflicts intensified with the implementation of austerity policies and neoliberal agendas of urban planning, the I demonstrated social reproduction that disrupted the socio-spatial imaginaries of the neoliberal city from above, and enacted one ‘from below’, enabling the survival and community building of undesired political subjects and various marginalized ‘Others.’ Social reproduction performed by the participants in their everyday life and solidarity engagement, emerged as an organizational modality of anti-capitalist place making in the city, evolving around: the survival of vulnerable communities through networks of care and the creation of grassroots infrastructure; the appropriation of spaces for care away from capital; the claiming of the right to participation against privatization, and resistance against touristification of their neighborhoods.

Following from there, I went onto present a more detailed account of how socially reproductive practices formed interconnected spatialities of care in the city. These spatialities formed constellations of care across the city, developing around place-based networks and

community on the level of neighborhood, as well as around city-wide organizing. Finally, I showed, through analyzing the participants daily routines and experiences in organizing, how their socially reproductive relational and commoning labor and caring, ‘grounded’ the social-spatial imaginary ‘from below’ into everyday life in the city, contributing to the sustaining of grassroots communities and anti-capitalist placemaking against austerity urbanism.

Chapter 5: The affective geographies of social reproduction and resistance: ways of knowing, ways of feeling and surviving in the city in ‘crisis’

5.1 Introduction

As showcased in the previous chapter, social reproduction emerged as the main cause around which anti-capitalist placemaking grassroots solidarity was organized in Athens through the formation of spatial constellations of care, all the while under the threat of state and far-right responses of extreme hostility and violence. In order to address the second research question of the dissertation, namely, “How do women and feminized subjects navigate, process, and produce the urban through affective, emotional, relational, and embodied understandings of the self and community through their everyday socially reproductive practices in the city-in-crisis?”, this chapter, centralizes the impact of these extreme responses of hostility as well as the transformational and subversive potentialities of social reproduction, by focusing on the affective dimensions of socially reproductive practices in the urban. The chapter draws on the interview data along with the results of the mental mapping exercises, the soundwalks/ field-recordings, and the GPS-tracked Photovoice, as well as photographic material provided by the participants, in order to represent the affective, emotional, and sensory aspects of their experiences in the (see Chapter Three for a detailed account of these methods and the data analysis).

In order to address the ways, the multiple, interlocking regimes of violence in the austerity city impact upon the bodies and the psyche of the participants, I draw on Carastathis’s (2015) spatial dimensions of affective economies of hostility, deploying the concept of *affective spatialities*. I also introduce the concept of the *affective topos* (τόπος meaning place in Greek, *topoi* in plural) to describe the space-time within which transformative affects are circulated via

embodied subjects engaged in practices of social reproduction and concomitant urban encounters, leading to the disruption of the heteropatriarchal constructions that organize urban livelihoods.

Building on the transformative and subversive potential of social reproduction unfolding within the spatiality of *affective topos*, I demonstrate the ways the participants develop *affective spatial strategies* through which they navigate and experience the city, developing collective and oppositional consciousness. These strategies evolve around the social reproduction of the caring self, the production of knowledge developed through sensory registers, and through their encounters within the urban palimpsest.

5.2 Affective struggles around social reproduction in Athens under austerity

Following from the struggles around social reproduction and belonging as well as the clash of clash socio-spatial imaginaries between the state and the grassroots, this section offers an analysis of the affective struggles and economies in everyday urban lives within which social reproduction has emerged as a terrain of contestation and as a site of conflict. It explores how the participants “felt”, experienced through affective regimes and spatialities of hostility and dispossession, generated by state repression, racist, and heteropatriarchal violence, amidst their day-to-day routines of survival, solidarity, and anti-authoritarian organizing.

The necropolitical sovereignty of the ‘crisis’ (Athanasίου, 2014, 2011; Carastathis, 2015) determines which bodies are worth the protection of the state and supra-national institutions as well as who is worth only having access to minimal resources of survival and under what conditions. Since the survival and making of a ‘home’ in the Athenian urban of ‘unwanted’ populations is considered an obstacle to its ‘competitive’ vision, that of an ‘orderly’ and ‘beautifully’ designed city, the enactment of different socio-spatial imaginaries of belonging

becomes the target of the state, heteropatriarchy, and the far-right, bringing social reproduction to the front of place-based contentious politics.

Here, I extend to the urban, Carastathis' (2015) conceptualization of “affective economies of hostility” (p. 4), articulating “racialised and gendered modes of belonging in and estrangement from the political community” (p. 4) in order to describe the affective atmospheres and spatialities within which women and feminized subjects socially reproduce communities, solidarity and anti-capitalist resistance. Thus, what I call here *affective spatialities of hostility* (see Figure 5.1 and

ArcGIS StoryMap 5.1 at <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/42ae3140b5914d62ab4dc0b9a8297640>)

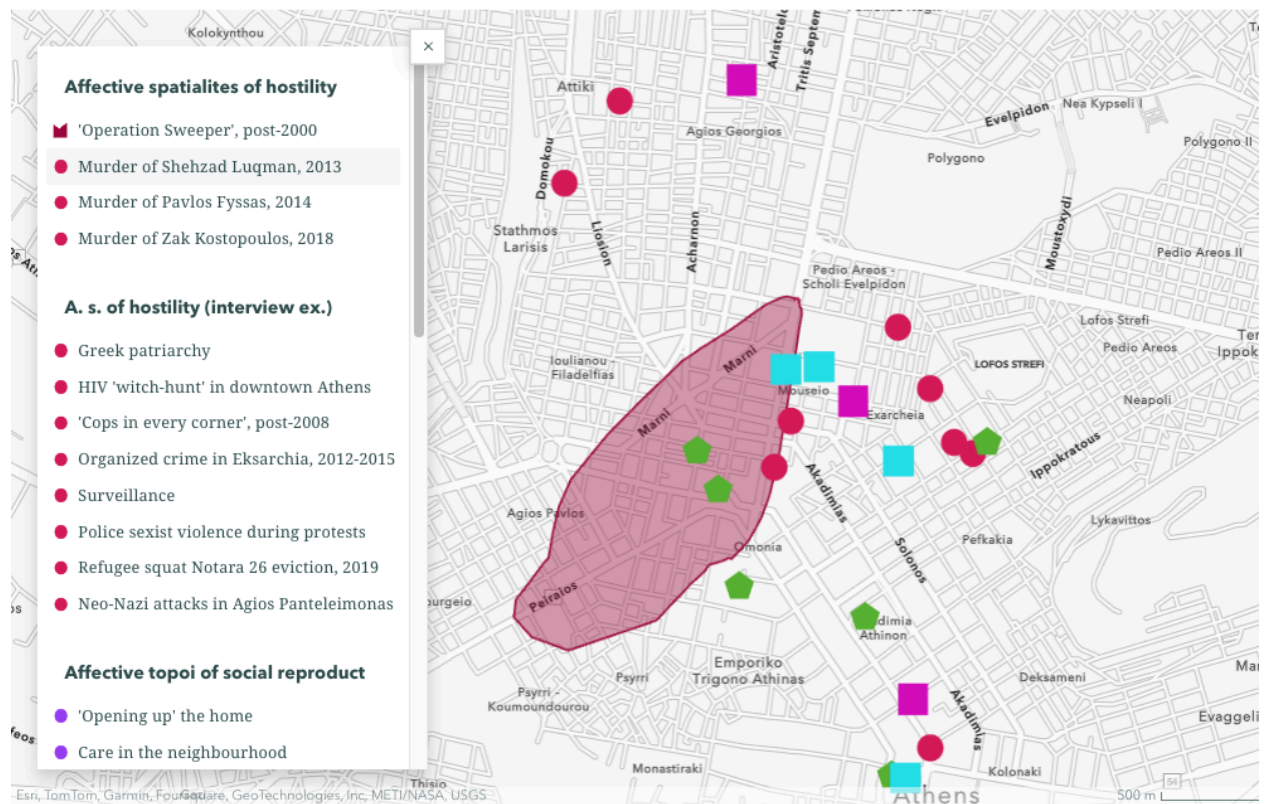


Figure 5.1: Screenshot of the ArcGIS StoryMap 5.1 depicting the affective spatialities of everyday life and social reproduction in downtown Athens- focusing on the affective spatialities of hostility (Katsikana, 2024). Access ArcGIS StoryMap 5.1 at

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/42ae3140b5914d62ab4dc0b9a8297640>)

refers to the circulation of affects in urban space, rooted in racism, sexism, homophobia, and other regimes of oppression, and the politics of fear and violence, that impact upon the ways participants experience urban livelihoods, along with their day-to-day routines of survival and resistance, through their interactions with individuals, groups, state actors, institutions, and the built environment of the city. These *affective spatialities of hostility* are not created in a void but are related to the processes through which certain socio-spatial imaginaries are enacted in the city through governing and planning practices. The ways affective spatialities of hostility are also impacted by the affective layers of collective memory and trauma that are part of the urban palimpsest and the participants' personal and collective histories. Hostile affects that dominated those atmospheres and spatialities are channelled through embodied aggressions, (hate)speech, signs and sounds towards those who are 'unwanted' and who don't belong in the vision of Athens as a competitive European metropolis, including those who enact and spread anti-capitalist and anti-racist socio-spatial imaginaries, defying austerity urbanism and European Union border regimes.

On the 27th of April 2012, Margarita a student at the time, after returning home from her waitressing shift, turns on the TV and sees the headshot of a young Russian woman in the emergency news reports, under the headline 'HIV ticking-bomb in the centre of Athens'. In the days that followed, a few blocks away from Margarita's apartment near Omonoia, after successive 'sweeper' operations (see ArcGIS StoryMap 5.1 at <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/42ae3140b5914d62ab4dc0b9a8297640>), 30 women (the majority, Greek citizens), appeared in the press conferences that followed as 'illegal immigrants' were arrested in downtown Athens, under the accusation of the intentional HIV 'contamination' of thousands of men through 'illegal prostitution', with their personal information, pictures, and addresses being publicized for the protection of 'public health' and 'Greek family-men'

(Athanasίου, 2014; Sioula-Georgouleia, 2015). As with many people involved in feminist and solidarity activism during that period, Margarita, was very angry but not entirely surprised:

When I saw her picture on the news, I went crazy, and it was all day, every day during those weeks, on the news... and everybody is saying it but that was one of the moments I felt ashamed to live in this country. They are doing all that to protect who? It was all for the elections...but that's how they value women...you will die in front of their eyes, and they don't care... (Margarita, online interview, 2021).

This 'operation', one of the many 'sweepers'⁵⁷ taking place in the downtown area, occurred a few months before the national elections of 2012, and the introduction (in collaboration with the European Union) of thirty refugee camps, outside major city centres and on the 'hot spot' islands (Tsavdaroglou et al., 2019). Through it, the figures of the 'family man' and the 'Greek family' (the supposed 'pillars' of respectable Greek society) along with 'our cities' were turned into symbols in need of protection by various 'threats' saved by heroic heteropatriarchal masculinities through physical, sexual, and psychological violence, punishment, imprisonment, deportation and murder. The 'cure' for these 'threats' was not only the physical removal of bodies from the public spaces of the city based on affective hierarchies of "(non)belonging" (Carastathis, 2015, p. 19) but also the determination of who could become an object of 'rightful' and 'justified' violence in the name of national cohesion, national salvation, and European proximity, through the enactment of "affective citizenship" (Ayata, 2023, p. 52).

In the meantime, the popularity of nationalist, anti-communist, and anti-anarchist attitudes within the police, who were known to have long histories of police brutality against leftists and anarchists, and the tolerance afforded neo-Nazi attacks (Dalakoglou, 2012b), enabled the 'covering up' of neo-Nazi hate crimes. In 2014, the tolerance of the state and the police towards the Golden

⁵⁷ Amidst the many 'Operation Sweepers' that have been taken place in Athens to this day, in 2013 the police 'gathered' 120 drug users and carried them to the Amygdaleza refugee camp, outside Athens in order to have them 'listed' by the authorities, and then released often with no way to return back to the city.

Dawn escalated in the murder of Greek anti-fascist rapper Pavlos Fyssas.⁵⁸ His murder sparked debates about whose life was deemed important enough to cause an uprising, revealing the affective hierarchies that characterized not only broader Greek society but also the leftist and anti-authoritarian milieu. Despite years of attacks, killings, and harassments through organized ‘patrols’ in downtown neighborhoods, including the murder of immigrant worker Shehzad Luqman,⁵⁹ in Petralona in 2013, it was only the murder of a Greek citizen, a cis man, that led to the persecution of the Golden Dawn as a criminal organization, but also to the heroification of Fyssas. Areti recalls the feelings of despair she experienced throughout those years (2012-2014) while living and protesting in the city and her realization of such hierarchies within activist communities:

It was in 2012, during the march of the 17th of November, when I had seen that old cinema downtown burning in front of me. It was wild...during that moment, I felt despair. It was very symbolic to me because I was in deep desperation in my life during that period. I didn’t know what to do, what will happen to me in the future. Then when they killed Fyssas, that desperation became rage. They were out of control, and they killed. And I was seeing that all this mobilization happened for a Greek guy, it made me really think. We had been to protests in Petralona for Luqman but it was never so massive. (Areti, online interview, 2021).

During the same period, in the neighborhood of Exarcheia (see Figure 5.1), the epicentre of organizing, the affective atmospheres of contentious urban politics were more evident than in any other area in the city. Interviewees who had been living in the area described a dystopian atmosphere characterised by extreme surveillance and the brutality of policing but also the

⁵⁸ Pavlos Fyssas was a Greek rapper who was active in the anti-fascist and solidarity movement in Athens, and who was murdered on 18th September 2013, in Keratsini, one the working-class neighborhoods of Athens, through a premeditated attack, as 50 supporters of the golden Dawn, armed with bats, assembled to carry it out.

⁵⁹ For a detailed account of this hate crime see the 2014 press release of the Hellenic League for Human Rights (Hellenic League of Human Rights, 2017).

accumulation of human suffering, especially through the presence of drug-dealing spots and organized crime in the neighborhood.



Figure5.2: The graffiti -covered streets of Eksarchia, 2020 (Areti, 2020).

Neighborhood assemblies and political collectives based in the area, publicly addressed the tolerance and corruption of the police towards organized crime, as part of the state’s effort to further demonize the area and appeal to conservative and far-right voters, with drug dealing being used as an excuse for evictions and raids in squatted buildings. Toula, who was organizing and working in one of the schools in the area, recalls:

At some point around 2012-2015 the situation was very difficult. There were gang battles in broad daylight, right outside my doorstep, with stone-throwing and everything... we are talking about stabbings, beatings, we were going out on balconies shouting, we didn't know what to do. It goes without saying that all this was done with the tolerance of the police. Even when people would call them, they would come and pick up the drug dealers and they would leave them after 15 minutes, around the corner, and they would come back at the square and start all over again (Toula, online interview, 2021).

It is important to note that such “clashes” happened often on a daily basis, with the extreme surveillance, targeted specifically at solidarity and anti-authoritarian activity, creating feelings of violation and suffocation for interviewees like Eirini, who lived in the area:

I moved into Exarcheia after 2008, after everything happened and for years from then on, there were specific periods that felt literally like the slogan “cops in every corner” (σε κάθε γωνία υπάρχει αστυνομία). I was going to the convenience store to buy toilet paper, and I was feeling all these eyes looking at me. Looking at my every move. I was suffocating... (Eirini, online interview 2021).

Their targeting by the police in their neighborhood, created issues in their ability to organize and to protest, causing distress and anxiety. Varvara often had to “...walk in circles around the blocks” until the riot police would leave the entrance of her apartment building, preventing anyone to cross or residents to get in (Varvara, online interview, 2021).

Over the years, the affective atmospheres of fear, suppression, and neglect, reproduced through excessive policing and surveillance, ‘sweeper operations’, intimidation tactics and overall socio-spatial injustice, resulted in the gradual dissolving of specific affective spatialities of resistance. The interviewees’ narratives revealed a ‘shift’ in the neighborhood around 2018-2019 (and continuing currently), signified by the ‘loss’ of collective character of certain public spaces, and the affective qualities that had made them important gathering and reference points for grassroots communities and marginalized groups.



Figure 5.3: A typical night in Eksarchia (Katsikana, 2023).

The police raids and refugee solidarity squat evictions that occurred in different waves, with a major ‘operation’ taking place in the summer of 2019,⁶⁰ also resulted in the destruction of community that had developed between collectives, residents (both Greek and immigrants) and the various ‘Others’ that found refuge and solidarity in the downtown neighborhoods. Fei, who organized and lived in the neighborhood close to many of the squats, recalls:

I know it might sound very banal to say that, but I felt like it was *χούντα* (junta) all over again. The cops closed the street, they wouldn’t let anyone come close so that they could evacuate the squat. They came at dawn, the cops and the MAT (riot police) to do what? And the door opened, and you saw parents coming out with babies and children, who all went to schools here in the neighborhood. I was very upset and angry...I was very angry. And of course, many of us tried to pass and they didn’t let us. There was a confrontation with the cops, where you hear all the sexist horrible things they say when they open their mouths. (Fei, online interview, 2021).

⁶⁰ For a detailed account of the operation see King and Manoussaki-Adamopoulou (2019).

Additionally, within the affective spatialities of hostility that emerged during the ‘crisis’, the rise of the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn party as well as the political discourses targeting leftists and antiauthoritarians as ‘enemies’ of the state and development, proved to render women and queer folks who were active in organizing and solidarity, as targets of attacks. Far-right supporters targeted them not only because they contributed to the survival of marginalized and ‘unwanted’ ‘Others’ but also because they were perceived as failing in their roles of reproducing the ‘nation’, through the rejection of ‘proper’ gender roles, sexualities, and gender performances (Athanasίου, 2014).

The fascists whenever they saw women alone, handing out pamphlets or doing something that was obviously related to solidarity, they attacked them. And the cops in in the protests always yell at you sexual stuff, and they will hit as much as they can, and you wonder what will happen to you if you find yourself alone with them. (Georgia, online interview, 2021).

The hatred towards marginalized groups was not a symptom of the ‘crisis’ but a result of long legacies of xenophobia, anti-leftist hate, and heteropatriarchal oppression that permeated all aspects of society and political life, from everyday interactions to state institutions aligned with the idea of proper ‘Greekness’. In 2018, in the heart of the downtown, close to Omonoia square, Zak Kostopoulos⁶¹ was beaten to death by the owners of a jewelry shop he was trapped in (as the owners supposedly feared he would attempt to ‘rob them’ and then escape (see Figure 5.3 and 5.4).

⁶¹A detailed investigation was conducted by the collective Forensic Architecture, as the mainstream coverage of the case initially obscured many of the details that revealed its dimensions as a hate crime, enabled by the police. For more on the case see Forensic Architecture (n.d.).



Figure 5.4: 'Street ZackieOh'. Activists replaced the street name sign in the spot where Zak was murdered, in 2018 (Alik, 2021).

The murder of Kostopoulos, was 'justified' in the press and political discourses due to the supposed right of Greek 'family-men' (νοικοκυραίοι) to protect their property from deviant 'Others', in this case, an openly gay man, long-time HIV+ activist and drag performer.



Figure 5.5: 'Zak Kostopoulos was murdered', poster in Eksarchia (Katsikana, 2022).

In the meantime, cases of violence against women would surface and be publicized in the news, with a clear pattern of 'justifying' violence towards 'immoral' women and girls, through victim blaming or through presenting routinized violence against women inflicted mostly by Greek men as monstrous 'exceptions', "since they tell us all the time these men have always been the good guys, and it's always the woman's fault" stresses Filio (online interview, 2021). During the

pandemic lockdowns, when the streets were empty, an alarming number of sexual assaults and harassments started happening, making participants much more cautious and fearful. Safety in Athens during night-time for interviewees emerged as a class issue, connected to the infrastructural neglect of the downtown neighborhoods but also the inability to own a car or use a taxi.

Overall, the narratives of the interviewees revealed how the affective economies of hostility and hierarchies of belonging and necropolitical governance translated into affective spatialities of hostility and dispossession in the urban, within which social reproduction and resistance unfolded.

The following section, discusses the ways in which social reproduction as an oppositional praxis, unfolds through affective encounters and relational processes, forming affective spatialities that foster the subversive and transformative capacities of caring, disrupting hegemonic assumptions and constructions around the spatialities of social reproduction in the city.

5.3 Affective *topoi* of social reproduction as an oppositional praxis

Despite the dispossession, emotional and physical harm inflicted by the synergy of austerity policies, neoliberalization of the urban, heteropatriarchal, state and racist violence, participants engaged in making a different life possible, building community beyond profit and creating spatialities of care. Therefore, in this section, I employ the concept of *affective topos* (τόπος meaning place, in Greek) in relation to social reproduction as an oppositional praxis, to describe the spatial and temporal conjuncture within which encounters between embodied subjects, nurture and enhance the circulation of affects in space, enabling processes of bonding, community building, empathy and resistance across difference.

In the particular context of the ‘crisis’ and its affective economies of hostility, *affective topoi* become the space-times within which social reproduction emerges as a political stake in the urban

amidst conflicting affective spatialities. Furthermore, the section discusses the affective and spatial implications of social reproduction as an oppositional praxis, arguing that within *affective topoi* care is politicized, reorganizing the urban around the social reproduction needs, as a public and collective issue and not as a private one. I argue that within these affective topoi hegemonic constructions of where social reproduction should be performed, in what ways, and by whom, are destabilized and subverted, disrupting the overall function of Athens as a neoliberal city.

Here, I define *topos* (whose meaning in Greek corresponds to the idea of place) in the context of the urban, as a spatiality that encompasses the personal and collective meanings, ideas, cultural representations, histories and memories that are attached to space, as a result of relational processes of life-making but also ,within larger hegemonic structures that organize urban livelihoods and power relations. The idea of *topos* does not rely on a fixed place-bound identity, but rather it is a product of relational processes of signification, practices of living, placemaking and subjectivity formation between different subjects. This means that *topos* is an open, porous, and relational idea of place, that may differ for individuals and communities on the grounds of their intersectional identities, embodiments, experiences, personal, and collective histories, their roles within social interactions and their sense of a place. Thus, there can be multiple affective topoi of social reproduction, with each one of them developing out of a particular space-time and encounter in the urban and being impacted by the relational attachment of the embodied subjects to the place that this space-time is embedded in. This relationality is a product of encounter within the urban palimpsest, i.e. the different layers of memories, histories, materialities that overwrite, blend, and interact with each other, leaving traces of past transformation in the materialities and collective memories of urban life. There, the *affective topos* emerges as the spatial relation through which

individuals and communities situate themselves within historical narratives, and processes of socio-spatial transformation in the urban.

As the urban is characterized by the emergence of affective ambiances that are formed by the interplay of bodies, practices, capacities, spaces, and the feelings these evoke, an *affective topos* becomes the space-time of encounter through which embodied subjects interact with each other, create new meanings and assigning them to space through practice. This ‘felt’ encounter with others, but also with place and its attached meanings and spatialities of power, triggers the ability to ‘bring together’ *affective threads* that connect current struggles and circumstances with both past collective and personal experiences, traumas, hopes and future imaginaries, as “sticky” affects (Ahmed, 2001). Nevertheless, *affective topoi* do not exist in a void but emerge as part of the urban fabric and the various lived experiences it fosters, along with the power relations that organize social relationships and shape urban form and its material dimensions.

In the context of this research, the *affective topoi* of social reproduction as an oppositional praxis emerge within an extreme mix of affective atmospheres, where state suppression, police brutality, predatory neoliberalism, racist violence, and heteropatriarchy co-exist and directly clash with those of solidarity, community, and belonging (see ArcGIS StoryMap 5.1 at <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/42ae3140b5914d62ab4dc0b9a8297640>). This clash of affective spatialities and ambiances create the conditions that render social reproduction into a political stake in the neoliberal city and politicizes acts of care. Even when these occur outside organized solidarity structures and networks, and are rooted in a relational and affective process that unfolds through the affective intensities of everyday life and the encounters that the urban fosters, the affective processes that created these topoi, are informed by and inform an oppositional consciousness,

At the same time, in the city and its public life, the affective topoi of social reproduction as an oppositional practice led to the transgression of hegemonic boundaries and conceptualizations around social reproduction, its ‘proper’ places and required roles in the urban as well as who and how is supposed to carry these out. Through bringing socially reproductive tasks out of the private into the public, collectivizing them and making them visible within the spaces of everyday routines in the city, the participants turn survival and solidarity into collective political issues to be dealt with ‘in common’. As socially reproductive tasks are being conducted ‘out of place’ in public through collective solidarity responses, marches and the occupations of public buildings, the affective *topoi* of social reproduction as an oppositional practice, disrupt the rhythms of the touristified city. Nevertheless, they foster the creation of affective spatialities of belonging in public and of ‘re-organizing’ the city around grassroots caring needs and at the same time ‘disrupt’ the carefully curated affective ambiances of Athens as a neoliberal city and its affective spatialities of hostility.

In the hostile affective spatialities of the neoliberal city, these affective topoi give spaces transgressive qualities as they foster practices of care, collectivity, and sociality beyond neoliberal dogma and the established hierarchies of necropolitical governance and (non)belonging. For Eleni, her small apartment in Kato Patisia, where she was living by herself, had become a symbol of her alienation from the community and her political roles. Financial precarity and long working hours had led her to only being able to go home and ‘crash’, waking up early each morning to go back to work. That changed though when she opened up her apartment to refugee mothers and children, who were living in makeshift tents in the downtown parks and squares, to take a shower and do laundry:

We were at a refugee solidarity assembly, and we decided to make a list of those who were able to offer their place for people to have a shower and wash their

clothes, and I offered to do so myself. A mother with two little kids came to my apartment, she was young and very polite, and the little ones were around 4 and 6 years old. Only the mother would speak a bit of English and somehow, we managed to communicate. She was worried about the children touching things in the apartment, but they were very nice, and they would just look around, reserved at the beginning. While the mom was taking a shower I played with the kids, I made them something quick to eat and they even helped me make the table and clean up afterwards. They stayed for five-six hours. The mother told me they wouldn't stay in Greece for much longer and that they would try to go to Italy. It was something that filled me with warmth and with energy. My house was not only for me, it was useful for these people, it got a different meaning, it was really truly open! (Eleni, online interview, 2021).

In this case, the apartment emerges as an *affective topos* of social reproduction where the encounter of an economically precarious Greek woman and a Syrian refugee mother and her children, defy the 'typical' spatialities of grassroots engagement but also neoliberal ideas of privacy and domesticity. Instead, the apartment temporarily becomes an open collective infrastructure for the coverage of the social reproduction of 'Others', and the building of allyship and resourcefulness that moves beyond the symbolic by providing access to material infrastructure and resources. Furthermore, the home becomes an *affective topos* where care-as-resistance is reproduced through the encounter of different socio-spatial trajectories of dispossession.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the typical downtown Athenian neighborhood has taken its current shape through the practice of 'antiparochi' (a land-for-flats scheme) during the period 1960s-1980s, dominated by the polykatoikia (πολυκατοικία) building. The dominance of the polykatoikia (πολυκατοικία) building has resulted in a dense urban fabric, lack of green spaces and vertical segregation—turning the neighborhood into an *affective topos* of encounter with difference, enabling the development of bonds and practices of care outside official channels of organized solidarity. Eleftheria recalls how such affective encounters led her, with the help of others in the neighborhood, to reach out and help a mother and her child living in the building next door through their adjacent balconies:

There was this little kid we would see in the balcony next to ours, playing alone or with the mom. The kid was throwing toys at us and smiling, and we would say ‘hi’ and smile back, he seemed to have some issues... but I hadn’t seen them in the neighborhood. One day, I went downstairs to the convenience store and asked the lady who owns it if she knew who that kid was and the family. It turned out it was a single mother who had difficulties getting by. We had been doing this thing with the lady from the store where we would take clothes and toys there and anyone from the neighborhood that needed these would go and take them. Eventually we talked to her and anytime there was something we didn’t need or we would find from others, we’d give it to her. We took an entire mattress with my partner and carried it to her apartment and helped her to find doctors for the kid too (Eleftheria, online interview, 2021).

In this case, the built environment of the polykatoikia (see Figure 5.5), the proximity that it offers to others living in neighboring apartments, but also the place-based networks of care that are rooted in the everyday life and relations developed in the neighborhood, were all crucial to the encounter of G. to the mother and her kid. This encounter led to an affective transgression of care, beyond the individualism and isolation of the neoliberal city.

In another space-time in the city, another affective transgression unfolds in the public spaces that are appropriated and temporarily host collective practices of care and belonging, with their assigned use and identity sentence unclear. Upon the arrival of large numbers of refugees in the port of Piraeus between 2014-2016,⁶² the majority of the interviewees participated in emergency solidarity interventions on the port’s piers (through different initiatives and networks of solidarity),

⁶² According to Human Right’s Watch in 2016, approximately “5,000 women, men, and children are sleeping in squalid, unsanitary, and unsafe conditions in passenger waiting areas, in an old warehouse, in tents outdoors, and even under trucks” (Human Rights Watch, 2016).



Figure 5.6: Athenian balconies in Kato Patisia (Nafsika, 2020).

often protecting refugees from police harassment, giving them information and helping them access downtown solidarity infrastructures, while also creating a welcoming atmosphere of solidarity. Maria remembers:

We went to the port in Piraeus. There were many refugees, most of them women with little kids and unaccompanied kids who had nobody. They were waiting on the pier and the gates, under blankets...the kids were running around. We brought food with us, and I sat and painted with the little kids that were alone. There was this little one that used to follow me around and hug me all the time. He was around five years old, and he stayed with me until we left. I couldn't part ways with them...It broke my heart because I knew some would end up with NGOs and they don't take care of them. It made me feel so bad that I couldn't take them at home with me, I had 4 other roommates at the time. I would go back home, and I had a roof over my head...But it helped me deal with my problems too, because I felt I had this community that did all these things...(Maria, online interview, 2021).

The piers, a transitory space of non-identity in the city, became a place of building solidarity and bonds through collective care, where differently precaritized and vulnerable groups encountered each other. The port was just one of the public spaces, where many refugees found shelter temporarily, from the Polytechnic School in Exarcheia, to the nearby Pedion tou Areos Park (Πεδίον του Αρεως) that hosted the collectivized care of solidarity, through makeshift schools, kindergartens, and kitchens. These affective encounters took place not only between the solidarity communities and those in need but also with the rest of society, who may not have had any involvement but stumbled across such actions on their way to work or to the supermarket, witnessing human suffering but also the possibilities of collectivity to transform the public spaces of the city. Tzenni recalls:

When we have our collective kitchen in the στέκι (hangout), because there is not enough space in the kitchen, we set up everything outside. We have an assembly in public where we coordinate and while some cook others set up the tables. We set them up on the sidewalk, and suddenly the rest of society passes in front of you, sees you eating and cooking your food with all these people. And that makes me feel freer, I feel stronger ... and very happy when people ask us what we do and take some food and come sit with us (Tzenni, online interview, 2021).

Thus, the *affective topoi* of social reproduction in the context of solidarity and resistance, give visibility, time, and space to collectivized and politicized care, making it visible in the public life and public sphere of the city, revealing and emphasizing the extent of the politics of neglect by the state and supranational institutions through the necropolitical hierarchies they enforce. This visibility creates a moment of transgression that also diffuses towards bystanders and onlookers, inviting them into the affective atmospheres of collectivity, while an assemblage of bodies, institutions, the built environment, signs, meanings, emotions and affects become a new layer in the urban palimpsest, part of the collective histories of the city that contribute to a place-based sense of place.

Besides, the transgressive uses of private and public spaces for the covering of social reproduction needs, organized spaces of solidarity and political engagement in the city became the *affective topoi* of encounter where those who could not participate in protesting due to their intersectional position found ‘alternative’ places and ways to engage in care as a political act. Aliko, an interviewee who had been previously incarcerated and was not able to participate in public protests and marches due to the conditions of her release, found community and belonging through grassroots organizing around care, teaching language courses and creative activities to immigrants, refugees and incarcerated individuals, crossing the city on a weekly basis, from immigrants’ schools to the piers, to the prison on the outskirts of the city:

In the immigrant school, I share joy and honor to be with them, to know that we are all human beings and the same blood flows within us ... I get a lot of love from my work with immigrants because they respect me and I respect them. Every time something happens, an emergency or COVID for example and I can’t make it, I feel like I am abandoning them because I know that for some, I am the link to building their lives here, to other communities and cultures. And I found meaning in my life too, I felt like I belong somewhere, besides my other friends... Same with prisoners... I have been there... and it makes me so happy to know that I can influence someone’s everyday life in a good way, in a creative way, to find something they could do from that moment on (Aliko, online interview, 2021)

Solidarity grassroots spaces become *affective topoi* of safety. Given the targeting of immigrants and refugees, but also anyone who is perceived as a deviant ‘Other’, marginalized and vulnerable individuals face challenges of mobility in the urban, having to avoid specific ‘dangerous’ areas in order to avoid sweeper operations and far-right attacks. At the same time, while downtown Athens becomes a short-term ‘chapter’ for many immigrants and refugees on their journeys to countries of northern Europe, solidarity spaces are crucial for their socialization and community, when there is not enough time to organically develop placed-based ties. Aggeliki stresses the importance of such places of encounter in the city:

There is no meeting place for people from different classes and communities, to closely interact with one another, besides solidarity spaces and their neighborhood. To live in these neighborhoods like Gkyzi or Kypseli or downtown, in general, means you see many people for short periods of time living next door and one day they disappear. Where can you meet those people and spend time with them? I got to actually spend time and meet people from other places and cultures when I was giving Greek language courses in an autonomous library, in Kypseli (Aggeliki, online interview, 2021).

Solidarity spaces as *affective topoi*, thus, are essential because the circulation of positive affects provides the grounds for different form of sociality, within which people coming from different struggles, traumas, and places of the world, develop relational bonds with one another, that helps them plan ahead and harbor hope for the future through the sharing of stories, strategies and common goals about their life (and literal) journeys.

The following section focuses on the affective strategies and knowledges the participants developed within their everyday life and organizing in the city, in order to navigate affective spatialities of hostility, showing how they were crucial for their capacity to care for themselves and others, to reproduce community, and reclaim urban space and the socio-spatial imaginaries around it.

5.4 Affective spatialized knowledges of resistance and belonging

This section argues that women and feminized subjects develop affective spatial strategies and affective spatial knowledges, in order to navigate the urban and defy the impact of the affective spatialities and economies of hostility. These affective spatial strategies evolve around the social reproduction of the caring self, meaning the maintenance of the capacity to participate in solidarity as well as to perform their caring and socially reproductive roles. Additionally, the affective spatial knowledges that are produced within everyday life in the urban, developed through two interrelated lived aspects: (a) sensory registers like sound, vision, smell; and through (b) the urban palimpsest within which individual, collective histories, experiences, and memories are inscribed in the built environment. These affective knowledges helped the participants to be able to navigate the city and its affective spatialities of hostility, to be able to reproduce their capacity to care for others as well as to identify spaces and moments of familiarity, belonging and joy in the urban and to share these knowledges through praxis, with others.

5.5.1 Affective strategies and social reproduction of the caring self

The affective strategies that evolved around the social reproduction of the caring self as an act of resistance unfolded for participants through both individual as well as collective practices of care that develop between their close-knit circle of friends (most of whom are women and queer folks), who often also participated in their activist and unionizing networks and spaces as part of an urban feminist praxis of care. The affective economies of the crisis that unfolded were based on the disposability of, and injustice and neglect towards women and feminized 'Others', thus an essential task within the processes of social reproduction of resistance proved to be the social reproduction of the caring self and the caring body, as a prerequisite for maintaining the ability to care for Others, in organizing and beyond.

For most of the participants caring and organizing roles were embedded within the heteropatriarchal regimes of Greek society, and for some they thus symbolized relationships of oppression, control, and unrealistic expectations for their socially reproductive labor. Thus, for the majority of the interviewees, crucial to the social reproduction of the caring self as an act of resistance was the insistence of interviewees to ‘go against’ their extended family that saw their engagement with politics and unionizing as an obstacle to their family caring-giving roles, either in the context of parenting such as taking care of their elderly parents and helping out in general. The interviewees were called to compliantly fulfil these roles in a society where ‘a woman’s place’ is largely thought to be devoted to domesticity, respectability, and a selfless devotion to the family, to the care and maintenance of wellbeing of husbands, siblings, the elderly, and children. Compliance is a belief system deeply rooted in Greek society, and hence has also been broadly reproduced within activist communities (Katsikana, 2021).

Therefore, the social reproduction of the caring and political self particularly for those who held the role of motherhood, required the emotional navigating of the hostility of their extended family. Setting boundaries was crucial to their ability to both engage in solidarity but also to combat feelings of oppression. Nafsika, who has been a prominent member of local grassroots communities and active in her union, addresses how her organizing was seen as conflicting with her role as a mother throughout the ‘crisis’, by her extended family, causing her guilt, anxiety, and sadness:

They said this distracted me from my maternal duties, and this was the main accusation against me, which upset me and hurt me. Instead of sitting down, let’s say, taking care of the children, reading, shopping, cooking ... There was a very serious accusation against working mothers, all of us who work, stressed, to take the children, to leave in order to go home and cook ... I felt like a very bad mother... I’d put the kids to sleep and go to the neighborhood assembly. Male relatives didn’t want me to hang out with their wives who were unemployed, so I don’t lure their wives into ‘irrational activities’. That is, to go out, to complain about something, to

go watch a theatre play. I also went out with my friends, teachers, and girlfriends to dinner, without my husband and because of that I was accused of ‘loose morals’ (Nafsika, online interview, 2021).

While ‘going against’ such attitudes were often something interviewees had to face on their own, sharing their experiences with other fellow activists-friends was a vital support network that offered them particular ways to navigate those issues.

Outside of the extended family environment, as Gazia elaborated, the physical burden of the caring role in their personal life and solidarity organizing was aggravated by the psychological (and often physical) violence of everyday sexism and harassment, in the affective atmospheres of heteropatriarchy and racism that dominated the city:

Women have to be a multi-purpose tool, run to do everything and be able to cope emotionally and physically with the role they have. And it’s not just the part of the fatigue. Every day, you might hear that idiot on the street, a guy harassing you, doing something to you, it somehow accumulates in the fact that I cannot exist in this world in this place in the way I want to exist. (Gazia, online interview, 2021).

Thus, an integral part of the social reproduction of the caring self was the development of spatial strategies through which participants navigated the city, either avoiding places that were connected with previous experiences of trauma, linked to police brutality and heteropatriarchal and racist violence or combating such attitudes through empowering practices of reclaiming their presence in public space. For most of the interviewees the heteropatriarchal nature of Greek society was directly manifested in the way women, feminized subjects and queer folks were treated in public, often with their safety being threatened, casually exposed to various forms of violence.

Sexism and homophobia, often overlapped with police brutality and surveillance, especially during protests but also in everyday aggressions that interviewees faced while circulating in the downtown neighborhoods and particularly Exarcheia. Despite being triggered by the traumatic impact of such experiences, participants claimed their space against police harassment, an affective

spatial strategy unfolding through the refusal to change their routes and through keeping calm. Fei recalls such a strategy that created feelings of empowerment against police harassment and surveillance in her neighborhood, Exarcheia:

When I see them in the street, I get really upset I can't lie to you. I know I can't do much, I have to go on with my day, but I feel like I am tolerating it (the police attitudes), I don't like it. They think they can silence me because they are cops? I won't change my route! I pass in front of them. Even if I wanted to avoid them, they are everywhere. Every time I do this, I confirm all the sexist things I hear from them. Every time...(Fei, online interview, 2021).

Affective strategies of care were also developed in the context of marches, in order to ensure the safety of protestors and to avoid exposing those who lacked experience of police brutality and possible arrests. Katerina describes her routine and strategies of care of going to a march from her house, in Eksarchia, to the downtown meeting points and then back home:

Depending on what kind of intervention it is, the police presence might be harsher. I am very careful, I always have my mobile phone with me, I usually talk to a friend of mine until I reach the meeting point safely, because they can stop you, search you and plant bottles or other things on you. Then, I look for the banner of my union, my collective, whoever I join the protest with. We say to everyone that is very important to be in an organized block in the march, not to lose your reference point, your banner or your comrades. Whatever happens, we don't run alone, we don't leave alone, we gather again, we take care of each other. And in the same way I go back to the point where the march ends, again I have my cell phone, if I go back alone and I'm not with a friend to take me to some point close to my home. Again, I try to go from main streets, talk on the phone and give courage to others too (Katerina, online interview, 2021).

Such affective strategies of navigating the city during protests were very important especially in marches where many unexperienced protestors joined, facing the excessive use of police violence and tear gas, resulting in them being unable to navigate the 'protesting' landscape.

In a similar vein, in an effort to maintain their emotional capacity to navigate everyday life, interviewees like Filio strategically avoid places of previous harassments, due to the emotions these cause them:

If I can avoid Omonia, I will. I think I have a lot of trauma connected with this area, that is ultimately about racism. I grew up in Kolonos, one of the areas that are considered dangerous, and I have witnessed racist crimes that have taken place there. Until I was five years old, I grew up around Vathis Square...my parents had a kiosk in the neighborhood, they knew everyone, they were friends with the people working at all the bars. I was not afraid as a kid. But one day someone tried to get me in their car, and another time close to Kypseli, a guy tried to push me in his apartment. To this day I have a hard time walking past those places. (Filio, online interview, 2021).

Similarly, the majority of the interviewees also expressed their anxiety in relation to walking home during the nighttime, coming back from work, a night out, or returning after collective processes and protests that lasted long hours. Interviewees developed specific strategies in order to ensure their safety especially when in public space at night, following specific routes depending on the time of the day and how busy the area seemed.

Look, in Athens, you have to make a decision...Are you going to live in fear, live inside your home? Or are you going to live your life? I've decided that I can't live in fear in my own city. I can't be afraid of even my shadow or stay in because of that. I tell myself to not be afraid and I believe it. And if I do, I will talk to someone on the phone, I will walk faster. But when I go through a dark street or a park, and I get out of it and nothing has happened to me, I feel so happy. I get into my home, and I feel happy I made it back safe, and I am happy I was able to walk home. (Sasa, online interview 2021).

Within the devastating emotional cost of navigating everyday life and caring roles in the context of affective spatialities of hostility, interviewees engaged in conscious affective strategies of navigate the city through the spatialities of positive affects linked to place-based memories of being taken care of by loved-ones.

I like passing from certain streets around Omonoia (Square) and Aioulou (Street), where there were these cheap clothing shops... We used to go there with my mom to shop, when I was younger, and now that I have lost her, passing by brings so much joy and nostalgia, in a good way. Warm feelings. And down the street, from these my grandpa used to run a small shop and we would go see him while he was working. Nothing is there anymore but I keep these in my mind (Margarita, online interview, 2021).

As can be seen in the ArcGIS StoryMap 5.2 (see Figure 5.7 and <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/42ae3140b5914d62ab4dc0b9a8297640>) which depicts six participants' 'own Athens' through places of personal and collective significance as well as their

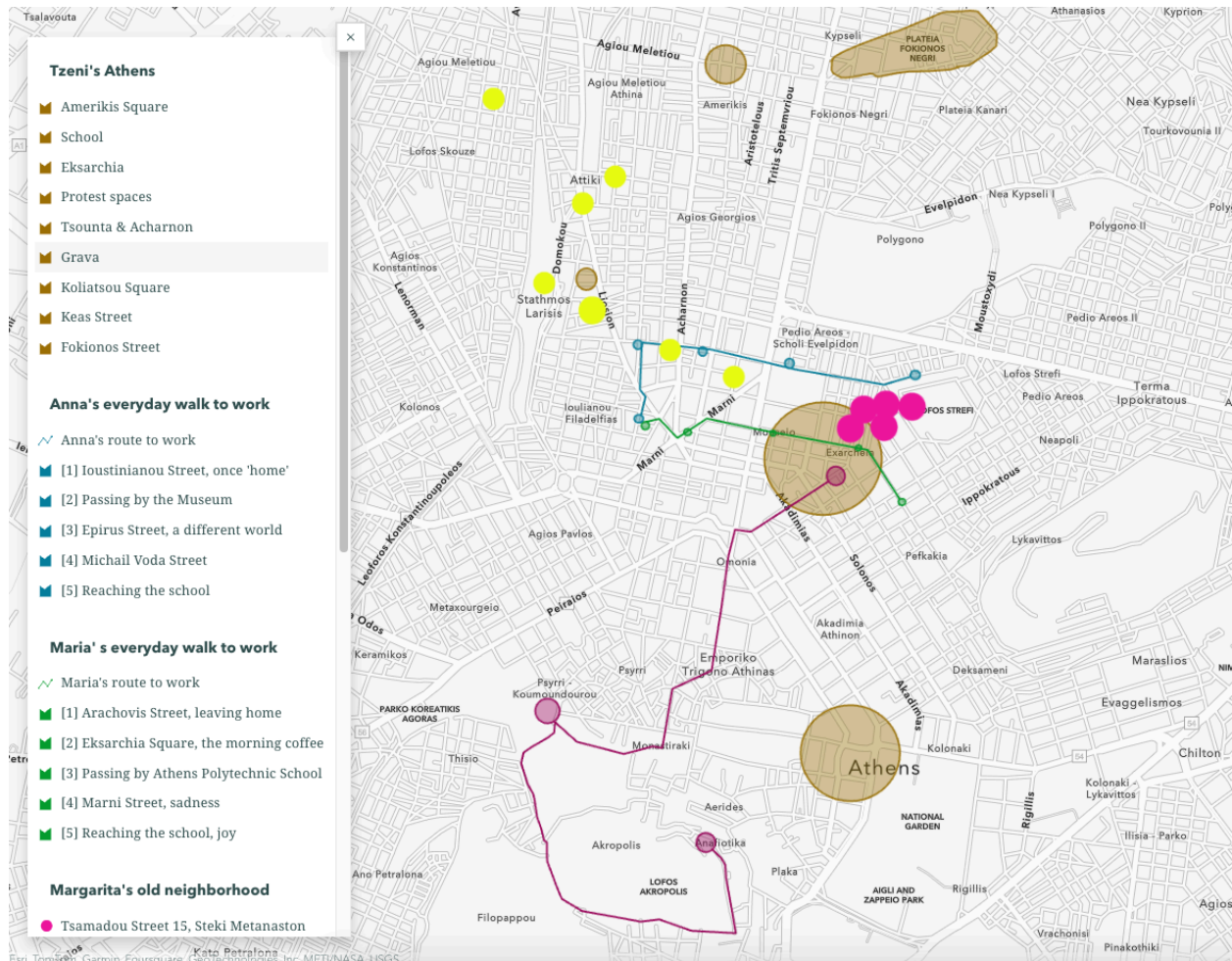


Figure 5.7: Screenshot of ArcGIS StoryMap 5.2 depicting six participants' 'own Athens', though their significant everyday places and routes, downtown (Katsikana, 2024). Access ArcGIS StoryMap 5.2 at <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/42ae3140b5914d62ab4dc0b9a8297640>

'favourite' routes they follow during their everyday routines, the affective atmospheres of Athenian 'cityness' as well as the personal and collective memories inscribed in the urban palimpsest were crucial to the embodied experience of the urban. Maria's everyday walk to work (see Figure 5.7 and ArcGIS StoryMap 5.2) is described as an everyday "journey" that takes

through various often conflicting emotions informed by her encounters with the city and its familiar and unfamiliar residents, with the past and her hopes for the future:

There is a man I see in the neighbourhood, outside my place...I don't know if he is homeless, but he is there every morning. He usually asks me for money and I help him when I can. I pass form the [Eksarchia] Square, I see the people there that drink their morning coffee, I get my own to go, say 'hi' to people... I pass by the Polytechnic. Every time I see the graffiti, you know, I have seen it a million times, every time it catches my eye, it moves me. I remember assemblies and demonstrations... I cross Patision to go to work in Vathis Square, which is the most difficult part for me. I pass in front of some spots where many users gather there because there is a rehab facility near by...then I pass in front of the girls that do street work there...no matter what time it is they are there. I feel sadness, a disappointment, a frustration and a shame for this society... these girls are trafficking victims most of the time...I pass by at two pm in the afternoon sometimes, and they are standing there. Just imagine having walked this route and then I reach the school and the kids are waiting for me at the door. I get in and all of them come to me and yell “MISS-MISS!!” and i forget everything. The children give me a lot of joy. For example, recently I lost my dad, I went to the previous school and I met the children I taught on their fist grade at the school, after two years... and the love I received was so intense (Maria, online interview, 2021).

Living in the downtown neighborhoods for many meant they lived in close proximity to places of collective significance within their activist and political communities, such as places of organizing and regular meetings as well as places of political action where their resistance practices had unfolded, that filled their everyday routines with encounters with memories of collectivity and empowerment. Tzenni recalls (see work Figure 5.7 and ArcGIS StoryMap 5.2):

I pass every day from places that take me back to very vivid memories of collective actions, like the building we squatted in, for example, the Rectorate (Πρωτανεία), or meeting places in Sepolia where we have assemblies or gatherings, and I remember the first times, when I started to get involved and I became more confident and independent to do such things. Exarcheia and Syntagma too, there are all these spaces of collective actions that give me the feeling of strength, independence, militancy. Having that in my day reminds me what I am able to do, myself or with others (Tzenni, online interview, 2021).

Tzenni's mental mapping exercise (see Figure 5.8) revealed the emotional perception of 'her own Athens', which consists of places of belonging and inhabitation as well as of places of power and exclusion.

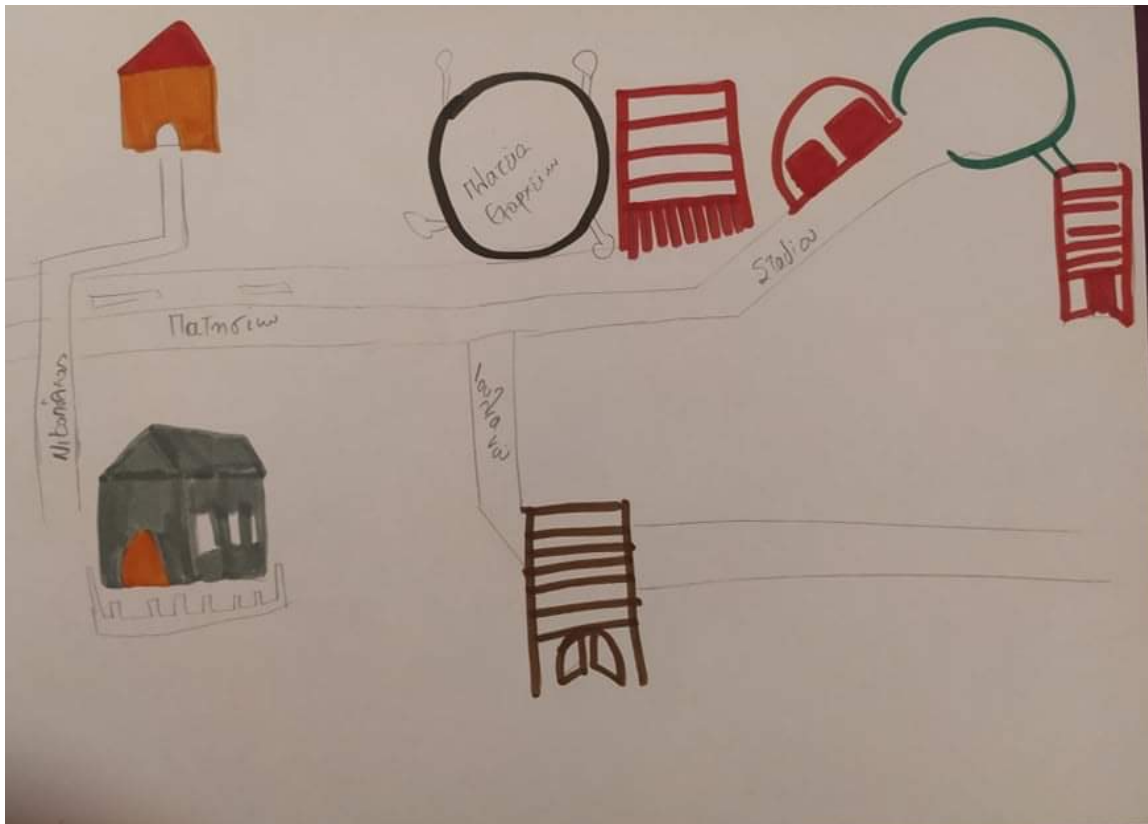


Figure 5.8: Tzenni's mental map (Tzenni, 2021).

In the contextualization of her map, Tzenni explained she chose to use bright colors in order to depict: places attached to feelings of acceptance, empowerment, political engagement, and community such as the neighborhood, and her parents' and her own places in it; places of happy memories she passes through everyday, on her way to work; and places of collective and solidarity endeavors. On the other hand, symbolic places of power, such as the parliament building, or the tourist areas of the city and its downtown commercial district were drawn with dark colors, to express the negative connotations these had for her, as she had experienced them through protests and police suppression.

On the other hand, Fei’s mental map (see Figure 5.9) shows a more detailed representation of her everyday routines in the city, where the affective spatialities of belonging are bordering with geographies of touristification and profit. Friends’ places, her childhood home, meeting spots for a ‘night out’, places of self-care, all trace routes along which she also feels safe to navigate the city, as she emphasizes “everyone I know is around, and I know all these streets too, even though the area changes, it still feels like home” (online interview, 2021).

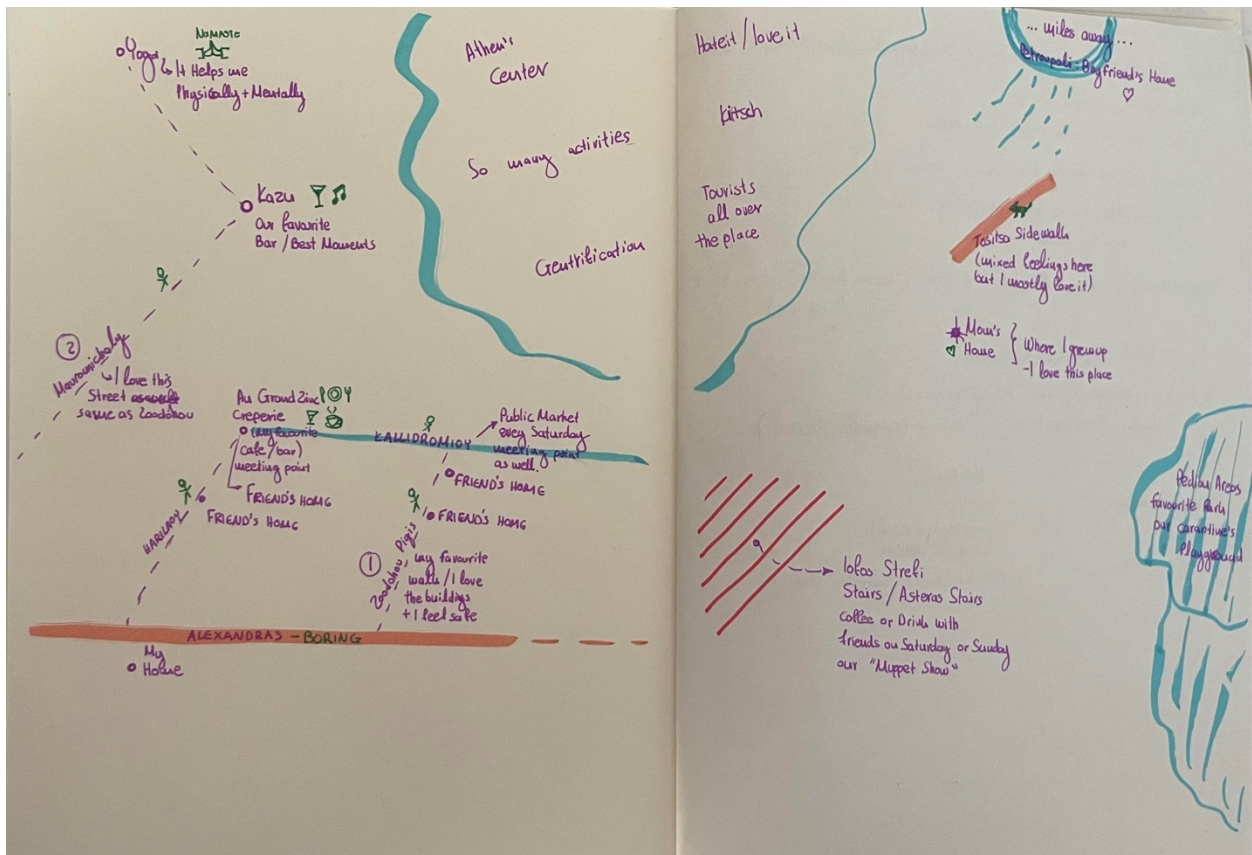


Figure 5.9: Fei’s mental map (Fei, 2021).

Besides navigating the city intentionally through affective spatialities of belonging, as well as overcoming feelings of fear and reclaiming public space, for the majority of the interviewees their close friend group and particularly other women and queer folks were crucial to their affective strategies of the social reproduction of the caring and political self. Close friendships, many of which were established in activist, union and grassroots circles, but also friendships rooted in

neighborhood life, created geographies of belonging, warmth, and joy for the interviewees and overall emotional and material support, as interviewee Aliki expressed:

I am overworked and my health is deteriorating. I am also lucky because I have friends who love and support me, when I do not have money for my medication or to eat or anything. No money to go to the supermarket or pay my rent. I think that if I am struggling so much with all the help and support have, what happens to all the people I see in the streets? (Aliki, online interview, 2021).

Aliki was one of the participants who also participated in the method of field recordings/soundwalks, where she chose to record her favourite route in the city (See Figure 5.9 and ArcGIS StoryMap 5.3 at <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/42ae3140b5914d62ab4dc0b9a8297640> Sound Clip 5.3 at recording at <https://youtu.be/q5z4ipl1XSA>)

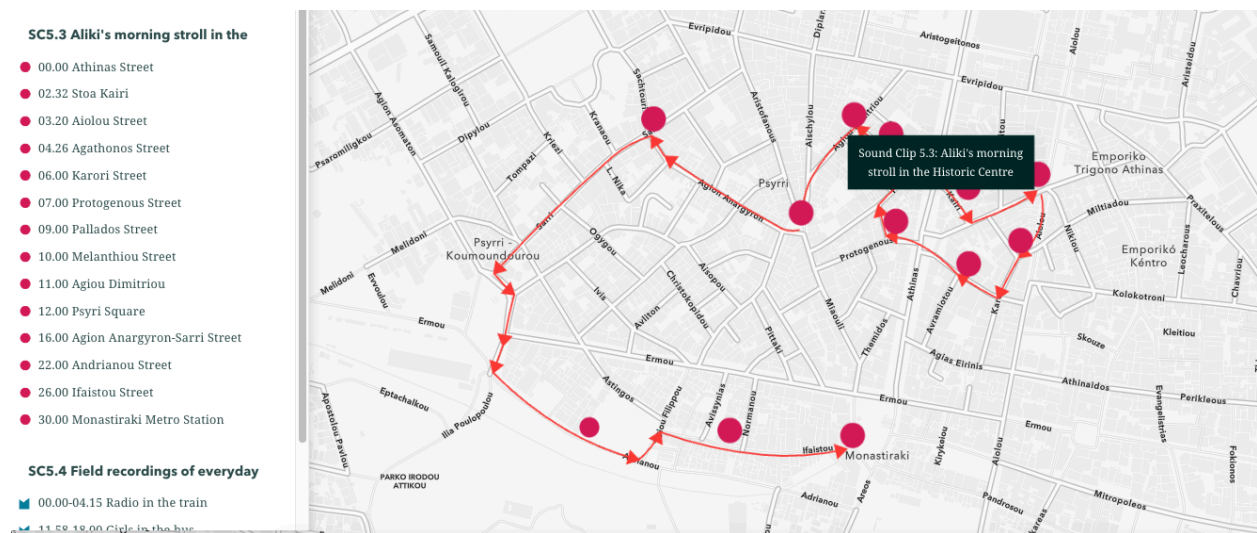


Figure 5.10: Screenshot of ArcGIS StoryMap 5.3 that depicts the routes of soundwalks and locations of field recordings of everyday life in the city, focusing on Aliki's morning stroll in the Historical Center (Katsikana, 2024). Access ArcGIS StoryMap 5.3 at

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/42ae3140b5914d62ab4dc0b9a8297640>

This was a route that she followed often, while completing her routines of social reproduction, and through which she could meet and catch up with many of her good friends, who worked in small shops or lived in the downtown area. Aliki describes in her recording how the

‘quiet’ non-gentrified streets of the historic centre make her feel at peace, away from the harsh sound and noise of the city. Walking amidst tourist who speak in foreign languages, she describes that she feels as if she is going on vacation, something she hasn’t been able to do in years. She describes that she stops by all the little shops where her friends are working and often sits there with them, intentionality ‘filling’ her time of unemployment with moments of joy and togetherness. Alike, who had been previously incarcerated and was estranged from her family who was living in another city, saw her friends as her chosen family, that helped her not only to re-adjust after her release but also to develop a community that supported her when she could not afford to cover basic needs. Close friendships in the context of organizing, functioned as safe spaces amidst the sexist atmosphere that permeated solidarity and unionizing spaces where interviewees had been dismissed and devalued as political subjects due to their gendered performances.

For those working in jobs where they had to perform socially reproductive roles in their interactions with vulnerable groups, the emotional costs of doing such work, overlapping, and intersecting with their grassroots organizing, revealed that the social reproduction of the caring self, was impossible to navigate without their peers who faced similar issues. Nafsika who worked as a teacher in the downtown schools (see Figure 5.11) where most of the refugee children went to school, elaborates on the emotional cost and coping mechanisms she adopted:

One day you might have a refugee kid that disappears and the next day, a kid whose dad beats her mom. Others have serious financial difficulties. These areas, it’s a suffering population, really. For all of us who live here, the burden of human suffering is too heavy, too heavy. And for all of us who work here with the kids, we see it first-hand. We see so much, every day, it’s impossible to not affect us. Let’s say Mohammed is gone... we now know from experience when a child will suddenly “go missing”, you can tell by the way they look at you. The kids have clear instructions not to tell anyone anything. The last one that left me, left me a month ago, from Afghanistan, we learned that they ended up in Germany. We take care of them, but we never get to say goodbye to these children, nor to the parents,

nor to the mothers with whom we have a very good relationship. This is too difficult, I don't know... I dealt with it a little bit with the help of therapists, and I was talking about all this sadness that I am going through, this pain. I need the help of a specialist. I can't have this fight. How can I tell you? The weight of this is too much...(Nafsika, online interview, 2021).

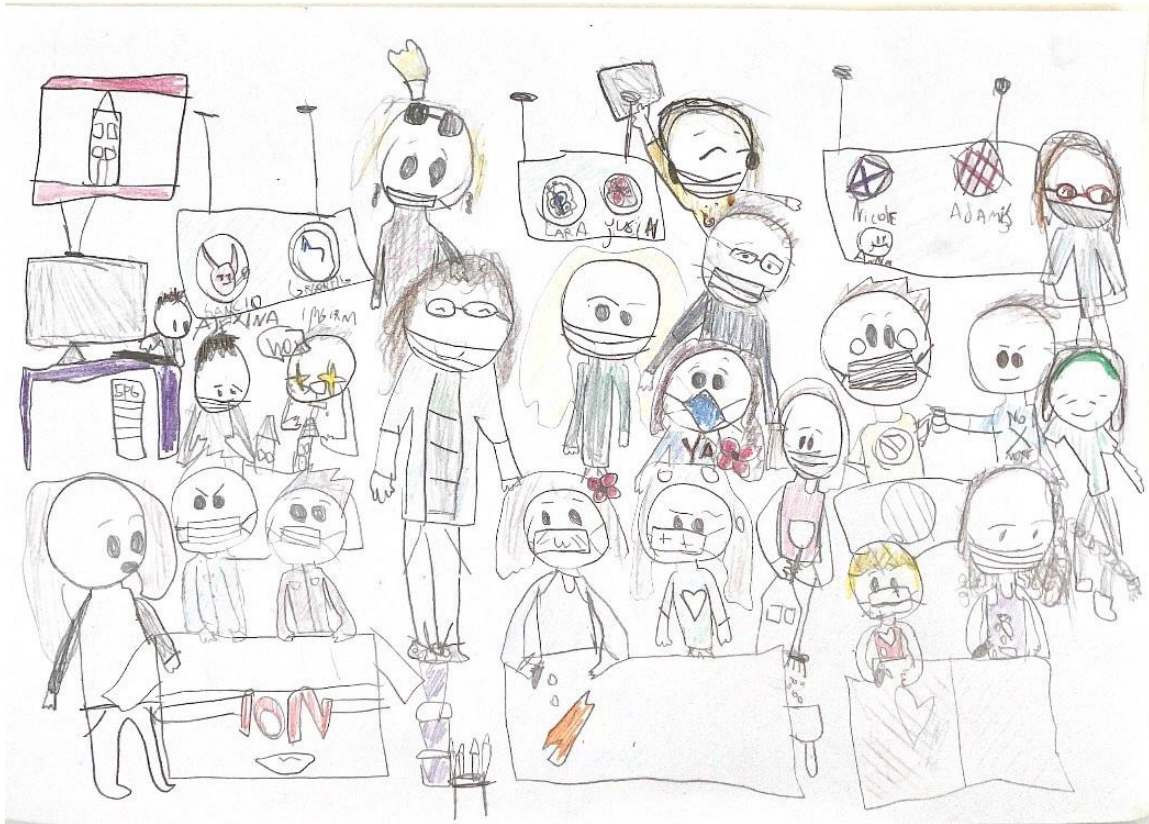


Figure 5.11: Pandemic classroom drawing by one of Nafsika's student in Sepolia (Nafsika, 2021).

It is important to note that seven of the interviewees acknowledged that relying on professional support (from a therapist or a psychiatrist) was perceived as an act of care that reduced or eliminated the emotional labor their friends (while often facing their own issues) had to perform in order to help them. For those for were not able to afford mental health services, their proximity to social centres and squats, in their neighborhood, was essential to the maintenance of their mental well-being through solidarity resources as well as participating in events (fundraising concerts and parties) where the community would gather.

While the social reproduction of the caring self implies engaging in tasks that the individual was responsible for, interviewees relied strongly on the close-knit interpersonal relationships and friendships with other women and queer folks who shared their anxieties, problems, hopes, and dreams. Such affective strategies moved beyond the commodified practices of “wellness” that emerged during the ‘crisis’, as well as notions of the neoliberal selfhood, responsabilization, and the professionalization of feminist activism. Instead, these strategies were rooted in relational bonds and feminist praxis in the urban in the context of solidarity communities and spatialities. This feminist praxis emerged as transformative through the relational intersectional building of communities away from profit, through mutual respect, reciprocity, and a commitment to oppose patriarchy in the particular context that this appeared in the lives of the interviewees.

It is important to stress here that while interviewees saw their practices aligning with feminist politics broadly, for interviewees like Maria, who had been part of feminist collectives, there was a clear distinction between grassroots, anti-authoritarian approaches on the one hand, and performative, opportunistic academic and NGO-feminism, on the other hand, Maria decided to depart from a feminist collective/space due to her refusal to engage in exclusionary practices caused by the professionalization and elitism that made the pursuit of funding and academic recognition priorities, creating hierarchies particularly among those who were knowledgeable about ‘Western’ and US-produced feminist and queer scholarly works and those who were not, with attitudes of “you better shut up because you don’t know about all this” (Maria, online interview, 2021).

On the contrary, the interviewees’ feminist engagement relied on a grassroots approach, rooted in everyday experiences of heteropatriarchy and exclusion, from working-class, non-academic, feminist backgrounds as well as intersectional positions, and intergenerational histories.

The affective strategies that the interviewees developed in order to navigate the affective spatialities of the city, were crucial to their perception of the urban as well as to their perception of their own intersectionality.

5.5.2 Affective spatial knowledges of resistance

The interviewees developed affective spatialized knowledges through their everyday routines and resistance practices in the urban, which they incorporated into their affective spatialized strategies of survival and care. These affective knowledges are essential not only to the formation of affective bonds with place but also to the intensities that “move” individuals and social groups to mobilize ‘together’, that develop through personal and collective experiences as well as through public history and collective memory within the urban palimpsest. Affective knowledges are “bound up with what makes us sweat, shudder, tremble, all those feelings that are crucially felt on the bodily surface, the skin surface where we touch and are touched by the world’ (Timperley, 2024, p. 34) defying the Cartesian mind/body dualism. At the same time, embodied subjects accumulate affective knowledges through their encounters within the urban palimpsest, that incorporates sensory elements and affective qualities, producing multiple layers of meaning. The layers of the urban palimpsest are created through the occurrence of daily life, “supported by experiences, perceptions and sensations... associated, preserved, and stored to be recalled in memory” (Turgut, 2021, p. 11).

Therefore, navigating everyday life in Athens, within affective spatialities and economies of hostility has led interviewees to develop *affective spatial knowledges* that were an integral part of their affective strategies of resistance and social reproduction. Here, the *term affective spatial knowledges* refers to knowledges linked (a) to sensory registers and perception of the urban that

are linked to the affective spatialities of hostility but also affective spatialities of care and resistance; and (b) to the urban palimpsest within which individual and collective histories and experiences are inscribed in both the physical realm of architecture and the urban landscape but also in the development of a sense of place and the collective memories attached to certain places in the city. These two types of knowledges are interrelated, and they can both trigger the emergence of affects and memories, occurring as intertwined processes with the everyday practices of living and caring in the urban.

Affective knowledges are crucial to the formation of affective strategies of care, resistance, and collectivity as they are informed by individuals' and social groups' intersectional and embodied experiences of the urban, 'learned' meanings and strategies of survival. These knowledges are not just developed and held by people individually but are transmitted affectively as shared ideas of place, through relational bonds and embodied practices, connected to collective identities as well as socio-spatial imaginaries. As these knowledges are developed within affective spatial strategies of navigating the urban, they were both informed and were informed by the conflicting affective spatialities of urban life during the 'crisis': they "draw on and produce a critical consciousness to confront and redress historically and geographically specific conditions of oppression and exploitation at various scales" (Katz 2004, p. 251).

(a) Affective spatial knowledge through sensory registers

During the interviews, the participants referred to very specific sensory registers in the urban that helped them navigate the affective spatialities of hostility, but they also identified positive affective spatialities that made them 'feel good' and 'safe'. These affective registers referred to sound, smells and sights that emerged temporarily but frequently and were associated with specific

events in the urban. Interviewees ‘learned’ to incorporate these affective knowledges in the ways they navigated urban space in order to avoid specific situations, either because of the emotional cost of getting ‘triggered’ or to avoid the possibility of physical harassment or arrest, or any interaction that could be dangerous for them. Katerina, who had been living and working for years in the area of Exarcheia explains:

When there is a smell of burned garbage or wood or something like that you know it’s a garbage bin on fire which means that the *μπάχαλα* (clashes with the police) are going to start near by....Now in the protests, especially the ones happening every December, that is the standard... during the march you might also smell benzine and that usually means there are people with molotovs and then you have to decide if you are going to be near that or not...And then the smell of chemicals the police uses... if you are close enough to smell it your eyes burn or your nose starts itching, your throat...it is very distinct, and even if you haven’t heard the sound of them dropping the chemicals, since you smell it and you think where you are, for example, in Exarcheia, you can usually tell where something is up... (Katerina, online interview, 2021).

Some of the above smells, as mentioned by Katerina, are accompanied by distinct sounds, that help those familiar with the area to identify the location of the event, something that usually follows by checking online or with others to see if there are any reports. For the majority of the participants, seeing and smelling fire acquired a very particular connotation especially through the urban clashes of 2008 when the centre of Athens was ‘burning’ for days.

The sounds of the affective atmospheres of hostility included the “familiar” sound of the MAT (riot police) running in the streets, especially in the neighborhood of Exarcheia, disrupting everyday life and cultivating a climate of fear. Natassa explains how the sounds of the motorcycles of the DELTA (motorised police unit) were very traumatic for her, especially as she had witnessed and encounter them roaming in the city centre, especially during marches and protests:

When I hear that sound of all these motorcycles moving together...you know its them and you have to move to the side because they don’t care about anything. After the November 17th march, I remember on Alexandras Avenue, they would go up to people, not caring if they would harm them or drag them down...Old, young they

didn't care. They run in folks and they have the audacity...like the street is theirs...(Natassa, online interview, 2021).

During the protests, sounds like the 'breaking' of a Molotov cocktail or the 'dropping' of chemicals, were crucial to the ability of participants to navigate space safely, when clashes with the police broke out and many protesters could not see but only hear what was happening. Hearing proved crucial for the collective practices of care protesters wanting to keep everyone safe, especially when the use of tear gas by the police didn't allow them to see, as Spiridoula stresses "you have nowhere to go...you have to be super aware and present and remember the space around you from earlier" (online interview, 2021).

For the majority of participants, living their everyday life in the downtown neighborhoods, became very useful in terms of their perception of urban space in the context of protesting. Having already a spatial awareness of the small streets and 'hiding spots', from their everyday routines in the city, interviewees who participated in the more 'violent' protests (particularly the ones every December), mentioned that during the marches they would look to the small streets trying to identify possible escape routes and hiding spots. Similarly, seeing figures with shaved heads, dressed in black (along with specific indicators such as clothing stamps or tattoos), fascists (φασίστες), in specific areas in Kolonos or Agios Panteleimonas was always an alarming sign, as it indicated the presence of far-right supporters in the area.

At the same time, affective spatial knowledges also included the identification of sensory registers with positive connotations that led interviewees to choose a specific route over another, to 'guess' where a collective solidarity action was taking place and to join it spontaneously. Collective cooking, taking place in the street or the sidewalk, outside hang-outs and social centres would lead participants who were familiar with the area to find them, filling the atmosphere with

the smell of Greek and other cuisines of the immigrants and refugees who participated. Music coming from parties and concerts would also be a sensory indicator of a collective action with the type of music often denoting the political affiliation of the organizers and the participants.

At the level of the neighborhood such sensory registers as hearing music and conversations, laughter or the smell of cooking helped them ‘check in’ with their neighbors, especially those in vulnerable positions, since they were seen as indicators that “nothing bad had happened to them” (Giorgia, online interview, 2021). During the pandemic, the densely built environment of the downtown neighborhoods, created a sonic environment of isolation that was often characterized by the ability to “hear every little thing” (Anna, online interview 2021) that was happening in neighboring apartments or even hear conversations happening in the buildings across the street, through balconies, open windows, and the common spaces of the buildings.

Participants who conducted the soundwalks and field recordings in places and routes of everyday routines like Eleftheria, shopping at the farmers market in Kallidromiou Street, in Eksarchia, a task that the participants both anticipated and ‘feared’ due to their financial difficulties (see ArcGIS StoryMap 5.3 and Sound clip 5.1 at https://youtu.be/QW_3t3F0YHY). Nevertheless, the vibrant sounds of the farmers market provided satisfaction when participants ‘scored’ a great bargain with vendors who shouted out loud their the ‘good quality’ of their products along with their prices. Aggeliki, on the other hand, conducted a series of field recordings during her everyday commutes to work across the city (to her job as a tutor), travelling on the bus and on the train, as well as including her waiting times for transport and at a supermarket (see ArcGIS StoryMap 5.3 and Sound Clip 5.4 at <https://youtu.be/TFBmAsGWZkM>).

(b) *Affective spatial knowledges within the urban palimpsest*

Life and organizing in the downtown neighborhoods was also connected with a very close proximity with places of collective significance that were fundamental to the development of the political consciousness of the interviewees (see ArcGIS StoryMap 5.1). These places were not only part of major events of major political significance that had been celebrated within public collective history (such as the uprising of the Polytechnic school in 1973), but also events that had been largely obscured from official and mainstream accounts (such as the extent of police brutality against various ‘Others’). Having such places embedded within routes of everyday life and socially reproductive routines as well as within their organizing and collective spatialities in the city, contributed to the experiencing of affects that were both ‘triggering’ and ‘moving’ for the interviewees, forming the affective spatialities that are crucial for the social reproduction of resistance and that of political consciousness. Filio. emphasizes:

In Syntagma there were exactly the same marches or that at the point where you step a man has died and you know it because you have seen it in a photo, you still see the bullets on the wall, it is a very emotional city for me. Even in the Polytechnic we say that in the upper corner Kaltezas has been killed and it is very recent, in 1985, and in the lower corner opposite Patision Street, a student who was killed by the junta... the whole place is very charged. It amazes me that I pass in front of the Polytechnic School that is a very big part of modern history, and at the same time having all these experiences ourselves in there, from marches and assemblies being in there with cops throwing tear gas from outside in Strournari (Street) (Filio, online interview, 2021).

Thus, places of historical significance for the social movements of the city (and the country), co-exist with current struggles and mobilizing, as well as with everyday routines of survival, forming affective threads that link intergenerational experiences, personal and collective memories. Margarita recalls the moment when she first participated in one of the large assemblies

in the Polytechnic School, in Exarcheia, one that she had always seen in pictures of previous historic mobilization, that then became her own experience:

You see, it's the same marble, and you stand on the same spots where people were pointed at from shooters in the balconies around... Even if you don't agree with the politics that followed, from that generation of politicians, it is still very moving and emotional. It makes me feel like I am carrying a bigger responsibility...(Margarita, online interview, 2021).

Participants like Margarita, mentioned that, moving about in the area made them research further about the history of certain places and buildings, while others would learn about such histories from their companions. For others who had always been living in close proximity to such places, protesting and organizing gave them the opportunity to “really observe the public space and connect the dots” (Kaiti, online interview, 2021) of collective and obscured histories. At the same time, interviewees' everyday routines unfolded in public spaces with memories of police brutality, racist and heteropatriarchal violence that had stigmatized anti-authoritarian feminist and queer communities (see Figure 5.12):

I think that it's very shocking to go through the city every day, pass by these places and to know that there used to be blood everywhere there. Even with Grigoropoulos, the fact that in Eksarchia we walk there, in Mesolongiou every day, to know that somebody was killed “here” not too long ago...It charges you a lot. Passing from Drosopoulou [Street] too and seeing the Lelas Karagianni squat and remembering how the cops dragged people out of there. I go to a march and I realize it's close to the place where Δεκεμβριανά of '44⁶³ took place and see the same buildings. Realizing that you step on the same place where someone fell dead and you know they fell dead in injustice. It's important to know and to not forget. It important knowing whose blood has been shed in all the corners because some are in deep denial...(Eirini, online interview, 2021).

⁶³ The interviewee refers to buildings in downtown Athens that still have bullet holes from the guns fired during the Battle of December 1944, which initiated the Greek Civil War of 1944-1949, between conservatives and communists with the intervention of foreign powers such as Britain and the United States.

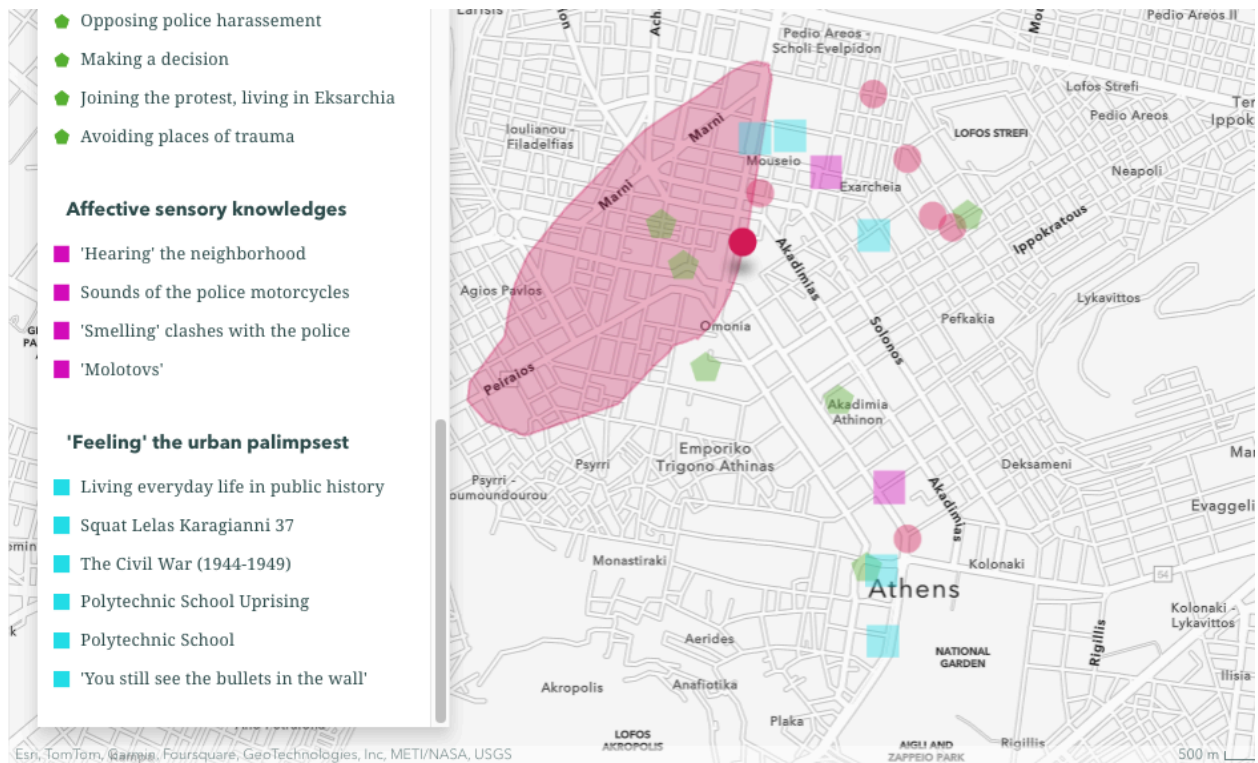


Figure 5.12: Screenshot of ArcGIS StoryMap 5.1 depicting the affective spatialities of everyday life and social reproduction in downtown Athens-focusing on the affective knowledges of participants within the urban palimpsest (Katsikana, 2024).

Other interviewees mentioned that it was through their protesting and organizing in the city that they got to know different neighborhoods but also the city's centre as "theirs" (Anna, online interview, 2021), as opposed to it as a place reserved for tourists, cars, investors, and construction sites. Developing these affective spatial knowledges that connected affective threads within the urban palimpsest was important in the construction of socio-spatial imaginaries against the dominance of a supposed 'pure' national identity and the idea of Athens as a 'a city of antiquity' upon which its Europeanness has been claimed from the state, the far-right and various domestic and international elites (Athanassiou et al., 2019).

Finally, interviewees like Aggeliki stressed that living in the downtown core, and organizing, created an atmosphere of political consciousness of actively being part of 'history in the making':

I always have this feeling, when the city is in turmoil, you go to assemblies, marches, you hear things... It feels like everyone is getting ready for something to happen and it usually does. And after a while you know that atmosphere, you can tell... The world is moving and you find yourself in the centre of everything, in these neighborhoods, and that makes you do things because it is a better life for you too (Aggeliki, online interview, 2021).



Figure 5.12: Mesolongiou Street, 2019, where Alexis Grigoropoulos was murdered in 2008, by a policeman, triggering a youth uprising (Katsikana, 2019).

Thus, the affective knowledges developed and shared by the interviewees, contributed to the formation of their resistance and critical consciousness, by placing themselves and their communities and various ‘Others’ within “historical moments” (Farell-Banks, 2023) that “contain the potential, not always realised, to ‘stick’ in certain spaces and times when they are given a role in political discourse” (p. 16). These affective knowledges are vital to the formation of socio-spatial imaginaries as interviewees, as political subjects in all their intersectional dimensions, exercise agency, and feminist praxis through collectivized caring practices.

5.5 Conclusions

Through the analysis of the emotional and affective experiences of the participants’ everyday routines of caring and organizing in the city, I demonstrated the ways the relational, embodied, and spatial character of social reproduction fosters the formation of affective spatialities of belonging in the city, through which the affective economies of hostility and violence in the urban are disrupted and contested.

The concept of *affective topos* emerges, then, as a socio-temporal conjuncture within space, whereby the transformative and subversive potentiality of social reproduction becomes an oppositional praxis, through the everyday embodied urban encounters with various ‘Others’. Within the *affective topos*, embodied feminized political subjects engage in a circulation of emotions and affects, forging relations beyond profit and across difference, transcending and opposing hegemonic constructs of space and perceptions of social reproduction.

Finally, it is within the *affective topos* that the participants developed affective spatial strategies and knowledges through which they navigated the urban, engaged in acts of refusal,

formed attachments to place and related to collective claims and histories but also came into oppositional consciousness. Their affective strategies and knowledges evolved around the social reproduction of the caring self, as well as through sensory-registers and encounters with the urban palimpsest and the collective memories attached to it.

Chapter 6: The subversive role of caring and social reproduction towards anti-capitalist future imaginaries

6.1 Introduction

Drawing on the concepts already presented—the spatialities of care, affective spatialities of hostility, affective topos of social reproduction—this chapter addresses the third research question of the dissertation asking how everyday struggles over social reproduction, against austerity and neoliberalism, inform expanded understandings of the political and the right to the city.

The chapter introduces the concept of the *urban caring undercommons* (Section 6.2), drawing on the ideas of fugitivity in order to provide a novel understanding of the transformative and subversive potentiality of the social reproduction practices carried out by dispossessed feminized subjects in the urban. This conceptualization centers social reproduction within anti-capitalist commoning processes, as an embodied relational infrastructure, built on fugitive consciousness across difference.

Building on this notion of the *urban caring undercommons*, I present the political aspects of social reproduction as a two-fold embodied socio-spatial praxis in the urban (Section 6.3) characterised by *social reproduction as resistance*, meaning the formation of informal networks of care and relations beyond profit, and by *social reproduction of resistance*, which is performed specifically within the context of organized solidarity, enabling grassroots movements to pursue their anti-capitalist agendas, through collectivizing caring practices city-wide. Within these notions of *as / of resistance*, I argue that social reproduction fosters the creation and sharing of *affective pedagogies*, that help communities to adapt their struggles, across time, to the

transformations of capitalist enclosures, based on affective previous knowledges that are shared intergenerationally through praxis (Section 6.4).

Lastly, I conclude by addressing the ways future imaginaries of the desired city (and its society) are manifested within the pursuit of the current needs and claims of dispossessed communities, and how these are ‘guided’ by the participants hopes and imaginations, that are centred around the right to survive and thrive (Section 6.5). This offers an expanded framing of the right to the city as the right to social reproduction, without which collective struggles for participation, appropriation of space and inhabitation would be impossible.

6.2 Urban caring undercommons as embodied relational infrastructures

In the previous chapters, I discussed (Chapter Four) the centrality of social reproduction as an organizing modality for anti-capitalist placemaking and grassroots solidarity, as well as how spatialities of care contributed to anti-capitalist placemaking and enactments of the right to the city. At the same time, I demonstrated social reproduction practices do not occur in a void but are performed as embedded in space, place, and history (in the form of the urban palimpsest), all manifesting in the affective dimensions of urban lives (Chapter Five). Having analyzed how social reproduction emerges in the urban affective spatialities as an oppositional praxis performed through relational, embodied, and spatialized practices, I demonstrated how the participants negotiated configurations of power in their day-to-day life, while enabling survival. Thus, building on all the above concepts, I argue here that within the affective economies of hostility that dominate Greek society, dispossessed women, feminized and marginalized subjects develop a fugitive consciousness across difference (Chapter Two) that leads us to an expanded

conceptualization of social reproduction as an embodied relational commoning labor against the capitalist city.

Therefore, this section introduces the concept of the *urban caring undercommons* in order to capture the ways through which socially reproductive labor is politicized and spatialized, within embodied relational infrastructures, rooted in fugitivity. The *urban caring undercommons* consist of practices of resistance and transformation in the urban, performed by dispossessed women, feminized subjects, and marginalized ‘Others’, within extremely hostile urban environments, under regimes of violence. Here, I reposition care and social reproduction at the centre of Kubaczek and Avraham’s (2021) conceptualization of the urban undercommons, developing an understanding of how fugitivity (Harney and Moten, 2013; Houdek, 2023) develops in the Greek context of austerity, as well as at the centre of Simone’s (2014) “infrastructures of relationality” (p. 18). In deploying their work and its implications in the theorization of urban placemaking, I develop the concept of *urban caring undercommons* as an embodied relational infrastructure of resistance, reworking and resilience—the “creative strategies that people used to stay afloat and even reformulate the conditions and possibilities of their everyday lives” (Katz, 2004, p. x)—providing expanded understandings of political action and the right to the city.

Fugitivity is a vital element of the concepts of the undercommons (Harney and Moten, 2013), and particularly the urban undercommons (Kubaczek & Avraham, 2021), which are “marked and re/produced by the radical felt space-time of the dispossessed: Black people, brown people, poor people, queer folx, trans folx, Indigenous peoples, and the precariat class”(Houdek, 2023, p. 356). The urban undercommons are space-times through which differently dispossessed subjects come together in the urban, forming community, alliances and producing space and knowledge against their exclusion from the city and the nation:

They represent a form of commons that is essentially shaped by those who are not allowed to be here—if it were up to the nation-state—but are here, nonetheless. The urban undercommons thus represent an accumulation of very different realities of life, some of which arrived here through a multiplicity of migrations, escapes, or forbidden excursions either yesterday, days before yesterday, or perhaps not yet (Kubaczek & Avraham, 2021, p. 113).

Thus, the undercommons are characterized as (under)ground “fugitive space-times” (Houdek, 2023, p. 358) of refuge and belonging, by subjects that are oppressed in different ways. The undercommons consist of “the relations, connections and commons amongst unequals that live together in the same urban space” (Kubaczek & Avraham, 2021, p. 104), but who might face overlapping ‘crises’ and exclusions that bring them together within processes of anti-capitalist commoning, through a “fugitive form of togetherness” (p. 107). These subjects are often excluded by mainstream society, the public sphere, the nation, the city, and its commons, and are cast at the bottom of affective economies and spatialities of belonging, outside the political body of the nation (Carastathis, 2015).

This fugitivity in the Greek context emerges under extremely hostile conditions and regimes of violence in the city, within which women and feminized subjects perform their socially reproductive roles and routines, threatened by heteropatriarchal, racist, police, and state violence as well as by dispossession, that directly endangers their bodily autonomy, freedom, their bodily safety, and overall right to exist in and inhabit the city. Although, as showcased in previous chapters and in previous research in the Greek context (Katsikana, 2021), solidarity and activist spaces are perceived as ‘immune’ to such regimes of violence as their political ideologies and agendas are positioned against heteropatriarchy and racial capitalism, in reality, heteropatriarchal violence very often permeates activist communities and relational infrastructures of everyday life, creating an affective spatiality of hostility ‘from within’.

Thus, when discussing the ways socially reproductive labor contributes to expanded understandings of the political and the right to the city, it is important to place fugitivity at the centre of the transformative socio-spatial practices that make possible the desire for freedom from dispossession: as expressed by one of the participants “to be able to exist the way I want to exist” (E., online interview, 2021). Fugitivity, is thus not only a driving force for transformation but also a way of knowing, feeling and being that affects the ways Greek dispossessed women and feminized subjects, experience and produce the urban through their everyday practices of care but also think about the future, within movements and in the everyday. Fugitivity, moreover, in the Greek context, leads to a theorizing beyond the supposedly uniform collective ‘us’, produced within the commons as it reveals subjects that don’t *properly belong*, neither within the neoliberal city nor within activist communities, where heteropatriarchy still dictates hierarchies of belonging and repertoires of resistance. And yet, it is these subjects that perform the majority of socially reproductive labor of building and sustaining communities, as well as the conditions of resistance and everyday survival through care in the city, their labor remaining invisibilized and politically devalued.

Here, while I consider the concept of relational infrastructures (Simone, 2014) as vital to the conceptualization of urban undercommons, and particularly their role in the production of caring spatialities and urban transformation, I suggest a recentering of social reproduction within its framing. As it was argued in Chapter 2 and 4, the labor of building and sustaining communities as well as developing responses of resistance, resilience, and reworking (Katz, 2004) are situated within what Simone (2010) has called “cityness” (p. 3) .Considering though that “people” are not equally undertaking the labor of reproducing everyday life, and do not experience the urban in uniform ways, the capacity of “cityness” relies on the women and feminized subjects who take on

the socially reproductive labor of making life happen. Processes of dispossession affect bodies at the intersections of gender, ethnoracial background, class, sexuality, (dis)ability, and legal status (along with other axes of marginalization) (Nieto-Valdivieso, 2022). These processes affect their ability to socially reproduce themselves and their communities, turning social reproduction into the main cause around which solidarity, resistance and everyday struggles for survival are organized.

Therefore, I cast “cityness” as embodied and relational, and as a socially reproductive capacity when I deploy Simone’s (2014) concept of relational infrastructures, as “vehicles of movement and becoming, ways of mediating the constantly oscillating intersections of various times, spaces, economies, constraints and possibilities making up city life” ” (p. 18). Thus, re-centering embodied social reproductive labor in Simone’s understanding of relational infrastructures, where relations are “the tools through which political imaginations and claims are exerted and thus are the embodiment of force” (Simone, 2014, p. 18), emphasizes care as the generative force that brings and keeps relational infrastructures together.

In this context the concept of the urban caring undercommons comprises the subversive and transformative potential and materialities of social reproduction, as it is performed by women and feminized subjects in the austerity of the Athenian urban, within the context of solidarity engagement and everyday life. It describes the routinized, invisibilized, and often depoliticized socially reproductive labor that women and feminized subjects perform in the city. This socially reproductive labor not only transforms the city, while producing affective spatialities of belonging through care and solidarity, but also transforms resistance repertoires and agendas away from militant heteropatriarchy and hegemonic masculinities. Furthermore, the urban caring undercommons reproduce urban livelihoods, through relations of care and practices of social

reproduction and solidarity towards anti-capitalist, anti-racist and anti-patriarchal ‘presents’ and ‘futures’ of co-operation, care and producing the city ‘in-common’.

The *urban caring undercommons* thus addresses how embodied relational infrastructure is sustained within the urban and by whom, providing an expanded understanding of its political and transformative possibilities and its role in exercising the right to the city through subversive relations of care that reclaim and produce space against capitalist accumulation, dispossession and profit making. Additionally, the concept provides a framing of social reproduction as the main process of resisting “from within”, transforming both the urban and the spaces and processes of urban world-making, through an ethics and critical praxis of care. These embodied relational infrastructures of resistance, resilience, and reworking, form the material, social and affective conditions of survival for the emergence and actualization of feminist, anti-racist, and anti-capitalist imaginaries of living and belonging in the urban.

More specifically, I have identified six characteristics which I argue frame the urban caring undercommons:

- a. **The urban caring undercommons is organized around caring practices, embodied relational infrastructures and networks formed by dispossessed women and feminized subjects within organized solidarity and everyday life in the urban.** They unfold through the collectivization of social reproduction in spaces of solidarity, as well as within caring practices that participants engage in, in their everyday life in their place-based communities in the city, and through their socially reproductive roles in the society at large. The urban caring undercommons often operates “in the shadows” within larger anti-capitalist commons as socially reproductive labor is “devalued” even within resistance

repertoires, and hence they politicize care, transforming the commons “from within” away from heteropatriarchy.

- b. **The urban caring undercommons disrupts processes of dispossession, capitalist enclosure of care and neoliberal ideals of growth and conditional belonging that dominate urban austerity, by enabling the social reproduction of resisting subjects that do not carry out or embody the vision of the ideal neoliberal citizen-consumer-entrepreneur.** Instead, they enable the social reproduction of subjects, relations and spaces that are not aiming to reproduce the neoliberal ideal of exchange value, productivity and profit, aiming instead for the flourishing of community and world-making of resisting political subjects, precaritized, ‘undesirable’ and marginalized ‘Others’ in the city.
- c. **The urban caring undercommons manifests in anti-capitalist placemaking and space-making, through the appropriation of public and private spaces for and through socially reproductive practices, as well as through the creation of affective spatialities of belonging and resistance in the city.** These practices entail engaging in strategic visibility in the urban, in order to politicize and collectivize care but also to “protect” marginalized groups from the state, the police, the far right and heteropatriarchal regimes of violence. Sometimes they take over public or private spaces in the city through collective cooking, encampments, squats, makeshift schools in squares and parks. Other times they unfold in a state of informality and “secrecy”, even within institutions (such as the public school), utilizing public infrastructure and resources for the socially reproductive needs of marginalized and precaritized communities.
- d. **The urban caring undercommons develops under a state of semi- or full ‘illegality’, as the practices of social reproduction in the city are indirectly ‘criminalized’ by the**

state, within agendas of securitization, border regimes, property laws, and processes of dispossession and displacement. This condition often translates into a state of fugitivity whereby performing specific socially reproductive practices, either in public or in “occupied” private property, is targeted as an “illegal” action, leading to deportations and detainment of refugees and arrests of allying activists.

- e. **The urban caring undercommons actively oppose the institutionalization of solidarity through strategic refusal** of co-operation with NGOs, the church, or philanthropic institutions that depoliticize care and often use ‘philanthropy to re-direct attention from their compliance with hegemonic practices, regimes of violence and the victimization of marginalized communities.
- f. **Within the urban caring undercommons women and feminized subjects develop and share different types of knowledges**, from practical ‘know-how’ regarding the logistics of organizing, and putting together makeshift infrastructure to cover the needs of social reproduction as well as mobilizing resources and coordinating among different networks of solidarity, to spatial knowledge about how to safely navigate the city and about the location of physical spaces in the city (for example, abandoned buildings) that could be used for carrying out social reproduction needs. These knowledges are vital to the creation and sustaining of the caring undercommons and their spaces in the city and they are developed through everyday praxis, co-operation, and the development of critical consciousness about how the self is situated within systems of oppression in relation to others.

Thus, the significance of the urban caring undercommons lies not only in the enabling of social reproduction of precaritized and marginalized groups in the city and the creation of anti-

capitalist spaces of collectivity, but also in the fact that they are created and maintained through a relational praxis that politicizes social reproduction and caring labor. This praxis results in the transformation of subjectivities, relations and spaces through which resistance, resilience and reworking (Katz, 2004) are pursued. It is within these urban caring undercommons that social reproduction and care are carried out as the ‘backbone’ of organizing but also as the embodied social infrastructure that keeps everyday life going amidst and against dispossession, violence, and oppression. In this context, the participants’ desire for a life of freedom from dispossession, oppressions and violence is grounded in the transformation of their urban lives and the city itself ‘in the now’, through transformative practices, relations, subjectivities and spatialities.

6.3 The political aspects of social reproduction in the urban

This section’s focus is on the role social reproduction plays in resistance, the actions that resist, subvert, and disrupt “conditions of exploitation and oppression” (Katz, 2004, p. 242), not as a by-product of organizing or just out of necessity and the need for survival, but as an embodied socio-spatial praxis that is performed within the urban caring undercommons that transforms the processes and understandings of the right to the city. This praxis has emerged within the affective urban geographies of social reproduction, presented in Chapter Four and Chapter Five, and is seen in the ways the participants’ everyday practices of socially reproductive, affective, and emotional labor that have informed places of belonging and opposition to the dispossession and violence of the austerity city and the various regimes that dictate the production and regulation of urban space for profit.

While praxis is the process of ‘grounding’ imaginaries, ethics, and political beliefs in the spaces of everyday life and in the processes of forming relations, its embodiedness addresses the material bodily and affective dimensions of socially reproductive and caring labor, as well as the

impact on the bodies and psyche of the subjects that perform this labor. This embodied praxis, is inevitably socio spatial as, through the formation of embodied relational infrastructures, it materializes in oppositional urban, anti-capitalist imaginaries about how to live, relate and care. It is through these embodied relational infrastructures that urban life is made possible 'otherwise' (Lesutis & Kaika, 2024), despite and against the exclusions and violence of the neoliberal city, ultimately opposing and disturbing its spatialities of profit, dispossession, and exclusion.

Thus, this two-fold embodied socio-spatial praxis unfolds through processes that entail (a) *social reproduction as resistance*, i.e., the politicization and collectivization of care, and the realization of different socio-spatial imaginaries of belonging in the city and (b) the *social reproduction of resistance*, i.e., the creation of the material, relational and affective conditions and strategies that enable and sustain organizing, reclaiming, and appropriating space within and against the heteropatriarchal neoliberal city. *Social reproduction as resistance* differs from the *social reproduction of resistance*, with the former addressing the politicizing, and collectivizing of care as a means of transforming everyday relations, spatialities of social reproduction and the conditions under which these are performed in the urban, while the latter addresses the socially reproductive affective, emotional, connective, and menial labor that is required for the organizing and sustaining of solidarity networks and the spaces within which the collectivizing of care takes place.

I discuss below how this two-fold embodied socio-spatial praxis contributes to a framing of social reproduction that emphasizes its subversive and transformative potentialities, while also showcasing its significance in the processes of (re)claiming the right to the city, resisting the neoliberal dogma of individualism, dispossession and the exclusionary agendas of neoliberal austerity urbanism and border regimes.

6.3.1 Social reproduction as resistance

Social reproduction emerged as resistance not only through the enabling of the material conditions necessary for the survival of precaritized and marginalized urban groups but also through the politicization and collectivization of care, both in the context of organized solidarity and within informal close-knit place-based networks. Social reproduction as resistance emerges then as a political act, transforming the relations through which social reproductive labor is performed, transcending its supposed spatial boundaries, and assigned ‘proper’ places in the city, utilizing the urban as commons and appropriating public and private spaces for the covering of social reproduction needs.

The politicization and collectivization of care has unfolded primarily through the creation of embodied relational infrastructures that come together under emergencies but also “draw” on those already existing, expanding their capacity through everyday moments of care across difference. By addressing the everyday needs of survival through ‘coming together’, participants engaged in socially reproductive labor as resistance through rejection of the neoliberal subjectivity of individualism, the entrepreneurialism of homo economicus (Read, 2009), and the affective economies of belonging imposed by national and supranational regimes. Xristina, who was involved in refugee solidarity organizing for years, articulates the significance of such collective efforts of care have for her:

There are times that I think about people I have met in the refugee squats or at the port in Piraeus, young girls with children, and I realize that for so many of them in their journey nobody knows about their existence. Anything could happen to them and there is no trace of what happened... like they never existed in that journey, pushbacks kill all these people, and they are a number for the state and Frontex who are proud of protecting the borders. Protecting the border from whom? From the

baby? We do as much as we can to have these people tell their stories and find others, to not end up in the refugee camps, to reach their destination and their families and whatever they want to do (Xristina, online interview, 2021).

In Xristina's narration, the political significance of social reproduction emerges in the collective defying of the affective hierarchies of belonging and necropolitical governmentalities across borders, that dictate who is worthy of survival, care, and solidarity and who isn't, in the urban.

The collectivizing of social reproduction was diffused into the everyday practices of survival in the city, providing larger-scale alternatives to austerity simply because these had to be performed collectively. It was an impossible task to be carried out by an individual or a small group of people, since the urban poor (and middle classes) were left with minimal social protection amidst the collapse of welfare structures, public budgets, and the dispossession resulting from privatizing public resources. Tzenni explains how such a process of collectivization is more affective for those in need but also those who provide solidarity:

You know I walk down the street, going back and forth to work every day, and I see other women in the street in a very bad condition and I go to her and help, give her money or food or whatever I can get...and then a few blocks away I will see another one...and there are times were I realize I can't keep doing this, I don't even have money for my own rent or groceries sometimes. And me by myself helping them is not the point...and the services don't do anything. The point is for these people to have a place where they can go...and go back when they need it...and for them to know that there are people there that will listen and will help for as long as they need it, and half of the work is sometimes reaching out to those people and let them know... When it's 15 of us in there, cooking and each one of us brings in things and support from others we can do so much more for everyone (Tzenni, online interview, 2021).

As Tzenni mentions above, the impact of the 'crisis' on homelessness along with the cutbacks on social services, left precaritized people merely surviving in the streets without community and support, making it impossible for individual acts of solidarity to be affective. Thus, collectivizing social reproduction was not only important for providing food or essentials, but also

in reaching people who did not have a community nor support from the municipality or the state, offering them solidarity instead of philanthropy, providing them with connections to a more stable, place-based community and its collective resources. Thus, many of the larger collective socially reproductive solidarity functions occurred downtown in squats or even public spaces with a city-wide reach, as the city centre has the city's most well-connected transportation node.

At the same time, within the spatiality of the neighborhood and place-based community, the collectivizing of care was grounded in everyday life through collective cooking, time banks and small-scale exchange-based solidarity economies, skill sharing, community run social centres and solidarity health services, and the gathering of essentials (Vaiou & Kalandides, 2016). Such collective practices, despite often being smaller in size than the initiatives that operated with a city-wide reach, materialized alternative socio-spatial imaginaries of the city beyond the neoliberal exclusionary and authoritative vision of Athens as 'European' city for creative classes, wealthy Greeks, investors and properly 'diverse' visitors.

Social reproduction as resistance also emerged within spontaneous caring practices, developed through place-based everyday encounters and relations of neighboring, involving caring acts between smaller networks, infused by larger political claims and beliefs. Eleni elaborates on how the interplay between organized and unorganized solidarity functions synergically in the everyday life of the neighborhood:

Some of us in the neighborhood are organized in collectives and assemblies but that doesn't mean that's the only way you can do things, especially in the everyday, when you have a million things to do and you can't bring something to the assembly and the collective...there are ways to do it and it happens between friend groups or when you live close to comrades. You might go to get cigarettes at the kiosk (περίπτερο) and you might hear something about someone needing help...we learn those things in the neighborhood...I will ask around see what I can do and then I will call friends, people I know can help and 3-5 of us we'll manage to do something...and that becomes a way to deal with problems...when we can't do much or when there is a serious issue behind, then we take things to the assemblies (Eleni, online interview, 2021).

Eleni's elaboration explains how smaller and larger networks of care organizing and operating through different ways address the everyday needs of social reproduction in the neighborhood but also achieve transformation through the development of spontaneous strategies of coping. These strategies, rely on the ability to coordinate fast in order to address an issue but also to connect that issue with larger claims and collective processes of solidarity when needed, forming relational infrastructures that lead to future mobilization and transformation.

As seen in the narrations of the participants, within the everydayness and routineness of care, social reproduction as resistance operates by transforming the 'root' processes that enable life, through an oppositional consciousness formed within struggles for survival and belonging, against the dominance of relations built through and operating in the logic of capital and profit. These instances were not informed by a philanthropic need to 'help', neither by mere necessity, but were developed through the "coming into consciousness" (Katz, 2004) through affective, relational and embodied processes that 'moved' participants into making political decisions and creating everyday spatialities of care. Eirini discusses the political dimensions of care in these everyday non-organized settings:

Living in this situation all these years in Athens has taught me that there is no single thing that we do that doesn't have a political impact. We are political entities, and we come from different places and beliefs. Does everything have politics and a conscious decision behind? Let me tell you...It becomes your way of living...of looking at the world...Just this last month, I have helped three people to move apartments, I have given furniture, I have cleaned with them because they couldn't do it on their own nor could pay someone to do it. No task is an individual task when we can do it together (Eirini, online interview, 2021).

While such 'small' acts of care are often excluded by the organized solidarity responses as they are often seen as unable to reach a momentum of widespread change and transformation, I argue that they have an accumulative effect of 'grounding' larger demands in everyday necessities and realities becoming a catalyst for the diffusion of large-scale movements from the symbolic spaces

of protest in the city to the level of the neighborhood. Thus, social reproduction as resistance does not only rely on the collectivizing of caring practices in organized solidarity and its collective spaces in the city, but also through translating political values, and imaginaries of belonging into concrete embodied actions and repertoires of care in the everyday life, revealing the transformative potential of embodying resistance through care.

6.3.2 Social reproduction of resistance

Social reproduction of resistance in the urban unfolds through all the caring, material, and immaterial labor that is feminized and performed mostly by women within solidarity, activist, and union networks, that sustain the ability of collectives to organize and materialize their vision in the urban as well as that allowing organizing to coordinate and spread in moments of emergency. Social reproduction of resistance occurs within bigger and smaller networks and spaces of organized solidarity, either at the level of the neighborhood or city wide, relying on socially reproductive labor as its ‘backbone’, without which the sustaining of organizing would be impossible.

The social reproduction of resistance also occurs in and through the urban caring undercommons that are often developed within social movements and larger anti-capitalist commons. As in the case of the participants, even though solidarity movements and anti-authoritarian leftist spaces are supposed to be safe spaces and often adopt a feminist-friendly profile, they are often dominated by gendered, raced, and sexualized hierarchies, that are not discussed openly. Instead, these hierarchies dictate not only the ‘militant’ and ‘authentic’, or ‘valuable’ embodiments and practices of resistance, but also devalue the contribution of socially reproductive labor to the repertoires of resistance and to political transformation. Toula discusses

her experiences in organizing, in relation to the division of socially reproductive tasks within spaces of political collectives:

You know I was in this collective a few years ago, that had very active women members that were always in the front of the protests holding poles... when we had to do things that had nothing to do with the protest, simple things like...fixing things in the hangout, or more housework stuff. You would see the men not doing anything...looking at everyone as if they didn't know how to do things...and you would see the women taking over... getting things done that all of us should have been sharing as tasks (Toula, online interview, 2021).

As seen through Toula's experience, socially reproductive labor is not considered a "true" labor of resistance and expression of political agency, but rather an operational aspect of organizing with no political significance, its assignment mostly to women and feminized subjects within solidarity networks and spaces further contributes to their marginalization within collective processes.

Based on the interviews, the participants who faced this marginalization within Athenian social movements, engaged in the labor of arguing for equitable treatment by their comrades, in publicly holding accountable collectives and organizers for their sexism, homophobia as well as violating attitudes, as well as introducing feminist and queer agendas within organizing and pursuing the redistribution of socially reproductive tasks against the gendered hierarchies deeply rooted within Greek society. Sasa observes how she has witnessed the impact of such labor within the solidarity and anti-authoritarian milieu over the last decade and how it is gradually "changing things":

For me the beginning was with some of the queer and feminist squats around 2008. After December [of 2008], there were so many young people who were curious about the anarchist squats and collectives, even the neighborhood assemblies for the first time, and "Greek queer" had started becoming more visible in the anarchy milieu. There was a lot of overlap, and feminists and queer folks would speak up openly about what was happening in many collectives, about the sexism and the homophobia and all the macho anarchists. I think some of the collectives were kind of forced to change in order to keep their people, others failed to do so. But in any case...there are things that happened a few years ago that would cause an uproar

today and don't happen as easily. There are still people who will defend the same old behaviours, and some things might happen in a more covert way but at least there has been some type of effort to change. There is a long way to go in my opinion (Sasa, online interview, 2021).

Thus, the social reproduction of resistance includes the spreading of feminist values and consciousness within movements to make them into safe places both for the embodied political subjects who organize as well as for those who are receiving solidarity and allyship and are marginalized and oppressed on the basis of their intersectional identities. The social reproduction of resistance contributes, thus, to expanded understandings of the right to the city, not only towards the inclusion of feminist ethics, agendas, and praxis in the collective endeavors that produce spaces of collective opposition in the city but also transform repertoires of resistance towards the politicization of care and social reproduction.

Both social reproduction as resistance and the social reproduction of resistance, while they unfold through the fugitive character and togetherness of the urban caring undercommons, perform a feminist placemaking praxis in the urban, transforming from within. both the city as a terrain of everyday survival and the anti-capitalist and solidarity spaces of resistance within the city. The politicization and collectivization of care and maintenance of organizing practices through care, as crucial resisting strategies, have been spatialized in the creation and operation of grassroots infrastructure (Kapsali, 2023). Care was performed 'in common', showcasing the possibilities of collective action to interrupt processes of capital accumulation and the capitalist enclosure of space and resources in the city. This enactment of spatialized resistance, requiring the reclaiming of physical spaces in the city (also through protest and occupations), through makeshift urban interventions of care, disrupted the rhythms of the neoliberal tourist city and made visible different modes of collaboration and co-existence. These spatial interventions of care not only resisted

austerity urbanism and racist discourses that were adopted within urban planning but also resisted the politics of fear and violence, implemented by state suppression, police brutality and the toleration of far-right violence, creating affective spatialities of belonging against the affective spatialities of hostility.

6.4 Affective pedagogies of social reproduction and future imaginaries

As showcased in Chapter Five and above, the socially reproductive labor of women, and feminized subjects relies on the development and sharing of a range of knowledges acquired through an embodied praxis of care, community, and everyday encounters in the urban. At the same time, such embodied praxis both fosters and relies on the creation of oppositional consciousness, the ability to situate the self and the community within historical processes of oppression and resistance. This embodied socio-spatial praxis of resistance through care not only alters current relations and conditions for communities to survive and thrive within the neoliberal city but most importantly, enables them to develop strategies that prefigure survival, and ‘ways out’ of upcoming crises. While this prefigurative element of fugitivity, the “way out” is envisioned “in-common” with others and among ‘Others’, the embodied socio-praxis of resistance through care develops the steps-in-between, enabling the move from resistance, reworking, and resilience to transformation. At the same time, the framing of embodied socio-spatial praxis of resistance through care in the urban responds to Federici’s (2018) call for the redefinition of social reproduction that puts “an end to the separation between the personal and the political and between political activism and the reproduction of everyday life” (np).

This section addresses the ways this embodied socio-spatial praxis of care that emerges from the urban caring undercommons leads to the development of pedagogies of resistance, through the

development of knowledges, affects, relations, and spaces that ensure the ability to resist both in day-to-day survival and *across time*, as well as “doing together” as a subversive socio-spatial praxis of care towards future horizons. It explores the ways the *social reproduction as/of resistance* as an embodied socio-spatial praxis that occurs through the *urban caring undercommons*, contributes to the long-term sustaining of resistance and political struggles and their adaptability to resist the expansion of capitalist enclosures, through the formation of collective pedagogies that enable exercising the right to the city, across difference, intergenerationally, but also across place. To do so, this section introduces the concept of *affective pedagogies of social reproduction* in order to demonstrate the ways social reproduction as/of resistance fosters the development of collective pedagogies through which political subjects and communities ‘learn’ how to ‘come together’, develop and share knowledges and affects, forge relations and appropriate spaces in common. This concept also suggests centring the transformative possibilities of caring as a strategy for resistance through the production of embodied relational infrastructures and collective consciousness that can together inflict change, *across time*, towards alternative socio-spatial imaginaries of living in the urban.

In the context of this research, social reproduction is a subversive process that addresses both the necessities of ‘now’ but also prefigurative strategies for the future ‘in the long run’, that help communities survive across crises (and often successive and overlapping ones). These prefigurative strategies enable the making and re-making of ‘home’ and community in the urban, developing the embodied knowledge of ‘how-to’ do so, as well as an oppositional consciousness through praxis. Thus, surviving across time requires also an understanding of how relational infrastructures, anti-capitalist commons and urban undercommons within which resistance is reproduced as embodied, require strategies for their own social reproduction and the social

reproduction of the caring subjects within them, not only across and throughout crises, but also in the in-between periods of relative stability. Further, this requires an understanding of resistance as non-linear through a consideration of the ‘ebbs and flows’ and of the bodily and the emotional and affective capacities of resisting subjects across axes of difference. These considerations lead to affective pedagogies of social reproduction produced within what Francoise Verges refers to as the temporality of “the long road to freedom, a never-ending struggle” (Verges, 2019, p. 5), where “revolution [is] daily work” (p. 5) and within which she situates decolonial feminism.

The concept of affective pedagogies of social reproduction thus describes the ways women and feminized subjects acquire, accumulate, and share the essential embodied and collective ‘know-how’ through social reproduction, forming resisting and caring political subjects, in order to survive across long-term adversity, crises and capitalist attacks, towards liberatory futures. What makes this process an affective pedagogy of social reproduction is that this ‘know-how’ is acquired and shared through embodied socio-spatial praxis of care, it is learned through lived experience, through the affects and feelings that it generates, and is transmitted inter-generationally and across difference through learning how to make life possible, how to care and be cared for.

In the context of the Greek ‘crisis’, while massive protests such as the revolt of December 2008 and the 2011 Syntagma Square occupations and protests, were often framed as “spontaneous” due to their high levels of participation and their detachment from political parties and unions, scholars such as Petropoulou (2014) have argued that such “spontaneity” would not result in such massive contestation without the grassroots less “spectacular groundwork organised over a long period, slowly “preparing” (Dalakoglou, 2012, p. 540) the conditions under which such collective mobilization and organizing could be achieved. Thus, affective pedagogies of social reproduction

create the capacities for resisting subjects to emerge within and against escalations, turning each moment of spectacular revolt (Dalakoglou, 2012b) to more than a moment but to a “long lasting situation which will allow the movements to deal with counter-insurrectionary political forces” (p. 541), and become the social infrastructure for the next situation. It is through these periods of ‘preparation’ and diffusion of the political momentum of social movements and uprisings that political subjects learn how to reproduce themselves and their communities through the two-fold understanding of social reproduction as and of resistance.

In the context of these affective pedagogies of social reproduction, participants like E. who grew up in with “a mother who had our house always open for people in need, from family friends, to neighbors to refugee families she met through collective stuff” (online interview, 2021), witnessed, while growing up with mothers and other women in their family and community who engaged in organized and informal solidarity, social reproduction and caring infused by their political beliefs. For others like Nafsika, who grew up in the neighborhood of Sepolia (Σεπόλια), it was the witnessing of collective socially reproductive struggles of previous generations and the impact it had in the neighborhood and their daily lives intergenerationally, that informed a collective consciousness of resistance and commoning:

I remember my parents and uncles and neighbors protesting for the municipal clinics. ...And they work until today, but the municipality is trying to cut off most of the services. These clinics have offered so much and saved people’s lives here in the neighborhood. It was our families and then over the years a lot of people, refugees, immigrants, internal migrants who have been going there for free, and many, many women, poor women. I remember participating in those protests as a kid with the grown-ups, and with older people 70-80 years old...And here we are again, now that I am 53 years old, we are trying to keep this tradition, and people join us...to not let it be taken away from us...(Nafsika, online interview, 2021).

In Nafsika’s statement, the keeping of this tradition referred to the ethos of mobilizing in order to ensure free health care in one of the working-class (and later one of the underprivileged)

neighborhoods of Athens, became a lived embodied praxis that formed her own politicization and participation in similar struggles in her adult life. These affective pedagogies encompass intergenerational knowledges that are transmitted through storytelling and oral histories within families, networks of kin and communities, in the everyday encounters in public and semi-public spaces, during the routines of social reproduction in the city and the neighborhood. Decades later, after the clinic protests, living in the same neighborhood with her family, Nafsika faced first-hand the right-wing attacks against leftists, immigrants, and refugees as well as the infiltration of right-wing beliefs in the schools of the neighborhood. When one of her sons was attending school, she had to “sit down and talk about the Civil War and the famine, and to give him the history to read, to see what this thing was and how people suffered by the same fascists” (Nafsika, online interview, 2021).

Like Nafsika, most of the participants had been raised by working-class women, either their own mothers, their older sisters or aunts, grandmothers or older neighbors, who carried within them, and “taught” others, ethics of care and community building, through life histories and journeys of resilience but also a fugitive caring performed through small everyday practices under extreme hostility. This fugitive caring often occurred within the home and the extended family, the neighborhood and local community but also through encounters with strangers during their urban routines. Through these traumas, collective memories, but also stories of how to *survive through* and move forward, towards desired futures of liveable and workable (Katz, 2004) urban livelihoods, are preserved and transmitted, not through the romanticization of struggles but through the forming of a fugitive consciousness that comes from living within what Tsibiridou calls the “patriarchal palimpsest” and that impacts women and feminized subjects “in the long durée” of interlocking regimes of oppression:

However, female bodies in this part of the post-Ottoman world, from Greece to the Western Balkans and then to the Caucasus, are bodies that were exchanged for centuries among families for reasons of honor and interest. They were constantly supervised, punished, and controlled by the family and the community, while religious justification was establishing female embodied inferiority in a *longue durée* process. Female bodies had to endure invisible borders of modesty and decency, enclosures, amputations, and honor crimes; practices that draw upon customs, rituals, and representations producing female otherness and second-class citizenship in the framework of modern states (Tsibiridou, 2022, p. 15).

For certain participants, it was stories of migration and survival in hostile environments and then the journey of coming back home, journeys as refugees being able to “make life again from zero” (Kaiti, online interview, 2021), that carried embodied and affective knowledges of how to survive. For others, Like Sasa, who witnessed women in her family ‘revolting’ against parental figures, husbands and brothers or patriarchal figures who perpetuated their exploitation, this ‘revolt’”, carried out in order for “their own kids, us, to not go through the same, to know otherwise and to be able to say no and leave” (Sasa, online interview, 2021), functioned as an intergenerational pedagogy. While some of these women performed their resistance under the radar, sharing their knowledge with other women and younger female members of their family in order to ‘know otherwise’, others had the ability to participate in organized resistance, as for example during the period of the dictatorship, facing the violence of heteropatriarchy, Greek nationalism, and foreign interventionism. Anna remembers how her mother and grandmother talked about the period of the dictatorship, explaining how that led to her own politicization and their support:

My mom was the first in her family to go to the university, and it was during the junta [dictatorship] that she started participating in organizations, as a student. Her parents were always afraid about what will happen to her, but my grandmother came from a communist family and had been through a lot of struggles and discrimination the previous decades. When the time came, my mother found her own way and my grandmother was worried, but she was telling her “Go, my child”, hoping the worst won’t happen to her. From what I have been told, my grandmother didn’t used to

go out much to not draw attention to the family, but whenever she could, she hid people in the house or in the little shop they ran in the neighborhood. We were raised hearing those stories. We only understood what it meant later on, and for me personally that was December 2008 and everything that came afterwards. And I always think that they did those things as women's backs then, during the junta, even if that sounds cliché to say (Anna, online interview, 2021).

Anna's narration about her mother's and grandmother's different types of resistance and their relationship of care, support and camaraderie reveals an affective pedagogy of social reproduction that was crucial to her coming into consciousness, to her social reproduction as a resisting political gendered subject and the grounding of her understanding of previous intergenerational struggles to current ones.

Under such adverse circumstances, such diverse and small acts of resistance contribute to a "preparation process in the quotidian life" (Petropoulou, 2010, p. 569) and which have the potentiality along with its organized forms to, "implement new micro-actions through which they reproduce and re-invent new codes of solidarity, autonomy, liberty and dignity" (Petropoulou, 2014, p. 570). In these practices of care as resistance in quotidian life, political subjects "learn" how to implement political imaginaries and values in their routines of survival, how to transmit these through praxis, and the forging of relations beyond individualism and profit.

After the uprising of December 2008, the diffusion of resistance and solidarity in neighborhoods focused on the collectivizing of social reproduction and the right to the city, bringing together people who had been already active in anti-capitalist and solidarity politics but also others who had no political experience but needed support. Eirini observes how such encounters in the everyday solidarity spaces of the neighborhood, created paradigms of collaboration and collectivity that brought 'new' people within these political spaces and movements, beyond their own urgency for survival:

So, when we had open calls in the neighborhood about anyone who needed help, food, medicine, clothes, we would see people coming who had never even been in a protest, or immigrants and newcomers who didn't know where to go or how to get help. Especially for the Greeks, older people with families, it was shameful to come and ask for help, to get things from the hangout... they wouldn't really participate in the assemblies... others wanted to be discreet and not make it visible that they needed help... but after a while the majority of them started actually participating, coming to protests, asking questions, and after a while became themselves active in helping others, bringing more people in (Eirini, online interview, 2021).

In Eirini's case, pursuing everyday acts of survival through collectivizing care in the neighborhood, functioned as an affective pedagogy of "doing things together" that further contributed to the social reproduction of those who received help as political subjects. At the same time, everyday "unplanned" encounters within the routines of social reproduction emerged for participants like Toula as a terrain for political intervention, and as an opportunity of bringing others into networks of place-based care:

When we pick up the kids, we catch up with other parents, talk, we discuss the problems of the school and the neighborhood. But some of the parents are people who have been raised in different ways, who don't participate in unions or protests... and they don't know how to participate in this and how doing things collectively can fix these problems or at least try. I think that is the root of everything, because we come from a different basis. And you sit down and talk with that parent and talk and talk... and sometimes it doesn't work but when it does, it's that moment that's important to me. I think it is this conflict, this fermentation with the people in the society that are in their own bubble and look at their backs, that can make the difference (Toula, online interview, 2021).

The processes of fermentation that Toula refers to emerges as the heart of the affective pedagogies that not only form practical knowledges but also an affective 'know-how' of communication and building of relations beyond individualism, of engaging in productive political dialogues. This praxis of 'sitting down and talking', triggered by the desire for change, becomes a terrain of care in which different political subjects tackle problems of everyday life, learning how to 'put together' the intimate place-based knowledges of their local communities and of their spaces in the city, in a dialogue with 'lessons' from previous struggles and collective memory. Through these processes, political subjects learn how to form embodied relational infrastructures

of care and resistance, and transmit that knowledge through praxis contributing to the sustaining, renewal and adaptability of infrastructures of resistance to gradually achieve transformation.

At the same, resilience as *surviving across*, along with the affective pedagogies of social reproduction are essential to the development of resistance and reworking responses both in the present and in the long-term. This is possible through the production of knowledge, affects, ideas relations, repertoires and their material manifestations in the city that both address the “concrete conditions” of present needs and how to collectively attend to them through planting and cultivating the “seeds” (Caffentzis & Federici, 2014, p .95) of a desired future in the city, and that implement “the practice of today (now) as the basis for an imagination of the future” (Cruz, 2023, p. 65).

The following section addresses how the right to the city and the struggles around it are reframed through the practices and spatialities of social reproduction in the city along with the future imaginaries of urban livelihoods.

6.5 Social reproduction, the right to the city and urban futures

The previous sections have discussed how centering social reproduction and care within socio-spatial processes through which precaritized urban communities pursue social change, and enact responses of resistance, resilience, and reworking, can expand understandings of the political and of the ways through which transformation is achieved, both in the present and in the long-term. Building on this analysis as well as feminist critiques and re-framings of the right to the city (Beebejaun, 2017), and the narrations of the participants about future imaginaries of living in Athens that guide their political engagement, dreams and hopes, this section centers social reproduction and its spatialities in pursuing the right to the city as an enactment of desired futures in the city.

Feminist scholars have critiqued the overlooking of gender and intersectional identities and embodiments within dominant framing of Lefebvre’s concept of the right to the city as they “subsume gender within the urban citizenry rather than theorizing gender as a structuring

dimension of peoples' identities" (Beebeejaun, 2017, p. 325). Instead of obscuring gender and intersectionality within an all-encompassing genderless understanding of the right to the city feminist scholars have highlighted the ways women's and feminized subjects everyday practices of survival, caring routines and embodied strategies of resistance, resilience and reworking in different socio-spatial contexts, are crucial not only to the production of urban space but also to the disruption of capitalist processes of urbanization and urban dispossession (Betteridge and Webber, 2019; Narayan, 2023)

When asked how they imagine and desire their life in the urban to be and how that imagined future relates to their current struggles, the participants' responses revealed an imagination of the future city that was directly linked to perceptions of urban space, everyday lives and relations as well as intimate and affective knowledge's of the urban that they had accumulated through their intersectional identities and embodiments as caring subjects navigating the city. The participants articulated imaginaries of life and belonging in the city, within which social reproduction was not only the means of achieving concrete change in their lives, relations and spaces, but also placed it "at the center of social change" (Federici, 2018, p. 4) and the right to the city. Thus, while the right to the city is broadly articulated as the right to appropriate and use urban space, to live in the city and to act collectively, as well as the right to participation and collective decision making in the production of urban space (Purcell, 2002), on the basis of inhabitance (Dadusc et al., 2021), centring social reproduction and care leads to the emergence of the right not only to live in the city but to be able *to reproduce liveable lives in the urban, against dispossession and across difference.*

While Lefebvre sees the city as a work of art, the participants see the city as a work of care, and the future as a work of care that will be performed equitably, collectively, and without the exploitation of bodily and emotional capacities of women and feminized subjects, but also through

what Berlant has called a place of “nonsovereignty” (Berlant, 2016, p. 394) i.e., of being treated as equal, in common. At the heart of the right to social reproduction in the city lays the labor of forging and pursuing alternative socio-spatial imaginaries through the immediacy of the ‘now’ and the prefiguration of *surviving across time*, not as an utopian vision of the urban (Cruz, 2023), but an expansion, a communal ‘taking over’ or ‘taking back’ of the city by already existing relations, spatialities, affects and bonds across difference that have been developed in the urban caring undercommons and other spatialities of resistance in the city.

Through the participants’ articulations of what the fight for Athens means, there emerged different aspects of future urban imaginaries regarding the desire for (a) public and collective infrastructures of care, both city wide and at the neighborhood level, (b) the abolishment of capitalist processes of accumulation in the city along with the regimes of exploitation, violence and securitization they impose, and (c) collectivity across difference and the forging of anti-capitalist relations beyond profit. In the remainder of the section, these different aspects of the future imaginaries are explored through the narrations of the participants.

The descriptions of everyday anti-capitalist and feminist imaginaries articulated by the participants were characterized by their desire to live in a city where capital accumulation and profit are not the driving forces of life, away from the touristification of the city:

I want cheap rents, so no one has to leave the neighborhood or move cities. I want to have convenience stores and a bakery in the neighborhood like before and not brunch spots for the tourists. I want all the empty buildings downtown to be given to people who need them. For those who live in the streets, for their kids and the women who are abused and have nowhere to go, for refugees... to not take them to the camps... for young people... to gather and have spaces in the city for them with no need to pay (Aggeliki, online interview, 2021).

Their everyday anti-capitalist and feminist urban imaginaries envision Athens as a city beyond securitization, but also without the regimes of violence that disproportionately affect the

ways women and feminized subjects experience the urban. In these imaginaries, ‘safety’ and being able to ‘freely’ live in the city, in the everyday, is not an issue of fearing ‘crime’, but rather the systemic violence of a patriarchal misogynistic and homophobic state, the racism of nationalism, and neoliberal “acceptable” diversity, police brutality and the suppression of protesting, as well as the casual sexism, racism, and homophobia inherent to various strata in Greek society. It is in a city, free of these regimes of oppression that the routines of social reproduction unfold without the threats of such violence, as Giorgia elaborates, a city where “not having the fear over your head, these eyes watching you, the anxiety to make it to a safe place, to walk fast or pretend you didn’t hear” (Giorgia, online interview, 2021).

At the same time, participants like V. envisioned a city where solidarity is not only a necessity for survival but also a source of joy for the community, and where cultural production and entertainment are not commodified but are part of political engagement in the everyday, through spaces of caring and commoning:

I would like there to be a hangout to every neighborhood. To be able to organize and have fun together, to be able to arrange screenings, conversations, feasts, simple gatherings, cafés. To have a point of reference in the neighborhood, where you don’t have to reserve a spot, but you can stop by every day, on the way to work or your errands, to say hi, to ask for something, to give something. To know that you don’t have to do things alone and that there is this place where you can find two or three people to talk to and to help (Spiridoula GPS-tracked PhotoVoice online discussion, 2021).

These descriptions reveal a city where space and care are produced and reproduced ‘in common’ with others, within affective spatialities of belonging and co-operation rather than individualism and neoliberal dispossession.

Infrastructural neglect, especially at the neighborhood level, has been a crucial issue for many of the participants, that affected the ability of the participants not only to navigate the city

themselves, but to be able to carry out their socially reproductive roles, especially for those caring for children, the elderly and relatives or friends with accessibility needs.

I want the neighborhood to be more cared for, to be able to live a pleasant life here. Because in our neighborhood, people with needs come and come...we need infrastructure and care... to not having to climb over a mountain of garbage to go anywhere. To pay the workers who clean the public spaces well. To have lights in our streets and sidewalks where one can actually walk, where one can push a stroller or a wheelchair... To have more green spaces and more open public spaces. People who have small children at the moment have nowhere to take them, they find it very difficult to find a place for their children to go to play to do sports for free (Varvara, online interview, 2021).

In Varvara's description, "caring for" the city will be realized through the restoration of public spaces, through the maintenance of urban furniture that facilitates everyday life in the city but also through better salaries and working conditions of those who are employed by the city to clean and maintain public spaces. These aspects of her desired future imaginary also reveal the desire 'to be cared for' by the those who design and govern the city, recognizing infrastructural neglect as another manifestation of the marginalization many of the downtown residents' experience based on the intersections of their identities and other aspects of difference.

Participants envisioned a city where public spaces are 'taken back' by inhabitants, regardless of citizenship status, and where commoning practices can unfold, through political encounters with others, with community, and newcomers. For Vasia, 'taking back' these spaces are accompanied by commoning processes in which marginalized political subjects like women, queer folks, refugees, or others who are deviating from masculinist versions of activist militancy, will be able to organize:

I would like to be able to go out in the parks and squares and meet... to have fun and talk, to not have security guarding the parks we grew up going to...I would like people's assemblies to run these spaces so everyone can participate and use them. And I want for everyone to be able to be part of these... to not have to deal with all the sexism and the hierarchies, and dealing with comrades whose voice counts more because they are men (Vasia, online interview, 2021).

While the participants described these aspects of future urban imaginaries through the changes and transformations they would like to see in the urban spaces of their everyday life, in the processes of ‘commoning together’ and co-operating, as well as in the disruption of capitalist accumulation and dispossession in the city, their future imaginaries were built on the desire of futures beyond capitalism more broadly, towards more communal modes of living and belonging. Nevertheless, the expression of the right to social reproduction in the city emerged in their imaginaries through the desire for communities to be able to socially reproduce themselves, using the city as a commons, through new forms of togetherness.

The right to social reproduction in the city is accompanied by an oppositional socio-spatial imaginary in which social reproduction is not another ground for commodification, nor another stake for the exclusion of ‘Others’ and their dispossession but is instead both the means to achieve and the object of transformation and social change itself. The right to social reproduction in the city is both pursued and articulated by the right to perform social reproduction as resistance but also to be able to socially reproduce resistance in the urban and to create affective pedagogies through which the subversive potentialities of caring can sustain the long struggle against capitalism.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the ways in which the everyday socially reproductive labor of the participants in the context of everyday life and solidarity produces new expanded understanding of the political and of the right to the city. Building on the findings of previous chapters I argued that fugitivity is a vital driving force behind the organizing of dispossessed and marginalized feminized subjects in the city, contextualized in Greek society, as rooted within the

desire to flee, and subvert that condition of oppression participants experience in the context of Greek heteropatriarchy, far-right and state-induced violence, border regimes, and austerity dispossession. Building on the idea of a fugitive togetherness across difference, I introduced the concept of *urban caring undercommons* in order to address the ways dispossessed women and feminized subjects, organize through practices of care within extremely hostile and violent conditions in the urban. The *urban caring undercommons* are framed, here, as an embodied relational infrastructure that disrupts capitalist enclosures of care and neoliberal ideals of growth and individualism.

In this context, social reproduction performs a two-fold embodied socio-spatial praxis in the urban that entails two intertwined political aspects (a) *social reproduction as resistance* and (b) *the social reproduction of resistance*. While the first unfolds through the formation of informal networks of care, guided by broader political beliefs and an oppositional consciousness, in the context of everyday place-based interactions and encounters, the later entails the creation and maintenance of grassroots communities and the enabling of their political activity through socially reproductive, caring, and commoning labor.

Building on the political aspects of social reproduction and the fugitive production of knowledge within the *urban caring undercommons*, I argued that social reproduction allows for the creation of *affective pedagogies*, through which communities learn to *survive across time*, recuperating their capacities against the transformations of capitalist accumulation processes in the urban. This concept demonstrated that while social movements in the Greek context have been framed as spontaneous, they are actually informed by the long-term preparation of struggle within everyday practices of care and solidarity, that enable movements to seize the momentum of particular historical conjunctures and centralize their demands.

Finally, I concluded by showing that the struggles over the right to the city could not have been possible without the right to social reproduction, which is under constant attack by the necropolitical governmentalities of austerity, border regimes, and heteropatriarchy. In this context, through the subversive potentiality of social reproduction, participants not only envision an anti-capitalist city of care but also ground their imagination in the moment and in the production of spatialities of transformation within the everyday life in the city.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

A few months after the fieldwork was completed, in one of the neighborhoods where the research was conducted, a shocking case of trafficking of a 12-year-old girl was revealed after the mother went to the police to file a report and press charges. The trafficker and abuser of the girl was a 55-year-old ‘respectable’ member of society, prominent in their local church and with ties to conservative and far-right politicians and to the Greek police.⁶⁴ The girl, who came from a poor family of eight children (two of whom were adults at the time), was running errands in the neighbourhood to make some pocket money and was often found at the abuser’s grocery store, where he got to know her and ended up trafficking her to other men while also sexually abusing her himself.

When the case went to trial, there was an effort to put blame to the mother, accusing her of trafficking, based on the fact that she was a poor and ‘unfit’ mother who could not control her children. In the press, the 12-year-old girl was presented as a ‘sex worker’⁶⁵ who didn’t look her age, who chose the wrong path of life, who could confuse and seduce men, and whose main goal was to ‘make money’ under the direction of her mother. As happens with cases where women,

⁶⁴ His wife, Elisavet Lekka, was elected as an Athens city councillor in 2019 on the slate of (then) right-wing mayor Kostas Bakoyannis, nephew of the conservative Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis (Athens Bureau, 2022).

⁶⁵ Some of the media outlets that covered the case as well as the lawyers who defended the abuser often applied the term ‘sex worker’ to the girl, implying that she was not trafficked but that it was her own choice to perform sex work in order to ‘make money’.

girls, or queer persons, are abused, assaulted, or killed by Greek cis heterosexual otherwise ‘good guys’, often in positions of power (in media and politics), the abuser is defended, and the focus of blame is laid on the victim. Leading up to the trial, the girl and her siblings were harassed and threatened by masked men, leading to a knife attack on the girl, in her neighborhood⁶⁶.

While the case was unfolding, the state and the municipality were absent from any type of care provision for the girl and the rest of her siblings. With her mother in jail (for almost 18 months) and an absent father, the care of the children was undertaken by older siblings, their grandmother who was herself poor and unable to physically care for them, and the local community, that from early on stepped in and organized around the case. The organizing of solidarity towards the girl, her mother, and their family was initiated by the local popular neighborhood assembly of Kolonos/Sepolia/Akadimia Platonos, by some of the women that I interviewed for this research, who participated in the *Solidarity Committee for the 12-year-old-girl*.⁶⁷ These women, some of whom are teachers in the local schools, protested, fundraised and mobilized, not only to help the family, but also to protect them from the heteropatriarchal violence and the institutional neglect and dispossession to which they were subject.

Their protests in the heart of the city, with marches as well as with sit-ins at the courthouse, directly named and contested the corruption and misogynist dispossession at the heart of the juridical and political status quo in Greece. One of the *Committee*’s press release states (translated from Greek by the author):

The imprisonment of a woman without any kind of support, who dared to break the silence, made visible, from the start, how powerful is the class-based prejudice towards those who are at the limits of their survival. And it showed how gendered presumptions remain towards the

⁶⁶ For more details on the incident see e-kathimerini (2023).

⁶⁷ As Greek legislation does not allow for the names of sexual abuse and child abuse survivors to be publicized, the case was broadly referred to as that of “the 12-year-old girl”. The excerpt above was published in Greek, on the website Verso (Verso, 2024).

women, who are seen not only as exclusively responsible for the upbringing of their children but also the ones who are “guilty” if anything goes wrong. (Solidarity Committee for the 12-year-old girl, 2023).⁶⁸

The Solidarity Committee called out the state’s hypocrisy and supposed legislative ‘modernization’ towards women’s rights, when on the ground, amidst everyday feminicides, male violence towards women and girls is still presented as isolated cases of ‘passion killings’, or ‘love crimes’. In one of the press releases of the Solidarity Committee for the 12-year-old girl, we read (translated from Greek by author):

The Greek state claims to be conducting action plans, to be signing international agreements that are established by law, to be co-signing - in theory - updated laws, while at the same time, its actors, when they are handling real life cases, are only seeing ... degenerate mothers and underage girls that seduce family men. The Greek authorities penalize poverty and throw in jail, with so much ease, those who suffer from it, covering up not only its causes but also the perpetrators of abuse. (*Solidarity Committee for the 12-year-old girl*, 2023)

As members of the local assembly, but also through their longtime experience in the neighborhood, the community who participated in the call for solidarity and support of the 12-year-old girl, posed demands of the city and the municipality of more family services and support for vulnerable populations. While members of the Solidarity Committee, over the course of the trial, were treated with hostility by the mainstream media and conservative politicians, that spent hours discussing on air the responsibilities of ‘unfit mothers’ who do not properly ‘educate’ their daughters to avoid abuse, the *Solidarity Committee* performed a political intervention.

The *Solidarity Committee* positioned this issue in its broader systemic roots that members of society and the state had denied acknowledging, that of the neoliberal, heteropatriarchal, and racist political and socio-spatial economies of (non)belonging and dispossession, that have been ordering urban livelihoods and their “value” according to profit and attachments to power. As another *urban*

⁶⁸ The entire call for solidarity and press release (in Greek) is found on the website Akadimia Platonos in the City of Athens (2024).

caring undercommons, the community of one of the most underprivileged neighborhoods of Athens, came together, cared, and mobilized against local governance, judges, the police, and the media, that is always ready to confirm their ‘superiority’ against failed, immoral, unproductive ‘Others’, justifying and normalizing the violence against them.

7.1 The affective geographies of social reproduction: presents/futures of care in the urban

In concluding this dissertation, I (re)turn to the question: Why look at the affective geographies of social reproduction, and why specifically in the Greek austerity context? I address this question drawing from the analyses presented in this dissertation.

First, though, I briefly discuss austerity, as I understand it in the aftermath of this research but also as I have felt and experienced it growing up and living the majority of my adult life under prolonged austerity and its various ‘crises’. Austerity, imposed through the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) by supranational institutions, has been thrown at various ‘problematic’ economies as a neoliberal *panacea*. Its mission is to discipline already precaritized populations as well as those ‘doing well’ financially (although not the elites) into taking over the ‘labor’ of national indebtedness, and to ‘bear’ dispossession for the ‘common good’ of capitalist society, through the promise of ‘recovery’ and the future merit of a booming economy. But, despite austerity as a ‘one-fits-all’ remedy for ‘crises’ that are nationalized and ‘contained’ from the globalized capitalist system that has created them in the first place, its impact is not uniform across the different places (and eras) in which it has been implemented.

Rather, as showcased in chapters that analyze the data collected, austerity “locks-in”, from above, on already existing place-based practices of capitalist accumulation and exploitation and on social hierarchies of (non)belonging, formed through place-specific manifestations of broader

(neo)colonial processes that make the “many Souths” (Vergès, 2023, np) of the world. Austerity privatizes public assets and resources, it dismantles the welfare state and encloses everyday practices of survival, commodifying them, further dispossessing those who then cannot afford them and whose role becomes that of cheap precarious labor. Austerity, though, is not faced with a passive acceptance of its policies, but with already existing practices of social reproduction that communities have used throughout different ‘crises’ to survive, thrive, oppose, and to inflict change, formed by particular geo-historical contexts.

It is in the urban that austerity is imposed, unfolding through multiple (supra)national capitalist accumulation processes, and felt to a large extent in the intimate spheres of embodiment and the family. There in the geographies of everyday survival, struggles against austerity are not just grounded in the ‘now’ but also in the personal and collective socio-spatial imprints of intergenerational experiences of dispossession, in journeys in search of a better future, and mobilizations for the transformation of the cities that many ‘Others’ call home. Despite austerity building on and deepening already existing inequalities, the socio-spatial imaginaries of successful capitalist recovery and development that it fosters, clash with those produced by the urban poor, and the grassroots communities that mobilize and act collectively, to resist and combat the impact of austerity.

In the case of Athens, in a state of successive small and large ‘crises’, from austerity, to the ‘refugee problem’, to the pandemic, the everyday struggles for survival and justice in the city, reveal that social reproduction is not what happens automatically and instinctively, just out of the will to survive. Instead, as was showcased in Chapter Four, it is the result of everyday decisions and strategies, which women and feminized subjects have to go through, from place-based everyday encounters and daily routines of navigating the city, to city-wide organizing. These

decisions and the socio-spatial practices they lead to, are deeply political as they enact socio-spatial imaginaries of belonging from below, caring for themselves and ‘Others’, as political subjects undesired and dysfunctional to neoliberal urbanism and dreams of bordered European development.

Social reproduction is the cause around which not only grassroots solidarity, but also anti-capitalist placemaking are organized in the urban, against neoliberal distortions and appropriations of the right to the city. It creates interrelated non-hierarchical spatialities or constellations of care that form the networks and institutions of care that navigate through their different roles and positions within communities, appropriating and taking space away from capital, contributing to anti-capitalist placemaking.

As discussed in Chapter Five, the social reproductive practices that the participants engaged in, did not unfold in a void, but rather within existing heteropatriarchal hegemonies that reinscribed ‘new’ sexist capitalist and neoliberal necropolitics, which dispose of gendered, raced, and classed bodies according to their needs. In the austerity city, old and new regimes of violence that justify acts of violence and dispossession, create *affective spatialities* of hostility that clash with the affective spatialities of belonging that socially reproductive practices nurture. *Affective topoi* are formed in the space-times of everyday encounters, in the community and the city, collectivizing and politicizing care, performing it in the public spaces of the city and making it visible at a societal level, as a collective as opposed to individual struggle.

In their everyday decision-making, women have to carefully choose their routes, stops, and visibility in the urban, they have to deploy their knowledge of space, and to trust their affective and sensory perceptions of it. It is in these space-times that feminized, dispossessed, political subjects are able to develop *affective spatial knowledges and strategies* informed by the awareness

of their position within the affective economies of the systems of domination and exploitation they are subjected to, as well as by their own bodily and affective capacities to care.

In the *affective topos* of the everyday encounter with systems and actors of oppression and regimes of violence, but also with caring and cared-for ‘Others’, dispossession, violence, and injustice are witnessed and felt across difference contributing to processes of coming into oppositional and fugitive consciousness. In the Greek context, the fugitivity that emerges within the hierarchies of power and belonging under ‘crisis’, casts embodied subjects outside the national body, rendering them disposable and deploying them for the implementation and normalization of threat, neglect, and politicized harm. It is not only their intersectional embodied identities that cast these bodies at the bottom of social hierarchies, but also their political engagement, as manifested in the general penalization of solidarity.

Under a fugitive consciousness, feminized and disposable ‘Others’ come together forming *urban caring undercommons*, performing care and enabling their survival ‘under the radar’; of systems of oppression and dispossession in the urban. The *urban caring undercommons* formed from *embodied relational infrastructures*, that perform the embodied labor of social reproduction, creating socio-spatial relations and enabling transformation through the desire for different futures.

Within the *urban caring undercommons*, that can emerge both within society and within specific institutions and solidarity spaces, embodied political subjects engage in a two-fold embodied socio-spatial praxis that reveals the two political functions of social reproduction—*as resistance* and *of resistance*. This two-fold praxis is both a form of resistance since it politicizes and collectivizes care, both within everyday encounters and organized solidarity, but is also a set of practices of care through which resistance in the form of organized solidarity becomes possible.

The knowledges that precaritized and marginalized communities have accumulated over the years around their dispossession and its resistance, are encapsulated in the concept of *affective pedagogies of social reproduction*. These pedagogies are embodied, shared intergenerationally and across difference and help communities not only to survive but to do the affective and transformative labor that forms oppositional consciousness and resisting subjects and prepares communities for moments where their dynamic resistance can become a social movement. The affective pedagogies of resistance that teach communities how to care politically and form relations beyond profit, form and are formed by socio-spatial imaginaries, often tied to ideas of place and spatialities of resistance, helping communities to resist across time.

In the city in crisis, all the above create the *city as a work of care*, performed collectively, forming *the right to social reproduction*, a prerequisite for any endeavour to claim and exercise the right to the city. The city as a work of is not a utopian fantasy, but a product of all the underground work of care unfolding in the *urban caring undercommons*, in everyday affective encounters of care, in the affective topoi that foster the subversive potentiality of social reproduction, and finally in the socio-spatial embodied praxis of resistance, and its functions.

Social reproduction, the everyday strategies that reproduce the work force that drive capitalism, but also life in general, fosters the practices, relations and knowledges to fight capitalism *from within*, reproducing opposition and caring political subjects. With the urban as a terrain of conflict between different groups, lifestyles, attachments to power, claims, and imaginaries about the city, social reproduction forges the socio-spatial relations and practices through which everyday urban spaces are turned into those where the enabling of life as transformative is made possible. The geographies of social reproduction in the urban are nurturing of and are nurtured by the affects, emotions, meanings, attachments and relations with others and

with space and place that form spatialities of resistance, resilience and reworking in the city. They are the grounding of future socio-spatial imaginaries of the urban, the embodied prefigurative 'now' of fugitive praxis.

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Appendix A

Sample Interview Questions

Research question 1: Social reproduction practices in the city

-What are the things you have been doing in your everyday life in order to survive, either for yourself or for others (family, friends, community) including domestic work, care and emotional support? Where do these take place in the city?

-What are the things you do in your solidarity activism that help others survive? Where do these take place in the city?

-How is your solidarity activity connected to your everyday life? How much time does it take up on a weekly basis? How do the solidarity spaces you find yourself in connect to each other and to other spaces?

-Could you describe your access to health care during the crisis? Have you found any solidarity run alternatives? If yes, could you describe them and your experience of using them?

Research question 2: Solidarity spaces in the city

-Do you have a “steki”? If yes, where is that located?

-Have you contributed in the creation and/or running of a “steki”? Can you describe your participation? How do you feel about your experience?

(“Steki” is socio-political hub, a space where a particular community-group meet and spend time on a daily or weekly basis and is used as a space for community building and organizing as well as for hosting various activist events and activities, in the context of the solidarity and anti-austerity movements in Athens. It is run by activists and often is an occupied space.)

- Has your involvement with a “steki” affected the way you have been using the public space? If yes, in what ways?

-How do you feel about being seen doing solidarity work in a “steki”?

-What could you say about how the “steki” is perceived and interacts as a community with the neighborhood it is located in? Where do you situate yourself in these interactions and how do you feel while getting involved with the local community?

Research question 3: Affective and embodied experiences of austerity in the city

-What is the impact of living in austerity on your emotional state and your body? Where do you get support for dealing with these impacts? Have you offered support to others and if yes, in what context?

-How would you describe walking in the city makes you feel? Could you give specific examples? What are the images, sounds, smells that you can remember? Where are these located in the city?

-How has the city changed over the years during austerity in your opinion? Have these changes affected the way you have been using public space? Could you give specific examples?

-Have you been a witness/experienced the police presence/violence and /or manifestations of state or other types of violence? If yes, how have these experiences impacted the ways in which you use public space? How does this impact upon your everyday life? How do you feel about this?

Appendix B

A brief history of the neighborhoods: Omonia, Exarcheia, Sepolia/Agios Panteleimonas, Metaksourgeio, Kypseli, Patisia

The history of the downtown neighborhoods in which this research was conducted, starts with the reconstruction of Athens as the capital of the Greek nation state in 1834. Besides Omonia, all these neighborhoods were on the margins of the first plan for Athens. They took current shape and form during the urbanization process of the 1960s-80s, producing a densely built urban fabric characterised by a lack of green spaces and dominated by the Greek polykatoikia (πολυκατοικία) apartment building.

Omonia built in 1833 hosts one of the oldest squares in the city, which is also an important transportation hub (including a metro, train and buses), attracting a variety of retail, hospitality and entertainment uses, as well as a high number of commuters. As the inner city's living conditions had deteriorated by the 1980s and the economy underwent neoliberal restructuring, many businesses and residents moved out of the area. Omonia, hosting a variety of cheap hotels and an aging housing stock, became the first arrival place for the migratory populations attracted to the city, who opened grocery shops, restaurants, transfer agencies and call centers as well as informal trading and worship spaces (Papatzani and Knappers, 2020). Since the 1990s, Omonia and its surrounding areas had also become a meeting place for the city's outcasts and marginalized populations (including drug dealing and street sex work, gaining a "dangerous" reputation, that later, post- 2005, was further fuelled by xenophobia and racism, leading to the emergence of the "ghettoization" narrative (Koutrolikou, 2016).

Exarcheia, in close proximity to Omonia, has been a neighborhood where many artists and intellectuals were based, as well as a centre of countercultural consumption and entertainment in

the city. The Athens Polytechnic School and other university buildings in the area led to a high concentration of students, keeping rents historically relatively low, while also fostering political organizing (Vradis, 2020). In 1973 the Polytechnic school building was occupied by students as a form of protest and resistance to the military dictatorship, leading to an uprising. The radical legacy of the neighborhood continued with it becoming a centre of anti-authoritarian and anarchist organizing, alternative lifestyles, counter-culture and alternative economy. Police and state suppression escalated in 2008 with the murder of Alexandros Grigoropoulos, that later led to the intensification of surveillance and securitization in the area.

Kypseli and Patisia had both been areas where residential buildings co-existed with theaters, cinemas, and retail stores, and where the middle classes and more affluent Athenians resided. Similarly to Omonoia, declining living conditions in the 1980s led to many residents moving out to the suburbs, offering immigrants a cheap housing solution. Immigrants and refugees rejuvenated the local economy through their small businesses and gave the area its multicultural character. The high concentration of old neoclassical and modernist abandoned buildings in the area led to rich countercultural and political activities, often occupied by anarchists and turned into alternative socio-cultural centers.

Close to Omonoia, Metaksourgeio (meaning silk-factory), has been a neighborhood that historically hosted working-class populations, Roma families, artists, working in nearby theatres, and manufacturing workshops (Alexandri, 2015). The area underwent a wave of gentrification in the 1980s-1990s, during which many previous residents were displaced, and later transitioned into a mix of residential and entertainment land uses (Alexandri, 2015). Metaksourgeio's gentrification was interrupted during the austerity crisis leading to a demographic mix of working-class families, immigrants, and wealthier creative classes who sought an alternative lifestyle.

Sepolia and Agios Panteleimonas have historically been working-class neighborhoods that were developed near Athens industrial zone in the 1900s, where most workers and their families lived. With urbanisation in the 1960s-1980s and the rise in incomes, many residents left, leaving the area to working and lower-middle classes consisting of internal migrants, immigrants, and refugees (Vaiou, 2014). Post 2008 these areas became a terrain of racist violence through the activity of the neo-Nazi party 'Golden Dawn' and their supporters, who clashed with local, anarchist, and leftist communities (Kandyliis & Kouvalakos, 2011).

