Spring 2021

Athenian Graffiti and the Right to the City: The Illegal Practice of Public Space Reclamation

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Senior Honors Thesis By
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Presented to the
Urban Studies Department
Trinity College
Hartford, Connecticut
2020-2021

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Dedication

The idea for this thesis grew out of my study abroad experience in the city of Athens before Covid-19 sent me home. I would like to thank the Athenians who graciously let me interview them while they were in lockdown and Garth Meyers, my insanely wise and level-headed thesis advisor. Finally, my love of cities and of art is a manifestation of those who have shaped me throughout my life. Thank you to my beautiful mom, kind-hearted dad and courageous sister for giving me endless happiness, love, and opportunities.

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Abstract

Graffiti is not often thought of as a positive tool for change, especially in the era of urban neoliberalism. Rather, it is regarded by such forces as harmful to the urban fabric, a signifier of urban decline and a crime progenitor. While neoliberalization threatens the authenticity of the urban through privatization and appropriation, graffiti has the potential to reclaim and reappropriate public urban spaces. How can graffiti be used as a tool to enforce Lefebvre's theory of authentic urban space? Simultaneously, how does graffiti combat the processes of urban homogenization and commodification at the hands of the state and the firm within Lefebvre's 'right to the city' framework? By considering the act of graffiti within Lefebvre's framework of urban space reclamation and basing my research in the notoriously graffitied city of Athens, Greece, I intend to prove that graffiti can aid in the reclamation of appropriated and commodified spaces at the hands of 'the state and the firm' through its ability to shape and form space, subvert existing hierarchies and systems, reinstate belonging and visibility, and initiate dialogue and communication, which makes graffiti an effective tool for Lefebvre's theory of authentic space reclamation and creation.

Introduction

Cities around the world are experiencing the adverse effects of neoliberalization and globalization. As spatial theorist David Harvey emphasizes, this neoliberal ethic aids in the creation of urban inequalities, specifically focused on that of "...urban identity, citizenship, [and] belonging," which are all "fundamental characteristics" of public space (Dimitriou 27). The morphing of urban space manifests itself in a shift away from public urban spaces to civil spaces, which Zygmunt Bauman characterizes as "spaces for [...] organized consumption" characterized by "a redundancy of interaction, lack of friction, togetherness and any deeper reason to communicate" (27). As such, neoliberalism brings to the forefront questions of urban authenticity, and the tangible loss of such spaces in the urban fabric. In order to understand this loss of authenticity and the simultaneous bereavement of urban identity and belonging, one must first attempt to understand the characteristics of authentic urban space. What is it, and is it being abolished by a greater force associated with neoliberalism?

It is not unusual to feel that one urban space is more "real" than others, or invokes a feeling of truthfulness that other spaces in the same city seem to lack. For pseudo-Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre, this urban realness is found in practiced public spaces, which are places of unexpected and diverse encounters and communication, unpredictability and playfulness, agency and access (Schmid 58). Indeed, they are "spaces of justice" that are inseparably bound with politics, a "breeding ground of urban character" that allows all citizens equal access and the ability to shape the space themselves (Harvey 1.4.3). The authenticity of such spaces, however, is constantly threatened by neoliberal forces. Lefebvre calls these commodifying forces the "state and the firm" (Lefebvre 53). Through a process of appropriation and privatization, these forces destroy the lively urban and replace it with inauthentic, "dull [...] mutilated" spaces. These entities confiscate resources and limit access to space, creating pockets of exclusion and fragmentation (Lefebvre 56). Invoking the use of Lefebvre's notorious and celebrated phrase, the only way to regain urban agency is by reclaiming one's 'right to the city' and as such, one's right to public space (Schmid 58). It is this concept of urban contestation over public spaces that binds space with power, a recurring theme in the following work.

This narrative is explicitly tangible in the modern city of Athens, located on the southern edge of Greece, where neoliberalization manifests itself through issues of urban belonging and exclusion as true public spaces disappear at the hands of the government (Dimitriou 1.5). However, there are also spaces where the right to the city is activated, resulting in organizational novelties and experimental forms of self-governance, as seen in the lively district of Exarchia (Dimitriou 1.5). More specifically, citizen-run Navarinou Park, located in the heart of the neighborhood, has become a space where citizens can participate in the transformation of space through open committee meetings and neighborhood collaboration (Advikos 6). This practice of reclamation is known as *commoning*, in which a community "decides to manage [...] in a collective manner with special regard to equal access" (Dimitriou 6). Similar commons have emerged in the neighborhoods of Kypseli and Patission in central Athens, and although a seemingly perfect implementation of Lefebvre's 'right to the city,' issues of internal exclusion and segregation plague the spaces (Advikos 8). Although these flaws do not negate the act of spatial resistance, it becomes inefficient and unsustainable as a model of practicing ideal space.

How, then, can public space in the city of Athens be reclaimed and reappropriated through the common people, negating the neoliberal ethic enforced by the state and the firm? To

this I posit that the act of graffitiing, although widely discounted and stigmatized, can aid in the creation of commons. Athens is known as one of the most graffitied cities in the world, an urban landscape where graffiti "quite literally covers almost every surface [...]" (Alexandrakis). Its ability to shape and form space, subvert existing hierarchies and systems, reinstate belonging and visibility, and initiate dialogue and communication makes graffiti an effective tool for Lefebvre's theory of authentic space reclamation and creation.

Subsequently, this thesis will be organized into three chapters, supplemented by a series of primary interviews I completed with Athenian architects, graffiti artists, and graffiti festival organizers. The first chapter will discuss pervasive issues facing Athenian society, protest culture, and the fractured relationship between civil society and the state, as these themes inform both the impetus and content of Athenian graffiti. The second chapter will discuss the methodology used, which is taken from Lefebvre's theory of authentic space creation and reclamation, and apply it to Athenian spaces. The third chapter will examine the graffiti movement in Athens as a means to create commons and enact Lefebvre's 'right to the city.' In this way, I will advocate for the reassessment and restructuring of anti-graffiti thought, the stigmatization of graffiti artists, and simultaneously defend the need for authentic urban spaces for purposes of inclusion and belonging.

Chapter 1: Paradox, Contestation, and Resistance in Athens, Greece

The modern city is a complicated place full of opposition. Addressing such enigmas may shed light on the "dark side" of cities, but as Beauregard states, "we cannot understand the city without attending to these paradoxical qualities" (Beauregard xii). Beauregard focuses on the paradoxes of democracy and oligarchy, and tolerance and intolerance, both of which he believes can thrive equally in urban environments. It is the precarious nature of such aspects of an urban society that "frequently [... arouse] popular resistance," making a city the "major terrain of politics" (Beauregard xi, Dimitriou 1.4.2). Urban scholars De Certeau, Schmid, and Harvey agree, recognizing the city as a space for effective political resistance, for transformation and change (Dimitriou 1.4, Schmid).

Such paradoxes exist plainly in modern Athens, and recognizing them is crucial in understanding the impetus for contemporary urban resistance. Despite the city's title as the

"space where democracy was born," the Greek state's narrative is plagued with oligarchies, monarchies, and dictatorships (Dimitriou 2.3.1.1). The shortcomings of the contemporary government became shockingly evident during the economic crisis of 2009, when harsh measures of austerity, imposed by international stakeholders, spurred a sharp cut in public spending, resulting in high levels of unemployment, inadequate social services, and wealth disparities. These issues led to misdirected feelings of contempt towards new populations of refugees and immigrants, leaving Athenians to grapple against feelings of xenophobia that materialized in the elections of 2012, when the Golden Dawn, a far right, anti-immigration party, won 18 seats in Parliament (Dimitriou 2.3.3.3).

A paradox that Beauregard omits in his political and social analysis of the city is the competing narratives of the urban built environment. This is crucial in understanding the city of Athens as a whole, specifically because the urban landscape is so contradictory, both visually and ideologically. A striking palimpsest, it emphasizes the delicate balance between past and present, a glorification of the ancient and an aversion to the contemporary, a direct reflection of the struggle for a modern Greek identity (Kotzamani 12). Furthermore, the glorification and preservation of ancient monuments and sites starkly contradicts the ongoing process of commodification and privatization of urban public space in the age of capitalism (Dimitriou 1.1.2). The role of public space is further complicated by the diversification of the Athenian population. Urban studies scholar James Holsten believes "the dominant classes meet the advances of these new citizens with new strategies of segregation, privatization, and fortification" (Dimitriou 1.1.2). Marxist scholars take a similar approach, blaming the capitalist system and disproportionate agency of the rich to exploit and manipulate the fundamental inclusionary aspects that make public spaces public (Beauregard xiii).

Despite the means of commodification, examining significant public spaces "...reflects the relationship between individual and society," and emphasizes the "...material construction of socio-political relationships" (Dimitriou 1.0). This negates the neutrality of Athenian public space, further emphasizing it as a contested political space where defiance and denial, direct democracy, reclamation and decision-making happen (Dimitriou 1.3.3, Kavada 70). Thus, Athenians' historic relationship to public space is crucial to understanding the city's resistance movements, especially those considered unconventional.

It is unsurprising that Lefebrve, whose theory relies heavily on Marxist philosophy, blames the palpable decay of democratic urban space on "the state and the firm…" who seek to "appropriate urban functions and to assume and ensure them by destroying the [other] form of the urban" (Lefebrve 53). The crisis of the urban area accompanies a "crisis of urban jurisdiction and administration" (53), and the only way to combat the resulting "separation, segregation, and isolation" is through "participation in the city" (Lefebrve 56). The mode of such participation is unspecified, and thus leaves it up for debate, which I will address in Chapter 3.

Marx himself "noted the numerous ways in which opposing tendencies were harbored…" in the city (Beauregard 15). As Beauregard says, "the city is inherently unsettled" because of the constant contradictions (Beauregard xii), and it is only through understanding this unsettledness that the tactics of participation, which I define as acts of defiance, are recognizable. In this chapter, I will emphasize historic and present-day Athens as space of social, political, and spatial contradictions, and associate its paradoxical nature with the impetus for political urban resistance against the "state and the firm" (Lefebvre 53).

1.1 Origins of Foreign Rule and Resistance

The success of Athens as the center of the Western world was dependent on its favorable situation in the landscape. Athens occupies one of the greatest plains in Greece, is enclosed by mountains landward and opens to the sea southward (Kostanick 56). The various hills made the spot a "...natural site for the early development of the city," as it was easily defensible (56). Originally five kilometers from the sea, it was not in immediate threat of naval invasions. Additionally, Phaleron Bay with its protected harbor of Piraeus, and the Corinth Canal, made Athens the center of many sea routes. It was also a central to land routes from the Peloponnesus and mainland (57). This geographical versatility allowed Athens to flourish as a hub for trade, and as a result, the city accumulated great wealth and became the heart of early Western culture.

Although Athens' position ensured its longevity, it simultaneously made the city a frequently sought-after asset by foreign powers since its beginning in 5000 BC (Dimitriou 2.0). Following a complicated pattern of foreign rule, Greece became an independent state in 1834 after the signing of the Treaty of London by the Great Powers (Dimitriou 241). However, despite being officially recognized as an independent kingdom, it was to be ruled by King Otto of

Bavaria until 1862, who was responsible for commissioning and implementing the first Neoclassical plan of the city. By 1862, the autocrat was forced to leave the country after a series of public and military uprisings, replaced by Prince William of Denmark (King George I) (242). In 1910, following the loss of the Greco-Turkish War (1897), Eleftherios Venizelos of the Liberal Party became the first Prime Minister of Greece. Following Greece's participation in a series of wars beginning with the First Balkan War and ending with the Greco Turkish War and the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, the second Hellenic Republic was declared and ruled by Pavlos Kountouriotis, despite an attempted coup by Venizelos (244). In 1935, the Kingdom of Greece was restored under George II but a self-coup within a year began the 4th of August Regime led by General Ioannis Metaxas. This period of rule "...espoused the values and symbolism of Italian Fascism, and had economic ties with the emerging Nazi Germany," and in 1941, the German Army entered Athens and the Nazi flag flew on the Acropolis (Dimitriou 244). A year later, the Greek People's Liberation Army (ELAS) was founded, and along with Axis intervention, succeeded in liberation in 1944. Greece joined the United Nations in 1945, and in the following year, fighting between the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) and the Government began a civil war that ended in 1949 (246).

The postwar period (1950-1967) contained power struggles between fascist and anti-fascist ideologies, ending with a coup d'état that initiated seven years of right-wing military juntas. In 1973, dictator George Papadopoulos aimed "to legitimize and "democratize"" his regime by calling Greece a republic (247). Despite this measure, it was still considered oppressive and on November 17, an uprising at the Athens Polytechnic School left twenty-four civilians and students dead (247). The event is commemorated every year as a heroic act against tyranny (247). Following this period of tyranny was the Third Hellenic Republic, which began in 1974 as Konstantinos Karamanlis was elected under the conservative party (New Democracy Party). In only a few decades, Athens would see the rise of PASOK, the Panhellenic Socialist Movement. The most significant and symbolic measure came that same year, when the monarchy was finally abolished, and a parliamentary republic officially established. This signaled an official end to centuries of foreign rule (248).

The complicated narrative of the modern Greek state until its independence sheds valuable light on the origins of contemporary Greek ideology and beliefs. Scholars speculate that the general Greek polarization in political behavior has resulted from the "...polarization of the

Greek nation-state as a cultural nation of undoubted eminence but a weak, inefficient [foreign] political state" (Dimitriou 2.2). This is reflected in the Greeks general skepticism towards the ability and power of the state, while believing in the effectiveness of civil participation- a consequence of centuries of foreign rule (2.2). This conviction in the power of citizen-led movements was seen in the notorious resistance movements and riots of 2008 and 2011 which ruptured any relationship between the state and the general citizen population, making it apparent that Athenians needed a different way to relate to the state (Dimitriou 2.2).

1.1.2 Paradoxes of the Greek Identity

It is the significant and complicated past of foreign rule that has influenced the modern Greek identity. Indeed, the decentralized, multi-ethnic and multi-religious quality of the Ottoman Greek State before 1834 resulted in a general lack of social and cultural cohesion (Karatzas 156). As such, an ideological dilemma surrounded the establishment of the Greek state in the early nineteenth century. Eager to be accepted among their European neighbors, specifically in social coherence (Dimitriou 2), but lacking a unified national identity due to decades of foreign rule, the new state spent the majority of the nineteenth century emphasizing their connection to Ancient Greece (Kotzamani 12).

Upon the signing of the Treaty of London in 1830, the agenda of the new Greek state was to establish itself as an independent country through a process of self-definition and social unification under a shared Hellenic identity. Archaic Greek was chosen as the official language, conscription was established as a universal duty, and a uniform school curriculum was implemented (Karatzas 159). One of the most tangible and effective tactics in the nation-building effort happened in 1833, when Athens was chosen as the capital instead of Nafplio (159). The transformation of Athens was monumental in the development of this identity: the tangible visuals of Ancient Greek culture throughout the city enforced the prevalent yet illusionistic narrative of historic continuity (159).

This search for a cohesive image in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries led to a homogenization of Greek culture, prioritizing Western tradition (now considered "high culture") while simultaneously overlooking Eastern heritage (categorized in a somewhat biased way as "folk culture") (Kotzamani 12). By the end of the twentieth century, Eastern influence

was reinvigorated by an influx of immigrants from "...Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa" (12) and, although the ideological hierarchy still exists in contemporary Athens, it is challenged and reshaped by the continually diversifying population of the city. Oftentimes, this invokes a distinction between the Greeks and the Other. Today, the Greek state is an "imagined ethnic community" united under the umbrella of Greek Orthodoxy, and in the minds of the Greek people, the nation is always under threat. Contemporary official narratives are "...still largely based on a notion of continuity with antiquity" (155), and the paradoxical built environment of contemporary Athens enforces this sentiment.

1.2 Urban Topography

The earliest plans for Athens must be examined when defining the shortcomings and crises of the present-day city. The paradoxical symbolism of past and present visible in the city was purposeful in these plans. Indeed, Ancient and Classical monuments were glorified and used by the earliest planners to dictate the new urban geography. Lefebrve believed that "modern Athens has nothing more in common with the antique city covered over, absorbed, extended beyond measure" (Lefebvre 7). He believed that the ancient remnants were commodified, "only places for [...] consumption and aesthetic pilgrimage" (Lefebvre 8), and his distaste for the early plans of Athens can be surmised from his belief that one "cannot plan realistically based on ideologies" (7).

By examining the shifts in urban planning and architecture from the mid-seventeenth century, two themes emerge; the view of public space by authoritative entities, and the "chasm between legislative intentions and spatial applications" (Dimitriou 86). State institutions consisted of wealthy stakeholders who based decisions on financial and commercial interests. The broader public was excluded from such decisions, and as such, "competing narratives and social forces" became apparent, culminating in collective action and resistance as will be discussed in section 1.3.3 (Dimitriou 86).

1.2.1 Paradoxical Plans for a Modern City

Modern and ancient narratives are constantly at play in the built environment of Athens, reflecting the Greek struggle to balance a dual identity of past and present. This purposeful juxtaposition was first introduced in the early 1830s, when the capital was moved from Nafplio to Athens. The reimagined city was to play an instrumental role in projecting an image of past prosperity and unity to the surrounding European nation-states, while providing a strong political center as Greece adjusted to centralized rule (Karatzas 156).

In the final stage of Ottoman rule, Athens was a dense, vibrant provincial town in the typical Ottoman pattern (Karatzas 157). The city was organically divided into sections based on religion and language, and neighborhoods varied by social and financial status (158). It wasn't until the establishment of the new Greek state in 1830 that the power of the urban environment was harnessed as a tool to enforce the nation-building agenda (159). In order to deny all associations with Ottoman tradition, and given a virtually blank slate since the city lacked any concrete plans and had been previously destroyed by war, the first of many plans was proposed in 1833 (159).

The first plan, drafted by Kleanthis and Schubert, was decidedly Neoclassical (Dimitriou Chapter 2.3.1.1). As students of Karl Friedrich Schinkel in Berlin, they had a romantic perception of city planning, and tried to find symbolic expressions within the city by proposing a symmetrical plan with several major axes connecting the core of the city with the surrounding port and monuments (Karatzas 160). The hierarchical plan intended wide boulevards bordered with public buildings and housing for the new elite, as well as a major palace prominently facing the Parthenon (159). The plan, however, was never completed due to a lack of funds and resistance from Athenian land-owners as the serious impact of the plan on their properties was realized (Dimitriou 2.3.1.1). A year after the first plan was drafted and rejected, Leo von Klenze, the primary architect of Ludwig I of Bavaria, made major modifications to the Kleanthis and Schubert plan (Dimitriou 2.3.1.1). The major difference was a conscious avoidance of anything that could cause clashes with landowners. The proposed royal palace was to be moved from Omonia Square to Kerameikos, a site northwest of the Acropolis. The final plan was a fusion of both. All that remained of the original plan was a triangle of streets surrounding the historic center of the modern city (Dimitriou 2.3.1.1), a strong Neoclassical style, and a "regularity and

geometry that reflected social hierarchies" in a modern iron grid formation (Karatzas 159). These earliest forms of Western zoning continuously and intentionally created a "separation and [...] segregation" in the following eras (Lefebrve 53).

The socio-economic division became evident as spatial patterns emerged in the 1860s (Dimitriou 2.3.1.2). The eastern region of Athens surrounding the King's palace in Syntagma Square was overwhelmingly wealthy, while working class residents moved to the western area of the city along Piraeus Avenue and self-built settlements sprung up around the base of the Acropolis (Dimitriou 2.3.1.2). It was not only private residences and neighborhoods where such divisions were evident, however. Public spaces, originally created to serve major governmental buildings, were favored by different economic groups. Zappeion and Syntagma, abutting the National Garden, were favored by the rich. Social and commercial life developed within a triangle of Stadiou, Ermou, and Eolou streets, while lower class citizens gathered around the squares of Psiri, Omonia, and Independence (2.3.1.2).

By the turn of the twentieth century, Athens was considered a beautiful (and typically European) Neoclassical city with wide avenues, urban parks and gardens, elegant private and public buildings, and very little manufacturing industries. The lack of manufacturing meant that the city had minor levels of pollution, with middle and upper class inhabitants dominating both the center city and the developing suburbs, partly due to the displacement of lower class citizens to the urban periphery and smaller informal ghettos and gatherings throughout the city (161).

It is obvious in this early period that public space was "synonymous with [the] strategic plans of the state" (Dimitriou 1.5). Unsurprisingly, political control in the nineteenth century was deeply hierarchical, and this was reflected in the "hierarchies of the production of built space" (Dimitriou 2.3.1). The plans of the king and his appointed architects and engineers were influenced by wealthy Greek families, who had the power to manage the proposed plans through land speculation. However, the lowest strata of society, while able to participate in the production of space through informal settlements, could not tangibly or officially altar the design of the city.

From 1864 to the early 1920s, Athens experienced a substantial expansion as the population spiked, and as a result, new public spaces were incorporated into the city plans, albeit sometimes unintentionally and oftentimes, disregarded. Peripheral areas were absorbed into the city plan, but this was "based solely on the logic of maximization of land profit owned by private

individuals," while squares, "scare and small in size," were a byproduct of the "non-vertical sectioning of two roads" and the resulting irregularly shaped lots were unprofitable and unbuildable. Other squares, as mentioned before, were placed in relation to existing landmarks and ancient ruins (Dimitriou 83). Until the mid-twentieth century, squares were considered "expendable reserve stock of city spaces," and private or government buildings were often erected in the squares, eradicating any open space (Dimitriou 84).

The Modernist movement in the 1950s introduced new questions surrounding public space, but did little to enhance its importance in the eyes of the government. In The Charter of Athens (1942), a "published result of the 1933 *Congres International d'Architecture Moderne* edited by [...] Le Corbusier [...] laid out a 95-point program for the planning and construction of rational cities" (Dimitriou 85). Among the topics addressed were strict zoning, encouraging the creation of independent zones for different urban functions, and forgetting the "chaotic jumble of streets" that was typical of European cities at the time. Squares were mentioned only once in the public charter, and were looked down upon as they were not "organic elements of the city" (Dimitriou 85).

The quest for the "ideal city," as Lefebvre called it, was far from achieved in these early master plans of Athens. Lefebvre philosophically approaches the "ideal city" in which there is a freedom from division of labor, social classes, and class struggles. It is a tightly knit community that manages itself (Lefebvre 25). Of course, this view of the city is almost so idealized and embroiled in Marxist theory that it is unrealistic to apply to a modern urban space. Indeed, Lefebvre addresses this, noting that one "cannot plan realistically based on ideologies" (Lefebvre 7). Although the planners of Athens sought to create a space that invoked the previous glory and ideals of the agora, their plans enforced quite the opposite: a conformity to the previous systems of the capitalism and aesthetic sensibilities of the surrounding European nations that created greater divisions of labor, inequities, and "projects of separation" (Lefebvre 27).

It was in this period that the construction of housing shifted from the public to the private sector. As a result, speculative exploitation of urban land heightened while a new type of urban space- an ambiguous public-private space- emerged in the form of the *polykatoikia* (Dimitriou 86). The privatization of public space, as will be discussed in Chapter 2, provoked new and complicated disputes regarding ownership and belonging. As such, it is an important development in the relationship of the Greek public to the Greek State, once again indicating that

the forces of neoliberalization result in the privatization of public services but are met with significant pushback from the civil sphere.

1.2.2 Modern Architecture: The *Polykatoikia*

Lefebvre, although focused primarily on public urban space in the city, extended his theory to architecture. He looked upon architects as having an "established and dogmatized ensemble of significations" that were removed from the actual significations perceived and lived by the inhabitants of the city (Lefebvre 63). Their practice originated not from the reality or needs of the people, but rather their "interpretation of inhabiting," which is taken as an incontrovertible truth despite being "poorly developed" (63). Lefebvre believes that this shallow outlook interprets the city as an object "of cultural consumption for tourists" and for aestheticism, avid for spectacles and the picturesque, which can be seen in the nineteenth century plans for Athens, aimed at creating a spectacle of Neoclassical opulence and bliss (57). Beauregard similarly protests against this view of the city as an object, as it is merely a reduction of what the city truly is. This version of the city is "[no longer] lived in or understood practically," but "manipulated rather than effectively known" (57). This outlook is obvious in the early aesthetic plans of the city, as described before, but changed significantly in the 1950s, as housing became privatized. Although this seems contradictory at first glance, the privatization of housing changed the impetus for building and planning from an agenda of the state to the very real needs of the people, prioritizing function over aesthetics and as such, transforming the definition of public and private space.

Thus, the architectural history of Athens is important for my argument as it directly reflects the shifting needs and ideology of the Athenian population. The period after 1834 was dominated by impressive public buildings and gardens with a strong Neoclassical sensibility (Karatzas 148). The focus on grand governmental buildings and palaces reflected the new nation's need for order and strong centralized power, and the Neoclassical style alluded to the past in an attempt to unite the diverse population, as well as to fit in with their European neighbors (150). Residences were low-rise, stand-alone houses that were low density and inefficient at accommodating higher levels of population in the next decade.

The need for adequate housing increased as the population rose rapidly in the second half of the nineteenth century (Kostanik 58). In 1848, the population rose to 32,000, and nearly doubled by the seventies (58). Waves of refugees arrived from Asia minor in the 1920s, causing the population to top one and a half million in the mid-twentieth century. As a result, the city expanded outwards towards its natural boundaries and resources lacked to accommodate the new influx of people (162). New suburbs sprang up on the periphery, built with whatever materials and land were available, and resulted in a new Greek vernacular architecture (Lejeune 148). This vernacular was the first "architecture without architects" since the time of the Ottoman rule. It was "deeply rooted in the specific climate and culture of Athens" (148) and its "humility and cunning" (148) contrasted with the shifting neo-Hellenic architectural ideals of the modern metropolis, bringing in a mix of folk and Byzantium influences that had been carefully avoided in the Neoclassical redesign of the city in the nineteenth century (Shugart).

In the 1950s postwar period, another influx of people seeking anonymity as a means of self-protection from political persecution and urban employment opportunities moved to Athens (Karatzas 162). This influx of urban migration again created a dire need for housing, and another wave of illegal settlements appeared on the periphery of the now-bustling city. Although the newcomers owned small plots of land, they lacked building permits. The result was buildings that mimicked the architecture of center city to hide their rank, but lacked basic infrastructure. The government eventually legalized these settlements, as they were unable to provide alternatives to meet the needs of the rapidly growing population (163).

In a similar fashion, the government's failure to provide adequate housing to the lower and middle class in the fifties, paired with the influx of migrants, provoked a new housing solution that would alter the Athenian landscape forever. The ineffective Neoclassical low-rise housing was destroyed and replaced by a type of unique, multi-story apartment building called the *polykatoikia* (translated literally as "multi-living") (163). The design was based on Le Corbusier's Domino house, a conceptual, multi-use model house with an open floor plan and movable concrete slabs delineating the different floors (Sarra). Le Corbusier's design encompassed the ideals of the Modernist movement, as it prioritized function, and therefore versatility of function, over form. It was this multifunctionality and neutrality of design that made the *polykatoikia* so adaptable in the Athenian landscape. By slightly altering the concrete slabs, the building could accommodate both residential and commercial needs while

simultaneously allowing a densification of the urban landscape that was impossible in the previous Neoclassical urban plan (Karatzas 164).

It was not only the original architecture of the *polykatoikia* that made it so unique, but the system in which it came to be. Known as *antiparochi,* landowners would give their inner-city and periphery plots to small construction firms in return for flats within the apartment buildings developed there. Thus, the *polykatoikia* evolved without architects or governmental intervention (164). This came as a relief to the government, and as the new system helped to stimulate the post-war economy, it grew quickly in popularity.

In less than a generation, the image of the capitol had transformed from a typical Neoclassical European city to a dense metropolis dominated by relics of the Modernism movement (Karatzas 163). Indeed, the *polykatoikia* was an expression of the needs and values of the time, encouraging a new modern lifestyle to be adopted with the rising importance of nightlife and social gatherings (164). *Polykatoikias* were increasingly crucial during the early twenty-first century, as the presence of refugees and immigrants pushed the city to its limits. The natural geographical boundaries surrounding Athens inhibited sprawl, and thus, increasing the density of the city was paramount in accommodating such a population increase (164).

The *polykatoikia's* significance is not only that it showed the ability of the Athenian population to alleviate the failure of the government in providing basic rights for its increasing population: It redefined public and private space (Sarra). The lack of communal spaces in the city transformed the balconies into recreational space, and similarly altered the typical human interactions of the city. Additionally, the bottom floor was an in-between space, bridging the gap between the traditional definitions of public and private urban spaces. This changed in the eighties, when the ground floors were often used as private parking garages, thus cutting off the public use of the buildings (Sarra).

The domination of the *polykatoikia* led to increased conservation efforts, specifically of Ancient and Neo-classical buildings and areas, in the following decades (Karatzas 165). Restoration of historic aspects of the built environment, such as the Acropolis and the surrounding neighborhood of Neo-classical Plaka, enforce the importance of the symbolic nature of spaces and the narrative of historic continuity that is so integral to the Greek identity (Karatzas, Dimitriou 2.3.1.2). This stark architectural juxtaposition is still obvious in contemporary Athens, embodying the conflict of the Athenian people in balancing their past with

contemporary existence, realities, and struggles, while simultaneously embodying what Beauregard considers an urban "paradox" (Beauregard xi).

1.3 Contemporary Athens: Crisis and Major Issues

Lefebrve believed that the crisis was a "struggle for a different city" (Schmid 42). In his famous 1968 book, *Le Droit à la Ville,* he saw the systems of power in the city as a manipulating and abolishing force, looking to "separate, segregate, and isolate" the inhabitants of the city (Lefebvre 56). In this section, I will examine major Greek crises and the resulting movements urging for change in Athens, or, as Lefebvre believes, urging for "a transformed and renewed right to urban life" (Lefebvre 64). The issues resulting from the crises are the impetus and content of most Athenian graffiti, and as such, are important to understand.

The historically laissez-faire approach to urban regulation, as well as the shift from public to private sector housing in the mid-nineteenth century, is indicative of the overarching inadequacies of the "weak, inefficient" Greek government (Dimitriou 2). Despite being a nation of undoubted cultural importance, constant foreign intervention and occupation until the late nineteenth century created a disproportionate growth between the state and civil society, which developed well after the establishment of strong state institutions. This unbalanced relationship, paired with the abstract idea of a unifying yet ambiguous Greekness, muddled the distinction between public and private while simultaneously weakening the relationship between state and civil society (2). A general distrust of politics emerged by the end of the nineteen hundreds and persisted into the twenty-first century as crisis' required international intervention and aid, further undermining the country's sovereignty and increasing civil unrest (Dimitriou 2).

1.3.1 The Other: Immigration and Refugees

The frustrations of Athenians were sparked by the Greek government's obvious inability to address the fairly recent phenomena of heightened foreign immigration (Dimitriou 2.3.3.3). Despite periods of increased immigration throughout Greek history, as in the early twentieth century and post-war periods, this critical aspect of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries in Greece is significant in understanding the obstacles facing modern Greek society.

At the end of the twentieth century, Greece appeared comparatively stable, both economically and politically, in contrast to the surrounding nations. The fall of the Soviet Union and similar communist regimes triggered an influx of Central and Eastern European immigrants seeking opportunity, many of which were absorbed in cheap labor (2.3.3.3 Dimitriou). Greece was also the point of entry and transit for many "unauthorized immigrants from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East into the borderless European Union and Europe" (2.3.3.3), and the Dublin II regulation in 2003 "provided relocation of unauthorized immigrants throughout Europe to countries of their prime entry until their cases were adjudicated," turning Greece into a storehouse for illegal immigration to the broader European region (2.3.3.3 Dimitriou).

The numbers of foreigners continued to rise rapidly into the following decade, contributing to what came to be known as the Greek Refugee Crisis (Lamb 66). A scattering of conflicts in the Middle East, specifically the spread of the Islamic state (ISIS) into Syria and Iraq in the summer of 2014, the Syrian civil war in 2013, and economic deprivation in Africa, created nearly 14 million refugees, half under the age of 18, by 2015 (Lamb 67). In October of 2013, Australia, the United States, and European countries agreed to take in around twenty thousand refugees, and by July of 2014, the numbers of incoming refugees rose to around one hundred thousand (68). By September of 2015, the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) recorded three hundred thousand refugees in Europe, and a mere two months later, around three-quarters of a million (69).

By the end of 2015, a staggering and unprecedented 1.5 million refugees had illegally entered Europe, with around eight hundred thousand of these refugees entering through Greece, which was known as the "preferred gateway" (Lamb 69). UNHCR reported that in 2015, the number of refugees arriving in Greece had increased from 2014 by over 750 percent (69). Many Greek Islands hosted high numbers of migrants and refugees such as Lesbos, Kos, and Chios due to their close proximity to Turkey, while others arrived through Athens (69).

Athens has struggled to accommodate this influx of refugees and migrants, lacking both adequate resources and coordination between aid organizations (73). Although local reactions aided smaller groups of migrants, the lack of a cohesive, consistent plan highlighted the issues in European and Greek policy. Indeed, Greece has been criticized for its "inconsistent, tardy, and disorganized effort to manage the crisis," although blame is consistently shifted to their financial incapacity (74).

Not only did the arrival of immigrants and refugees shed light on the insufficiencies of the Greek government and increase Athenians' lack of faith in the state, but simultaneously sparked a rise in xenophobic tendencies (Dimitriou 2.3.3.3). The Greek economy, already stretched thin and lacking available jobs, meant that many newcomers were forced to turn to illegal networks, and the rise of illegal activity in the following years confirmed this. Indeed, employment and income shrunk for both the new and native population, creating an atmosphere of competition (2.3.3.3). Similarly, the presence of the new refugee population damaged tourism, which comprises approximately twenty percent of Greece's gross domestic product, and was a reality that many native Athenians came to resent (Lamb 73).

The rising tensions, resulting in xenophobia and the rise of fascist ideals, came to a head in the outcome of the elections of 2012 when the Golden Dawn, a far right, anti-immigration party won 18 seats in Parliament (Dimitriou 2.3.3.3). During this period, the "...Racist Violence Recording Network recorded more than one hundred and fifty racist attacks on non-citizens," and legal impunity in racist-based attacks (2.3.3.3). Similarly increasing were police hostilities and frequent round up operations, making the process of integration and acceptance extremely difficult and resulting in "extreme social, economic, and political marginalization" (2.3.3.3). As such, the election of the Golden Dawn can be considered tangible proof of the Greeks' historic struggle against otherness.

In the past decade, immigrants and refugees have settled in and begun families, creating rich multicultural neighborhoods and new spaces for cultural mixing and gathering (2.3.3.3). However, the humanitarian crisis that was globally recognized in 2015 is far from solved. Although Athenian natives are moving towards acceptance, underpinnings of xenophobia, enforced by the Greek need and desire for a unified identity, are still tangible in contemporary Athens. Migrants and refugees are among the most impoverished populations, often living in cramped conditions lacking basic amenities, and settling in areas of concentrated poverty.

Immigrants and migrants *themselves* are not responsible for the contemporary urban issues in Athens. Rather, it is the inability of the government, and simultaneously civil society, to adjust to such changes, increases, and diversification of the population. Greek citizens "could not look to the state for help or comfort," instead encouraged to address their problems at an individual rather than a communal level, relying on people as infrastructure (Dimitriou 2).

Although this movement at times produced close-knit and diversified communities, the fear of otherness is impossible to ignore.

1.3.2 Economic Instability

Distrust in the state was simultaneously emphasized by the economic crisis beginning in 2009. Shortly after the restoration of Greek democratic rule following the military junta regime in the late twentieth century, Greece joined the European Economic Community in 1981. This preceded the establishment of the European Union in 1992. The euro was introduced seven years later, and although adopted immediately by the majority of the participating countries, Greece failed to meet the fiscal criteria with "inflation below 1.5 percent, a budget deficit below 3 percent, and a debt-to-GDP ratio below 60 percent" (Council on Foreign Relations). By 2001, Greece adopted the euro despite a steep debt level above 100 percent of GDP. It is only by misrepresentation of funds that Greece is permitted to join the eurozone, and the summer Olympic Games, hosted in Athens in 2004, only increased the rising deficit and debt-to-GDP ratio. The games, which cost over 9 billion euros, triggered the "European Commission to place the country under fiscal monitoring in 2005" (Council on Foreign Relations).

This period of time saw an increasing commodification of public space (Dimitriou 2.3.2.4). Beginning in the 1990s during the era of economic shrinkage and culminating in the Athenian Olympics of 2004, public space was treated as an investment asset, as the state looked at public space "as an economic value in order to make the Greek capital competitive against the large cities of Europe" (Dimitriou 2.3.2.4). The Olympics of 2004 triggered a multitude of public works projects including overpriced highways, stadiums, and a new airport, but were done so with the interest of economic gain over necessary public works needed for the social good or serving collective needs. The result of such projects was the creation of exclusion zones, as well as socioeconomic segregation (Dimitriou 2.3.4.3).

Following the global banking crisis of 2009, Greece entered the first of three bailout agreements with the International Monetary Fund and the EU for a sum of 110 billion euros, in loans, over a three-year period (Council of Foreign Relations). Greece imposed strict austerity measures including tax increases and spending cuts, sparking national indignation and public defiance through a series of riots known as the Indignant Movement (Kavada 74). Although the

Prime Minister at the time, Papandreou, called for a referendum on a second bailout agreement, he was forced to step down and replaced by economist Lucas Papademos who "implemented further austerity measures and structural reforms." Despite the continuing protests against the bailouts, the second EU-IMF bailout was approved in 2012 in exchange for the largest debt restructuring plan in history (Council on Foreign Relations). In 2013, new austerity measures were implemented by the Greek government. The tangible results of such measures were shocking, with "layoffs of some twenty-five thousand public servants, as well as wage cuts, tax reforms, and other budget cuts," and public outcry grew as labor unions called a general strike.

Despite the election of the SYRIZA party, a left-wing, anti-austerity party that interrupted a forty-year stretch of two-party rule, a third bailout was approved in 2015, the third since 2010 (Council on Foreign Relations). This created new tax reforms, cuts in public spending, privatization of state assets, and labor law reforms. It was only in 2018 that Greece exited the final bailout agreement, but the amount of debt owed to the IMF and EU (around 290 billion) remains staggering. Additionally, in the period between 2008-2014, unemployment increased from 8.4 percent to a staggering 26.6 percent, with youth unemployment spiking from 21.9 to 52.4 percent (Kavada 74). Around 35 percent of Greeks were "exposed to poverty and social exclusion," and suicide rates spiked (75).

The consequences of this period are significant. International intervention undermined the agency and ability of the state, already believed to be ineffective and as a result, civil disobedience and radicalization rose, and a willingness to mobilize increased (Kavada 70, Dimitriou 2). This shift was globally recognized by an international audience during the period from 2008 to 2010, when a series of anti-austerity protests shook Athens (Malamidis 78).

1.3.3 Citizen Response and Protest Culture in Athens, Greece

Despite the recognizable increase of public opposition in response to economic crisis and austerity measures in the early twenty-first century, protest culture held a significant role in the decades leading up to the anti-austerity riots in 2008 and 2011. Indeed, the protest repertoires are "learned cultural creations", dependent on "specific socio-political pasts" and thus, contemporary movements of resistance depend heavily on patterns of past resistance (Kalyvas 489). In the case of Greece, "contentious politics evolved [...] as a result of historic struggles" (489) and protest

became a form of glorified resistance to undermine state authority and revolt against governmental policies (489).

The romanticized vision of collective action evolved throughout the late twentieth century and was emphasized by the student opposition movement between 1967-1874, during the rule of the military junta. These protests culminated in the uprising at the Polytechnique on November 17, 1973 (Kalyvas 489). This was followed by the fall of the dictatorship in 1974, and popular belief was that the uprising and reinstatement of democracy were linked. This was significant in Greek protest culture, as it simultaneously heightened the romanticized vision of collective action while "amplifying [...] widespread suspicion of any attempts by authority to impose a stricter internal security control" and "provid[ed] fertile ground for new movements to elicit sympathy and obtain legitimacy" (Kalyvas 489). In the following two decades, although Athens became the stage for increased strikes focusing on wage and pension requirements, student mobilizations maintained significance, as seen in the student protests of 1990-91 and 1998-99 to show international solidarity with the Balkans and the Zapatistas (Malamidis 69).

The 1990s was categorized as a time of superficiality in public discussions and political discourse, characterized as an "era of mediocracy" (Malamidis 69). The middle-class dreamed of short-lived prosperity, and job security played a large role in this dream, made "feasible through family and political networks" (69). By the turn of the century, however, the Global Justice Movement against neoliberal globalization emerged, which had a significant effect on domestic movements in the early 2000s, causing social movements against superficial politics and the neoliberal agenda, as enforced by EU summit in Thessaloniki in 2003 (69). The radicalization of participants in debates surrounding summits led to a rise in left-wing organizations that challenged the social democratic organizations of the main-stream left-wing, demanding more radical tactics for social inclusion and justice. It was in this period that SYRIZA, or The Coalition of the Radical Left, was established. Simultaneously, anarchist groups became increasingly radicalized, leading to heightened mobilization and the use of violence. Other organizations, such as the Anti-Authoritarian Movement, a libertarian group, and the Athens Indymedia, a grassroots anti-commercial alternative media network, allowed the movement to thrive in a diverse environment (70). Civil disobedience continued in opposition to global issues, such as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, while local issues were also the impetus for unrest, such as opposition to the hosting of the Olympics in 2004. The European Social Forum in Athens

in 2006, a recurring conference held by the Global Justice Movement, triggered a protest march of around 70,000 protestors, and was followed by a period of student mobilizations against the privatization of public universities. These student movements helped "link political issues with widespread social discontent felt in Greece at the time," and collective action was recognized as a representative body of state interests. It is in this era that the movement community, now defined by its own culture and diversity of thought, cultivated a willingness to mobilize. This wide-spread contentious spirit would be recognized in the 2008 and 2011 protests that followed.

The riots of December 2008 were triggered by the murder of a young school boy, Alexandrios Grigoropoulos, by police officers in Exarcheia, Athens, on December 6 (Malamidis 70). This was the impetus for a series of severe riots against police brutality in central Athens, which became a major issue in Greek society. Amnesty International recognizes the Hellenic Police as using excessive force, and having allegations of "unnecessary force, using chemical irritants against peaceful demonstrators, using stun guns in a manner that violates international standards, subjecting photographers and journalists to violence, and obstructing access of injured demonstrators to medical assistance, as well as arbitrary arrests" (Amnesty International 10). The murder sparked large-scale violent protests in various large cities across the country. Nicknamed the "Greek December," over one thousand occupations took place within the month, which "legitimized mass violence and found roots in armed resistance movements against the Colonel's dictatorship in the 1970s" (70). A new wave of city-guerilla groups and militant organizations increased opposition, while the idea of direct democracy and self-management bloomed. As a byproduct, state authority was often disregarded and bypassed as social centers, neighborhood assemblies, and other grassroots organizations took hold in the city, increasing universal solidarity and cooperation across Athens (54).

The increasing economic issues and enforced austerity measures in the years leading up to the anti-austerity protests of 2011-2014, as discussed before, included rampant taxation, increased poverty levels, joblessness, the abolishment of collective labor agreements, and privatization of public services and enterprises (54). The anti-austerity mobilizations began in 2010, but increased in intensity with the introduction of a new Austerity package in 2012 and the simultaneous public suicide of Dimitris Christoulas in Syntagma Square (74). His notorious suicide note condemned the Greek government for neglect, stating "I see no other solution than this dignified end of my life, so I don't find myself fishing through garbage cans for my

sustenance. I believe that young people with no future will one day take up arms and hang the traitors of the country…" (75). The first phase of the protests, which took place in 2010-11 under the signing of the first memorandum, sparked major protests by unions and student organizations. Under the second phase, defined by the signing of the second memorandum, left-wing parties as well as anarchist and other anti-authoritarian organizations became increasingly involved. In the third phase, Greece held two major elections but were met with great abstention rates amid the riots, of which 20,210 were recorded by police from May 2010-March 2014 (76). This period was recognized as involving a broad range of actors and a new pool of activists, specifically including women. These protests introduced the possibility for alternate forms of direct democracy, and were newly "demonstrative, confrontational, and violent" (78).

The Indignant Movement, known as the Square Movement or Occupy Movement in Greece, simultaneously rose in popularity during the anti-Austerity mobilizations in 2011, and transformed the contentious protest culture popularized in the time period (Malamidis 79). Against economic inequality and a lack of genuine democracy, the new organizational and cultural formats introduced a joyful form of protest defined by occupation of public space, with a loose organization structure where participants relied on individual relationships to connect with other camps, as opposed to the anti-Austerity movement, which used collectives and organizations to coordinate. These main square assemblies discussed local issues, and "socialized a culture of civil disobedience" popularized by a refusal to pay tickets of public transportation, tolls, looting, and utility costs (79). By occupying public spaces in Athens, it became obvious that space was linked with power, and space was a product of "metaphors, designs, practices, and physical and mediated components" (Kavada 56). This movement heightened the idea in the public sphere that public urban space was to be a right, not a commodity, and that claiming that power was significant as an act of resistance.

This period of urban movements created a social cohesion that lacked prior, while simultaneously transforming the passive relationship between the state and the public (Dimitriou 2.3.3.4). Urban issues were pinpointed as "attacks on public services and public spaces," while increased surveillance and policing threatened the freedom of collective expression.

Tactics to regulate gatherings continues in modern day Athens, where protests are still an important part of Greek life, especially in significant urban areas such as the capital. Daily protests often take place on the streets of the central city or in major squares in front of the public

buildings as seen in Syntagma Square (Vassilopoulos). In July of 2020, thousands marched through Athens to protest a bill that limited the right to protest. It was voted into law by 187 Members of Parliament "from the ruling conservative New Democracy Party, the social-democratic Movement for Change, and the far-right Greek Solution party" (Vassilopoulos). Many contemporary opposers of the bill drew a line between the repressions under the fascist junta of 1967 to 1974, calling the bill "draconian." The law of 1971, the only other recorded law to police protests and public gatherings, enabled the military junta to pseudo-legally crush any uprisings. This decree was never officially dissolved and has "laid dormant on the grounds that the right to protest is protected by Article 11 of the 1975 Constitution" (Vassilopoulos). However, the new law requires organizers to give notice of public protests and assembly before it takes place, and gives the police and authorities the right to impose restrictions or refuse permission on proposed gatherings. The overwhelming reason for a refusal is if "there is a serious threat to disturb the socio-economic life of a particular area" (Vassilopoulos). Protestors or organizers who refuse to work with the authorities or break the agreement for peaceful conduct will be sentenced to two years in prison and held liable for any injuries or damaging of property. Although this measure is intended to keep the city functioning, a pushback in reaction to the repressive nature of such a decree is unavoidable, and has thus heightened the tension between the public and state in recent months.

1.3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to give the outsider a view of Athens as a space of paradoxes and contradictions on multiple levels. These paradoxes of the city- not created *by* the city itself, but visible there in stark contrast- exist in many layers, both tangible and intangible. Obvious to the outsider is the typographical contradictions of the city, with the palpable allusions to ancient splendor visible in the fragmented monuments throughout the city. The colliding identity exists on a metaphysical level as well in the imaginary of the Greek people. On another level, constantly present to the Athenian, is the juxtaposition of state and society. Only when collective discontent manifests itself in marches and riots does the outsider witness the tangible, conflicting urban agendas. The tangibility or intangibility of these contradictions does not correlate with

their importance, as all these layers- as indefinable or complex as they are- are integral parts of what makes up "the urban" (Beauregard xiii).

Beauregard's urban, and consequently, the urban that Marx and Lefebvre focused on in their literature, is particularly defined by conflict and inequality. Their approach to these inequalities, however, is quite different. For Marx, it was capitalistic tendencies and the resulting competition among firms that created contradictions and inequalities in the city, and was almost entirely attributed to the urban political economy (Beauregard 16). Lefebvre, although operating in a vein of thought believed to be Marxist due to its emphasis on urban injustice, focused on the city " relatively independent from capitalism," instead looking towards the smaller systems of happening in the city, grounded in the "assembly of humans and ecology" (16). His focus was so grounded in these ideas that he attributed the contradictions and inequalities of the city as a product of the urban itself, rather than the consequences of a broader system of oppression and hierarchy. Although this is a limited, even precarious view, Lefebvre's ideas pertaining to land use, urban space, and the universal claim to the city are still hauntingly applicable today.

This chapter emphasizes historic and present-day Athens as space of social, political, and spatial contradictions, and associates its paradoxical nature with the impetus for political urban resistance against the "state and the firm" (Lefebvre 53). Indeed, the relationship between civil society and state is contentious and distrustful, spurring experimentation and reorganization at local levels in an attempt to circumvent the inefficiency of the government. Continuing to use Lefebvre's ideas of space ownership and belonging, among the ideas of other major urban studies scholars, the following chapter intends to examine public space theory and apply it to Athenian spaces with the ultimate intent of seeing street art and graffiti as a tool to claim one's right to the city through public space ownership, resistance to homogenization, and visibility.

Chapter 2: Urban Space and Public Space Theory

The city as an undefinable place of contradictions is not a new idea in urban theory. Schmid recognized Lefebvre's understanding of the city and its urban space as "the simultaneous presence of very different worlds and value systems" with a "constant tendency to separate themselves from one another" (Schmid 57). Although Schmid's interpretation and idea of constant separation is problematic in our understanding of the broader urban system in which

Beauregard argues simultaneously fosters intolerance *and* tolerance, Lefebvre knew that the city was a place of difference, of encounter, of unexpected interaction, and that it all took place in the public urban spaces of the city. This, to Lefebvre and Schmid, is one of the greatest values of urban space. However, it is not in private spaces, only granted access to by select urban citizens based on identity, social status, vocation, or income, that the most diverse interactions take place, but rather the public spaces of the city. Beauregard agrees, saying that we "seldom come into contact with strangers and aliens at home or in the synagogue. Rather, we encounter them in the public spaces of the city… it is almost only in public spaces that people physically meet the 'other'" (Beauregard 125).

However, the two typical categories of space in a city- public and private- is an overgeneralized categorization. As in most cities, Athens has both public and private spaces but also in-between, hybrid spaces that are considered "semi-public" and "semi-private," as Athenian architect Maria Vidali sees them (Vidali). Not only is this seen in the *polykatoikia,* but in the Greek concept of the *commons* as well: a space for a shared use, in which the community participates in caring for and preserving (Vidali). This new hybridization of space complicates the past idealized space, the Agora. The Agora was a place to gather together and assemble, with few constraining physical barriers, where citizens experienced *synoikismos*, "an incorporation of social groups in a cohesive union" (Schacter 7). The Agora tolerated difference, encouraged participatory democracy, and promoted the notion of "tolerance of difference," (7). This shockingly modern-seeming, Lefebvrian model of public space was lost in the modern era as capitalistic policies of spatial control, neoliberalism, and privatization ravaged city spaces (7).

This broadening in definition of public and private emphasizes another important idea related to difference and the city that is often overlooked in urban space theory. The urban, specifically Athens, is a space of multiple identities. As such, the definition, interpretation, and expectation attached to public space is far from universal. As will be discussed, the significance of urban space goes well beyond the physical realm, incorporating representation, perception of space, and conceived space, of which can vary greatly between individuals (Lefebvre 64). These possible discrepancies make public space a contested topic, but one idea- that of public urban space as both a need and a right- stands out in urban scholarship, stemming from Lefebvre's 1968 essay *Le Droit à la Ville*.

Lefebvre argues for the importance of authentic urban spaces, while lashing out at the forces that attempt to homogenize, commodify and appropriate; a force he generally calls the "state and the firm" (Lefebvre 56). Indeed, if we consider the very crux of cities to be a realm where different people and groups can encounter and interact, public space is crucial and indispensable. Therefore, in this chapter I will attempt to apply Lefebvre's 'right to the city' theory on urban spaces to the public urban areas of Athens while broadening his definitions of space and, at times, contradicting them. Among the unique urban spaces discussed will be a form of Greek space called the 'commons,' examples of which are Exarchia, Navarinou Park, and Kipseli. These commons exemplify David Harvey's association of public space with political participation, and directly reflect Lefebvre's ideal process of reclamation and authenticity (Harvey).

2.1 The Production and Importance of Urban Public Space

To understand the role of public urban space, one must first examine both its impetus for existence and the process of creation that follows. Although the production of space can appear disorganized and organic, like the natural growth of a small town to a bustling metropolis, urban theorists such as Lefebvre look at the production of public space in a distinctly segmented and analytical way.

Lefebvre attempts to understand the production of space by defining the urban, of which he gives multiple criteria. Firstly, the urban is a "level of mediation between global and the private. Secondly, its form is centrality, assembly, encounter, and interaction. Finally, the urban is characterized by difference; it is a place where all differences come together and generate something new" (Schmid 49). This "something new" is defined as *space*, a relatively new and generalized term in theory at the time of Lefebvre's 1974 essay, *La Production de L'espace.*

In this work, he introduced two three-dimensional dialectics (Schmid 49). The first triad of processes is "spatial practices," "representation of space," and "spaces of representation" (Schmid 49). Spatial practice is described as daily routines, perception of space, and reproduction of social relations by family members, working class, and society members in "trivialized spaces of everyday life" (Fuchs 137). Contrastingly, representations of space involves conceiving and calculating by experts, planners, architects, and technocrats, and becomes associated with power, ideology, and theory surrounding abstract space (private

property, commercial centers) (Fuchs 137). Lastly, representation of space is experienced by both inhabitants of a space and "users who passively experience" it, and is processed through non-verbal symbols and signs, memories, social life, art, and culture.

Lefebvre believes that these exist within another triad of "perceived," "conceived," and "lived" spaces, which are all equally important in the production of urban spaces (Fuchs 137). Conceived space is a "depiction that reflects and defines a space," and as such, there can be infinite conceptions, both analogous and contradictory, surrounding the same physical space (Schmid 51). Similarly, spaces of representation "signify something" and Lefebvre believes that this something is not the physical space itself, but a third or an "other." It is something that "defies analysis," (an example Lefebvre gives is divine power) and can only be depicted by artistic means (Schmid 52, 53). From these processes, Lefebvre emphasizes that the significance of urban space goes well beyond physical presence, or the "perceptible component," that is perceived by the five senses (Schmid 50).

Therefore, physical urban space is only one part of a greater, physically intangible aspect that exists in the minds of the users, either collectively or individually. A collective consciousness towards a space might be informed by space-specific historical narrative (for example, monument spaces in Athens that invoke images and narratives of historical significance). Individual interpretation of a space is just as valid, and can be informed by the identity of that user and previous memories of experiences in the space. Thus, a city and its spaces are not solely formed from "material production," but the production of knowledge and meaning as well, which can be seen in physical manifestations, as will be examined through the process of graffiti-making (Schmid 51). Massey reiterates this when he says, "space is not a surface" (Dimitriou 23).

The importance of public urban space is emphasized in the Lefebvre's previously-mentioned ideal city model, which he acknowledges is unrealistic in practice (and often taken up by naive planners) but informative in theory, especially when considering the benefits of public urban space. The conceptual "ideal city" is inherently Marxist, emphasizing the freedom from division of labor, social classes, and class struggles. It emphasizes the needs of the community, and as such, the community itself plays a significant role in its own management (Lefebvre 24). Public space allows the community to meet, plan, and discuss their needs, while simultaneously gives them a space for implementation and trial. In a similar vein, public urban spaces enable

social relations on multiple scales, enabling encounters, assembly, communication, and the passage of information between diverse groups (Schmid 58). For Foucault, space is similarly defined as heterogeneous and imbued with relations, the opposite of empty and homogeneous (Dimitriou 23). Additionally, urban space is playful and unpredictable, and this unpredictability of encounter becomes increasingly possible with centrality, as there is more of a likelihood for the crossing of diverse paths (49). Thus, centrality becomes essential to a functional and successful urban space as well.

2.2 Threats to Authentic Public Space

In order to understand, even partially, the importance of public space, it is crucial to understand what other spaces exist in the city, and how each space faces possible forces of exploitation and destruction. As mentioned before, Lefebvre and Schmid define these spaces in terms of "production, not product," embroiled in metaphysical symbolism and systems of meaning (Fuchs 26). For urbanists such as Bauman in his 2001 work *Liquid Modernity and Beyond*, however, spaces in the city can be categorized in a more concrete manner based on intention of usage within a broader system.

Bauman gives four major categories of city-space based on consumption rather than production, of which many involve forms of exclusion and rejection. First is emic space, which is a public space but a non-civil space. It is intended to be looked at and observed, but not lived in, and is exclusionary in the way that it "spits out and bars those who do not belong" (Gane 270) In a similar vein is phagic space, which is also public but non-civil as it "encourages sharing of physical space by engaging in the same activity," which Bauman considers a form of consumption. This idea of space encouraging a universal consumption is, to Bauman, a tactic of homogenization in response to otherness, an attempt to "ingest and devour foreign bodies and spirits" to an identical identity indistinguishable from the main body of society (271). The next category of urban space is seemingly contradictory, as he calls it "non-places." These "nowherevilles" discourage settlement, but regardless, are inhabited by strangers in what seems to be a transitory manner. Examples are motorways, hotels, and airports; spaces of coming and going. The last space is empty space- a place that exists before the colonization of designers and appears, to the outsider, devoid of meaning. Bauman argues that these bleak types of spaces are

increasing in relevance as space itself becomes more irrelevant in cities with the development of technology, destroying the relationship between space and time (273). Bauman's theory comes off as quite fatalistic and cynical, addressing the city as if it is constantly controlled by a higher power intent on exclusion and implementation of a universal agenda contrary to civil needs. This idea is mimicked by de Certeau, who uses the term "geometric sites" to describe spaces that "the state or disciplinary regime impose upon their subjects" through the exploitation of architecture, planning and technology (De Certeau 29).

Lefebvre writes about a similar process of commodification, homogenization, and privatization happening to the city at the hands of "the state and the firm" (57). Of course, Lefebvre was basing his theory on Paris in the 1960s, an era of intense modernization. In true Marxist fashion, Lefebvre believes the "urban problem" began when industrialization began, and although he recognizes that industry characterizes modern society, Lefebvre sees the industrial city as replacing the political, commerce, and craft city. For Lefebvre, this crisis was a shift towards the homogenization of behavior and a "colonization of daily life" where playfulness and unpredictability are regulated (Schmid 43).

Despite the conditions in which his theory was formed, his ideas of commodification are still applicable today. He attributes the commodification of the urban to the systemic exploitation of urban space, but he is quick to note that this goes far beyond the sale of physical space (Schmid 55). The social space itself is sold, which encompasses "...the people living in it, as well as the social resources and the economic effects produced by them" (56). Lefebvre also looks towards globalization as contributing to the destruction of urban space, and as Schmid puts it, "...between global and private levels" the urban is at risk of being "whittled away" as the uniqueness of space is submitted to corporate logic under the firm, the state, and private individuals (47). Lefebvre is quite explicit when he defines this shift in city planning to move beyond human scale, emphasizing aestheticism to "feed the appetites of the consumers," as was seen in the first plans for Athens by Kleanthis and Schubert (Lefebvre 15). Planning linked with the state is scientific in manner, forgetting the human factor, while planning by developers makes the practice an exchange value itself (16).

What do city spaces become, then, once transformed by the state and the firm, or globalization, or industrialization? What does a commodified city look like, and how does this transform public spaces? The urban core, or new commercial center, is one of the results of

industrialization, a "dull [...] mutilated," appropriated space (Lefebvre 6). The city becomes fragmented, disconnected and indistinguishable. This fragmentation is visible in the physical landscape, which splinters into a series of ghettos, parking lots, and divisions between groups (Lefebvre distinguishes the separation of workers, intellectuals, students, and foreigners, although the list is endless) (56). This separation is enforced by zoning laws, which further fragments the landscape (56). Urban space is no longer lived space but an object for cultural consumption, an area for tourists and visitors to observe aesthetic spectacles (58). It becomes a removed thing, observed as if it is a museum or an exhibition (57). Lefebvre distinguishes the urban from the city (the metaphysical versus the physical) and believes that the urban can never truly die out. Instead, it survives like a glowing ember in the city ruined by systems of destruction, waiting to be revived (46). How, though, is this possible? Lefebvre asks this question in *Le Droit à la Ville:*

> "The state and the firm seek to appropriate urban functions and to assume and ensure them by destroying the form of the urban. Can They? [...] The conditions and modalities of the crisis of the city are gradually uncovered and accompanied by a city-wide institutional crisis of urban jurisdiction and administration. What was specific to the city falls increasingly under the control of the state and by institutionalizing itself in a global context, the city tends to disappear as a specific institution" (Lefebvre 53).

This paragraph emphasizes the state and the firm as a united force of destruction against the *authentic* urban, and through participation in the global system, the city itself becomes homogenized and powerless, segmented and un-lived in (57). Through this process of control, the urban spaces transform from lived spaces of genuine social encounters, assembly, and communication to spaces of representation, formulated not by the real interactions of civil society but conceived and calculated by technocrats based on removed theoretical and ideological speculations (56). Indeed, in a slightly ironic way, Lefebvre emphasizes the superfluous nature of urban theory in the formation of cities. It is unneeded and insincere.

Lefebvre then poses a striking question. Can urban life recover, and "strengthen its capacities for integration and participation" (53)? Ultimately, Lefebvre believes that it is possible

to restore the urban, although the process is far from simple. The medium for this recovery is not through "authoritarian [...] or administrative means," but rather up to the working class who must initiate economic, political, and cultural revolutions (Lefebvre 55, 64). After all, the transformation of cities "is not a passive outcome of changes in a social whole," but rather the active reclamation of political control (Schmid 58). Only then, when all citizens realize and reclaim their right to the city, will Lefebvre's idea of authentic urban space be rediscovered.

2.3 The Right to the City

Lefebvre's acclaimed paper, *Le Droit à la Ville (1968),* was one of the first pieces of urban scholarship to address spatial injustice in the modernized city. Aside from defining successful urban space and the forces that threaten its existence and integrity within a social framework, Lefebvre claims that "social needs are inherent in urban society" (Lefebvre 57). While individual needs motivated by consumption are recognized through the capitalist system, *social needs* are generally ignored and neglected by systems of power. These social needs are quite diverse, encompassing a need for adventure, predictability but also unpredictability, communication, independence, play, and creative and physical activity (57). Although seemingly trivial, human lives without such aspects would become the dull and homogenized existence that Lefebvre fears, and as such, he considers these needs as infallible urban rights, or every citizens' 'right to the city' (57).

Lefebvre further associates these rights with urban space. He writes, "Would not specific urban needs be those of qualified places, places of simultaneity and encounters" (Lefebvre 57)? It seems obvious that access to public urban space enables the fulfillment of his social needs. By equating social needs with his definition of authentic urban spaces, the right to the city becomes the right to urban space, and the right to "participate in the transformation of space and to control investment into space" (Schmid 52, 53). However, as discussed in section 2.2, this right to public urban space is constantly under threat by the state and the firm, which attempts to exclude certain groups and individuals from public urban spaces through privatization. Public spaces are "places where exchange [should] not go through exchange value, commerce and profit" (57), and thus, the right to the city is not only a right to public space, but the right to public space devoid of materialism, exclusion, and systems of economic oppression. Public urban spaces, instead, must

be a space with playful and unpredictable elements. There must be a possibility for encounter, communication, and the passage of information, where "heterogeneous elements can no longer exist in isolation" (48).

Lefebvre's concept, although created during a specific moment in urbanization, is still believed to be applicable to modern cities. Urban scholar Christian Schmid attempts to understand the shifting meanings of Lefebvre's 'right to the city' in today's highly urbanized society, first by addressing the claim that the city is in crisis, as Lefebvre believed when he wrote *Le Droit à la Ville* in the late sixties (Schmid 42). The urban crisis for Lefebvre was a result of urban issues in his era: massive rural to urban migration, Fordism, the inefficient restructuring of inner city areas and the rushing modernization of everyday life (42). Indeed, Schmid believes Lefebvre himself amended the broad phrase 'right to the city' in *Le Droit à la Ville* as a right to centrality, difference, and space (49). How then is it applicable to today's cities, and what actions does it require to achieve the fulfillment of such rights?

Schmid observes that Lefebvre's right to the city is now used as a "conceptual umbrella for all types of urban demands," a resurgence of rallying cries for the rights of urban life in an era of modern urban crises (43). Although Lefebvre believed the major issues of the era was the homogenization of lifestyles, the monotony of the labor process, and over-functionalized and bureaucratized cities, the crisis of the city has broadened in recent decades to include a multiplicity of urban issues. In the broadest of terms, the crisis is a "struggle for a different city," or "...the possibility of experimenting with and realizing alternative ways of life" (Schmid 43). This alternative way of life emphasizes the right to access the resources of the city for all segments of the population in which the city itself is considered a social resource (as Lefebvre says, the "supreme resource among all resources" (Lefebvre 64)). These resources focus on basic needs, such as food, water, education, healthcare, and adequate housing. Another major theme is the right not to be displaced into a space produced for discrimination or separation. Under these categories, recent struggles for urban equality have used Lefebvre's framework to validate different specific demands and issues, including the promise of liberty, appropriation of public space, gentrification, and the preservation of urban culture (44). As such, there is no concrete definition of the "right" that Lefebvre argued for, but rather a larger concept encompassing urban equality and justice against systems of repression, colonization, and appropriation.

How are these rights achieved? Lefebvre offers a variety of ways that the right to the city *cannot* be achieved; it cannot be a "simple visiting right" or a return to the "traditional city," and is not a passive urban change (Lefebvre 64). Rather, it is up to the people to achieve a revolution through participation, to reclaim urban space for themselves by redefining the urban space. Indeed, encompassed in the very right to the city is the right to "participate in the transformation of space and control investment in space" (Schmid 52). This can only be achieved through the "rediscovery of the urban" that Schmid argues is happening in many modern cities through collective social movements that have resisted transformation, modernization, and commercialization of the urban, demanding a return to authentic city centers, street life, and public spaces. Collective social movements signify the withdrawal of the national state from many areas of urban life, which delegates tasks to local levels, creating new opportunities for the collaboration and unity that Lefebvre believed was the very crux of urban life.

In the past decades, there has been a tangible rise in collective urban movements, many citing some variation of the right to the city as a broad impetus for their claims. Many of these movements rely on the physical occupation of public space as a tool to interrupt the daily happenings of the city, a new tangible unity that heightens visibility of the issues, and a demand for change at higher political levels. Examples of such can be seen in recent movements of resistance in the 1970s and 80s in Italy, Western Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and later, Athens, as was discussed in the previous chapter (Schmid). The common factor between these urban resistance movements is that they take place within the built environment of the city itself, occupying public, private, and in-between spaces, and as such, enforcing Lefebvre's idea that public space is far from neutral but rather a political, charged space of difference and democracy, a "spontaneous theater" where political action and collective want is made visible (Lefebvre 64).

The idea of public space as political space was recognized by David Harvey in his 1985 work *The Political Economy of Public Space*. Harvey looks at the public sphere as an arena of political participation, and fundamental to successful democratic governance (Harvey 1). Indeed, the relationship between space and democracy is symbiotic, and although it might be impossible "to sort out the relationship between the physicality of space and the politics of the public sphere with any exactitude," the connection between them is undeniable (1). Collective political

participation often makes use of public space, politics can dictate how we interpret and use city spaces and inversely, our experiences in public urban spaces influences how we act politically.

It is this intertwining and inseparable relationship between politics and public city space that Lefebvre alluded to when he wrote about commodification at the hands of the state and the firm. To a certain degree, public space is tantamount to power in that public urban space in the hands of the diverse public enables collaboration, collective participation, and self-governance (Schmid 58). This access to public space creates an ability to circumvent and exclude the state and the firm, and as such, threatens to eradicate their political power when urban citizens have the right to "participate in the transformation of space and to control investment into space" (Schmid 52, 53). Thus, Lefebvre's call to radical action through collective citizen participation- the call for the right to the city- is a direct reaction against the commodifying powers of the state and the firm and a reclaiming of political agency and ownership or as Harvey states, a move away from capitalist domination towards self-determined appropriation of public spaces (Pafsanias 5).

2.4 Modern Athenian Public Spaces and the Right to the City Movement

Physical public spaces, their uses, and the imaginaries and assumptions that accompany such spaces vary city to city depending on a myriad of collective factors. In order to understand the various ways that Athenians claim their right to public space, it must first be understood and examined in various geographical, social, and cultural contexts. However, defining public space in concrete terms, including the ceaseless and continually shifting individual definitions of what public space is and how it should be used, is challenging. Indeed, the definition "is like that of a city: an ideological artifact" (Dimitriou 1.1.2). As Athenian and urban scholar Maria Vidali believes, it is nearly impossible (Vidali). This is especially true for a city as diverse as Athens, with each immigrant, refugee, outsider, visitor and citizen bringing a different understanding and interpretation to public space. This is important to recognize as scholars attempt to present definitive analyses on the use and value of public urban spaces and simultaneously acts as a disclaimer for the following chapter. I do not attempt to impose one definitive interpretation of Athenian public space. Rather, I aim to understand Athenian space through Lefebvre's definition in order to contextualize urban space as a right, and as such, something that must be reclaimed.

In order to understand Athens as an urban space where acts of spatial resistance are constantly taking place, and additionally broadening the way we understand the claiming of space to include forms of graffiti, Athens' urban spaces must first be reexamined in Lefebvre's right to the city framework. Keeping in mind the historical context of Athenian spaces as discussed in Chapter 1, they will now be considered through a contemporary lens as socio-spatial places threatened by forces of commodification at the hands of the state and the firm.

2.4.1 Athenian Public Space

Existing literature on Athenian public space follows multiple distinct strands of which vary in both applicability and veracity. The first prevalent idea is that public space is "synonymous with the strategic plans of the state" (Dimitriou 1.5). This assumption implies that space is formed separately from users' daily interactions and activities, disagreeing with Lefebvre's socio-spatial framework as discussed in section 2.1. It is not entirely incorrect to associate the state and the firm with the creation of Athenian public spaces; this relationship has been visible since the establishment of the modern Greek state in the strict Neoclassical planning of the city by Kleanthis and Schubert, followed by Schinkel in the early seventeenth century (Dimitriou 1.1.1). The major public spaces of the city were created by allocating open space in front of important state buildings, such as Syntagma Square in central Athens, and as such, the physical presence of the state's role in the production of public space is palpable. Indeed, the early plan for Athens acts as a prime example of government agenda as an impetus for space creation and planning practice, which persisted well into the twentieth century, as open spaces were seen as "mere stages for stereotypical uses" and "the production of public space [was] orchestrated solely by the state" as a form of inserting hierarchies of power over the population (Dimitriou 1.1.1).

However, this assumption is only viable when considering space in a purely *physical* dimension, and although this is not Lefebvre's primary understanding of urban space, he does not ignore it, addressing the physical (space as a place grasped by the five senses, relating directly to materiality and resources, a space where physical urban processes become tangible) (Schmid 40). However, to understand the production of space as the exclusive result of state agenda contradicts Lefebvre's idea that the production of space is actually a social production

process, shaped and conceived by the users (Schmid 41). This further reduces the metaphysical aspect and the power of social practice (and therefore knowledge and meaning) in the formation of space (Schmid 51)

However, this is not the only way Athenian public space is thought of in current literature. A second, new strand contradicts the previous idea, associating both social *and* spatial characteristics, but doing so within a broader urban context without truly addressing the socio-spatial production of public spaces (Dimitriou 1.5). This link between social and spatial exists as a contemporary and emerging vein of study in Greek literature, one that gives more agency to the user and less power to the state while simultaneously challenging the perception that public spaces are merely neutral, physical areas disengaged from politics, social relationships, and movements of resistance, which has become increasingly obvious in Athens since the early 2000s.

The last strand of dominant theory focuses on "organizational novelties" that includes spaces considered commons (Dimitriou 1.5). These spaces of organizational novelty are framed as everyday resistance against the state. One of these organizational novelties that is considered resistance is seen in a unique type of Greek space referred to as the commons, which is a shared public space in which "...a given community decides to manage a resource in a collective manner with special regard for equal access…" (Dimitriou 6). This socio-spatial understanding to the management of public space mirrors Lefebvre's own view of space as a resource and a right, while simultaneously resisting the exploitation and commodification of the space for commercial use (Dimitriou 34). Although author Dimitriou believes that the commons are constantly being defined and re-defined, Maria Vidali sees the commons as a traditional understanding of Greek space in which the community feels it has a stake in the space (Vidali). A basic example is a sidewalk of which multiple users sweep each day, and as such, feel a deepened connection or sense of ownership and belonging (Vidali). The act of commoning, or forming new spaces that defy the typical urban power hierarchies, creates a new way to exhibit direct democracy, and as such, conforms to Lefebvre's idea that the right to the city encompasses "access to resources of the city for all segments of the population, and the possibility of experimenting with...alternative ways of life..." (Schmid 43).

In a similar way, Athenian public space is a political space and a "space of [...] resistance" (Dimitriou 1.4). Author Harvey sees the public spaces of a city as a "distinctive place

of belonging within a perpetually shifting spatio-temporal order that gives it a political meaning [and] mobilizes a crucial political imaginary" (Dimitriou 1.4). Indeed, many ancient public spaces were areas of known debate or resistance (the Agora, Pnyx Hill, Syntagma Square, and many other spaces that served as political hubs). Public spaces were "theatrical spaces where people came to be informed" through debate and participation in political deliberation (Dimitriou 2.3.1.1). The preservation of ancient monuments in such spaces invokes, reminds, and preserves that ancient tradition. Underscoring the importance of symbolic spaces as a means to invoke current practice and usage, now those same spaces, along with sidewalks and the areas outside of cafes, are known for their rich political discussions (Dimitriou 1.2). The streets and squares are similarly steeped with political meaning as frequent demonstrations and acts of collective resistance take place there, using public spaces as a tool for disruption and giving movements of resistance "spatial agency" (Kavada 1). This enforces the idea that public space in Athens is formed by social relationships that enable collaboration and the formation of collective thought and action (Dimitriou 1.4.5).

This association of Athenian public space as a major terrain of politics became undeniably obvious in the global social movements of 2008-2011, in which many radical and revolutionary acts took place in, and for, Athenian public spaces (Dimitriou 1.4.2). Globally, there were a series of major urban resistance movements in this period that came to be known as the anti-austerity Occupy Movement, or the Square Movement, for their tactics ("spatial repertoires of contention" (Kavada 75)) of which included public assemblies, sit-ins, and occupation camps in public urban areas. This era of resistance transformed the typical contentious politics of urban dissent, turning police brutality and illegal acts of looting and rioting into "joyful...celebrations of direct democracy" (Malamidis 79). In Athens, Syntagma Square became one of the major spaces of resistance in the 2011 movement, inspired by square occupancy in Spain by the Spanish Indignatos (Kavada 71). Syntagma Square was occupied for nearly two months, creating what author Kavada calls a "free space" (Kavada 74). The free space is defined as a "small scale setting within a community or movement that is removed from the direct control of dominant groups" and usually accompanies political mobilizations (74). Protest camps, such as the one that formed in Syntagma Square in May of 2011, can be considered as such a space. The location of Syntagma Square was chosen for many reasons. Firstly, its size allowed a large number of occupants and its location outside of a major metro station ensured the

disruption of the Athenian urban transportation system. However, also of importance was its symbolic and historic significance next to the royal palace, which now acts as a Parliament building (Kavada 76).

The main shared objective was for general equality rooted in the balanced allocation of resources, wealth, and power to all groups in society (Dimitriou 1.4.2). Public space was considered such a resource, and as such, the occupation of major public spaces was symbolic for a larger set of demands. Indeed, public spaces in these movements act as metaphors for justice, encouraging movements to make public claims through space management (Kavada 76). The Occupy Movement transformed opinions regarding collective urban resistance and space, creating an undeniable link between the two, confirming resistance as a spatial practice (Kavada 76). Similarly, space becomes synonymous with a certain degree of power, which Lefebvre believes can be harnessed through more than just access to space, but associations, design, and regulations of space (Kavada 75). This idea of space as not only a right, but a politically charged tool, highlights a different issue surrounding the misuse of space as power, not by the working class but the "state and the firm" (Lefebvre 53).

2.4.2 Commodification of Authentic Athenian Space

In order to understand the misuse of space made possible through hierarchies of power, one must address the difference in space as a resource and a right as opposed to a commodity that few control, or the "productive" versus "nonproductive" ways of consuming space (Schmid 56). As mentioned in section 2.2, Lefebvre recognized the act of treating space as a material good at the hands of the state as an act of commodification (57). The systematic exploitation of public space does not merely jeopardize the physical shared space, but the social space itself, encompassing "the people living in it, as well as the social resources and the economic effects produced by them" (56).

In Athens, the systematic commodification of public space first became tangible in the 1990s and early 2000s, a period of financial optimism for Greece (Dimitriou 2.3.2.4). Various processes of "Europeanization and modernization" were taking place simultaneously as the Greek nation attempted to rebrand itself as a member of the EU. In fact, the sole agenda of the government, which was becoming increasingly dependent on clientelism, was to rebuild the city

en masse. With an increasing national GDP, an increasing enthusiasm for capitalism, and the expanding neoliberalism, Athens quickly became a consumer city (2.3.2.4).

Public space suffered greatly in this period. Squares were replaced by malls, multi-centers, and international retail chains, accompanied by increased social isolation and individualization (2.3.2.4). Free public space was devalued and treated as an economic surplus, while private spaces were favored. Urban planners focused on creating spectacle architecture for tourism and image-making purposes, and the city sprawled out in all directions, decreasing its centrality and increasing the city's periphery areas. Public land became appropriated "following the privatization of [other] public services" and inept planning resulted in fragmentation and "exclusionary zones" (Dimitriou 2.3.2.4). These processes were accelerated by the Olympic Games hosted in Athens in 2004 (Dimitriou 2.3.3). Necessary public works regeneration was ignored as major urban projects took precedence. Although the Olympics were seen as securing Athens' place in the EU as a competitive, capitalistic, and "future oriented city," the resulting effects on urban spaces were detrimental. The policies surrounding the new projects resulted in extreme land and real estate speculation, increasing profits for a small group of elites and thus generating greater socioeconomic divides while reducing communal space ownership (2.3.3).

The commodification and privatization continued well after the Olympics concluded as Greece entered the following period of financial crisis (Dimitriou 2.3.3.1). The effect of the financial crisis was that "space itself [became] a surplus financial asset exploited for crisis management" (2.3.3.1). The Greek Asset Development Fund (TAIPED), which was established in 2011 as a means for crisis management, absorbed all Olympic properties, which had been public spaces prior to the games. TAIPED oversaw the selling of all public assets, and many of these sales were to private investors in "completely non-transparent procedures" (2.3.3.1).

This process of spatial privatization and commodification goes beyond the mere loss of physical urban spaces. Schmid summarizes Lefebvre, saying that "[the] people, residents, and visitors alike are reduced to mere 'extras' in the great urban spectacle" (Schmid 56). For Athens, with its great diversity of population, this is especially dangerous, as the commodification of public space threatens the ability to be seen, to create spaces of social representation, and to feel collective belonging in the urban space itself. Indeed, it is a question of political and economic control between the consumer and the user; the state and firm, and the citizen. The only way to

regain this power is through the reclamation of urban rights and authenticity (specifically to centrality, space, and difference) through collective action, or "revolution," as Lefebvre called it.

Although a different form of commodification, the rise of Airbnb has been similarly destructive to the authenticity of the urban fabric. In the years between 2015 to 2018, the overall increase in the number of Airbnb listings rose 300%, with the increase in specific neighborhoods to be even greater (Gourzis 201). Neighborhoods like Exarchia have been especially affected due to their status as "vibrant, real-feel" neighborhoods, and result in the sharp increase in rent and the loss of affordability (205). As such, the very real forces of gentrification are constantly in the forefront of Athenian's minds, and can be seen as another force threatening neighborhood authenticity within the city.

As we have examined when looking at the protest culture in Athens, there are many examples of dissent that take place in the form of impermanent occupations, marches, and riots, as seen in the 2011 Indignant Movement. These transitory acts of dissent utilized space not as a container but a tool for change. As mentioned before, one of the existing forms of literature on Greek public spaces emphasizes spaces of resistance, and although most literature glorifies this resistance, public space takes a secondary, almost inferior role in those acts (Dimitriou 1.5).

However, there are many areas of constant resistance, considered commons, within Athens that are unequivocally tied to the public space they inhabit and use, which will be discussed in the following section, *Spaces of Resistance and Representation.* When looking at spaces such as Exarchia (more specifically Navarinou Park) and Kipseli, it is obvious that public space is not the passive backdrop to resistance, but rather, can be used as a physical tool to reclaim one's right to space against processes of commodification by the state and the firm. This is done through the act of commoning, which will be framed as a model for authentic space-making.

Section 2.4.3 Spaces of Resistance and Commoning

The subcultural neighborhood of Exarchia is nestled between the historic sites and tourist attractions in central Athens, but is less well-known than either of the latter (Dimitriou 4.2). Firstly inhabited in the mid-nineteenth century, it was the first new borough of Athens beyond the original core. It covers only 0.21% of the entire metropolitan surface, and only about 20,200 residents inhabit the neighborhood (Cappuccini). The population is overwhelmingly young,

diverse, and middle-low class (Cappuccini). Due to the nearby intellectual institutions, among them the Athens Polytechnic, it is known as a space for intellectuals, students, and alternative thinkers, as well as one of the main symbolic and historic centers of alternative political resistance groups (4.2). Although some of its triangular boundaries are somewhat ambiguous, it becomes clear as Exarchia borders "its bitter class-enemy, Kolonaki, the rich, radical-chic district of Athens" (Cappuccini). The stark differences are noticeable, as the neighborhood's streets are named after freedom fighters from the Greek War of Independence, there is a significant increase in graffiti on the white marble facades, and the streets are "largely ignored by the city's bureau of urban hygiene" (Cappuccini).

The history of resistance against the state goes back as far as its creation, as it originally served as an illegal craftsmen settlement during the early nineteenth-century and later a space for illegal food markets during German Occupation (Dimitriou 4.2.1). In the mid-seventies, Exarchia acted as a base for resistance groups during urban warfare with the police, and played a large role during the student-led opposition against the Junta dictatorship (Cappuccini). The space was also a known haven for drug trafficking and consumption which gave the police excuses to conduct regular violent raids, especially in the eighties under Operation Virtue (1984-85) (Dimitriou 4.2.1). This pattern of police violence and abuse continued throughout the twenty-first century, hitting a crescendo when a young school boy named Alexandros Grigoropoulos was murdered in Exarchia on December 6, 2008, sparking a series of anti-authoritarian and anti-austerity protests across the nation (Cappuccini). A resident said that "Exarchia is a special case in Athens and in Europe as well. And yet there are these hard times, because we bear the brunt of police violence: for no specific reason, they enter the district in order to arrest or detain people" (Cappuccini). Another resident said, "Exarchia is a symbol, and so when the police break into it, it is as though they are giving a message to the whole of Greece: 'we control the country!'" (Cappuccini).

It is this symbolism, leading to harsh portrayal in the media, that makes Exarchia a target of the state. It has been referred to as the "enemy within," and the stigmatization continues as words such as "crime, chaos, anarchy, hoodie-wearers, drug-dealer and drug-dealing" are typically associated with Exarchia in the media (Cappuccini). Indeed, it is called an area that 'anarchists regard as their fortress' when in reality, the community is quite diverse in its identity, ranging from "anarchist and autonomous collectives, socially marginalized people, simple city-users, migrants, young rebels, and mavericks" (Cappuccini). In the late 1990s, during the New

Democracy period, state officials would not "tolerate the existence of an anarchist state in Exarchia," and as such, the area surrounding Exarchia was incorporated into a larger urban renewal project, with the Deputy Minister of Planning stating in 1993, "Exarchia will become like Plaka" (Dimitriou 4.2.3). However, the area resisted gentrification. In 2002, a second, sudden regeneration project was enacted (Dimitriou 4.2.4). The plan was intended to reduce free space, increasing areas for cafe seating. A private contractor installed fences, removed pavement, and cut trees, but later that day over fifty residents knocked down the fences and left graffiti saying, *"regeneration = suppression."* In the following days, a concert, attended by hundreds, took place in Exarchia Square to protest the regeneration project and escalated into a violent clash with the police (Dimitriou 4.3.2).

A second protest over public space took place in 2009 over a small abandoned parking lot owned by the Technical Chamber of Greece in Exarchia, only meters away from the spot of the Grigoropoulos murder (Advikos). For over a decade, residents of Exarchia had proposed for a public space on the unused lot, to which the municipality had accepted unanimously (Dimitriou 4.3.2). However, the municipality was unsuccessful in altering the regulatory plan, and as such, the lot continued to be used as an open-air car park until it was occupied by the residents on March 7th, 2009. Posters around the neighborhood called for an occupation to "transform [the plot] into a green space- a people's park" (Avdikos 4) and on the first day of the occupation, over five hundred Athenians visited the plot. They broke the pavement and began to plant trees, while local artists attempted to beautify the spot through installations. The occupation continued over the next months, in which performances, plantings, and political activities were held. This was not met without state resistance, however. During this period, police regularly frequented the park, conducting violent arrests. On March 30th, the Technical Chamber President and Mayor of Athens agreed on a compromise, exchanging the plot for one on Alexandros Avenue, while continuing state ownership of the Navarinou plot. This was met with increased occupation, some of which was unnecessarily destructive and considered removed from the cause, by whom the Exarchia community dubbed "hooligans and anarchists, or "hood-wearers" (Vidali). To combat this destruction and the continuing issues of state ownership, an open committee was formed, meeting weekly to determine the future of the space (Avdikos 2).

This open committee embodied the implementation of direct democracy and Lefebvre's belief that the reclamation of urban rights requires "participa[tion] in the transformation of space

and [the ability to] control investment into space" (Schmid 52, 53). The committee meetings began with around sixty to eighty participants, encompassing diverse political backgrounds and personal identities, from "leftists to pacifists to anarchists to anti-authoritarians" (Avdikos 4). The Navarinou committee was further recognized and praised by multiple Greek leftist political parties, among them the local SYRIZA party, Antarsya party, and the Anoihti Poli, or Open City party, that took part in the local elections of Athens municipality in 2006 (Avdikos 5). On their website, they stated, "the organized act of the citizens in [...] Parko Navarinou is the best answer to the Municipality of Athens, as every day it [...] proves that [it] cares more about the promotion of the commercial and economic interests, and less about [...] the residents' needs" (Avdikos 6). Although Lefebvre's theoretical implementation of direct democracy, as originally seen in Navarinou Park, allowed all citizens equal right and agency over the space they inhabit, the flaws to this ideological and perhaps unrealistic ideal were quickly proven, as the weekly meetings became dominated by those with an anarchist political agenda. Indeed, this led Exarchia residents and other participants to stop attending committee meetings altogether, as they "cannot control the outcomes of the meetings" (Avdikos 6). This went for the general attendance of the park as well, which devolved into a primarily anarchist space, and was recognized as one of the main failures of Navarinou Park and other similar common spaces, such as Parko Kyprou in the neighborhood of Patission in central Athens. As one of the major anarchist leaders said in an anonymous interview in 2009 of the shortcomings, "Often times we prefer pure anarchy than to have a relationship with society. This is a mistake. Like Marxism and Stalinism, if you believe completely in it and don't allow criticism, we are no better than [the state]. We go straight to one closed system" (Avdikos 8).

However, that is not to say that effective direct democracy was never present in Navarinou Park. Indeed, there were glimmers of what Lefebvre envisioned in 2011, when a brutal police attack in December of 2010 prompted the formation of the "Initiative Committee of Exarchia Inhabitants," which called for a massive meeting in November of 2011. Over three hundred people participated in a lively discussion that lasted for hours, incorporating the voices of many different residents, and resulted in greater participation, a re-opening of certain park boundaries, and various street parties within the following months, succeeded by further community-planned and implemented initiatives such as a public market, public film screenings, and organized graffiti on neighborhood walls, some of which exist still (Avdikos 6). As such, an

imperfect yet extraordinary space was formed, spurred by the "struggle for a different city," and "...the possibility of experimenting with and realizing alternative ways of life" (Schmid 43).

My focus on Exarchia is not to imply that this is the only space of collective spatial resistance in the city. The act of commoning is a recurring practice in Athens, as is seen in Kypseli, one of the oldest and most densely populated neighborhoods in central Athens (Daniilidis 4). Originally a high class neighborhood in the sixties, in the following two decades major issues contributed to the degradation of real estate values, namely a lack of green areas, parking, high levels of traffic and noise, and atmospheric pollution (4). With lower housing costs, a large influx of immigrants, mainly from former Soviet republics, moved into the area, followed by a second wave in the early 2000s from Asia and Africa. The dramatic influx caused the remaining middle-class families to flee, and the neighborhood became known for its high density, high level of war refugees and immigrants, and degrading infrastructure (4). It was the lack of communal space and adequate services and infrastructure that led to need and subsequent creation of a commons in the heart of the neighborhood called Kypseli Market, where the municipality planned to construct an office complex but was collectively opposed by citizens (5). An informal, open-air public market space was erected through the public initiative of Kypseli residents, who took over the Neoclassical building. The space housed a variety of services, such as education, charitable actions, and cultural activities, and was a "space of solidarity, mutual cooperation, and immediate democracy" (Daniilidis 6).

This public space, aside from exhibiting another example of a successful commons, is significant in that it is a space of needed social representation in a city filled with "others." A Greek study in 1995 found that the majority of urban spaces inhabited by immigrants and refugees in Athens were enclosed, such as old houses, hotels, and railway stations, which contributed to feelings of isolation and seclusion (Daniilidis 7). As such, a communal space like Kypseli Market was important as it promoted social integration of the immigrant population, while providing them with an amount of agency in the ownership of a space where various needs (access to food, educational services, and social interaction) were fulfilled (8). In addition, the market acted as a safe space from the demonization of immigrants and refugees, a population that has been continuously and collectively blamed for urban, social, and economic decay (Balampanidis).

2.4.4 Conclusion

Spatial particularities, such as Navarinou Park in Exarchia and Kypseli Market, are crucial when attempting to understand public space as political and authentic space, specifically in the ways in which Athenian spatial practices exemplify Lefebvre's 'right to the city' ideal. The collective act of commoning relates directly to Lefebvrian dialectic in that "the existence of space is both a social and political product" and simultaneously, an act of collective resistance against ongoing commodification, commercialization and privatization by the state and the firm that is representative of the whole society (Daniilidis 3). Although shortcomings exist, such as the possibility of "commoners causing exclusion from the interior" (Dimitriou 1.3.4) and as such, creating their own privileged common group, Athenian commons exist as important sites of reclamation, political action, and radical acts, proving that Lefebvre's right to the city ideal is far from outdated or quixotic. At the forefront of movements of spatial reclamation is the recreation of *authentic* urban spaces in an age when the Athenian government is seen as "aiming at an architecture of control, creating spaces sterilized from every element of spontaneity, dead zones of continuous consumption, volumes of cement, surveillance cameras, and constant policing" (Dimitriou 4.3.4).

Is built public space a mere container for social and political acts, a backdrop where collective want is made visible and as such, inexplicably but trivially connected? The built environment itself becomes politicized through practices of appropriation, causing a direct correlation with claims for social justice and ownership, authenticity and representation (Dimitriou 1.4). In this process, tangible aspects of public space are representations of political discord and resistance, as seen in the built environment of Kypseli Market, Navarinou Park, and Syntagma Square. The physical *alteration* of physical public spaces signifies a reclamation of power, a tool for representation that is different from collective acts of mobilization and occupation as seen in the Athenian Indignant movement. Such physical acts of alteration, which may be less obvious forms of resistance, are common in urban spaces, despite being often ignored due to their familiar imagery and prevalence.

One such action is the practice of graffiti, which is seen on almost every urban surface in Athens. Indeed, it is considered the "most stained, most saturated [city] in the world" (Tulke 131). For an urban space where identity and ownership, as well as the relationship to the state, is

constantly contested and challenged, graffiti has the potential to play an important role in the struggle for authentic urban space through the successful process of commoning, as examined previously in Exarchia, Navarinou Park, and Kypseli.

Chapter 3: Athenian Graffiti and the Right to the City

Beauregard's idea of the paradoxical city is, in part, so effective because it evades a definition altogether (Beauregard xii). The city is something so complex and multidimensional that any attempt to truly define it would be both inaccurately positivist and cruelly confining. How, though, does this definition of the city and urban public space help us to understand the practice of graffiti? Indeed, author Jeff Ferrell believes that in order to understand graffiti, one must "read the contemporary global city as well. When we do, we find that the city itself is a tangle of emerging contradictions, and a place of mutating political economy" (Ferrell 27). As such, the dynamics of the city inform the practices within the city, and the examination of one cannot exist without the examination of the other. Applying this definition of paradox to the actual practice of graffiti is equally effective, namely because of the globalized scale of the movement that encompasses an endless myriad of materials, styles, intentions, implications, and reactions that present oppositions. These "dialectical tensions" are vast. Graffiti and street art, or "independent public art," as author Rafael Schacter calls it, can be both visible and invisible, legal and illegal, commodified and vilified, consumeristic and anti-capitalist, ephemeral and lasting (Ferrell 27, 30). The complexity of this practice is often ignored by the urban audience as graffiti has become increasingly common, thought of as a mundane form of vandalism or disfigurement, a "type of dirt" that covers the city (Chatzidakis). However, the practice of graffiti is far more pragmatic than the media manipulations portray; it can be a direct expression of dissent, as seen in the explosion of Athenian graffiti following the 2008 revolts, reaching its peak in 2011 during the height of the anti-austerity movement (Alexandrakis). Indeed, it is both a form of communication done purely "by a person who [...] wants to communicate something" (Dokos), and of action, able to transform an urban space through what Lefebvre calls "authentic" socio-spatial processes (Schacter xxviii).

The impetus for graffiti writing is extremely vast and spatially specific, as will be discussed in the context of Athens. However, if the practice of graffiti can be *comprehensively*

considered an act of resistance, what are the unifying forces to which it reacts against? Competing systems of urban authorities, the imposed order of spatial practices, and the production of the "one-dimensional city" through police order and disingenuous planning projects are often cited as the forces to which graffiti confronts, albeit generalized and by no means comprehensive (Iveson 90). Despite the varying intentions, the illegality of graffiti as an act makes it inherently and undeniably political, an act of resistance against a hierarchical system that Lefebvre calls the "state and the firm" (Lefebvre). Indeed, as the processes of spatial and social control take form through the homogenization and commodification of once-public spaces, graffiti has the potential to restore the creativity, play, surprise, ephemerality and random encounters (through signs and words) that Lefebvre believes are crucial to genuine urban spaces (Lefebvre 57). Viewing graffiti and its role in urban space, specifically Athens, within Lefebvre's framework, graffiti can aid in both the creation and the reclamation of public space, contributing to a "cultural revolution" that results in an increased right to the city (Lefebvre 57).

3.1 Graffiti and Street Art

As mentioned before, graffiti is surrounded by endless paradoxes and contradictions as both a practice and a topic in scholarship and mainstream media. Scholarship on graffiti, which is scant but an emerging focus across many interwoven disciplines, focusses on public space and political unrest, a culture of the streets, and a tool to express sentiments or political ideals. The aspects of gang graffiti, youth subculture, and criminality is rarely focused on in scholarly literature, and "formal, intentional" studies are lacking in academia (Schacter xxi). As such, much of the studies on graffiti are also studies of politics, social science, and the city, pushing back against the entrenched and prevalent view of graffiti and graffiti artists in the mainstream media (Stampoulidis 11). Indeed, for decades, the media has portrayed it with suspicion and even acrimony, categorizing the artists as vandals, teenagers, and marginalized groups who are frustrated with their own lives and take it out on the city at the expense of others. In Athens, this was particularly pervasive before the 2008 crisis, as media portrayed the artists as "lost children and wasted youth" who had little concern for politics or the greater good, "preoccupied with their financial future...who expressed general anti-authoritarian attitudes, [...] did drugs, [and] vandalized property" (Alexandrakis). Indeed, anti-graffiti campaigns tend to vilify the artists

behind the works, using media manipulation as their tool. In Greece, they are referred to as “those wearing hoods" (Vidali) and were grouped in with the anarchists, antifascists, antiauthoritarians, and urban guerilla groups. Although the presence of anarchist graffiti is undeniable in Athens, identifiable by phrases that are anti-authoritarian calls to action and marked with the anarchist symbol of an encircled ‘A,’ (see Fig. 1) the act of graffiti cannot be categorized as an exclusive anarchist practice; indeed, an Athenian artist said, “Anyone who [groups us together] does not understand what we write and why we write it” (Alexandrakis).

Along with this misrepresentation comes the ambiguity of the terms *graffiti* and *street art,* which are often misused and incorrectly believed to be synonymous and interchangeable. As the Athenian graffiti artist Haze (2012) said, “If it's not illegal, it's not graffiti" (Ampatzidou 33). This distinction is echoed by Dimitrios Dokos, muralist and street artist, who says that “graffiti is inherently illegal” (Dokos). Indeed, it is said that street art (or “post-graffiti”) (Chatzidakis) utilizes a broader range of materials and mediums, such as postering, stenciling, commissioned murals, paste-ups, stickering, and other legal or borderline-legal works, as given permission by owners of the property upon which the work relies on (Alexandrakis). For example, in 2005, the Ministry of Transportation commissioned a mural outside the ILPAP electric trolley-bus depot in central Athens, which was sponsored by ten private and public agencies (Leventis). The mural, which depicted “good” or “bad” citizens in shared or private transportation, respectively, was intended to celebrate an initiative called “For the Sustainable City" in which they held Car Free Day (Fig. 2). The message and intent is extremely clear, and the imagery is recognizable to a large portion of the viewers.

Graffiti, on the other hand, is a vernacular form of art, varying by region, encompassing any illegal scrawl or image on public or private space, and usually uses text or text-image interaction to get across a specific, and often political, message (Schacter xxxii). While a commissioned work’s message is commonly straightforward, or “more digestible” as Dokos frames it, a work of graffiti often includes “sub-narratives and sub-jokes, as well as pervasive imagery” which makes it accessible to certain groups more than others (Ampatzidou 34). In this way, graffiti content can be exclusive, oftentimes catering directly to other graffiti artists, to which Dokos states, “Graffiti is a means of communication between graffiti artists. It concerns only their own community, it is a way of power and recognition” (Dokos). The sub-narratives are often enforced by the layering, crossings out, and interactions of graffiti on a singular surface, as

seen in many of the buildings of Athens (32). Indeed, as author Ampatzidou states, “What we see is but a small portion of what has existed- a majority that has been done within the past half century is now invisible” (32). As such, their “visibility enacts their own invisibility” and the ephemerality of graffiti is likened to the “comings and goings [of] a series of urban apparitions" (32). Indeed, it is constantly in flux; changing, disappearing, reappearing, intervening, and deteriorating.

Responsible for much of this change created by layering is the practice of tagging, which is considered the “large-scale mutation of graffiti art” (Leventis). These works, which usually rely on experimentation with typography, consist only of the artist's pseudonym or “street name” and as such, lacks images (Schacter 26). Although generally thought of as a cry for attention or notoriety among the graffiti community, the act of placing one's name onto the physical city can also be looked at as a way to feel seen in a system of oppression, where marginalized groups are not recognized collectively. Because tagging can lack the aesthetic appeal of graffiti art, it is often increasingly vilified by the media as the “dirt that covers the city” (Chatzidakis). Street artist and organizer of the Athens Street Art Festival said in an interview, “[...] tagging has become a sort of visual pollution, pointless slogans and names [...] no longer confined to abandoned buildings” (Grek) and as such, is usually regarded differently than forms of artistic graffiti (Fig. 3). She went on to say, “I find it a bit fascistic to spray anti-fascist statements [and names] on the walls of other people’s homes, many of whom actually fought against real fascists” (Grek). This trend of general distaste towards tagging is shared with the majority of Athenians, who much rather prefer graffiti of aesthetic images.

Another defining characteristic of graffiti is its space specificity, which will be a vital aspect of graffiti when discussing its relationship to the Lefebvrian model of space creation and reclamation (Gounezos). Indeed, graffiti can be considered a spatial act and a spatial practice due to its dependence on urban space (Schacter xxviii). As an anonymous Athenian graffiti artist told director George Gounezos in his documentary film *Alive in the Concrete* (2014), “The space I choose makes me spontaneously decide what I draw.” For other Athenian artists, such as Bleeps.gr or Sonke, the space where a work is done is meticulously planned due to its social or personal significance (Leventis). Sonke’s infamous crying girls, with wild, billowing hair and broken hearts, were done in spaces his ex-girlfriend would frequent throughout the city (see Fig. 4). Contrastingly, Bleeps.gr, whose work is known for its figural renderings and Hellenic blue

backdrops, chose spaces of communal significance and as a result, his work invokes deeper solemnity and social significance. His piece entitled *I Dream of Love, I Search for Clients*, depicting a forlorn girl clutching a bag of euros to her chest, is outside of an inconspicuous brothel door (Leventis). One of his more political works, entitled *Immigrant, My Love,* (Fig. 5) was placed on a wall near the site where a group of neo-Nazi's assaulted two foreign immigrants, underlining his fascination with representing and defending the "other" through imagery and word play (Leventis). Aside from utilizing space as a way of enforcing and strengthening the narrative, others utilize public space simply as the most effective way to gain a wider audience for notoriety and message-dissemination purposes (Stampoulidis 11). Regardless of the reasoning behind the choice of space, it is undeniable that graffiti "can only ever be understood in relation to its other…" and as such, cannot exist without the urban spaces it utilizes, and is "first and foremost a question of place" (Schacter 36).

3.2 Athenian Graffiti, Resistance, and Right to the City

Graffiti is thought to adorn the physical surface of long-established public spaces, a form of "ornamentation or decoration" that sits on the skin of the city like a tattoo, latent and passive, unrelated to the socio-spatial creation and consumption of the space it adorns (Schacter 5). Anti-graffiti entities are notorious for this opinion, implying that graffiti lacks power and agency, and is little more than surface-level clutter. However, contradictory theories of graffiti address its power to shape and create the very urban space where it exists, even within the anti-graffiti movement (Ampatzidou 28). Its physical presence is often viciously heralded by anti-graffiti entities as a catalyst for urban degradation, as championed by the conservative political scientist James Q. Wilson (Ampatzidou 30). His "broken windows model" (1982), which argued that physical signs of urban decay such as broken windows and graffiti were linked to a rise in disorder and incivility, categorized graffiti as a "crime progenitor" and catalyst of destructive unrest (Schacter 30). Thus, as Wilson posits, graffiti can be understood to change and influence spatial practices that form public urban spaces.

However, graffiti's ability to transform urban spaces is misrepresented in this way. While it may be a symbol of degradation to planners, government and investment entities, and owners of private property, graffiti has the potential to reclaim "dull [and] mutilated" space that makes

the city fragmented, disconnected, and indistinguishable (Lefebvre 6). The content of graffiti is often political itself, but it's undeniable relationship to urban space makes it a tool to reappropriate the city, which has become increasingly evident in Greece, more specifically the city of Athens, in times of crisis.

The history of ornamentation and surface level adornment goes back to ancient times, when architectural ornamentation was celebrated and given a deep significance in the era of Greek city-states (Schacter 7). The complimentary zone to the Agora was the Acropolis, which served as both a military defensive and a spiritual space. There, flamboyant ornamentation on temples and holy structures signified a unified connection to the gods, sacrifice, and devotion, and as such, the very first forms of architectural ornamentation produced "spaces of representation", which signify something, not physical but a "third, or other" that defies analysis, such as divine power (Schmid 51). As such, surface level architectural ornamentation was far from superficial, even in Ancient times.

Since that time, urban ornamentation has morphed into the practice of graffiti, wildly different in form and intention but equally significant as a communal signifier. Its role as a form of dissent and activism was first seen collectively during Nazi occupation, when groups of women snuck out after curfew in the mid-late twentieth century to coordinate wall-writings, in which they would leave messages of "encouragement, hope, and strength" (Tulke 133). In the 1980s, individuals and graffiti crews practiced tagging in European cities such as Athens, and it was not until the 1990s that the first "large scale mutation of tagging" took place, creating a new culture of "graffiti art" (Leventis). In 1991, the first Athenian graffiti crew was formed, called *Carpe Diem* and founded by the notorious graffiti artist Woozy. His intent was to support artists while simultaneously providing a legal basis on urban canvases. In 1998, the first international graffiti festival took place, an initiative by the Hellenic-American Union, and saw large scale works created on the walls and facades of Ermou street (Leventis). The works became larger, more recognizable through relations of imagery and text, and began to "claim a legitimate part in the forming and transforming of urban identities in visual and spatial iterations" (Leventis). Indeed, in the period leading up to the 2004 Olympics, commissioned graffiti rose, sparking the beginning of legal street art culture.

However, despite what can be seen as glimmers of the "institutionalization" of street art in the early-mid 2000s, subversive, illegal graffiti exploded with the rise of austerity measures,

multiple crises, and political instability (Leventis). With the rise in unemployment came the rise of graffiti as creative potential exploded, resulting in “informal cultural production” in the form of graffiti (Tulke 131) and what author Karathanasis calls “overpainted landscapes" (Karathanasis 3). Always in existence but now covering the city in competing narratives and images, graffiti became an unavoidable part of the everyday physical urban landscape, covering abandoned buildings, vacant shops, walls, and billboards, starkly juxtaposing the Neoclassical architecture and monuments of the city (Tulke 131). It is considered a trace of dissent and defiance, collectivity and individuality that cannot be ignored. Indeed, Athens is considered one of the “most stained, most saturated in the world” (Tulke 131) and has become “a space for artists and activists to emotionally process the continuous state of exception” (Tulke 133) while simultaneously expressing individual opinions, allowing a “meaningful basis of political solidarity and [the sharing] of community information” (133). Indeed, the content of the works are undeniably shaped by crisis and austerity, and the consequential commodification, regulation, and attempts at depoliticization of public space (Ampatzidou 187, 188).

3.3 Aesthetics of Resistance

Difficult to avoid in the comprehensive examination of graffiti is its status as an aesthetic practice, despite the prevalent critique from anti-graffitists who claim it lacks both skill and artistry (Iveson 93). Indeed, graffiti has been described as “urban ornamentation” (Schacter xxii), which successfully links urban space to the practice but is simultaneously problematic. The term *ornamentation*, associated with aesthetics and beautification, strips graffiti of its social and political power given the prevalent assumption that beauty negates activism (Schacter 4). This assumption was exacerbated by the idea that “ornament and decoration [was] understood often mistakenly as something adventitious and luxurious, not essential…” (Schacter xxviii). However, by looking within the broader architectural canon that grappled to understand the relationship of ornament and order, an opposing association emerged between social and aesthetic hierarchies (Schacter 6). Semper said that there was an undeniable connection between “ornament and the creation of a larger, divine harmony, a rich [...] Hellenic language connecting it to the creation of a sacred order” (4). For Gombrich, ornamentation was the result of a psychological need to impose both material and social order, and as such, implied that there was

a direct relationship between social and aesthetic hierarchies (5). Rafael Schacter, author of *Ornament and Order: Graffiti, Street Art, and the Parergron (2014)* , takes Gombrich's idea a step farther, claiming that ornament has the power not to simply reflect social hierarchies, but "create them, to [...] produce [both] structural and social formations" (10). Thus, architectural ornamentation has both agency and transformative powers, and can simultaneously reconstruct a society's views *and* physical environment (10). As such, Schacter refers to it as an "politico-aesthetic" response to the city, and even if viewed as a purely aesthetic form of ornamentation, ignoring its spatial and contextual intentions, has the power to change and influence the social and political happenings of the urban space.

Graffiti as an art form is additionally powerful and disruptive in that it is a resistance against accepted and valued forms of high art hierarchies (Schacter 27). As a vernacular aesthetic practice that varies in style and application depending on the region it is in, it is considered *folk* art, resulting not from formal training or schooling but the "principle need to decorate as humans" (Schacter xi). Indeed, ornamentation was considered by major architectural historians, such as Adolf Loos, to only be acceptable when applied by the aristocratic but believed to be a disgusting, primitivist practice when used by the bourgeoise or lower class, a fetish embroiled in regionalism and lacking in creative value (27). When applied to graffiti, this may be in part due to the unconventional and often frustrating stylistic forms it takes, using the distortion of text and imagery that juxtaposes what is considered the universally applied *acceptable* aesthetic taste. As Schacter believes, it "breaks and pushes typographical [and image] laws," attempting to elude traditional systems of imposed aesthetic value. As such, the practice eludes the value attached to forms of high art, embodying a purist form of self-representation in the very fact that it breaks aesthetic normalities and hierarchies imposed by the elite and "unsettling the everyday" aesthetics (and aesthetic economy) of the city (112).

Although the thematic range is complex, encompassing "confrontational messages by anarchists, antifascists, and squatters which contrasts with poetic textual interventions" and images done by everyday citizens or self-proclaimed artists (Tulke 132), the aesthetics of Athenian graffiti stand out from other urban regions, similarly redefining what is an acceptable and valued aesthetic style or form. The vernacular art on the streets of Athens incorporates bright colors, is extremely ironic, and encompasses visual vocabulary and semantic symbols (Stampoulidis 10). Athenian graffiti is known for its emphasis on depicting the human figure,

manipulated as a "site of display for the everyday effects of crisis and austerity" as seen in Figure 6 (Tulke 132). Indeed, the representations of crisis are abstracted, disembodying the economic experience yet making it all the more accessible and impactful through humanized images, prompting questions of subjectivity (132). This is seen in the notorious work of artists like Bleeps.gr or Sonke, whose figures utilize popular, politically charged symbols and iconography, such as the euro (Leventis, Tulke 124).

In addition to the use of human figures is the incorporation of ancient imagery and symbols, such as that of ancient sculpture, philosophers, and architecture mutilated and twisted by aspects of current unrest. This alludes to the paradox of Greek identity which struggles with the old and new, the ancient and modern narrative. The artist Bizare is known for these incorporations, as his famous mural for the Athen's Art Biennale: Destroy Athens (2007), held by the Athens Biennial Non-Profit Organization (Leventis). The theme of the Biennale was to address how "Athens was refusing to accept its real image, existing in a wished-for reality" yet was still a "socio-urban field of injustice," continuing to romanticize itself as a "contemporary version of its fifth-century BC predecessor" and as such, ignoring current urban problems (Leventis). Bizare's work, entitled *Socrates Drinks the Conium,* signified the self-inflicted destruction of the city through ancient narrative and imagery (Leventis). A similar work that signifies the obsession of wall writers with their ancestors and ancient philosophers is entitled *THINK,* which appeared on the Acropolis in May 2015 by Bleeps.gr (see Fig. 7) (Stampoulidis 17). Depicting an Ancient Greek sculpture thinking furiously and commanding the viewers to do the same, it "redefines Ancient Greek culture, history, and philosophy [and] brings together the reminders of the country's glorious past and the inherent uncertainty of the future" (Stampoulidis 17).

A final defining characteristic of the Athenian graffiti movement is the use of stenciling, which often allows the artist to produce a more easily-recognizable, and therefore specific and powerful, image. They are easily reproducible and can be done more quickly, allowing a greater amount of the repetitive imagery scattered throughout the urban environment. Stencils enable portraiture, as seen in the countless stencils of Alexandros Grigopoulos, the murdered teen killed by police in Exarchia on December 6, 2008 (Tulke 128). These stenciled portraits, which are seen across the city, "bring presence to the murdered boy as a symbol" and demand to be seen (Stavrides 167). The infamous hooded ballerina stencil, seen outside the National Opera,

represents art and activism. In Kolonaki, the affluent neighborhood that borders Exarchia, there is a stenciled molotov cocktail outside a high end cafe with the words, “Relax you trendy guys and enjoy your drink. Your car is burning nearby” (167). Another graphic stencil is found on the campus of Athens University (See Fig. 8) that depicts the fornication between an Athenian police officer, identifiable by his helmet, and an Athenian citizen.

3.4 The Illegal Act

Graffiti has been framed in the previous section as a trace or a mark, the finished product of a previous act (Chatzidakis). However, the act itself cannot be ignored, as the “producing of these works is as much about the undertaking as it is about the product” (Schacter 106). SheOne, a well-known graffiti artist in Athens, said in a 2012 interview, “I never really worry about the final image, I do it for the process” (Ampatzidou 33). In a similar vein, Lefebvre focused on the “production, not the product” of spaces, as he found that the production, taking place in a constant and instantaneous cycle, was what made the lived space authentic and vibrant, a “spontaneous theater” of play, creativity, unpredictability, dependence, and activity (Lefebvre 64). As such, how does the act itself, not just the post-act trace, become a form of resistance and therefore aid in the movement to reclaim public space?

The process of creating a work of graffiti varies by artists and geographical region, but the artists’ emphasis on the actual process is universal. Although each symbol and image is unique and represents conflicting political views and urban narratives, graffiti is united by the creative operation behind the finished product that involves risk, self-expression, and inventiveness. Artists have described it as an “addiction” stemming from a “need to produce [a work] at the danger of an artist themselves or an actor” (Schacter xxvi), and their “commitment to the action in the street” is unwavering (xxv), while others have thought of the artistic process as the process towards invention, which is almost “always born out of dissension” (95).

The most obvious way to view the act of graffiti as an act of resistance against the state and the firm is in its illegality. Although the illegality is often construed as a direct act of aggression towards governmental forces that creates and enforces anti-graffiti laws, graffiti removal campaigns (see Fig. 9), and the commodification and privatization of public space, the fact that it is illegal does not directly or completely equate it with anti-establishment sentiment

(Schacter 73). Instead, it "transgresses prevalent hegemonic codes" but not social codes, a form of experimentation with alternative solutions to expression and public debate (90). The "classic public sphere" that was presented and *allowed* by the state and the firm, one filled with limitations and repressions, is suddenly circumvented as a new stage for dissent is explored, one that avoids convention (90). The act of creating outside the overarching hierarchical structure allows for more authentic and truthful production, as it is not marred or morphed by the demand of the state or the market (90). By resisting against dominant culture, the act changes the "political reality" of everyday lived space, indicating to urban space users that truthful things can exist outside of predominant hierarchical laws (162).

Although there is no explicit anti-graffiti law in Greek legislation, it is still illegal to destroy private or public property, and graffiti fits under this form of destruction (Chatzidakis). The very fact that Athenian graffiti is considered illegal makes it attractive, as youth artists in Athens say they are attracted to it because their parents seemed "brainwashed by the system," and a need to distinguish themselves against the various forms of authority in their lives: their parents, police, the government, and big business (Alexandrakos). For other Athenian graffiti artists, illegality is valuable as it further enforces the political nature of the act. As WD says, "The fact that you are going out into the city and claiming a space to express yourself without asking permission from any institution, mayor or owner [...] is a political process. [...] So, graffiti comes to make a small rebellion via the [illegality of the] act" (Stampoulidis 21).

To combat this illegal act, new regimes of social control, distinguishable by increased surveillance and restrictive urban design, have become increasingly common (Ampatzidou 28). "CPTED," or Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, creates straight walkways, sight lines, closed public facilities, and barrier planning, alongside both "spatial and technological control" tactics (29). This way of design, implemented increasingly by private companies and firms, indicates a trend towards "consumption-driven urban development" and zones of exclusion, privatization, and commodification (28).

3.5 Reclamation and Creation of Authentic Space

This brings to light the focus on space authenticity and urban social needs, which Lefebvre, quite adamantly, defines as simultaneous manifestations in an effective urban space.

Successful, lived urban spaces are places that meet not only the material needs of the people, but the social needs as well, resisting against homogenization and commodification (Lefebvre 57). As such, space must be a place for implementation, assembly, social relationships, encounters, and the passage of information between diverse groups (Schmid 58). It must be a space of playfulness and unpredictability, independence, creativity, "places where exchange [should] not go through exchange value, commerce and profit" (57) and a space where "collective want is made visible" (Lefebvre 64). Finally, the urban is characterized by difference; it is a place where all differences come together and generate something new" (Schmid 49).

Graffiti in urban spaces allows citizens to implement, or put into action, their collective and individual concerns, creating layers of different images and texts that work together to create an original amalgam and discussion. A city and its spaces are not solely formed from "material production" but the production of knowledge, meaning, and space-specific narratives, of which graffiti adds to public space through audience-image interactions (Schmid 51). The presence of graffiti, with conflicting and complementary narratives created from the constant addition, interactions, and layering of works, allows for alternative "channels of communication," and fosters "meaningful encounters" between artists, urban dwellers, and images on the urban landscape (Tulke 124). This can be seen in Figures 10, 11, and 12, "Don't Let the Neighborhood Disappear," found in downtown Athens. Done on a boarded up barbershop by anonymous artists, it shows three roughly-drawn figures in movement, with bold words warning against the forces of gentrification that threatens the neighborhood's authenticity. In the upper left hand corner is a patch of discolored paint, where an addition to the original work has been painted over. The artist that has been covered up responds by calling this "censorship," and that their intent was to "fix the background" (Figure 10). In response, another Athenian writes back:

> "People get evicted from their homes every day, 'cause of Airbnb. Someone wrote a statement on this wall about it and you covered it up with "*uhh's*" and *"hurrays"* (fixing the background)? It's all about caring or not! The people that get evicted are nice too. Maybe not in your life, but heh…." (Figure 11)

To this, the first artist answers back: "You have a valid point. I think art will get it across better than just an angry statement" (Figure 11). The previous artist answers back, "It's

better to censor yourself, before doing it to others. It's even better to leave alone enraged statements of desperate people, though. Life is not pretty for most of the people, and a "*hurray*" certainly won't change that" (Figure 12). This work is a perfect example of the debates, exchange and formation of knowledge, "channels of communication" and "meaningful encounters" that graffiti creates, which simultaneously form authentic public spaces (Tulke 124). The same message is seeable across the city with the words *FUCK AIRBNB!* as seen scrawled messily across the wall of a historic Greek Orthodox church in the hip and quickly-gentrifying neighborhood of Pangrati in Figure 13 (Schmidt).

Indeed, the act itself is "creative *and* social," one of collaboration and interaction, as artists form closely knit crews and meet up across diverse groups for graffitiing sessions (Stampouliidis 11). These elaborate narratives, dialogues, and interactions amass onto the physical city, adding richness and multi-layered "interactions and encounters" (Ferrell 33) (both physical and visual) to urban spaces (Tulke 131). While these works can be understood as the visible expression of collective dissent or yearning, they can also be viewed as individual statements posed to a collective public, and as such, enables independence *and* collectivity. The presence of graffiti interrupts the commodification process that attempts to physically homogenize and "cleanse" spaces, and as such, with shocking color and form, adds playfulness and unpredictability, as well as creativity, to a public urban space (Ampatzidou 188). As mentioned before, graffiti resists exchange value and commodification, and as such, contributes to a space where exchange does not go through "exchange value, commerce, and profit" (Lefebvre 57).

Lefebvre believes the ability of a citizen to shape and "appropriate" public spaces, as graffiti enables them to do, is important in the process of reclaiming urban space. The ability to "participate in the transformation of space and [...] control investment into space" (Schmid 52,53) has been overpowered by the processes of the state and the firm which attempt to destroy the authentic urban spaces and replace it with something contrived, formulated, repetitive and stagnant (Lefebvre 53). The increasing political culture has aided in this homogenization, looking to encourage an increasingly passive, non-participative public arena (Schacter 61). Space suddenly becomes a tool to control the public sphere, to "assure mass loyalty" (63). Simultaneously, the creation of spaces has become increasingly consumption-driven, in which quality of life is a commodity to be sold and the city becomes forged, a "Disneyland redesign of

its former self" (28). This redesign is driven by capitalism, and involves conceiving and calculating by experts, planners, architects, and technocrats (Fuchs 137). It becomes associated with power, ideology, and theory surrounding abstract spaces where every day needs are not met, and space is passively consumed (Fuchs 137). In Lefebvre's dialectic, this is "representational space", and aims for "streets [...] glistening like white walls, streets devoid of all smearing, all tattooing, all sgraffito, all selfhood; [...] a city devoid of the embedded social relations that ornament contains, a state of total 'white-out'" (Schacter 34).

As discussed in the previous chapter, neoliberalization in post-2008 Athens resulted in increasingly capitalistic policies aimed at "economic development, inner-city competition, and market-driven creativity and entrepreneurialism" (Ampatzidou 187). Public space became a prime target of economic development and city marketing, becoming so crucial to the Greek image that in 2013, the "National Council for Radio and Television issued a formal recommendation for media outlets to discourage the transmission of negative images" of social deprivation and poverty (Ampatzidou 188). This played into a larger, state-supported narrative in which Athenian public space needed to become "clean" and maintain a certain, acceptable appearance, removing conflict and political opposition. Politicians began to speak of "broom operations" in which unwanted people, such as prostitutes, the homeless, and immigrants, were expelled from the public eye. This was done through planning "representational spaces" aimed to increase homogenization, as seen in the *Rethink Athens* competition that took place in 2012 (Ampatzidou 192). The international architecture competition was held by the Onassis Cultural Center for the pedestrianization of Panepistimiou Street and the squares of Syntagma and Omonia, and was part of a large privatization and redevelopment project. The resulting plan was one of white buildings, widened streets, and a "dominant, sterile landscape [...] a stereotypical vision implemented in a top down fashion by a competition manager and a state institution" (195). Indeed, it looked to address the undesirable problems of vulnerable populations, homelessness, drug addiction, and crime by simply displacing them through homogenization. Although never implemented, projects such as these destroy the authenticity of the city through the confiscation of the universal right to urban space.

How, then, can graffitiing change this unauthentic, "one-dimensional" space appropriated by the state and the firm (Schacter 90)? The act of graffitiing a white wall or a private (once public) property destroys the primarily representational space and transforms it into lived, or

"practiced places," as De Certeau called it (Pafsanias). As such, the power of transformation remains at an individual, grassroots level, circumventing top-down forms of control and giving place-making agency back to the community, commenting on the implicit public regulations in the city- where one can write and where one cannot. In this way, graffiti artists assert their own alternative form of authority into the already-existing hierarchies of power, confiscating the surface of the city from the state and the firm (Schacter 91). As Harvey argues, the right to the city is far more than an individual liberty to access resources in the city. Rather, it is "the right to change ourselves by changing the city [...] the freedom to make or remake our cities…" (Pafsanias). Indeed, the very act of graffiti "enacts a different city" (Ampatzidou 92). Similarly, as a wide range of urban citizens graffiti a space, they feel a collective ownership, as if they have a stake in the space. As such, the act of graffitiing can create a form of commons.

Indeed, in areas of spatial resistance where alternative forms of governance and democracy are being put into action, such as Navarinou park and Exarchia, graffiti plays a key role as a creative mode of resistance against the surrounding hostile capitalist environment (Ampatzidou 199). Indeed, graffiti produces "commoning-through-representation" by "criticiz[ing] ironically deconstruct[ing] or, almost sacrilegiously, attack[ing] dominant images of the city" (Stavrides 172). The neighborhood is full of graffiti (Fig. 14), specifically of anti-police and anarchist phrases, as well as various narratives of resistance (Tulke 125). *ENOUGH IS ENOUGH* (Anonymous, 2015) (see Figure 15) "attempts to motivate users to overcome their fears and fight for their future, implying a call to action" (Ampatzidou 15). Another work by Cacao Rocks, from the same year and also in Exarchia, says, "When they said tanks...now they mean banks," (Fig. 16) comparing the period of the Greek military junta in the late 1960s and early seventies to new forms of oppression in the Greek present (15). That same year, a building of the National Technical University Building, located in Exarchia, was covered completely in black and white graffiti, with speculators attributing the work to Icos and Case, a notorious graffiti duo (Fig. 17) (199). It was done purposefully in the epicenter of the student uprisings in the late sixties and seventies, and sparked a furious debate about the illegality of graffiti, specifically on such a "heavily symbolic building" (Ampitzidou 199). While the anti-graffiti side argued that the removal of the graffiti would reinstate the University, others believed its removal was the "death of civic democracy." The University Dean used the opportunity to comment on the reduction of university funds during austerity, which made it impossible for its removal, and

as such, condemned the act while "endorsing its encompassing the issues of the times" (200). It was finally removed by a combined effort between the Municipality, University, and Ministry of Education, but highlighted the issues of ownership and commentary concerning a "public monument with a democratic symbol" (201).

Athenian works, "regardless of intent, represent a semantic intervention into the visual configuration of the city that implicitly contests dominant notions of what urban space should look like, questioning [...] representational regimes" (Tulke 124). As such, the act itself enforces the idea of the commons, a space that is equally accessible and simultaneously participatory, where discussions (which in this case happens between artists and viewers through imagery and interpretation) posit alternatives of urban living.

3.6 Alternative Ways of Life

It is not only the ability to alter and change city spaces that makes graffiti a form of revolt and reclamation, but its power to help reimagine existing systems and the *potential* for a different urban life. This is fundamental to Lefebvre's right to the city framework, as each citizen is entitled to the "possibility of experimenting with alternative ways of life…" (Schmid 43). Graffiti allows imagination to transform the current reality of the city, sharing new possibilities through image and text to a collective audience, and even the action itself, which altars the supposed reality of the neoliberal urban space, hints towards new alternatives and existences. Through this, the space becomes a place to "reimagine and reimage the city" (Pafsanias) and shows the potential for a "different urbanism than is evident in planned developments" (Schacter 11). Athenian graffiti is known for creating "alternative futures of the city" in its images and graffiti constitutes "the ephemeral promise of a democratic city" (Ferrell 33).

3.7 The Other

Simultaneous with the homogenization of the city comes an attempt to erase otherness, to "ingest and devour foreign bodies and spirits" and create an identical identity (Gane 271). Through the institutionalization of public space and by erasing pockets of individuality where the

crossing of diverse paths is made possible, the state attempts to govern the essential "being together of strangers" in which differences are realized (Schmid 49).

Graffiti as a practice has been associated with the Other since its inception. Existing outside of mainstream culture is a defining aspect of the underground movement, an art form in which marginalized and ignored groups use to express their frustrations, dreams, and creativity on the very city itself. Each work expresses the personhood of the producer, and marks the city with a "material substantiation of an individual, their personhood revivifying a physical space" (Schacter 34). The graffiti "leaves a distributed aspect of [the] self, a fragment of agency, [a] very name and personhood, on the body of the city" (43). It becomes a way to be seen and heard, calling into question the issues of social hierarchy and reclaiming one's visibility. Because of the lack of restrictions on who or who cannot participate in the process, it becomes an accessible way to express dissent and identity, and in this way, an equalizer (Ampatzidou 90).

It is not just the illegality of graffiti that sparks such profound feelings of dread and loathing, as other illicit aspects of the urban environment, such as postering, lacks the same strong response (Schacter 40). Postering involves corporations, rather than "residual smudges of the individual" (39). It is this very aspect of individuality, accompanied by inclusivity, equality, and the disruption of social and economic systems of oppression which are emblematic of capitalistic society, that makes graffiti so feared by the state and the firm. Indeed, the individual agency that is expressed through graffiti threatens to overturn the carefully constructed economic and social hierarchy of the neoliberal city. As author Rafael Schacter says, "Ornament was always conceived as potentially dangerous, chaotic, something which must be made servile to structure precisely because it lies in the dangerous realm of representation and can mislead [society] away from harmony and order" (Schacter 40). Indeed, it is an "utterance free of any strategic manipulation" (63). It is the very rawness, truthfulness, and authenticity of graffiti that makes it so powerful, and gives it the potential to aid in the reclaiming of public urban spaces against the one-dimensional city.

In a city as diverse as Athens, graffiti is crucial in representing those typically excluded, ignored, and misunderstood. Indeed, Richard Sennett writes that the "battle cry" of Athenian graffiti is "we exist, and we are everywhere… we write all over you" (Iveson 172). Graffiti is often thought of as a "call to action, declarations of war against injustice, humiliation, racism, and inequality" (Stavrides 174). It is the very fact that graffiti is so accessible and attainable that

makes it democratic, allowing participation and subsequent representation from all strata's of society, as "anyone can write on walls and what counts as 'good work' is never fully settled" (Iveson 95).

As opposed to the work of Bleeps.gr, who takes it upon himself to represent prostitutes, immigrants, and other citizens who exist outside the typical bonds of society, artist WD, an immigrant himself from Bali, Indonesia, uses graffiti to represent his own struggle as an outsider, with the "rising, ugly face of racism being what worries him the most" although he also focuses on issues of homelessness and poverty (Leventis). He says, "It just takes a walk in Athens to realize the different cultures, the uncertainty and the rage of the people, the inequality in the society and the tough present times" (Leventis). His work in Exarchia shows a large sleeping man that takes up the entire facade of an apartment building, dripping in paint that mimics tears, with the caption "Dedicated to the poor and homeless here and around the globe" (Tulke 132).

However, it is not just an attempt to humanize the other that becomes central to graffiti, but to *maintain* otherness as well. While many artists, such as WD or Bleeps.gr, are concerned with public well-being and the condition of vulnerable populations, others use the illegality and taboo of graffiti to stand up against homogenization. Author Othon Alexandrakis shadowed a group of three youth graffiti artists over the course of a year, attempting to understand their motivations:

> "[It was] the preservation of the crew's own position of otherness within the social milieu, of its own mattering. The threat of becoming ordinary, of becoming one of the crowd of individuated, increasingly competitive, and necessarily self-reliant Athenians activated among them a kind of reflexivity that enabled my interlocutors to sustain themselves despite forces that would have changed them, and so preserved and kept open a relation to alterity" (Alexandrakis).

As such, the use of graffiti can be both an intentionally inclusive or an intentionally alienating force, a way to reclaim one's identity in a quickly homogenizing society or champion another's acceptance. For Lefebvre and Schmid, who recognize that one of the city's greatest assets is that it is a place of difference, encounter, assembly, and unexpected

interaction, maintaining one's individuality while simultaneously enhancing tolerance is key.

3.8 Forces of Commodification

There is a stark juxtaposition between urban space and graffiti in that it, too, is constantly subject to commodification and exploitation which dilutes, and even negates, its authentic purpose or meaning. In recent years, graffiti and street art has become an increasingly aesthetic practice, found in galleries and museums on canvases and walls (Alexandrakis). Spaces once regarded suspiciously for their copious amounts of graffiti are now heralded as must-see wonders, exploited for tourism purposes, and incorporated into popular “street art tours" (Ampatzidou 30). Governments employ artists to create large street art projects in the hope that it will aid in the gentrification of the neighborhoods where it is done (Schacter xxv).

This commercialization of graffiti is disturbing. As examined above, graffiti relies on urban space for its narrative, intent, and impact, an interplay between the constancy of the physical environment and ephemeral individual commentary. Indeed, some believe the two cannot exist individually (Schacter xxviii). Its illegality (and subsequent anonymity) defines the art form, deepening its impact while simultaneously twisting any passivity that could be mistakenly associated with it. The fact that graffiti exists outside common structures of aesthetic practice and profit (“...free of charge and [...] most copyright and licensing restrictions, unencumbered by price domain and permission barriers” (Schacter 67)) ensures a raw truthfulness to the act, and an inclusivity that lacks in other art forms. Through this, it becomes a form of direct democracy as it is not filtered through political, economic, or social hierarchies and regulations. Indeed, in its purest form it is “free from the church and the state” (66). However, as graffiti becomes increasingly exploited, it loses its agency while gaining material value. Similar to commodified public space, it becomes “dull [and] mutilated” (Lefebvre 6). What was once “holding a mirror to the mainstream public” has become, in some instances, mainstream itself (Alexandrakis).

By 2011, there was a tangible change in the city of Athens when it came to the acceptance of graffiti (Alexandros). It seemed to take a mainstream turn, becoming more commonplace than before. In 2011, one of the youth artists shadowed by Alexandros was caught painting a large toilet on the shutters of a luxury furniture store, and was caught by the owner.

Instead of being admonished, the owner "put his arm around him and said something to the effect of: "Finally, you've made me part of the neighborhood. It's about time someone put graffiti here." The young artist recalled this unhappily, saying, "It was like we did him a favor . . . like we did a commission for free." The artist said that graffiti had become quite common, "covering almost every surface of Athens" and that it had started to become "ordinary" (Alexandros). The graffiti artists were afraid that the "subtext" of Athenian graffiti would become thinner, and writings, if not done in an illegal and discursive manner, would lose their truthfulness and become less aware (Alexandrakis). This fear is reinforced by the increasingly popular commissioning of murals, which are used as tools for increasing high-end tourism and economic development (Ferrell 30).. The Athens Biennale, as mentioned in Section 3.2, was the first of many large-scale commissioned street art shows, followed by a series of murals done for the 2004 Olympics with themes chosen and approved by the commissioners, not the artists (Leventis).

This odd movement towards the glorification and exploitation of graffiti is shocking and problematic. Like the young Athenian artists feared, graffiti may lose its discursive power if it continues to be commercialized in the mainstream arena (Ferrell 29). Indeed, its paradoxical nature- one where the writer may be hailed a criminal or a genius- becomes increasingly messy as patrons, gallery owners, and urban planners attempt to commodify the art form, separating it from the urban spaces it needs in order to maintain its status as discursive, effective, accessible, and democratic (30). Indeed, " the [urban] landscape is a huge gallery giving everyone freedom," and without access to it, urban freedom does not exist (Stampoulidis 203).

3.9 Potential and Application

The inherent power of graffiti to shape and reclaim urban space is obvious. However, with increasing forces of capitalism and commercialization that accompany the neoliberalization of the city, its agency hangs in the balance, dependent on the preservation and creation of authentic urban spaces. The struggle of spaces and graffiti is one of authorship; who will create the city, and what version of the city will it be (Iveson 89). In order to avoid the creation of a one dimensional city at the hands of the state and the firm as graffiti becomes similarly paralyzed,

author Karl Iveson proposes a series of possible solutions to ensure its democratic agency remains.

Firstly, he advocates for alternatives to the “zero tolerance policy,” as it inflicts great social and financial costs on the city. Instead, he believes property owners and artists should decide on their own rules concerning permission, as the rapid removal of graffiti and the adherence to vandalism laws or formal planning seem pointless (Iveson 93). Additionally, embracing “legal avenues" only heightens unhelpful discourse comparing and inflaming the tensions between street art and graffiti, in which street artists believe they can “defeat” graffiti. Alongside policy advocacy is a form of permission seeking, which he says must “challenge rather than enforce undemocratic forms of urban authority” and rely on inhabitants rather than property ownership or law (93). Indeed, it must empower the community, “extending ownership beyond the private property model” in order to seek equality, putting the communities name a space that doesn't legally belong to them in order to “claim the wall for all” (93). Participation is additionally needed, and as the notorious London-based artist and activist Banksy said, “the only problem with graffiti is there isn't enough of it [...] Imagine a city where graffiti is legal [...] imagine a city where everybody could draw wherever they liked… and stop leaning against the wall- it's wet” (95).

The question of legality, however, is a similarly slippery slope. The graffiti artist Woozy, who began the Carpe Diem graffiti group in 1991 to offer artists a legal basis of expression, became involved in major commissioned projects like the Chromopolis project in 2002 (Leventis). In cooperation with the Ministry of Greek Culture, the Carpe Diem group, along with sixteen other well-known graffiti artists, travelled to ten cities around Greece and painted large-scale murals on industrial buildings and urban landscapes. Although the legality allowed for large scale works, perhaps more rightly called “street art,” the subjective truthfulness of illegal graffiti becomes increasingly compromised as more stakeholders become involved (Schacter 87). Indeed, it is the very rejection of legality, and the risk associated with it, that ensures each work to be honest and genuine, the most “authentic feeling of desire” that spurs someone to pursue an illegal form of expression (86).

However, that is not to say that all government collaborations and commissioned works are inherently harmful to urban space authenticity. Indeed, they have their own potential to foster inclusivity and space ownership. The Athens Street Art Festival works in underprivileged

Athenian neighborhoods, oftentimes around public schools. As Festival Organizer Christine Grek recalled, one mural painted in the early 2000s by street artist Judith de Leeuw was a rendition of Vermeer's *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, although she was depicted as a Mulata. The neighborhood was a place with an increasing refugee population, and Athenians began to protest against the mural, even defacing it, as they thought it acted like a "welcome sign for refugees" (Grek). As a result, neighbors and parents volunteered to clean the mural, and the nearby public school board invited both refugees and neighborhoods into the school to break misconceptions and create an inclusive community (Grek). This is the kind of integration and collaboration that Grek believes is possible through street art festivals, commissioned murals, and community engagement through legalized street art.

Another project for urban beautification is the KAFAO Project (Fig. 18), a partnership between the municipalities of Athens and local artists to transform telephone boxes into works of urban art throughout the cities. Their proposals were submitted online, and although this was proposed for accessibility, the "slight monopoly of ruling street artists in Athens that dominate the scene" were given most of the commissions, which is reminiscent of the internal exclusion despite the intent of inclusionary practice as seen in the commons of Exarchia and Parko Kyprou in Patissione (Grek). As such, illegal graffiti may have agency that commissioned graffiti lacks in its undeniable resistance against the state, and although the act itself may not create belonging, programming and collaboration with excluded populations can create other forms of inclusion.

Inclusion and participation goes hand in hand with street art and graffiti through the self-named citizen group called the Atenistas, or "Athenians in practice" (Ampatzidou 195). Similar to the weekly council in Exarchia, this group looks to "bypass the state and other forms of organized social agency" (195). They create pocket parks, implement public signage, clean abandoned spaces, and "add beautiful graffiti" with the intent of urban beautification by way of volunteering by connecting to participants through social media. The Atenistas "claim their share of responsibility in improving the image of the city" and although driven by pure and honest intentions and positive outcomes, they are merely "disguised as apolitical and community-building" (195). Their mission of beautification stays within the bounds of what can be aestheticized, and ultimately assists the authorities (whether that be the municipality or the state) in both intent and need. Municipalities increasingly rely on such groups in crisis, and a steady collaboration is developed between the two entities. In this way, authors Cristina Ampatzidou

and Ginette Verstraete see the citizen group as losing its political and challenging, contradictory nature as it complies with the state and the firm. That is not to say that citizen groups are complacent- their very motive to circumvent ineffective government is rooted in discontent. However, the aspects of the Atenistas that lack perceived illegality or visual discomfort, such as tagging and aesthetically displeasing graffiti, coupled with government cooperation, reduces its power of space-claiming.

3.9.1 Conservation

It is the very illegality of graffiti that makes preservation so difficult. As graffiti is not always recognized as art, there is no legal or official form of protection (Chatzidakis). The Greek law states only that "recent monuments" with "historical, artistic, or scientific" significance must be legally preserved. As no graffiti or street art has been declared a recent monument, it remains outside the institutional framework for conservation and as such, must be undertaken by the public. The conservation department at the Technological Educational Institute (TEI) has taken up the task, employing documentation and digital mapping to fight the inevitable ephemerality of the landscape (Chatzidakis). However, as with legality, it must be questioned.

Should graffiti be conserved, or is its transitory nature something beautiful and powerful? Indeed, the constant appearance and disappearance of images and texts create constantly shifting narratives depending on collective want. As a work fades, it becomes a trace of a past want or need, replaced by a new one. This enables the urban spaces it inhabits to remain a "spontaneous theater" where political action and shifting collective want is continuously made visible (Lefebvre 64). The act of conservation does not have to negate ephemerality, however. With the rising addition of social media and technology, conservation includes the digitizing of works so that their audience widens, incorporating a larger number of viewers through longevity and ease of access (Chatzidakis). This movement to cyberspace has been tantamount to the acceptance of graffiti as an art, as it was "a genre that was once dismissed as vandalism [but] has used cyberspace to gain credibility as one of the most vibrant and creative scenes in urban culture" (Chatzidakis). With such increased visibility and acceptance that seems to preserve the message of the work as well as keeping the urban space it uses essentially untouched, it appears to be an effective and responsible way to pursue conservation. The drawback, however, exists in the fact

that graffiti is undeniably spatial, as has been discussed throughout this work. With the increased digitization comes a loss of spatial awareness and contextualization provided by the viewers' and the artists' in-person interaction with the urban built environment. However, as conservationist Munoz Vinas states, "conservation [...] adapts to present day expectations and needs," and as such, one can view the digitization as a needed and unavoidable adaptation (Chatzidakis).

Conclusion

In a world of digitization, the physical public sphere is considered increasingly obsolete. Life takes place online, and the need for interactions grounded in the built environment of the city have dwindled as "virtual communities" have risen (Harvey 1). With the simultaneous rise in urban fragmentation, homogenization, privatization, and segregation that attempts to erase identity and agency, space becomes harder to use authentically, and encouragement of political participation through the built environment becomes arduous. For David Harvey, it becomes possible not only through a tangible direct relationship, but one's daily interpretation of the city (Harvey 1). If this is true, then to see a mess of colors, shapes, and symbols scattered throughout the city, all screaming and competing in different narratives and identities, can most certainly inform and dictate political opinion and participation.

There is a popular phrase that can be found around the city of Athens, scrawled in the nooks and crannies of the streets or blatantly displayed on building facades: *WAKE UP!* it screams in bright colors and shocking typography (Grek, Chatzidakis). But wake up to what?

Throughout the past three chapters, three trends have emerged in the political and social spheres of modern era Athens. Firstly, that there is a disconnect and distrust between the state and civil society, built upon through years of mismanagement and foreign intervention. Secondly, the need for civil society to find alternative ways to relate to the state and gain agency, which manifests itself in public displays of collective and individual defiance, is a constant struggle. Thirdly, neoliberal ethic has directly affected the creation and possession of urban spaces and as such, increased issues of urban belonging and ownership. As such, Athens becomes an optimal space to apply Lefebvre's framework of urban space creation and reclamation through the spatial practices of graffiti-making, of which I find to be crucial to urban

authenticity. However, this application brings up difficult questions of further study and application.

There is no doubt that graffiti is a complicated art form, embroiled in contradictions and paradoxes. Indeed, it is this very complex existence outside of normal frameworks and concrete characterizations that make it so powerful and accessible. As mentioned before, graffiti is at its most truthful and effective when it is uninhibited by outside forces. As such, preserving the lack of exchange value and illegality of graffiti is tantamount to its power as a form of resistance in a neoliberal society obsessed with privatization and capital. Since the very forces it works against are those of the "state and the firm," (Lefebvre 53) policy implications are increasingly difficult to propose when considering graffiti itself. However, inclusionary planning practices that involve community members and inhabitants have the power to form spaces of belonging as opposed to zones of exclusion, while simultaneously enforcing each community members' feeling of shared ownership in a space, creating a form of commons (Vidali). In terms of urban art, more specifically what I defined as "street art," collaboration between municipalities, urban government, and local street artists in partnership with non-profit organizations, such as the *Carpe Diem* graffiti group and the Athens Street Art Festival, has the ability to beautify urban spaces, specifically those where marginalized or underprivileged populations have settled, and create deeper connections and relationships within the diverse community itself, with the risk of losing truthfulness in the work as it filters through layers of top-down approval and private sponsorship.

As such, I am not proposing that graffiti is subjected to any form of regulation, legal recognition, or governmental supervision. Any effort to legalize, institutionalize, or interfere with the natural process of graffiti-making threatens to reduce its agency, and therefore its potential to alter and create authentic urban spaces. Rather, the rampant belief that graffiti is a form of "urban dirt" (Schacter 27) done by narcissistic hoodlums or "lost youth" (Alexandrakis) must be reexamined and reconstructed. The stigma attached to graffiti devalues it, encouraging either vilification or disregard of the Other. Therefore, I propose that further studies must focus on the humanization of graffiti writers and the redefinition of the act itself. The messages found in graffiti can inform policy makers on collective need and discontent, and as such, must not be thought about as superfluous or innately damaging.

Lefebvre believes that the right to the city cannot be achieved by a passive return to the "traditional city," but rather, can only happen through participation, redefinition and rediscovery of urban space (Lefebvre 64). Within this Lefebvrian 'right to the city' framework, graffiti *must* be recognized as a crucial tool to reclaim city space against the commodifying forces of the state and the firm. Graffiti is a way of authentic place-making, or commoning, in which the social needs of play, creativity, encounter, and unpredictability are met and practiced. Systems of social hierarchy are destroyed through the anonymous expression of collective want, and as it does not limit any conception of difference, "it attempts to pull people together, rather than apart" (Schacter 63). It demands "problematization of areas that until then had not been questioned," and enables direct acts of resistance against systems of privatization and homogenization (66). As such, graffiti is more than just an individual act of vandalism.

In this discussion of graffiti, the term tolerance has been seldom mentioned, as graffitiing is often seen to breed intolerance and tangible factions between civil society and the state. However, in Beauregard's definition of a city, he focuses on the paradoxes of both intolerance *and* tolerance, of which he believes can thrive equally in urban environments, making the city a "major terrain of politics" (Beauregard xi). As such, can graffiti be a catalyst for tolerance as well? Author Maria Chatzidakis believes it can, as she thinks the very act of targeted mass graffiti conservation is also an act for social tolerance, along with a review of normative social rules. Indeed, it's very presence invokes a "tolerance that is necessary to understand the chaotic aesthetics of a contemporary city in deep crisis. The coexistence of street art adjacent to a historic structure is a contemporary challenge that proves that tolerance is still achievable" (Chatzidakis). What may be mistaken for tolerance can be seen inadvertently in Athens, as strict municipal funding results in a lack of strict removal campaigns and therefore, the constant juxtaposition of street art and historic structures (Tulke 131). More purposeful displays of tolerance exist as well, as seen in the ways property owners choose to deal with graffiti. Interviewee Maria Vidali mentioned the School of Architecture located on the campus of the National Technical University in Exarchia, one of the oldest buildings built in the neighborhood (Vidali). The facades of white Athenian marble were extensively graffitied. However, only one small portion of the facade was purposely cleaned, creating a great aesthetic contrast between the two surfaces. When she asked why the School had chosen to do this, they said, "[Graffiti] is what is contemporary life in the city [...] we have to show to the new architects the quality of the old

that exists and is still there [...] but must allow the new voices and contemporary life to coexist with that" (Vidali).

As such, in Athens, a city that has struggled to find an identity since its inception as an independent state in the early nineteenth century, graffiti is crucial. In the aftermath of harsh austerity measures and multiple crises, graffiti became an outlet for collective woe while simultaneously acting as a form of unification and rebellion, a way of finding a collective identity through difference. As both Athenian public spaces and graffiti face the harsh forces of exploitation and capitalism, the role of graffiti as both a form of expression and reclamation remains vital. Although the motivations and intent of graffiti varies, no other art form compares in raw truthfulness, which is needed above all else in increasingly "one dimensional," overly-planned and privatized cities that lack genuine interactions. Indeed, as one Athenian graffiti writer said, "I think we all realize that graffiti is a way of saying 'fuck off,' of saying 'I love you,' 'wake up moron' [...] We use it to express anxiety, arrogance, passion, destructiveness, and, and, and…." (Alexandros). Lefebvre himself said the right to the city was "like a cry and a demand" (Lefebvre 64) in which one must open their eyes to new forms of the urban, a command that echoes throughout the city: WAKE UP!

Fig. 1. Anonymous. “Don’t Be Afraid of Invisible Enemies, Get Up and Fight the Visible Ones,” 2020, Downtown Athens. Courtesy of Christine Grek.

Fig. 2. Various Artists. “For a Sustainable City” (ILPAP Trolley Depot, detail), 2005. 85 Peiraios Street, Kerameikos. Courtesy of Panos Leventis.

Fig. 3. INO and Anonymous. INO Mural with Yellow Tagging. April 2021. Near Technopolis. Courtesy of Christine Grek.

Fig. 4. Sonke. “Untitled”, 2010. 2 Konstantinoupoleos Street, Gazi. Courtesy of Panos Leventis.

Fig. 5. Bleeps.gr. “I Dream of Love, I Search for Clients,” 2011. Plateia Theatrou, Psyrri. Courtesy of Panos Leventis.

Fig. 6. Dimitris Taxis. “I Wish You Could Learn Something Useful from the Past”, 2012. 91 Kerameikou Street, Kerameikos. Courtesy of Panos Leventis.

Fig. 7. Bleeps.gr. “THINK”, Acropolis of Athens, 2015. Downtown Athens. Courtesy of Georgios Stampoulidis.

Fig. 8. Anonymous. ‘I Heart Police’ Stencil. Athens University Campus. 2019. Courtesy of Athena Hadji.

Fig. 9. Metro station workers erasing graffiti, April 202. Thiseon Metro Station. Courtesy of Christine Grek.

Fig. 10. Anonymous. “Don't Let the Neighborhood Disappear,” April 2021. Central Athens. Courtesy of Christine Grek.

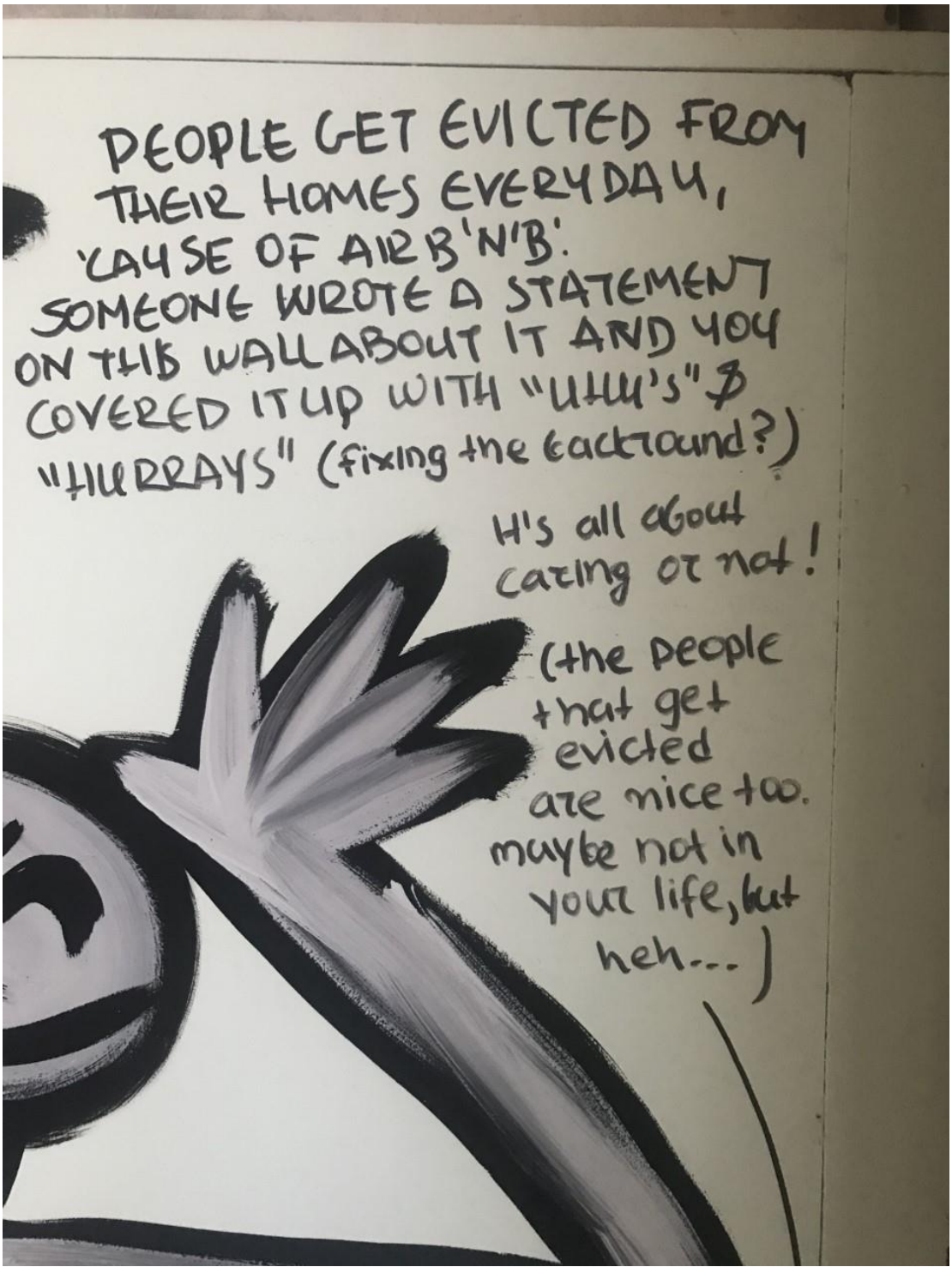

Fig. 11. Anonymous. Detail, “Don't Let the Neighborhood Disappear,” April 2021. Central Athens. Courtesy of Christine Grek.

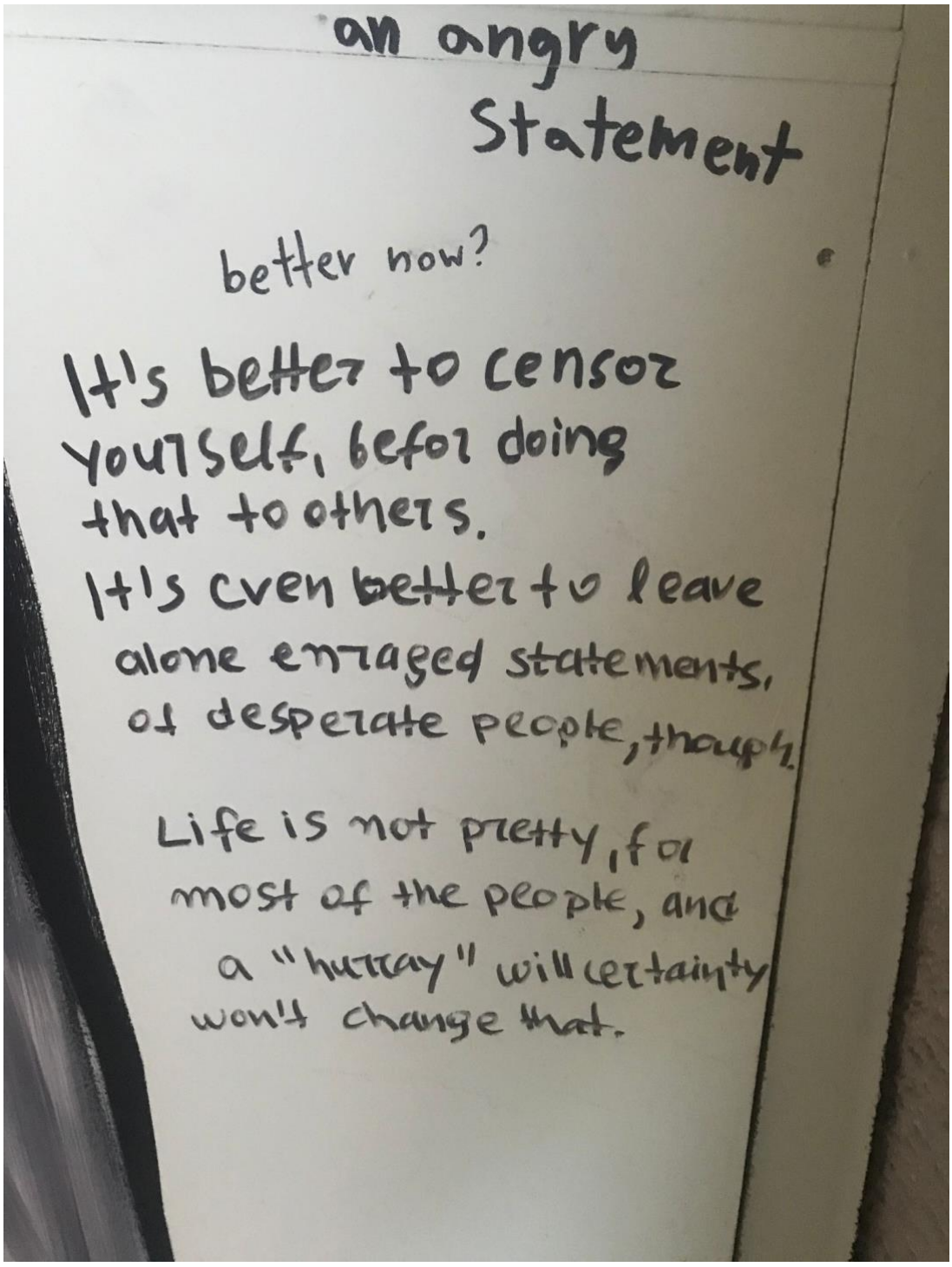

Fig. 12. Anonymous. Detail 2, “Don't Let the Neighborhood Disappear,” April 2021. Central Athens. Courtesy of Christine Grek.

Fig. 13. Anonymous. Corner of *FUCK AIRBNB!* on a church wall, February 2020. Pangrati, Athens. Courtesy of Lillia Schmidt.

Fig. 14. Neoclassical building in Exarchia with graffiti, February 2020. Exarchia, Athens. Courtesy of Lillia Schmidt

Fig. 15. Anonymous. ENOUGH IS ENOUGH! February 2015. Exarchia. Courtesy of Georgios Stampoulidis.

Fig. 16. Cacao Rocks. THEN THEY USED TANKS? NOW THEY USE BANKS, March 2015. Exarchia. Courtesy of Georgios Stampoulidis.

Fig. 17. Anonymous. The National Technical University of Athens, as seen from the corner of 28is Oktovriou and Stournari streets. March 5 2012. Courtesy of Verstraete, Ginette, and Cristina Ampatzidou.

Fig. 18. *George Koulouris, KAFAO Project*, 10 Feb. 2020. Downtown Athens. Courtesy of Lillia Schmidt.

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