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The Elliniko Airport: Contested Politics and the Production of Urban Space in Athens, 1938-2014

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**THE ELLINIKO AIRPORT: CONTESTED POLITICS AND THE
PRODUCTION OF URBAN SPACE IN ATHENS, 1938-2014**

by

George Papakis

A Dissertation Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in Urban Studies

at

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ABSTRACT

THE ELLINIKO AIRPORT: CONTESTED POLITICS AND THE PRODUCTION OF URBAN SPACE IN ATHENS, 1938-2014

by

George Papakis

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2014

Under the Supervision of Professor Joseph A. Rodriguez

This study traces the historical forces that conditioned the dearth of public spaces in Athens, Greece, and through the case study of the city's first civil airport, examines the current redevelopment plans of Athens' largest remaining open space as part of a wider process of urban transformation. After serving the city for sixty years, the airport closed its doors in 2001, and since then the site has remained vacant. The government aims at attracting investments in upscale tourism and real estate, hoping to reposition this sector of the city as a thriving business center and entertainment destination. Yet, given the severe environmental and social problems of Athens, the implementation of an urban development agenda which promotes the further commercialization of urban space will make a livable city—so dependent on open public space—a more difficult and unlikely contingency. It is precisely this possibility that unites a diverse group of community actors that contest the government's plans arguing instead for the creation of a metropolitan park, and presenting this site as a space of insurgent citizenship. The redevelopment process of the Elliniko airport is a central node in understanding the symbolic construction of Athens' restructuring as a competitive city, while on the other hand, it figures as a paradigmatic case in the analysis of conflicts between economic development and sustainability.

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To my brother, Niko, for being a great mentor, and
for always being proud of my smallest accomplishments.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

This dissertation studies the privatization policies which underpin the urban development trajectories in Athens, examining the way forces operating at a variety of geographical scales intersect in the construction of new socioeconomic environments. More specifically, this qualitative case study will examine the history and the redevelopment of the former international airport of Athens at Elliniko. An analysis of the struggle over this site lends itself favorably to addressing the main thrust of this inquiry, which is to better understand how urban space is produced and transformed in contemporary Athens. Drawing upon in-depth interviews, content analysis, and archival research, I examine how the discussion of Elliniko's redevelopment has been shaped by specific planning proposals, community activism, and national politics, as well as by the broader influences of geopolitics, paradigms of urban economic revival, and the mode of Greece's integration in to the Atlantic structures. The case study is examined against the backdrop of political economy literature, which postulates that as cities attempt to become more competitive in the context of neoliberal globalization, they compromise public space, environmental conditions, and local democracy.

While this dissertation's focus is on contemporary events and an ongoing process, the historical dimension plays a central role in illuminating the complex ways Athens' space has been colonized and developed. In particular, it illustrates the propensity of governing elites to use urban space as a mechanism that produces profits and perpetuates their grip on power. Thus, as a rule, they refuse to direct resources to the reclamation of

the urban environment unless this produces immediate exchange values or serves their narrow political aims. To this end, for most of the history of modern Athens, the state has played up an atmosphere of economic emergency in order to bypass the rules and regulations that safeguard public space. It has also arrogated to itself special powers for managing contradictions and tensions without requiring legitimacy. The notion of crisis, therefore, provides a rationale not only for refusing comprehensive planning interventions (there being, purportedly, no money for parkland, public housing etc.), but for actually allowing the encroachment into public lands, their commodification and sale in order to improve the economy and/or clear the country's debts. It is precisely this dynamic that has conditioned the current debate of Elliniko's redevelopment, with the state citing a supposed need for emergency measures to mitigate the crisis.

Surprisingly no studies to date have attempted to chronicle the intriguing history of the first civil airport of Athens. Yet, this site is full of history, and examining this history allows for the tracing of continuities and discontinuities in Athens' urban development. In fact, Elliniko has been a microcosm of the events and forces which have driven the evolution of modern Athens—not only in terms of its material space, but also as a place of discursive representation and struggle. Elliniko is a symbol of Greek modernity, cosmopolitanism, and integration into the international community, but also the theatre of geopolitical antagonisms and political strife. Above all, Elliniko is a site where competing visions of the future of Greece have clashed. Remarkably, today's debate over the site's redevelopment still turns on a number of inherently contentious issues. How to prioritize social needs, how to foster economic development, and how to

reach fair and farsighted decisions on these questions continue to divide Greek society and produce politically polarized discussions.

Elliniko is one of the largest urban redevelopment/real estate projects in Greece. Its size alone gives it the capacity to transform the face of Athens and, should it be commercialized, deeply impact the city's economy. In other words, it is an invaluable resource for the metropolitan region. Since a new international airport opened in Athens in 2001, the land of the old airport has remained vacant. As such it remains a tantalizing possibility. Commercially developed it has the potential to improve the city's economic position in the context of global markets. Transformed into a park it has the potential, in one fell swoop, to remedy the city's dearth of park space. Historically, however, these two objectives have represented contrasting and irreconcilable visions of the nature and purpose of public space in Athens.

Even before the decision to build a new international airport in Athens, the question of what is to be done with the land of Elliniko has sparked a heated debate.

Proponents for the privatization of this 1,500 acre piece of land argue that its development could jumpstart an ailing economy. In Athens, the scarcity of large,



Map 1.1 Elliniko, and the surrounding area
Adapted from Google maps.

contiguous parcels of land ready for development is particularly pronounced because

post-war urbanization led to a very dense urban landscape with minimal open spaces. The availability of such a sizeable and undivided piece of land provides a unique opportunity to businesses developers for investment in large-scale redevelopment projects. The land's exchange value is also enhanced because of its location on the waterfront of the Saronikos Gulf, in close proximity to the center of Athens, and adjacent to the Glyfada Golf Club. For more than two decades the site has been the object of many redevelopment proposals, which almost invariably involved its partial or complete privatization.

The recent financial crisis has brought to the fore a new argument for privatization: if Athens wants to attract investment, then the sale of Elliniko can serve as a litmus test that will verify the business-friendly approach of the Greek state. This argument is based on the assumption that the fundamental problem of the Greek economy is the lack of competitiveness due to an enlarged and interventionist state. The country's public sector is hypertrophied, and excessive regulation repels foreign investment. So, according to this narrative, if Greece manages to sell this prime real estate expeditiously and with limited or no regulations and public oversight, then this will show to the international community of investors and foreign lenders that Greece is "open for business."

In fact, there is the belief that redevelopment along the coastal front of Athens will provide a new impetus for economic growth in tourism and real estate. The idea is based on the old recipe of remaking the city's image. To the east of Elliniko, the Niarchos Foundation, named after the shipping tycoon Stavros Niarchos, is building a cultural center, designed by the famous architect Renzo Piano. This much celebrated

project and the plans for Elliniko's redevelopment are consistent with models of waterfront redevelopment schemes in former industrialized cities, based on gentrification, commodification, aesthetization, and image making. In practical terms, the privatization of the coastal zone means that some groups will be welcome to use the spaces, while other groups will not. These spaces are produced with the purpose of attracting specific segments of the population. These are the groups with high disposable incomes, and who are willing to spend more in order to enjoy further privacy, security, and all those offerings of a privatized space.

All planning proposals concerning Elliniko's privatization have not been the result of public deliberation and they did not involve citizens' input, in a complete disregard for the public's opinion. Throughout the different plan proposals, the dissemination of information has been non-existent so potential investors are not driven away by citizen opposition. In order to build consensus and grow support for the proposed privatization, the state has used multiple justifications to appeal to diverse audiences by balancing and reinforcing various ideas. Initially, governing politicians accentuated the economic potential of tourism development. Elliniko's land was portrayed as a natural resource which could create new employment opportunities. Then, the privatization was presented as an indispensable precondition for the making of a park. And finally, the land was described as a commodity to be sold for paying the state's financial obligations. Governing elites have framed Elliniko's privatization as an issue of national interest, and also in scientific and technocratic terms, albeit with limited results.

The opponents responded to this challenge in kind: they refuted the scientific merits of privatization proposals with the enlisting of the scientific community, and most

importantly, with the help of the National Technical University of Athens. Likewise, they too have framed Elliniko's redevelopment as an issue of national interest and a symbol of resistance to the mandates of international lenders. They have proposed a sustainable route to economic development that does not divorce environmental from social and economic issues. Their goal has been to politicize Elliniko's redevelopment, and transform the particular demand for a park into a universal call for a different politics and an alternative model of urban development. Thus, in Elliniko two opposing views of sustainability clash: market-driven sustainability and people-driven sustainability.

There is a potential tendency to view the objectives for the old airport redevelopment as being relatively straightforward or commonsensical. However, while there is clearly a need to re-use this land, there are widely divergent views regarding objectives, i.e., whether tax revenue, job creation, upscale housing, or public amenities and other social goals should be prioritized. In many ways, the conflict seems to take the form described by Molotch and Logan (1987) in which a power struggle arises between pro-growth coalitions seeking revenue-generating uses and citizen groups interested in quality of life issues. The goals of the privatization plans proposed by the different governments show that the Elliniko site represents an opportunity for profit generation through the construction process, commercial development, and through the generation of rents. These redevelopment plans are consistent with the "competitive" and "entrepreneurial" turn that many cities have chosen to implement in the last decades (Hall & Hubbard, 1996). However, regardless of intentions, public land redevelopment projects do entail conflict. Some groups see the redevelopment of the old airport as an

opportunity to strengthen the local tax base and to create jobs, while others see the creation of a public park as the central objective.

Whatever social benefits might accrue from the privatization of Elliniko, the economic argument is advanced primarily by a group with a distinct political agenda and a clear self-interest. The planning policies and economic strategies of the political elites have historically prioritized the exchange value of urban land, which has led to a city with immense environmental problems and an unparalleled lack of public green space. Residents from Elliniko's surrounding municipalities, environmentalists, as well as professional planners and academics, have opposed the commodification of this public resource and have questioned its reflexive privatization. Instead, they suggest that the old airport provides a unique opportunity for the creation of a public green space which would ameliorate the city's lack of parkland. They too propose that a comprehensive strategy is needed for the management of the coastal zone. However, their vision includes more sustainable forms of tourism, with minimal new construction, and investment in the physical environment, parkland, small scale commercial activities, sports, and culture. In this way, a number of jobs will be created, the existing jobs will be saved, and predatory practices will be avoided. In fact, this approach unites the diverse group of activists with local merchants, who fear that the state's proposed redevelopment schemes will close their business and gradually drive them out of the area. Most importantly, this coalition has an institutional basis, consisting of the mayors of the surrounding municipalities who support the creation of a park, transcending political affiliations and party lines. Even though their strength in the wider political balance of

power might be negligible, so far their activism has been an important factor in deterring Elliniko's privatization.

Besides its antiquities, the city of Athens is also known for its acute environmental problems. The combination of incomplete planning, land speculation, and illegal construction has led to an urban landscape that greatly compromises public and open spaces. Athens has never adopted a comprehensive approach to locating industrial sites, nor has it put in place effective mitigations of the water, air, and ground pollutants they produce. On top of this, Athens' population has rapidly increased, as has the number of cars on its narrow streets. These events have combined to make environmental pollution a serious concern. Moreover, sprawl, forest fires and deforestation due to illegal construction have further compromised the city's environment, as has the degradation of its coastal zones. The state has had limited success trying to retroactively impose regulatory measures. Consequently dangerous levels of air pollution are a common occurrence. The proliferation of concrete and asphalt has contributed to dangerously high temperatures during the summer, triggering an increased reliance on air conditioners and a corresponding spike in energy consumption. More paved surfaces also mean more frequent flooding during rainfalls. After the economic crisis broke out in 2009, a large segment of the population did not have the ability to pay for heating oil. In this predicament they resorted to burning wood—much of it painted and treated scrap wood—in unsafe braziers, a practice that has claimed a few dozen lives and created a blanket of smog over the city. These circumstances, in conjunction with massive cuts in health care, have exponentially increased the risk of disease epidemics and other health risks for the population. Besides

the negative consequences of the environmental and economic crisis on people's physical health, their psychological health has also been compromised. The increase in anxiety, depression, and other forms of mental illness, as well as the incidence of suicide which result, rarely make the headlines, as hunger, poverty and unemployment are viewed as more important. It is incontrovertible, however, that extreme deprivation and exorbitant unemployment levels have led to more mental and psychological problems. As a result, an increasing number of people are more isolated and vulnerable at a time of greatest need.

Though the benefits of public space to the social and psychological well-being of people have been frequently documented, these areas are under intense pressure for privatization rather than being protected. Public space, where people can socialize without having to pay an entrance fee, is become scarcer. Aside from the home and the work place, a privatized city affords citizens with few practical destinations. While a degree of social mixing was an unintended consequence of the post-WWII urban development pattern, this trend has been greatly reversed of late. Instead, spatial polarization and social exclusion have become more marked. People find themselves marooned, in a sense, on small islands of private property, separated from their neighbors and the greater community.

These would be worrying trends in any country, but today Athens has the infamous distinction of having the least amount of green space—27 square feet per capita—of any European capital. Thirty five percent of Greece's population is concentrated in the prefecture of Attiki/Athens (3,800,000 people out of 10,800,000), while in the municipality of Athens the population density is 44,800 people per square

mile (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2012). Table 1.1 reflects the dissatisfaction of Athenians with the city's urban environment. While the city has one of the highest population densities among the capitals of countries in the European Union—in itself not a bad thing—the lack of public green space makes the urban environment inhospitable, causing great discomfort and discontent within the city. Athens has consistently received some of the lowest scores in resident satisfaction.

Table 1.1 Survey on residents' perceptions of their urban environment in EU capitals

EU Capital Cities	Satisfied with green space (2009)		Satisfied with public spaces (2009)		Pollution is a problem (2009)		Satisfied to live in this city (2006)	
	Very satisfied	Not at all satisfied	Very satisfied	Not at all satisfied	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree
Amsterdam	35.0	3.0	28.3	2.4	20.7	7.2	60.6	2.2
Athina	4.2	50.4	5.7	36.9	87.8	2.3	34.5	25.7
Berlin	35.6	4.4	19.2	2.5	17.4	8.7	56.7	3.0
Bratislava	11.9	7.6	15.5	3.8	18.4	4.5	49.9	2.4
Bruxelles	24.6	6.6	14.9	5.7	29.9	4.5	54.2	5.3
Bucuresti	16.8	14.5	7.6	21.0	83.3	3.5	39.7	11.3
Budapest	11.3	12.2	12.4	10.4	73.2	1.5	57.1	6.8
Dublin	46.4	4.0	26.0	6.4	21.3	27.4	71.3	3.4
Helsinki	33.2	0.6	17.9	1.4	10.1	12.7	61.3	1.0
København	42.2	1.7	28.9	2.1	33.7	5.3	63.8	0.4
Lefkosia	7.8	32.2	8.7	29.9	49.7	4.9	57.4	6.7
Lisboa	8.7	12.9	10.4	9.3	49.2	3.2	53.1	4.2
Ljubljana	25.0	4.0	19.5	5.6	36.4	8.1	59.2	1.4
London	51.6	5.3	32.6	4.3	41.7	5.2	46.9	8.0
Luxembourg	49.5	1.0	36.0	1.4	9.2	20.1	68.6	0.6
Madrid	21.6	3.2	17.2	4.7	39.2	2.7	51.5	3.0
Paris	26.6	4.0	20.3	2.8	41.3	4.8	49.8	3.5
Praha	24.0	3.3	21.1	3.2	30.5	3.4	55.3	1.2
Riga	42.0	2.5	14.6	11.7	39.8	15.1	60.4	5.0
Roma	17.0	10.4	11.8	10.1	58.3	3.2	56.8	2.4
Sofia	14.7	23.7	9.3	24.9	74.0	3.5	68.4	6.6
Stockholm	48.6	1.1	27.6	1.0	25.8	8.2	77.3	1.8
Tallinn	28.3	3.3	14.6	8.5	33.1	10.0	66.1	0.4
Valletta	14.9	24.5	15.3	15.6	49.4	9.9	65.9	6.0
Vilnius	23.1	8.6	20.9	7.2	47.1	5.6	70.4	0.6
Warszawa	31.6	2.6	12.9	7.8	46.6	5.0	64.2	6.1
Wien	43.7	3.7	27.5	2.4	13.9	14.8	75.7	2.2
Zagreb	37.0	9.6	35.3	6.6	38.6	14.2	72.9	1.6

Note: Data compiled from Urban Audit - Eurostat.

This study charts the struggle between the competing concerns of environmental integrity and sustainable economic development, surveying the current debate unfolding in Athens over the competing social values of open space, and the divergent attitudes towards the commodification of public property. The forthcoming land use choices concerning Elliniko will have tremendous, long-term effects on residents' quality of life and on the city's identity—on this much the various camps agree. They vehemently disagree, however, on whether the effects of particular development will be positive or negative. What remains a constant in this story is that the state has never been able to allocate the necessary funds for the creation of a much needed public park, and that land has always been viewed as a source for the generation of revenues. The post-war economic strategies in Greece have led to an unsustainable pattern of development and, time and again, public land has been the realm in which to solve the structural problems of the economy; in this context, land has been used as what Harvey (2001) describes as a “spatial fix,” a geographical restructuring for resolving the inner crisis tendencies of the economy.

Theoretical considerations

This dissertation aims to observe and analyze how urban space is produced and transformed in contemporary Athens. To that end it will examine how public space is constituted in the neoliberal city, the role of the state and local politics, and the dynamics of contestation. Borrowing from Lefebvre (2007), a starting assumption is that the city is not just the landscape that can be seen or the morphology delineated on a map or a satellite image, but it is considered a political body that is socially produced, transformed, reproduced, configured, ordered and even symbolically invented. It is produced by the

conflicts and contradictions within the social order. Its qualities vary, as do the forms of social organization and social relations. Consequently, a society imbues a city's space with all its contradictions and conflicts that exists between social groups resulting from their divergent material interests, opposing ontological and ideological visions of the world, and different economic situations (Harvey, 1990). The city becomes a place of struggle for rights and freedoms, generating different types of conflicts. In this process, the city is transformed and with it its morphology, its activities, its people, their behaviors and demands.

In recent decades we have witnessed the gradual emergence of a discourse that has profoundly influenced urban policy: the discourse of augmenting territorial competitiveness. Political leaders and public administrators in many cities, with increasing frequency and conviction, have invested time and resources to pursue strategies that purport to promote economic growth through the discourse of competition. This is a phenomenon that appears to have deeply influenced our understanding of urban development. Not surprisingly, many of the debates that have developed in recent years around territorial development, such as industrial clusters (Porter, 2000), innovative milieu (Scott, 2000), new urbanism and creative cities (Florida, 2002), and certain modes of sustainable development have often made reference to the discourse on fostering competitiveness.

Today the dominant discourse on urban economic development is based on the principle that cities are now tied into global economic circuits and that, in order to compete successfully in the global market, they must increase and intensify their connections to such circuits, implementing policies similar to those traditionally carried

out by individual capitalists. David Harvey (1989) has called this phenomenon the transition from a “managerial” to an “entrepreneurial” approach in city politics. Prior to the emergence of neoliberalism, urban policy was intended mainly as the provision and administration of public services, and care for the reproduction of the local society. The adoption of neoliberalism at the urban scale has meant decreasing public interventions, reducing services, and privatizing public assets. The “traditional” province of urban policy (i.e. the “management” of services) has therefore been gradually shrunk, a process rationalized with bland pronouncements about the “unsustainable nature of public spending” and buzz words such as “the bottom line,” “fiscal realities,” and “new urban realism,” which are always used to close off alternative discourses about different spending choices (Short, 1999). Cities are pushed to “reinvent” their policies in order to attract resources, to become “entrepreneurs” of a sort able to “create” more suitable spaces for “doing business” (Hall & Hubbard, 1996). In this fashion cities are encouraged to build partnerships with private actors for the development of large-scale projects and to advertise and “sell” the city—the practice of so-called “urban marketing” (Philo & Kearns, 1993). In this sense, cities compete to create the most inviting urban landscape in order to attract the resources necessary to maintain their perpetual development (Jessop, 1998).

The manifestation of this political development presupposes the affirmation of a liberal model which some authors have dubbed the “new urban policy” (Cox, 1993) in order to contrast it with the previous political arrangement. But, to be precise, while being in a liberal perspective, it differs from the post WWII liberal formulation of thought in that it is opposed to the participation of the state in the economy. Indeed, if

proponents of neoliberalization are taken at their word, free market forces are superbly capable of regulating the economy and ordering society once released from the draconian interference of the state. But in fact political economy research on neoliberalism has shown that instead of intervening in the lives of its citizens with direct services and benefits, the state intervenes on the behalf of its “corporate citizens” in the form of direct and indirect subsidies, confident that their prosperity will ultimately find its way (the pejorative “trickle down,” of course, is eschewed) to the common populace. The state’s role is to facilitate economic development and competitiveness by adhering to the ideology of “growth at any cost.” Far from dismantling the state and advocating an ideology of laissez-faire, many critical scholars argue that this neoliberalization process is akin to a “mobilization of state power in the contradictory extension and reproduction of market rule” (Tickell & Peck, 2003, p. 166).

Thus, critical analysis of neoliberalism is concerned with identify the reformulation and redirection of state power. Who benefits and who suffers from the new dispensation? And how does a state sell neoliberalization to a citizenry as the system most conducive to economic productivity and general social welfare? It is important to note that neoliberalism does not argue for the state to withdraw from the market. To be sure, it no longer intervenes on the behalf of the underclasses, or the even larger and more nebulous “general public.” Instead it intervenes on the behalf of a much, much narrower clientele or constituency: the corporate elites. The withdrawal of the state, frequently cited by the social scientists of the 1990s, did not in fact happen. More accurately, one kind of state—the one Bob Jessop (2008) calls the “Keynesian Welfare National State”—was replaced by another, one he styles the “Schumpeterian Competitive

Post-National Regime.” The priority of the new state is not to promote the public welfare but to cultivate its urban business climate.

Despite the many negative impacts neoliberalization has had on people, societies, and the environment, it “has in effect swept across the world like a vast tidal wave of institutional reform and discursive adjustment” (Harvey, 2007, p. 23). To understand neoliberalism’s popularity, it is important to recall that initially it was seen as the answer to the contradictions of the post WWII arrangement that became apparent in the crisis of the 1970s. The failure of Keynesian tools to tackle the crisis called for other solutions, and adherents of neoliberalism argued that their strategies could affect the restoration of growth rates. It was also a period when the traditional anti-systemic movements had started to lose legitimacy, especially after the cultural revolution of the 1960s. Changes in the international economy and the labor market, many the result of incipient globalization, made militant labor unionism ineffective. And then the failures of developmentalism, the ideological retreat of the social-democratic parties, and the collapse of the actually existing socialism in Eastern Europe further legitimized neoliberal projects.

The widespread adoption of neoliberalism does not indicate, however, that the transformation has been either smooth or voluntary. Sometimes it has depended on the direct use of violence—brutalization by military dictatorships, while at others more subtle forms of coercion have been adequate—loan conditions and other persuasions offered by financial institutions (the IMF, the World Bank) and international organizations (the WTO, the EU). Today, neoliberal advocates hold central positions in global organizations, financial institutions, universities, think tanks, and the media, the result of

the discourse's dominance for three decades. Also, to most people, neoliberalism is simply "common sense" (Keil, 2002). It colors our perceptions of the world, and we have incorporated it not only into our daily behavior, but into our very identities. Its logic has been internalized by the emergence of a new subjectivity, which is based on individualism and the virtues of personal responsibility, and which equates freedom with consumer choice and it transforms citizens into consumers (Leitner et al., 2007).

And yet it has become increasingly apparent that neoliberalism does not effectively regulate world markets and in the face of economic and political instability many scholars, including many within the mainstream (Joseph Stiglitz, Amartya Sen, and others) argue that there is a need to start looking for other alternatives. It seems that the tide against neoliberalism has turned, and it is precisely the 2007 global economic crisis that has sparked the new debate on whether we are experiencing the end of neoliberalism (Altvater, 2009; Brenner, Peck & Theodore, 2010; Wallerstein, 2008).

Wallerstein, working from the perspective of *longue durée*, in fact argues that the economic failures of neoliberal globalization will allow, among other things, the return of protectionist policies, the acquisition of failing enterprises, and the return of more welfare redistribution policies. To be sure, such measures have been taking place for some time now in Latin America, where a number of governments, under pressure from popular social movements, have reversed neoliberalization processes that have pillaged their resources and ravaged their economies. They have introduced Keynesian-inspired policies that have alleviated poverty, and greatly improved human development indicators.

It is precisely “the return of the state” that sparked a number of scholars to claim that we are already experiencing the ascendance of a post-neoliberal arrangement. As a qualifying term “post-neoliberal” is so ambiguous as to be almost meaningless; all that can be said with certainty is that it does not refer to a major shift towards socialism. Parmell and Robinson (2013) argue that in some cities of the Global South municipal governments enjoy a degree of autonomy from the dynamics of capitalist accumulation which the states of core capitalist countries are never free of (p. 597). They critique the thesis advanced by many critical scholars that the forms of neoliberalization processes, despite their seemingly inexhaustible variety, in fact constitute a common set of mutations that have spread to cities throughout the world. Using the example of post-apartheid South Africa the authors argue that a strong commitment by the state to anti-poverty interventions and welfare provisions are indications of a post-neoliberal arrangement. These measures, combined with the efforts of the civil society and NGOs, have produced improved social outcomes through better governance.

Drawing on examples from Latin America, Grugel & Riggirozzi (2012) explain that “post-neoliberal projects of governance seek to retain elements of the previous export-led growth model whilst introducing new mechanisms for social inclusion and welfare” (p. 1). They argue that the coexistence of a free market economy does not automatically preclude a just, democratic state, and that in fact, the New Left should capitalize on this premise and explore avenues for a more equitable and productive capitalist economy. Thus, according to the authors, the new arrangement keeps the best elements of neoliberalism, such as minimal corruption, lower inflation, cheaper imports, and less distorted pricing structures, while at the same time providing for a more

interventionist state that can ensure the social peace necessary for sustaining economic growth.

What is surprising in these approaches is the extent to which they theoretically and empirically decouple local economies from their international context. They underplay the impact of international economic flows and transnational elites on national and local economies. More precisely, they pay very little attention on the dynamics of capitalist development and the forces of imperialism which have historically shaped development outcomes in the periphery as the present study shows. For example, the dependence of many Latin American and African economies on the export of primary commodities raises doubts about whether the various forms of neoliberal contestation can be enduring. Indeed, reliance on resource extraction under better state management in Latin America has improved the lives of large segments of the population who were previously excluded. On the other hand, however, this better governance arrangement can be also viewed as the latest turn for enhancing capitalist development under the aegis of the state.

The work of James Petras and Henry Veltmeyer (2013), two experts in Latin America studies, point out that the redistributive policies at the core of many countries' social programs only became possible because of the boom in primary commodity prices. Yet the economies of Latin America, leaving aside that of Venezuela, continue to be dominated by private companies which profit handsomely from the increased demand for natural resources. The proclaimed new development paradigm has been “predicated on the strategy of governments staying the course of neoliberal policies—and to complement these policies with new social policy targeted at the poor” (p. 55). From this perspective,

the objective of the so-called post-neoliberal paradigm is to save capitalism from itself. The question, however, remains: if global demand for these commodities subsides, will redistribution efforts continue? Veltmeyer (2014) suggests that in such a scenario “the agents of the post-neoliberal state will rally to the defense of global capital as the result of congruent economic interests” (p. 142).

As this dissertation shows, a similar process took place in Greece during the 1980s, when the rise of the PASOK social democrats seemed to run against the current of neoliberal ascendancy. Indeed, PASOK nationalized failing enterprises, and enacted social-welfare redistributive policies. Moreover, it introduced new approaches for urban development based on balanced growth and environmental protection. However, without being able to control the mode of incorporation of Greece into the structures of the global economy, the state had limited leverage to defy the dynamics of neoliberal globalization. Thus, the reform efforts were quickly abandoned, and the first phase of neoliberal restructuring, also termed proto-neoliberalism (Brenner & Theodore, 2002), crept in.

Like PASOK, the center-left governments in Latin America have demonstrated that they are capable of producing social peace, demobilizing mass movements, and promoting economic recovery (Petras & Veltmeyer, 2013), and yet unresolved tensions still lie in the background. Progressive administrations are facing some of the same dilemmas that beset the native governments which took power during the period of decolonization. They had the Herculean task of growing their economies while at the same time promoting equity, democracy, respect for cultural values, and environmental stewardship. At times the objectives of the center-left political parties have conflicted with those of the indigenous movements which helped bring them to power, leading to

political rifts. Proponents of growth and particularly of resource extraction argue that this is the only way to improve the economic condition of the people. Many indigenous groups, however, contend that it is time for cultural values to move beyond the old goal of unlimited growth—even if this growth assumes a more equitable, “socialist” expression (Wallerstein, 2010). Overall, what remains unclear in the arguments for a post-neoliberal arrangement is how the return to forms of Keynesian-inspired policies will resolve the crisis tendencies of Keynesianism that led to the ascendance of neoliberalism in the first place.

If we are to understand the current multidimensional crisis and the changes to institutions, policy, and politics that will arise from it, then it is important that we track the discrepancy between neoliberal theory and neoliberal practice. This is a difficult task given that neoliberalism has evinced a masterful capacity to adapt to different socio-spatial settings and mutate across space and time. The case of Elliniko shows that while the popularity of neoliberal ideology might be fading, neoliberalization as a process continues to dominate urban policy. As neoliberalism runs out of ideas (Smith, 2008), the more aggressive it becomes. The experiences of Athens as well as that of other crisis-stricken cities show that the implementation of neoliberal policies increasingly relies on the time-honored practices of violently grabbing public wealth and transferring it to private hands. Though the mechanisms of public property expropriation vary across space, there are some common elements. For instance, when the public’s consent cannot be secured with propaganda, state officials frequently declare a state of emergency and grant themselves exemption from the normal legal and legislative processes, thus railroading the transfer of public resources to private control. Proposals for Elliniko’s

privatization show a lack of imagination and a failure to provide long-term solutions to the crisis tendencies of neoliberalization processes. The proposed ideas resemble similar visions of urban development fifty years ago. Apart from the obligatory nod to environmental responsibility known as “greenwashing,” the political elites’ vision for Athens today can be summarized in the words of Konstantinos Karamanlis, a dominant right-wing post-WWII politician: build, build, build. This mantra provided a temporary solution to the contradictions of Greek capitalism at the expense of devastating the urban and physical environment. The development of mega-projects in the 1990s, a replication of this approach, not only failed to solve the underlying problems of the Greek economy, it further exacerbated these contradictions. And currently, as the case of Elliniko shows, the state tries the same recipe again.

Many scholars have noted the relevance of the concept of primitive accumulation to current analysis of state interventions, making specific reference to the role of the state as an agent for the expropriation of the means of production and wealth. This concept has been used to describe the transition from feudalism to capitalism. A number of scholars continued to use this concept when referring to a colonizer’s violent appropriation of a developing country’s land, resources, or industry. Primitive accumulation in this sense referred to the incorporation of these assets into a capitalist economy through the violent disruption of traditional production methods, the expropriation of agricultural lands, the eradication of local social reproduction mechanisms, and the proletarianization of the peasantry. Ernest Mandel noted in 1975 that the role of this expropriation process was more considerable in the colonial and semi-colonial societies, while in the industrialized North was of less significance (p. 46).

Lately, however, this idea has been revisited by scholars in the context of present-day developments in capitalist societies. In the early 2000s the British journal *The Commoner* and the book *The Invention of Capitalism: Classical Political Economy and the Secret History of Primitive Accumulation*, written by US economist Michael Perelman (2000), renewed interest on the topic. Perelman argues that primitive accumulation has a continuous character that extends beyond an original point, and that in fact it is a constitutive process of capitalist development. Massimo De Angelis (2007), editor of *The Commoner*, builds upon this assumption to claim that primitive accumulation is not replaced by expanded reproduction, but the two coexist, as they both increase people's dependence on capitalist markets for the reproduction of their livelihoods. The new understanding of the concept maintains that the process of accumulation by extra-economic means is not only applicable in the appropriation of values from outside the capitalist production process, but instead, it takes place within developed societies as well. David Harvey (2003) explains that accumulation by dispossession is not exclusive to the periphery, even though he admits that "it is certainly the case that some of its most vicious and inhumane manifestations are in the most vulnerable and degraded regions within uneven geographical development" (p. 173).

Eventually the concept of primitive accumulation got a new hearing in academic and popular writings because of the increasing aggressiveness of neoliberal restructuring. David Harvey's book *New Imperialism* (2003), an effort to reach audiences beyond academia, was an influential offering. In order to emphasize that primitive accumulation does not refer to a specific historical moment of early capitalism, Harvey calls it *accumulation by dispossession*. With this phrase Harvey indicates that this mechanism is

continually used to weather the recurring crises of capitalism. As a category it encompasses seizure in the broad sense: the privatization of public land and public services, the amassment of national debt, the conversion of property rights, the financialization of the economy, the enclosure of environmental commons, the commodification of nature, and the proletarianization of the populace.

“Overaccumulated capital,” Harvey writes, “can seize hold of such assets and immediately turn them to profitable use” (p. 149). This process is usually initiated by both local elites in conjunction with foreign states and organizations. The state’s role is to ensure the smooth transfer of assets with fast-track legislation and the “temporary” suspension of regulation by fiat. And of course, should these appropriations inspire dissent, the state, with its monopoly of the means of violence, is positioned to suppress it.

Similar to the experiences of developing countries, in the case of Greece, the above processes have been part and parcel of the incorporation of the country into the capitalist world-system. In fact, Samir Amin (1974), and other theorists working on the premises of world-systems and dependency theory, have asserted that there is a specific geographic aspect on how processes of primitive accumulation play out in response to crises: they function as external shock-absorbing mechanisms for protecting the core economies. Indeed, in Greece, as in many peripheral regions, the combination of consent and disciplinary power have been regularly exercised. Gunboat diplomacy, the regular suspension of democratic procedures, and the recurring incidents of national debt peonage have made the imposition of a state of emergency a repeating occurrence. On the other hand, security and geopolitical alliances, along with promises of modernization and incorporation into the “advanced” bloc of countries have produced the necessary

consent, albeit unstable at times, for the tacit reproduction of relations of power, and unequal development.

The incorporation of peripheral states into the European Union and the Eurozone has greatly weakened their economies, while it has benefited the countries of the core. The opening up of a common market to unrestricted competition with much larger and productive players has eroded peripheral productive economies. The European bureaucracy in tandem with local elites have imposed unsustainable amounts of debt on peripheral national governments, while in the meanwhile they force the destruction of the weak welfare state, the handover of public assets to private hands at bargain basement prices, and the transformation of workers into a precarious proletariat. Moreover, the core countries of the EU have installed in the periphery shadow governments staffed by foreign experts to monitor the progress of restructuring and reform. They did not even hesitate to impose the confiscation of bank deposits in the island-state of Cyprus. This what Harvey describes as accumulation by dispossession. Are these measures of dispossession effective at tackling the problems in the debt-ridden societies? Related to this, is this the real aim of the imposed policies? If yes, then is their ineffectiveness the result of policy mistakes on behalf of creditors? If not, then what is their real objective? One thing is for sure, the neoliberal state is more authoritarian and interventionist than it is described in the dominant political discourse.

It seems that after the 2009 Greek crisis, we witness a new phase in the neoliberal project. After the successful destruction of labor unions and the shift from class politics into “civil society” (the replacement of political parties with NGOs) the time is ripe for an onslaught on the rights of the working class either in the realm of production or the

realm of consumption and reproduction. In this way, the privatization of Elliniko was initially justified for paying for the park's construction and maintenance. Later, it was justified on the grounds of generating new jobs. Then, it was claimed that the sale revenues would go towards the repayment of Greece's external financial obligations. Two years ago, the government's estimating value was four to six billion euros. The external debt of Greece is more than 300 billion euros. Elliniko has been sold for 915 million euros payable in fifteen years. What we witness with this case is a new series of enclosures, as De Angelis would put it, or a new round of accumulation by dispossession according to Harvey.

Research methodology

The Case Study design

This discussion uses the case study of a single development site—the area of the former international airport of Athens—as a window into the inner workings of neoliberalism. A qualitative framework has been determined to be the most appropriate research paradigm when trying to identify and explain complex social structures (Patton, 2002). In this connection the case study is a particularly appropriate manner of inquiry because it satisfies the three basic principles of the qualitative method: describing, understanding, and explaining. Several modes of investigation will be subsumed within the qualitative approach, including: ethnography, naturalistic inquiry, grounded theory, case study, and action research. Though they have different foci these approaches share the characteristic of providing rich descriptions of social processes (Putney & Green, 1999).

There are particular historical, economic, and political dimensions to the management of public lands in Athens that inform any rehabilitation or redevelopment efforts. This inherent complexity is likely to be best captured and analyzed through the holistic approach of the case study, rather than the more reductive approaches of other investigative methods. Furthermore, the case study method accommodates the complexity of a political context where many intervening variables interact to affect an outcome.

By definition, the case study serves as a rigorous empirical inquiry that: a) investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context where b) the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and where c) multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin, 2003). Each of these three characteristics is evident in the issue treated in this dissertation. Taken in order: First, the contemporary phenomenon under investigation—the redevelopment of the Elliniko airport land—has had a long, messy history, and it will no doubt continue to evolve for some time. The case study approach lends itself to observing such phenomena as they happen, and within a context that is itself part of the study. Second, one premise of the dissertation is that the plans for Elliniko’s redevelopment cannot be separated from the larger context of the city’s general history and its policies concerning public land. Finally, true to the case study approach, this research utilizes a variety of information sources. A case study captures information on a phenomenon from the different modes in which can be obtained, and facilitates validation of the data through triangulation among these sources. Denzin (1978) identified four basic types of triangulation:

- Data triangulation: involves time, space, and persons
- Investigator triangulation: involves multiple researchers in an investigation

- Theory triangulation: involves using more than one theoretical scheme in the interpretation of the phenomenon
- Methodological triangulation: involves using more than one method to gather data, such as interviews, observations, questionnaires, and documents.

At the same time, case study research poses some distinct problems. First, a case study approach is context dependent; generalizations, therefore, even about similar cases, are not always justifiable. According to Newman (2000), case study research helps in the generation of new thinking and theory, but he warns against generalizing about other cases. For Yin (2003), however, generalizing from case studies is not an example of “statistical generalization”—the practice of generalizing from a sample or group of subjects to a population, as commonly happens with surveys and experiments. Instead it is an instance of “analytical generalization”—using a single case study to illustrate, represent or generalize to a theory. Thus, even the results of a case study can be generalized to help explain other cases with similar theoretical conditions.

The researcher who conducts a case study is confronted with another of its limitations: because this method uses a variety of qualitative sources such as interviews, archival research, and site observations, and because much of the analysis is based on the interpretation of informants’ views and archival data, its conclusions are not replicable in the way that a laboratory experiment’s results are replicable. Though poorly adapted for generalization and replication, the case study compensates for these limitations with the in-depth analysis it can provide.

Data collection techniques

Four different data collection methods were utilized in this research to gather information on Elliniko’s case. Evaluating the case study from multiple perspectives (an approach often referred to as a “mixed method”) helps to minimize the limitations of any

particular one (Richie, 2003). The data collected for this project came from a range of secondary sources, primary documents, and interviews.

Yin (2003) identified at least six sources of evidence in case studies, but for this dissertation the following four sources were used:

- Documents and archival records (different planning documents and related legislation mostly from the Ministry of the Environment, correspondence, administrative documents, memoranda, planning proposals, minutes from Common Council meetings, and other documents that were germane to the study);
- Newspapers (articles were drawn from the country's major newspapers; Table 1.2);
- Interviews (twenty eight interviews conducted during the fall of 2011). The interviews lasted approximately one hour;
- Physical artifacts (photographs; maps)

Table 1.2 Greek newspapers, magazines, and other sources

Title	Title in Greek	Political orientation
Athinaika Nea	Αθηναϊκά Νέα	Right
Avgi	Αυγή	Center-left
Efimerida ton Syntakton	Εφημερίδα των Συντακτών	Center-left
Eleftheria	Ελευθερία	Right
Eleftheron Vima	Ελεύθερον Βήμα	Right
Eleftherotypia	Ελευθεροτυπία	Center-left
Empros	Εμπρός	Right
Ethnos	Έθνος	Center-right
Imerisia	Ημερησία	Center-right
Kathimerini	Καθημερινή	Right
Oikonomikos Tahydromos	Οικονομικός Ταχυδρόμος	Right
Proto Thema	Πρώτο Θέμα	Right
Rizospastis	Ριζοσπάστης	Left
Ta Nea	Τα Νέα	Center-right
Tahydromos	Ταχυδρόμος	Right
To Vima	Το Βήμα	Center-right

Other Sources

Saarinen Files (Yale University Library)	International Civil Aviation Organization
Organization for Planning and Environmental Protection of Athens	Hellenic Air Force Museum
Eisenhower Presidential Library	National Technical University of Athens
Technical Chamber of Greece	The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration

Data from newspaper reports, combined with information gathered from planning and other documents, served as the primary basis for the case description. Interviews with politicians, officials, planners, activists, journalists, and academics aimed at increasing the validity of these narratives. This served as a means of triangulation of evidence, because the interviews helped to corroborate the evidence from the documents, archival records and newspaper reports.

Sampling procedures / Participant selection

A non-probability or purposive sampling approach was the primary technique to solicit participation. Purposive sampling involves selecting participants based on specific characteristics and roles within a particular context (Patton, 2002). In this study, in order to select appropriate individuals to participate in this research, a set of inclusion criteria were created. The criteria ensured that the participants would be knowledgeable about the case of Elliniko and accurately represent a particular stakeholder group. The inclusion criteria were based on factors associated with an individual's involvement in planning, reporting, and contesting the proposed land uses.

The first step in the research process was to determine who was appropriate and qualified to participate in the study. The main participants included:

- Politicians (local officials from the municipalities adjacent to Elliniko; representatives of the main political parties; other politicians directly involved in the case of Elliniko)
- Public servants (most notably from the Ministry of the Environment and Public Works)
- Journalists who have covered Elliniko's story
- Professors and planners who have been involved in the process in various capacities

- Local activists

Interview procedures

This study used in-depth interviews with the goal of soliciting the perspectives of an array of stakeholders. The opening questions revolved around different aspects of the case study in a general; from there I asked questions that help resolve any contradictions. Even though each interview began with a prepared set of questions, in most cases the discussion took on a life of its own, and the interviewees presented information on topics that I had not anticipated. The questions were designed to either reconstruct a history (informative questions) or to gather opinions and motivations (cognitive questions). I asked the initial interviewees to help me identify or locate other persons well-placed to have unique insights into the process of Elliniko's development. In order to avoid biases, I tried to interview only those people who were recommended by several different sources (Patton, 2002).

In order to avoid problems of construct validity in the interview instrument, two safety measures were taken. One was that an instrument guide itself was developed, topic by topic, from the literature in the field which addressed the phenomena of interest. A second precaution was the use of triangulation, which is the application of several research methodologies to study the same phenomenon. This preferred practice in the social sciences draws upon multiple sources, methods, and materials in order to minimize the potential biases of a single-case study (Yin, 2003). Likewise, the use of in-depth interviews may pose some risk to the reliability of the research results due to the subjective nature of interviewer recall and interpretation. Recording interviews and using verbatim transcripts for computer-assisted coding, search and retrieval processes formalized the procedures and heightened reliability.

The battery of questions asked had three characteristics. First, they were in-depth, while allowing for both consistent questioning of all and questions specific to that particular informant. Secondly, the questions addressed the interviewees' personal experience with Elliniko's redevelopment and their unique perspectives on its future use. Finally, the questions had a longitudinal interest, a concern with the issue's past history, present stalemate, and future resolution.

Ethical considerations

The study presented a low risk for participants. Those persons interviewed were not from protected categories (minors, prisoners, etc.), and the questions were not likely to contain an emotional threat for any of the subjects. The participants were informed that they could withdraw or have their participation excluded from the study at any point. Furthermore, the participants were informed that they could choose not to answer any particular question or to stop the interview at any time. The participants were also informed that should they decide not to participate or not answer particular questions, there would be no adverse consequences. The participants were informed that no reimbursements, remuneration or other compensation would be provided. As a researcher, I conveyed to the participants that the study would benefit all stakeholders and the entire community in so far as it seeks to understand a process in which all are all concerned.

Chapter overviews

Chapter Two: Early History of Athens and the Road to Elliniko, 1830-1939

The second chapter provides the historical framework that presaged the political economy of urban space in contemporary Athens. The narrative starts with the formation of the Modern Greek state and its incorporation into the world-system as a vassal state. The influence of foreign powers had a catalytic role in the choice and subsequent growth of Athens as the new capital city. Their economic squeeze imposed a permanent financial “state of exception” which in turn circumscribed subsequent development efforts. The externally-imposed political leadership established a highly centralized state mechanism that subordinated all regional and local decisions. Not enjoying any popular support, these elites clung to power by forming clientelistic networks in which they exchanged favors. Moreover, authoritarianism and the deep political role of the military did not allow for democratic processes to take root. The founding of Elliniko as the first civil airport of Greece reflected its awkward acclimatization to the modern world. The site was first inhabited in large numbers by refugees from Asia Minor who were constrained to make it their new home. The new settlements that arose, markedly different in quality and appearance, were divided along class lines. However, a few years after these settlements had been erected, and just before the start of WWII, the military dictatorship of Metaxas decided to build Athens’ first civil airport on the same site. Some of the poorer inhabitants protested the decision, but the state threatened deadly violence if they chose to resist their second relocation.

Chapter Three: Athens at War and the Transformation of Elliniko from a Flying Field to an Airport, 1940-1949

The third chapter picks up the story of Elliniko in the early 1940s, describing its transformation into an operational airport. This transition was instigated by the geopolitical dynamics of the time, and by the direct involvement of foreign powers.

Elliniko became a critical part of an infrastructure network committed to the wars that took place in Greece between 1940 and 1949. Under Nazi control it went from a dirt-covered airstrip with no infrastructure to a fully functional airport. As such it became the site of heroic resistance by liberation fighters who tried to undermine its operational capacity. After the end of the war, groups with competing visions of Greece's future development and its future political alignments once again made Elliniko a contested space. The airport was upgraded for the needs of the ensuing civil war between rightists and leftists. The British, who sided politically and militarily with the Greek Right, made the airport their main stronghold in controlling Athens. They also used the airport's grounds as an internment camp and as a base for interrogation and torture. When the US assumed control of the airbase from the British, they established a military post inside the site and further upgraded its structures. The aim was to restore the connection between the insurgent country side and the city of Athens, and to unify Greek space into one capitalist economy.

Chapter Four: The Makeover of Athens and the Golden Period of Elliniko, 1950-1989

The next chapter describes the successive upgrades of Elliniko, and the increasing pressures for its relocation. During the post-WWII period, a national policy of public works aimed at reconstructing the ravaged country, and to transform Athens into a modern capital. In this effort, Elliniko became a symbol of modernization and integration into the international community. Greece became an urbanized society, and regulation of urban space became a mechanism for economic growth, and an instrument for political stability. However, the Greek state's chronic inability to provide a comprehensive strategy over the city's future greatly diminished the opportunities for a

sustainable course of economic development, and for planning a satisfactory urban environment. Short-term interests seemed to always override the long term trajectories of the city, producing often a chaotic and seemingly irrational urban web. In this way, the growing settlements around the airport restricted its expansion, and sparked a long debate about its relocation.

Chapter Five: The Era of Mega Projects and the Decommission of Elliniko, 1990-2004

This chapter reviews the substantial investment in Athens' infrastructure as a catalyst for modernizing the city. Hosting the 2004 Olympic Games reigned supreme in this effort, with billions of dollars poured into tourism, the construction and real estate sectors of the city. Athens was to be transformed into a metropolis of regional importance, as a transportation hub, tourist destination, financial and trade center, and ultimately as a safe place for investment. The restructuring of the city's landscape meant the decommission of the airport as an obsolete piece of infrastructure, and the availability of this large plot of land for future redevelopment. Balancing out the desires of the business community for real estate development, and the demands of the people for a green park, governing politicians opted for the land's partial privatization and the creation of a park in the remaining area. However, preoccupation with hosting the Olympics, and political change deferred the final decision.

Chapter Six: Athens in Crisis and Elliniko at a Crossroads, 2005-2014

This chapter examines the final debates over Elliniko's redevelopment. While it seemed that the state had finally decided what to do with the former airport, delays in the implementation of its plans, persistent opposition by the locals, and political change

derailed the final resolution to the problem. Then, the sovereign debt crisis of 2009 unleashed a most aggressive cycle of neoliberal reforms that would make the creation of a public and green park an ever receding dream. The radical neoliberal restructuring led to a privatization spree and the sale of public assets at throwaway prices. Elliniko was awarded for a fraction of its value under a cloudy process.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

Since the uncertainty regarding Elliniko's redevelopment remains unresolved, the final chapter attempts to sketch the possible outcomes of this long process. Its starting premise is that the state and the developers will continue with the chosen course of action. As the history of Elliniko shows, however, until construction begins, there is always the possibility of a reversal. This can only come about through the perseverance of local activism and the dawning of wider political change. Specifically, the chapter scrutinizes the avenues of resistance open to the mayors and residents who continue to fight for a park. It also presents scenarios for several contingencies should the political opposition, SYRIZA, come to power.

Chapter 2

Early History of Athens and the Road to Elliniko, 1830-1939

The aim of this chapter is to concisely provide the historical framework that presaged the political economy of urban space in contemporary Athens, and in particular, the space of the city's first civil airport, the Elliniko. This is needed first and foremost in order to familiarize the reader with the history of the modern city, and to provide a spatial understanding of the relevant political and social processes that shaped the landscape of the modern city and contributed to its dearth of public space. Second, this historical introduction will help the reader to better recognize later in the study the endemic features of Greek capitalism that have persisted over a long period of time, and which have unremittingly conditioned the production of urban space in Athens. The processes of urban growth will be examined with an emphasis on the particular characteristics and history of the city, where path-dependent outcomes are critical to describing the production and/or compromising of urban public space. This effort will not be an exercise in historical determinism; but rather an analysis of the recurring patterns in the city's evolution from 1830 to 1940, and to recognize those continuities that will help explain contemporary urban development arrangements.

The early story of the modern Athens is the story of the capital of a new country that struggled to reassert its identity as a modern state and integration into the world-system. However, this effort was greatly hindered by the struggle for independence and national unity. The financial costs of military expenditures greatly undermined economic development efforts, while the political and economic dependency on the Great Powers of Europe limited from the outset the ability to produce the desired outcomes of

modernization attempts. However, as in other parts of the world, this modernization objective became the source of dependency and “distorted development” that has been reflected on the patterns urban space was colonized and developed. The mode of incorporation of Greece into the international inter-state system relegated it to function as an immediate periphery of the European heartlands. Under the impact of political and economic dependency, clientelistic politics, and anemic economic growth, the concept of public space became devoid of any meaning, where political and economic interests used it as something to plunder and exploit for their narrow interests. In many ways the development patterns of the early city have resemblances to colonial urbanization as far as foreign ruling groups subordinate urban development for their own desires and needs.¹ The imposition of a foreign king; the presence of foreign military to safeguard the regime; the colonialist planning influences; the importation of a foreign local administration system; the immense concentration of political power; the implementation of a new ideology in an effort to eliminate traces of previous cultures and its use as an instrument of hegemonic control; the disregard of the living conditions of the ‘indigenous’; the docile local political elites; and the specific urban spatial patterns that resulted from the interaction of industrialized powers and a traditional society, are all revealing indications of the complex interplay between external and internal determinations of Athens’s urbanization.

¹ Of course there is a fine distinction between colonialism and imperialism based on, but not limited to, the number of the colonists and the specific social and urban forms derived from this inter-group domination. In the case of Athens the term imperialism is rather more appropriate to describe the relationship between the Great Powers of the time and Greece. But, even though Athens was never considered a colonial city, in the early years after liberation, the Bavarian domination indeed had many resemblances to cities that went through a colonial experience (Aymard, 1985).

The second objective of this chapter is to describe the site of the Elliniko airport as well as the story of the origins of the first civil airport of Athens. The development of the area of the airport prior to its construction reflected the wider forces that shaped urban development in Athens. Right before the liberation of Athens, and in a period of changing property regime patterns, the land of this area passed from the Ottoman rulers to wealthy Greek landowners, many of whom became part of the new urban elites. The colonization of the area in the 1920s by the Asia Minor refugees urbanized the area, while their subsequent removal is a telling illustration of the growing tensions in inter-war Athens, where the harsh realities of being “left behind” further polarized the society, leading to the replacement of the already unstable parliamentary democracy with fascist military rule from the mid-1930s to WWII.

Athens is a relatively new city that grew very fast. The city’s ancient history played a critical role in its modern development, and it captured the imagination of many travelers who journeyed through the lands of the once glorious *polis*. Many historians have made the case that for most of the Byzantine and Ottoman times Athens was little more than an insignificant town. These scholars claim that during the War of Independence and in the first years of liberated Greece, Athens was just a provincial city largely destroyed by the war (Costa et al., 1991; Markezinis, 1966; Vermeulen, 1983). Indeed, the city sustained considerable damage during the War of Independence and many of its residents fled (Travlos, 1981). When Greece secured formal recognition as an independent state in 1832, Athens’ population was 6,000. Only two years later, however, when the city became the capital of the new Greek state, its population was 12,000 (Leontidou, 2001).

However, the claim that the city was unimportant is not totally substantiated since, as Kallivretakis (2009) suggests, at this period Athens compared well to other cities of southern Greece and the southern Balkans. But again, as Hastaoglou-Martinidis notes (1995) the southern end of the Balkans was the poorest, least populated, and most illiterate part of the total Greek nation. Flourishing Greek communities could be found in places such as Smyrna, Ioannina, Adrianople, while the city of Athens lacked the financial and political clout that would allow any comparisons with the then dominant Balkan centers of Constantinople and Thessaloniki. Nevertheless, the formation of national states would change this, and the soon to be national capitals would become the new centers of urban growth (Jelavich, 1988).

When Greece declared its independence in 1830 with the signing of the Protocol of London, Athens was still under Ottoman rule, and it would take four more years until the city finally became the capital of the Greek state. The borders of the new state were not satisfactory for the Greeks because they left it with a territory too small for substantial economic development or regional political influence. In addition, territories most Greeks traditionally considered part of their homeland were left outside the new borders. Consequently, many Greek populations existed as enclaves in neighboring states, a situation that facilitated persistent irredentist claims². Therefore, from early on, the idea of territorial expansion was very dominant among the liberated Greeks, who often invoked fantasies of Byzantine grandeur. But this was nothing new—the glory of the Byzantine Empire had beguiled the Greek imagination for many years. When the

² In fact Greece's present borders were decided in 1946, while even today the issue of Cyprus remains unresolved. It should be mentioned that for a long period in modern Greece's history the ideology of irredentist aspirations worked against the creation of class consciousness.

leaders of the new Greek state deliberated over the choice of a capital city, many suggested that only a temporary or provisional capital be appointed. They reasoned that only the city of Constantinople ultimately merited the title of Greece's capital, any other choice being simply a placeholder (Bastea, 2000).

At the time of the Ottoman Empire's disintegration, the various ethnicities inhabiting the Balkans were in the process of building nation-states. The Ottoman Empire was not organized around a conception of national identity; the region was a mosaic of different ethnic, linguistic and religious groups. The dismemberment of the Empire was attended by such profound political change that it altered the role and the fortunes of a city such as Athens (Hall, 2006, p. 10). Perhaps the most recognizable shift occurred in the cultures of the larger Balkan cities which began to take on a European rather than Eastern "pattern of life" (Jelavich, 1988, p. 46). Because the new capital was undeniably a self-consciously constructed symbol of the new nation, every aspect of its design is pregnant with meaning. Therefore, it should be studied, as Vale (2006) remarks, "inseparable from the broader pattern of political change" (p. 15).

Many scholars attribute the choice of Athens as the new Greek capital to the infatuation of the Bavarian monarchs with the idea of classical Athens (Bastea, 2000; Nikolaidou, 1993). Given the ideological context of Western Europe at that time, it was only natural for the European hegemony to promote Greece's ancient history while obscuring its Byzantine legacy. But though the Bavarians' romantic idealization of Athens certainly increased its cultural cachet, it is probable that more practical and petty political calculations led to its choice as the new capital.

Athens was not the first capital of modern Greece—this distinction went to Nafplio, a city whose buildings had largely avoided wartime destruction. In a short time, however, its tense, highly politicized atmosphere made the Bavarians feel uneasy. Numerous power brokers and large land owners from across Greece proposed their respective cities as the political seat of the new state, their advocacy no doubt fueled by their wish to see the value of their properties surge. Ultimately the monarchy chose Athens, which officially became the new capital in 1834. The monarchy, however, did not enjoy political legitimacy—it was a regime empowered by England, France and Russia. The freshly minted state of modern Greece, therefore, was in a precarious and compromised position: its affairs were in the hands of several European powers—rivals, actually—who only agreed that they wished to see the “orderly” disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. The imposition of an illegitimate monarchy was the price to be paid by Greeks for the support of the dominant European powers. The foreign powers recognized that their installation of a puppet government was transparent, and that it would remain a source of vulnerability unless they could alter the perceptions of the people. The Bavarians were well aware that most Greeks considered the regime illegitimate and held it in low regard. For this reason, the choice of Athens as the capital would consolidate their power far away from the liberation fighters who sought a representative democracy and a redistribution of land (Heidenreich, Chtouris & Ipsen, 2007). In fact, the Bavarians’ fear of the populace was so great that the location of the monarchy’s new palace had to be reconsidered many times until finally, after many deliberations and plan changes, it was built at the point furthest from the existing public bazaar (Vale, 1992, p. 40).

Of course, if England and the other foreign powers risked the forfeiture of a sphere of influence, the stakes for the monarchy were even greater: a popular uprising would likely result in the forfeiture of their lives. Besides the presence of 2,500 foreign troops guarding the monarch, fear of the independence fighters and the populace caused the new regime to search desperately for a new national ideology that would provide the necessary political legitimacy for its rule. In such circumstances regimes have historically tried to invoke images of a common national heritage to inspire nationalist sentiments. The new state needed a shared representation of the past that would allow it to claim self-determination and sovereignty, and thus rally the population around itself. At the same time, the Bavarians were keen to show that they were capable of leading the new state on the road of prosperity, and that under their leadership Greece would be joining the advanced nations of the West, leaving behind its “oriental” traditions. The monarchy and the Bavarians, then, as well as the rich diaspora bourgeoisie, all wanted the new state to break with its Ottoman past, abolish the Asian modes of production, and become integrated into the European capitalist economy. The transformation of Greece’s economy, while figuring prominently in their plans, was only a part of a far-reaching vision which sought to alter the forms of state, legal framework, and policy paradigms, as well as the wider norms, expectations, and cultural beliefs of the Greek people (Legg & Roberts, 1997). Milios (2000) notes that the self-conscious classicism and social engineering of this period in Greek history has relevant parallels to the Enlightenment of Europe, as a conscious effort to alter the organization of society, introduce liberal ideas espoused by the merchant bourgeoisie, create a bourgeois state, and incorporate all pre- and non-capitalist social forms into the capitalist world economy.

In light of this overt effort to re-make the Greek society, planning the capital city of the new state became a priority of the monarchy. They hoped to erase all traces of its “Ottoman” past by incorporating Western ideals and institutions. The new city would be “modern” and demonstrate “progress.” In this effort, Athens served the Bavarians very well because of the symbolism of its Classical Age. Thus, the misdirection of the new balance of political power could be silently assimilated by keeping the people’s attention and, no doubt, their pride, fixed squarely on the glory of its ancient past. As Vale (1992) points out, with this subtle elision “the centrality of the Acropolis with all its associations inextricably root[ed] the new city in the old” (p. 42). But the new ruling elite soon discovered that planning of Athens would be a formidable challenge, mostly because the city’s necessary make-over (both in physical and ideological terms) was so massive that in its sheer scale it was tantamount to the creation of a new city. The first priority was to build the new centers of political power in the capital. But this construction would need to satisfy a provision that amounted almost to a paradox: planning and design practices introduced from Western Europe would strive to retain (at least in superficial resemblance) the classical style of Greek antiquity. The Neoclassical style that resulted was not related to the Ottoman or Byzantine traditions, nor was it typically European (Jelavich, 1988). The design of the new city reflected the political realities of the time, and especially the pronounced centralization of political power in the new state.

The new state was formed under the auspices of the European powers which threw their weight behind those forces that promoted a “westernized” state with a strong centralized authority and minimal “regional fragmentation and politico-military autonomy of the local notables” (Mouzelis, 1978, p. 13). Indeed, after a long war of

independence and an acrimonious civil war, the formation of the Modern Greek state signaled the relative loss of local autonomy with the establishment of an externally imposed monarchy and a powerful centralized state apparatus seated in Athens. In the new capital, the challenge to accommodate the needs of the people was displaced by the objective to use architecture and planning as the means of political and ideological control. The weak legitimacy of the externally imposed regime was to be counterbalanced by a celebrated capital city with iconic architecture that would pay homage to the glorious history of Athens. The city's first master plan was designed by Kleanthis, a Greek educated abroad, and Schaubert, a Bavarian architect. Their design was a more or less transparent effort to advance the monarchy's ideological objectives by connecting the modern kingdom to the ancient world through the city's architecture and organization. Its monumental and hierarchical composition had as their central references first, the Acropolis, a symbol of the ideological prestige of Athens, and second the Palace, a rather heavy-looking and imposing building, a true space of authority.

During Athens' first period as the capital of the Modern Greek state, we can identify a process of city-building focused mainly on communicating the presence of the new ruler and on expressing the aspirations of the dominant classes. Monumental building did not only aim at reinforcing the hegemonic ideological discourse in the internal affairs, but it also provided the means for the merchant bourgeoisie of the diaspora, who had found in Athens a safe place, to declare its presence and to ground its political power. The design of most of the new buildings followed the tenets of Neoclassicism, a style developed by European intellectuals and influenced by the Romantic Movement. The donations of rich expatriate Greek merchants funded

construction (Mpiris, 1966). In these circumstances, and given the political and economic dependency of the new state to foreign centers of power, the city's first master plan did not provide any space for productive activities, only zones of political and cultural power: a palace, a cathedral, a national library, an academy, a house of parliament and other government buildings, and an area designated for the future excavation of antiquities.³

The re-invention of Athens as a modern capital city was initiated by a foreign ruler, designed by foreign planners (or Greeks educated abroad), and financed mostly by rich Greek expatriates. It was thus influenced by European planning ideologies and principles of that time. Since Athens was essentially a new city with comparatively little history and tradition to tip-toe around, power brokers could more confidently urge a complete overhaul. Subsequently, neither the local conditions nor the structural position of Greek society in the world-system were taken under consideration. Not only did the new monuments and centers of political and cultural power model those of the great European cities, the incorporation of public space also followed the examples of Versailles, St. Petersburg, Munich, and Karlsruhe. Thus the first plan provided for wide boulevards, handsome public squares, and spacious sidewalks. In fact, one fifth of the total area covered by the plan was supposed to be comprised by parks, gardens, squares and other open spaces. As it turned out, these public-spirited provisions of Kleanthis and Schaubert's plan sealed its fate. Analysis showed that a debt would result after all the people who suffered from the new city's layout received compensation (Mpiris, 2003).

³ The designated area for future excavations of antiquities around the Acropolis would later be greatly reduced due to rampant land speculation (Papageorgiou-Venetas, 1999, p.21).

Georgios Sarigiannis (2000) notes that leading the mobilization against the plan, besides many Athenians, were those foreigners who had bought land in Athens given the prospect of the capital's relocation. Opponents included the philhellene colonel and historian George Finley, the American missionary Jonas King, John Paparrigopoulos, then Consul General of Russia, the consul of Austria Georg Christian Gropius, the chieftain Kriezotis, who according to circulated rumors, would come into Athens with his men to save his plot of land from the master plan (Mpiris, 1966). Under the pressure from those property owners who would be negatively affected by the proposed layout, the plan was replaced by von Klentze's plan which again "was subjected to a series of modifications, most of which reflected lobbying by private landowners to turn public squares and gardens into private building plots" (Wassenhoven, 1984, p. 10).

That the initial and subsequent plans failed to be fully implemented in the center of the new city is certainly remarkable, but what is even more striking is that the urbanization of the city's periphery during these early years followed no master plan at all. In the absence of a viable political process that could help reach a popular consensus, Athens became a rapidly expanding patchwork of disorganized development. Whereas the city center was designed to emit images of balance and stability, the periphery was left to its fate, with no public services or resources. In this sense, a spatial pattern was prevailing in the new city that would resemble the social relationships of the time. Newcomers to Athens without the financial means to settle in the city's center had to live outside the purview of the first plans. In practice this placed them in a particularly vulnerable position, living in an environment where the state provided almost no regulation and negligible enforcement, and where land encroachment and land

speculation became common. Those who had purchased land in Athens just before the city was declared the new capital were now in a position to realize the fruits of their entrepreneurial acumen. First they bought land at very low prices; next, in the absence of any state regulation and administrative mechanisms, they encroached on public lands; finally, they divided the land into smaller parcels and sold it to newcomers. In this way new settlements started to appear in the urban landscape. Needless to say that in such an environment dominated by “private planning” no provision was made for public spaces.

The proliferation of private planning and the encroachment on public lands around Athens should not only be attributed to the Bavarian’s competence for introducing formal principles of planning in the new capital. In fact, the appropriation of public lands by private interests and the discrepancy between the codification of land rights and their enforcement had their origins many years before. The major transformation of land rights in the early history of the modern city started with the departure of the Turkish residents of Athens after the War of Independence. The Great Powers had decided in 1830 that the new Greek state should compensate the Turkish state and land owners who were compelled to leave the city. However, as Drikos (1993) notes, very few Athenians had the financial capacity to buy these lands. The Greek state under its first governor Ioannis Kapodistrias desired to acquire the lands for itself because this would endow it with greater leverage in exercising social and economic policy. However, the already indebted state was unable to secure the necessary financing from abroad, since the three great powers had little interest in ensuring that Greece’s capital would be provided with adequate public spaces (ibid.).

In light of the Greek government's inability to finance the acquisition of the Ottoman estates in the greater region of Athens (Attiki), the chief administrator responsible for overseeing the transfer of the Ottoman properties adopted a curious strategy: to derail any agreement on the transfer of these lands into private hands. The hope was that if the state could frustrate these transactions, eventually it would be able to take possession of the lands at very low prices. This would allow for the creation of a substantial class of smallholder farmers, and at the same time, these lands would furnish the new capital with ample public spaces for a comprehensive land policy (Drikos, 1993). However, this policy ran afoul of agreements with the Great Powers, and under pressure, Kapodistrias began proceeding for a public offering of these lands. As the details of the bidding process became clear late in 1830, the number of potential buyers started to swell. Low prices and the imminent selection of Athens as the capital of the new state created the potential for unprecedented profits (Sarigiannis, 2000). By 1831 all Turkish properties of Athens, and especially the large estates of Attiki (the region around Athens), were sold for dreadfully low prices to Greek and foreign buyers. The process lasted only five months, and in some cases whole villages were sold. Many factors combined to create a situation ripe for corruption and unfavorable for the acquisition of public lands: the short period of time in which the sales took place; the absence of a competent administration in Athens to guard the public interest; the frenzied, largely unregulated sale of lands by the departing Turks, who sometimes sold not clearly marked public lands as if they were their own private property; and the greed of land speculators who dreamt of getting rich quickly by snapping up large estates at low prices. The dream soon became reality. Drikos (1993) notes that by 1834, the year Athens became the capital,

property values had quadrupled. As it was, the new state had insufficient funds to compete with private capital. Soaring land prices, of course, only made the acquisition of public land that much more difficult and unlikely. Without a critical mass of land, the government lacked the means to initiate and exercise a comprehensive land use policy. These early events would cripple the prospects of public space in Athens for the years to come.

Indeed, the weak financial position of the Greek state which precluded it from acquiring the Ottoman properties in Attiki or even the adequately regulating their transfer into private hands had an adverse impact on the future development of Athens. Urban expansion never followed a master plan, but instead occurred in a spasmodic, arbitrary fashion. In the unstable political environment that followed the inception of modern Greece, the state desperately needed to minimize internal dissent and find ways to offset the lack of a comprehensive social system and land use policy. The political and social necessity of turning a blind eye to the spate of disorderly construction within Athens should not make us lose sight of its underpinning cause: the state's inability to fund well planned urban expansion, and thus deliver a comprehensive housing and planning policy. Indeed the lack of adequate financial resources devoted to city planning has been one of the most important reasons for the abysmal dearth of urban public spaces in Athens (Papageorgiou-Venetas, 1999).

Throughout the city's modern history, the various governments have consistently maintained that their negligent provision for urban public space was a direct result of the

state's insufficient funds.⁴ While this observation is undoubtedly true to some extent, it must also be noted that these financial constraints resulted from specific political and economic decisions. Significant fault must be laid at the feet of the earliest Greek governments, and yet, it is an open question as to how much freedom these administrations actually had. Their political choices could only occur within the context of the pressures exerted by France, Russia, and the United Kingdom. In fact, the Modern Greek state's very existence was the outcome of an unhealthy yet necessary financial dependency on the Great Powers of the time. Even before Greece became officially independent, it received so-called "Independence Loans" to help finance the war against the Ottoman Empire. These loans were given in 1824 and 1825, and their value was £2,8 million. Self-interest and corruption defined these agreements from the start. The Greek nationalists spent only a small amount of the total on the needs of the revolution (in fact, only £920,800 actually arrived in Greece). This fraction of the original amount was itself subject to further embezzlement, often used by the receiving officials to buy influence, creating clientelistic political networks. It is very telling on the nature of these networks that the main political parties in the post-liberation era in Greece were called: the English Party (Agglikon Komma), the French Party (Gallikon Komma), and the Russian Party (Rossikon Komma).

For their part, the Great Powers demanded onerous conditions for these loans.

The terms were so egregious that the Greek government was constrained to send back

⁴ Later on in this study we will see that in the post WWII period the government was unable or unwilling to allocate adequate resources for the creation of welfare mechanisms. It chose instead to allow and even promote encroachments on public urban and peri-urban spaces as a redistributive and social mobility mechanism.

much of the money in the form of interest payment and prepayment fees. At other times large payments were made for military equipment that was never delivered. Thus in 1827 Greece was in the bewildering position of being unable to service loans for sums it had not actually received. The first “bankruptcy” of Greece, then, occurred even before the official creation of the Greek state. One example alone will serve to illustrate the extortionate nature of these loans and the dependency they fostered: by 1854 the amount that the Greek state owed the British lenders had jumped to £8 million, a several fold increase of the original sum (Fotiadis, 1988). Numerous deplorable consequences have followed from the Great Powers molding Greece into a debtor nation, but one of the most disastrous was, as we saw above, the mortgaging of “national lands” in the Attiki region that had been abandoned by their Turkish owners.

Greece’s next loan came in 1832 with the agreement that the seventeen year old Otto of Bavaria would be the first King of independent Greece. The ostensible value of this loan was 60 million French francs, but again this figure is misleading: 33 million were apportioned for the servicing of old loans, interest payments and other expenses; 2.5 million were assigned to compensate the Protecting Powers (England, France, Russia); 12.5 million were distributed to the Turks who were compelled to leave their properties in Attiki, Evia, and parts of Fthiotida, and the rest to the Bavarians (Belogiannis, 2010; Fotiadis, 1988).⁵ The clearly exploitative nature of this lending led yet again to the failure of the Greek state to service these loans in 1843. Under the threat of military intervention by the Protecting Powers, the government imposed a series of measures that

⁵ Drikos (1988) also notes that the Ottomans used these funds to pay war damages to the Russians. For a detailed account on Greece’s foreign debt of this period, see also Iliadakis (2003).

would also affect the urban environment. Included among these was a halt in the paying of pensions (military retirees were given public lands instead of their pension payments); the legalization (after the exaction of a negligible fine) of all private structures built illegally on public land; the firing of all engineers employed in the public sector; and the suspension of all construction on public works (Katsimardos, 2010).

Multiple domestic variables and their interplay with the wider political economy of the time shaped Athens' urban development. But overall, from the period of Greece's independence to the end of the 19th century, the initial commercial and comprador character of Athens led to a rapid pace of urbanization with the associated phenomena of urban land speculation, the commodification of housing, and, in the absence of housing legislation, the expansion of illegal settlements. On the surface of Greek society there were indications of prosperity—the initiation of construction on grand public buildings, private mansions, luxury houses for the bourgeoisie, and basic infrastructure projects. Yet, these apparent successes masked structural weaknesses that ensured the city's underdevelopment: the fragmentation of open land into building plots, unauthorized settlements, the absence of a land registry, and the encroachment on public space (Nikolaidou, 1993).

After the 1880s, successive administrations began to transform the commerce-based economy of Athens into one more industrial in character. Initially these efforts only produced meager results. Prime Minister Trikoupis government attempted to modernize the country by building the necessary infrastructure upon which industrial development could take place. These efforts, however, were only partially successful. In the period between 1880 and 1909 various setbacks resulted from the tight supply of

available capital, the hostility of the bourgeoisie, and the lack of support from the political and financial leadership (Nikolaidou, 1993). These early steps towards modernization heavily relied upon borrowing, and perhaps not surprisingly they once again bankrupted the Greek state in 1893. For the period 1800 to 1897 the total value of all loans to Greece reached 770 million French francs, out of which the country astonishingly received only 389 million, or 50.5 percent. By 1893 it had amortized 472 million, i.e. 120 percent of the received loans, but it still owed 631.4 million, i.e. 82 percent of what it had borrowed. That same year, the annual income of the Greek state was 64 million French francs, only ten percent of its external debt (Iliadakis, 2011).

Despite the modest investments in industrialization, by 1922 the number of manufacturing firms had multiplied, especially those which were labor-intensive. These gains brought greater numbers of people to Athens, increasing the pressure on its already inadequate housing stock. But the hope of employment was only one of the motivations drawing people to the capital; the political instability and wars in many areas with a significant Greek expatriate presence prompted an influx of refugees as well, further accelerating the pace of urbanization. These trends exacerbated the housing shortage, allowing unscrupulous local property owners to exploit the newcomers with excessive rents and unsafe or unsanitary conditions. Mpiris (1966) notes that while the plan of Athens covered an area of 790 acres in 1878, by 1907 it had reached 3,950 (p. 274). This expansion, however, was not the enterprise of a formal government initiative; it was mostly the result of private enterprise and land speculation. Mpiris describes the now familiar process whereby land owners disregarded the city plan, arbitrarily dividing tracts of land into parcels and then quickly selling them off, frequently for large profits. The

following step was to submit these private plans for government approval. The new owners, by exerting political pressure or by bribing government officials, often succeeded in retroactively inserting their properties within the purview of the city plan, thus making them eligible for construction and for further commercial exploitation.

The quality of the rental units built during this period and the working class communities that arose next to the factories in Athens are telling examples of the housing problem of this period. The scarcity of adequate housing and the formulation of a social housing policy were not treated as social problems. Gradually, a new social geography began to emerge in Athens. An economic fault line divided Athens essentially into two separate cities: overcrowded working class neighborhoods lacking infrastructure and public space; and on the other hand, better planned districts for the bourgeoisie located mostly in the historic center of the city and in a few peripheral areas (Leontidou, 2001). This differentiation would be greatly exacerbated by the arrival of the refugees from Asia Minor after 1922.

One of the most critical moments, if not the most critical, in the city's history was the influx of the Asia Minor refugees in the period after 1922. The collapse of Greek communities on the eastern part of the Aegean has shaped the political, social, economic, and cultural life of Greece ever since, and has had a deep impact on the future of Athens. Once again, the urbanization process in Athens was determined to a large degree by political developments taking place far away from the city's territory. The arrival of Asian Minor refugees once and for all trimmed the dreams for incorporation of Greek populations outside the borders of the Greek state into one entity with Constantinople at its center. It was this event that once and for all confined Hellenism within the borders of

the existing state. Since that moment, the symbolic weight of the Athens was reinforced, as the city replaced Constantinople as the center of Hellenism. Since then Athens has been not only the capital of the Greek state, but also the capital of all Greeks around the world.

In the period before the Asia Minor debacle, wars in the Balkans, the end of WWI and the gradual dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire allowed for long irredentist claims to surface in Greek politics. The state borders were not permanently determined, and the Megali Idea—Grand Idea—aiming at creating a Greek state of the *three continents and five seas*, seemed at last to be achievable. The result however was the military defeat by the Turkish army in 1922, followed by atrocities on Greek populations, and finally by the end of Greek presence at the eastern Aegean after thousands of years. The whole matter was resolved by the exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey, where 1,221,849 people came to Greece (by many scholars this official count is an underestimation). The Greek state directed many of these to territories with weak Greek presence, many to Western Macedonia, and Thrace, while it dispersed others around the country.

Table 2.1 Refugee Population in Athens, 1928

	Total Population	Number of Refugees	Refugee % of Total Population
Athens (including Piraeus and Kalithea)	740,526	246,081	33,23
Greece	6,204,684	1,221,849	19,68

Note. Adapted from Leontidou (2001).

The repercussions of the collapse of the Greek communities on Asia Minor were multidimensional and they entailed a deep transformation on every aspect of social life.

The populations who found refuge around Athens would permanently leave their mark on the city's identity, making it a metropolis and a more cosmopolitan and diverse place.

Kafkoulas (2007) estimates that approximately 300,000 refugees arrived in the wider region of Athens, while 3,700 acres of land was devoted for the construction of their settlements. Thus, an exhausted from many years of war Greek state was faced with the great challenge to accommodate the basic needs of these potentially "dangerous" populations. Land had to be allocated while housing programs started for the first time in Greek history to be implemented. The League of Nations became involved, with the Refugee Settlement Commission chaired by Henry Morgenthau, Sr., the U.S. Ambassador to Constantinople from 1913 to 1916.

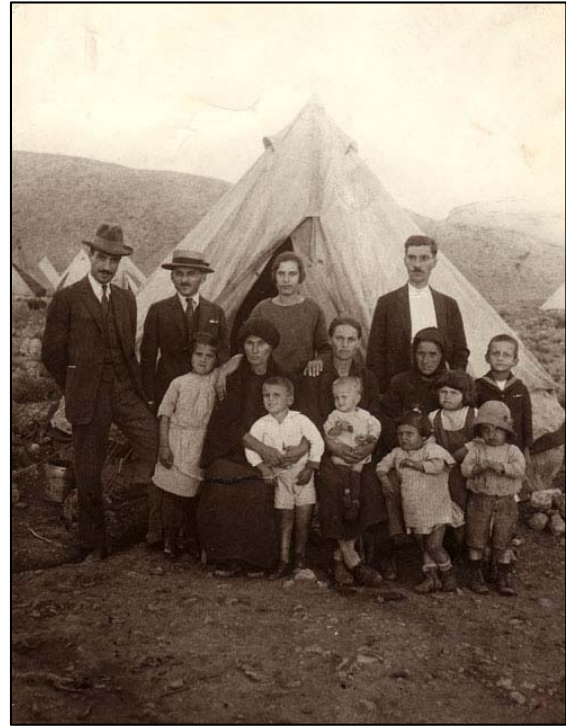


Figure 2.1 Refugee family outside their tent at Sourmena in 1925. Retrieved from Foundation of the Hellenic World.

The refugees along with their urban and cosmopolitan cultures, they brought with them their progressive political beliefs and their demands for justice over their ordeal. This, in addition to their harsh material situation, was a direct threat for the established political order, and a potential source of social instability, or as Mouzelis (1986) notes, "the influx of Asia Minor refugees, as well as the rapid industrialisation and urbanisation seemed for the first time to pose a real threat to the establishment" (p. 105). Therefore, the regime decided to disperse them around the country and in the periphery of existing

urban centers in order to preempt any potential political subversion. Thus, the state attempted to isolate the refugees from the rest of the society and to exclude them from the “public discourse,” an effort that would intensify in the early to mid-1930s when the populace became increasingly radicalized (Polyzos, 1985).⁶

The creation of refugee settlements at the outskirts of urban centers, often in close proximity to industrial facilities, supplied cheap labor and an extra push to a nascent manufacturing sector (Leontidou, 2001). In the aftermath of the Asia Minor debacle, the Greek industrial sector became strengthened. The relocation of large Greek-owned capital of the diaspora towards the territory of the Greek state, and the inflow of a substantial in numbers and highly skilled labor force, in addition to an enlarged internal market gave a boost to the Greek industry. The world crisis of 1929 led to higher levels of protectionism, and the internal orientation of production, especially through a gradual import-substitution strategy (Milios, 2000). During this decade and until WWII, Greece had achieved one of the largest growth rates of industrial production worldwide, behind of Soviet Union and Japan (Ioannidis & Mavroudeas, 2000).

The elites, conscious of the dangerous mix of a dissatisfied rising proletariat, with a progressive political culture, used various methods to control the situation. Besides the divide and conquer strategy among refugees and locals, it also made sure that social provision, and above all housing, was to be provided mostly through market mechanisms and the banking system. Their objective was to create a class of private owners instead

⁶ Leontidou (2001) describes how the refugee women claimed public space in Athens, until then the privileged realm of men. They participated in mass numbers in the work force, and in the management of private space. In the illegal settlements they formed networks of mutual support, while due to the small size of houses, they spent much of their time outdoors (p. 245).

of a proletariat. This effort would be exacerbated in the post-WWII period with detrimental effects on urban space, and especially public space, as we will see in the next chapters.

A number of settlements were built in the outskirts of the city to house the refugees. Athenians did not like the presence of the “easterners” in close proximity, and social segregation became very apparent. On the one hand, there was a trend of consolidation of bourgeois presence in the historic center of the city through the construction of high-rises apartment buildings. Large apartment buildings—the *polykatoikia*—were seen as a way to help the economy through the circulation of construction capital, the creation of employment opportunities, the provision of higher densities, and thus decelerate the uncontrolled expansion of the city which was difficult to finance and provide for new infrastructure.⁷



Figure 2.2 House at the “Garden City”
Located on the 3rd and D street, it was built in 1929 by G. Papadimitriou, who was originally from Smyrni in Asia Minor. Unlike many houses of this period, this house still stands today. Retrieved December 12, 2012, from http://www.panoramio.com/photo/75_177212



Figure 2.3 Modernist house at Elliniko.
This house, located at 3rd street, #33, was constructed in 1930 with elements of the architecture of the Modernist Movement, a typical example of the interwar period. Retrieved December 12, 2012, from <http://www.panoramio.com/photo/46993644>

⁷ As we will see in the next chapters, in the post-WWII period, the polykatoikia would become the driving engine of the Greek economy.

On the other hand, along with a centralization of bourgeois housing there is a parallel process of dispersion. In the mid-1920s a series of new types of settlements appear in the periphery of the city to house the upper classes. These settlements were called “garden cities” even though they did not resemble the Garden city movement; they were dormitory suburbs. One such community was the “garden city” of Elliniko. The creation of the Elliniko “garden city” (Kipoupoli) was part of an innovative collaboration of private and public forces, with influence of modernist design. It was built at the southeast side of the area of the future airport site, closer to the coast. The settlement broke with the Greek

tradition of city building.

It was planned ahead and

did not resemble a Greek

village, but instead,

according to the

newspaper *Athinaika Nea*,

“it should be easily called

the Swiss” -instead of

Elliniko, which means Greek (“To Ellēniko,” 1933, p. 3). It was conceived by the

Refugee Settlement Commission for those refugees who were more affluent and had

managed to bring some of their previous wealth with them to Greece. However, many of

the owners were indigenous locals who, according to Polyzos (1978), built there their

secondary homes, following a growing trend of the affluent classes of that time (as cited

in Leontidou, 2001). Social homogeneity and exclusion was ensured mostly by



Figure 2.4 What is left of the “garden city”

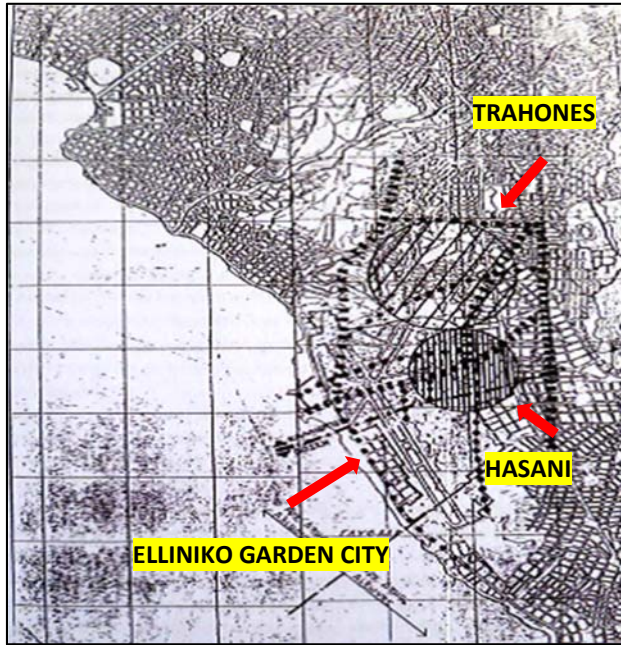
Retrieved from Google Earth.

demanding that recipients build their houses within a year after receiving the plots of land; to spend at least a minimum amount of money for the construction of their houses (30-40 thousand drachmas which was a prohibited amount for the vast majority of people); and create gardens with at least twenty fruit trees. The inhabitants were mostly doctors, lawyers, merchants, pharmacists. It was designed exclusively as a dormitory suburb with no production or commercial facilities, and where workers were nowhere to be seen unless they visited for construction or maintenance. It was hailed for its excellent climate conditions of minimum humidity and summer breezes; its cleanliness; its greenery; and its quietness. Indeed this was the ultimate dormitory suburb, where even the construction of a church was avoided to keep noise to a minimum. The residents only demanded that the state plant trees along the coast because, as the mayor of the time put it, the coast was the natural green lungs of the whole Attiki region and thus, planting trees would be an efficient and cheap way to improve the environment for the whole region (“To Ellēniko,” 1933, p. 3).

The Early History of Elliniko

The first civil airport of Athens was to be built in an area occupied by two village settlements, those of Hasani and Trahones (Map 2.1). During the Ottoman period of Athens, this area was divided into a handful of large estates, or *cifliks*, which were owned by prominent Turks. Tenants, however, worked the land, typically surrendering two thirds of their production to the owner, who in turn supplied the animals and the necessary equipment needed for cultivation (Drikos, 1993).

The land designated for the future airport was part of the Hasanlar ciftlik.⁸ After liberation most of the large estates of the Ottoman period were gradually broken up and divided into smaller estates for distribution to landless peasants, albeit in a drawn out and frequently contested process. In Attiki (greater Athens) and on the island of Evia, however, this practice was not to be followed. Instead, these estates ended up in the hands of a few Greek owners, like Pyrrou, Geroulanos, Skouzes, Louriotis, Zografos (actually Hasani passed to the hands of his widow and then to Karagiannopoulos), Soutzos and others. Trahones was first sold in 1830 to Pyrrou, at the end of the



Map 2.1 Hasani, Trahones, and “Garden City” (Kato Elliniko).
Adapted from DEPOS (1981).

19 century to Karapanos, and Hasani to Soutzos (Tounta, 1998). Significantly, the boundaries of the properties within their vast land holdings were often inexact and in dispute. Taking advantage of the confusion caused by the radical political change, both buyers and sellers purposely expedited the sale of these properties in order to maximize their profits. During the mad scramble of this period, wealthy Turks often arbitrarily claimed public lands as their own, selling them off before their right to do so could be contested. Following suit, the buyers often further expanded the boundaries of these properties. To this day, the ownership of some of these parcels is disputed.

⁸ Large farms or entire villages, which belonged to a landowner and were cultivated by crofters.

Confusion exists even over something as basic as the names of the area. For Sarris (1928), Trahones got its name because of the rough terrain. Mpiris (1971), on the other hand, asserts that it derives from an alteration of an ancient word signifying a place for the storage of cereals. In the case of Hasani, the origin of its name is even more obscure. The old name of the main area occupied by the airport was Limiko (Λοιμικό), a reference to the quarantine (*λοιμοκαθαρτήριο*) that was located there during the medieval times (ibid.).⁹ Later, during the early 1900s, the name was changed to Elliniko. Yet according to Mpiris (1966), the name Hasani was officially used until the 1930s, and widely used by the local population for well into the 1940s and 1950s. The village of Hasani was named after a Turkish tower, which stood until the construction of the airport (ibid.). Sarris (1928) suggests that it was named after a Muslim, and it seems likely that this was a reference to the Albanian-Turkish owner of the *ciflik*, Hasan Ali.

In ancient times, the cities of Evonymos and Allimountas occupied parts of the region in question. The latter, long the focus of archaeological study, is believed to have been the home of Thucydides. The majority of its remains, however, have been buried by the development of the area, and most notably by the construction of the airport. In fact, just months before the inauguration of the new airport, erosion caused by heavy rains and the excavations of playing children revealed ancient artifacts. In 1937, a journalist, present while some local children uncovered an ancient artifact, described his amazement at the way they were handled their treasure. Conscious of its importance and proud of the

⁹ It is interesting to note that at this period there is another settlement in another part of the city also called Limiko (*Λιμικό or Λημικόν*), which according to Fourikis (1929) is an alteration of the word Elliniko by Albanian-speaking inhabitants.

ancient heritage of their neighborhood, they handed the artifacts to the authorities (“Arhaiologika evrēmata,” 1937, p. 2). The findings in various parts of the area date back 3,000 years BC. As recently as 2003, part of a cemetery dating possibly from the 4th to the 8th century BC was discovered by the archaeologist Kaza-Papageorgiou on the construction premises of the tram depot (Sykka, 2003). On an adjacent farm a large burial grounds was uncovered dating back to the mid-4th century BC. The recent construction of the subway station also brought to light similar findings. But as Blackman (2001) notes, “the economic and touristic development of the country still



Figure 2.5 Antiquities at Elliniko.

Some, like archaeologist M. Korres believe that the area was named Elliniko after this ancient funerary monument. It was transferred “piece by piece” to another location for the expansion of the airport in 1960-61. Retrieved from Kaza - Papageorgiou, (2004).

provides a threat to the cultural and natural heritage of Greece” (p. 1). The recent economic crisis, however, has allowed some politicians and business leaders to fear monger about onerous construction delays and foster a mentality that is sympathetic to “fast-track” development. In this climate the protection of cultural treasures often takes a back seat to the drive for economic growth.

During the 19th and early 20th centuries the area was mostly rural and largely uninhabited, with only a few orthodox Albanian crofters at work on the Ottoman ciftliks. Stavros Voutiras (1890) notes that the area of Hasani, Trahones, and a couple of other adjacent settlements was inhabited by 275 people. Prior to the construction of the airport, the area was a destination for Boy Scouts expeditions (figure 2.6), a place for military

drills. A hunting ground, and a destination for daily excursions by more affluent

Athenians -especially the

coastal area of St. Kosmas (“Ē

hthesinē,” 1927. p. 2;

“Epitrepetai to kynēgion,” 1937,

p. 1; Giannoukakēs, 1936, p. 1).

However, it became more

intensely inhabited after the

arrival of refugees from Asia

Minor.



Figure 2.6 Crown Prince Pavlos at Hasani.

During a Boy Scout expedition in December 1938. Retrieved from Boy Scouts of Greece, <http://photoarc.sep.org.gr/displayimage-24->

The newcomers, who mainly came from the Pontos region of today’s Turkey, called their new settlement Sourmena as a reminder of their place of origin.¹⁰ In 1924 the Refugee Settlement Commission formed a refugee settlement for these immigrants according to the dictates of the Geneva protocol for the resettlement of the refugees from Asia Minor. The Greek state, citing eminent domain, took possession of the land, announcing its intention to create an agricultural settlement for the refugees.

The influx of refugees sparked hostility among indigenous Greeks. Many urban legends circulated about the newcomers who Greeks saw as a threat. The hostility was so strong, especially among large landowners, that after 1924 the decree for the eminent domain was amended in order to allow only the expropriation of the Greek Church’s landed properties. As was the case in other places, the relocation of refugees to Elliniko generated opposition. Many expressed the belief that it was unjust for the government to

¹⁰ Later in 1929 and 1930 it would be divided into two villages, Elliniko and Komnion, only to be united again in 1942.

condemn the private land of indigenous Greeks only to give it to refugees. Nonetheless, in 1924 the Commission moved to take possession of a property that belonged to Karagiannopoulos, and allocating 370 acres of land for the creation of the proposed agricultural settlement.¹¹ Refugees were apportioned plots of 0.6 acres (“Ta peri dēmefseōs,” 1928, p. 5), charged 30,000 drachmas (“Oi tsormpatzēdes sto Hasani,” 1934, p.4).¹² This land, however, was the most arid of the region, and almost impossible to cultivate. For the refugees it must have felt like a trap: not only must they look to their non-arable land for subsistence, it would also need to generate the income necessary to repay the loans they had taken out to build houses on their plots.

Table 2.2 Population by settlement

	1861	1889	1896	1907	1920	1928	1940
Hasani/Elliniko/Sourmena	36	33	23	27	60	875	3,441
Trahones	66	60	66	71	32	75	357

Note. Adapted from Houliarakis (1974), Leontidou (2001); Tounta, (1998)

The distribution of these plots did not always occur smoothly or within the guidelines of a transparent process. Plots of land were made available not only to eligible refugees, but also to native Greeks who were simply in line to receive a political favor from the regime in power. The newspaper *Rizospastis*, writes about just such a case when it recounts the story of Skoulakis and Martinis, two large landowners in the area who wanted to encroach on the public square and soccer field. After deliberations with government officials they were given private assurance that their actions would not be opposed. Then, with the protection of the local police, they began to plow some of the

¹¹ He had inherited the property by the widow of Zografos. The total size of the property was more than 7,000 sq. km. He did not have any relatives and after his death the property passed to the hands of the Greek state. He died in a hospital in Paris.

¹² In 1938 the compensation was 10,000 drachmas per sq. km.

public land adjacent to their own, hoping that their incremental theft would go unnoticed. The majority of the village's men were at their jobs, but as soon as the encroachers started their ploy, approximately seventy local women came together and started throwing rocks at them. Their collective resolve was strong enough to defy the police, and in this way, according to the newspaper, they managed to save this public land ("Oi tzorpatzēdes," 1929, p. 2).

But corruption and pay-to-play politics, long hallmarks of modern Greece, were not so easily thwarted. For example, even after the refugees settled in the area, constructing their homes and building up their community, the central state was consumed with creating and maintaining clientelistic networks as a means of political control. Thus, much of the government money given to the village for its administration was squandered by loyalists to the government officials ("Oi tsormpatzēdes sto Hasani," 1934, p. 4).

Most of the residents of the area were poor peasants and bricklayers. Many of these manual laborers worked on the construction of the adjacent "garden city" built for the more affluent refugees. However, they were routinely exploited, required to work long hours for meager salaries and suffered high rates of occupational accidents. The unskilled workers were paid fifty drachmas a day, and the skilled 80 drachmas. In order to get a sense of the meager salaries these workers received, *Rizospastis* reports of a work-related accident at the "garden city" where the victim was asked to pay for his treatment by the clinic 13,000 drachmas. The clinic threatened to dismiss him if he did not prove within a week that he could afford to pay for his medical expenses ("Syhna dystyhēmata," 1933, p. 3). On the top of these problems, they lived in fear of the

Agricultural Bank, which would often take inventory of the locals' properties and demand repayment of debts taken out during the refugee rehabilitation period ("Tsormpatzēdes kai Agrotikē Trapeza," 1934, p. 5). The residents were becoming increasingly agitated, and predictably, the state's fear of political subversion endorsed the heavy hand of the police. Labor unionists and leftist activists were tortured on a regular basis by the local police in Hasani as a means of quelling dissent and intimidating political opposition. Any time the locals would attempt to organize against the government proposal, the government would use pinkertons to try to derail any organization efforts for collective action. These pinkertons belonged to the royalist and liberal parties, and when their efforts did not break the resolve of the locals for collective action, they informed the police on the opponents and identified the agitators (ibid.). The state adroitly fabricated a threat to national security, and persecuted its enemies with relative impunity during the period's climate of anti-refugee and anti-communist sentiment ("Sto Hasani," 1933, p.5).

And yet, despite the state's draconian measures, the early years of the 1930s witnessed a time of unparalleled political agitation in Athens (Polyzos, 1985). During this period socialist ideas proliferated and the labor movement gained formidable strength. The social agitation and political turmoil triggered by the world crisis of 1929 necessitated that world leaders adopt new strategies of control: the climate of desperation, suspicion, and fear encouraged authoritarianism and totalitarian approaches. In Greece, the unstable politics of the 1930s led the military to play a central role in politics. Much of the political turmoil was the product of the labor classes' increasing demands; but it was also a by-product of intense competition among the great powers of

Europe for political influence. As the competing camps in Europe were getting ready for a final confrontation, Greek politics reflected a basic divide: the liberals largely siding with the British, the royalists generally affiliated with the Germans.

After yet another state insolvency in 1932 (Greece was exhausted from many years of war and the attending massive population movements), the political dominance of the liberals was ended and the royalists assumed greater and greater power, ushering in a period of greater protectionism and an internal orientation of productive activities, especially through a gradual import-substitution strategy (Milios, 2000). From the 1930s up until WWII, Greece achieved one of the largest growth rates of industrial production worldwide, behind only the Soviet Union and Japan (Ioannidis & Mavroudeas, 2000). But the distribution of the new wealth resulting from the policy of self-sufficiency created intense social rivalry. The permanent crisis affecting the major port cities and the growing disparity between rising industrial profits and stagnant worker wages were some of the points of friction. Finally, in 1935 general Kondylis brought back the (Danish) King, and a year later another general, Metaxas, staged a coup and took control of the government with the connivance of the palace.

In many ways Greece's political divisions reflected a wider geopolitical realignment. The world economic crisis had led to a more fragile world order, causing great geopolitical camps to coalesce. Already in the early 1930s, a frenzied armament race was under way, the great powers feverishly improving their war infrastructures. It was apparent to all of the major powers that airpower would be a decisive factor in future wars. Therefore the adversaries increased their capacity for airpower, including the necessary infrastructure for the new weaponry. The adversaries kept building airplanes

in massive numbers never seen or imagined before. Since this was the first time airplanes would be used on such a scale, most airfields lacked the capacity to handle both the increased traffic and the larger-sized aircraft. The construction of new airports, therefore, became a strategic priority for the major powers and their allies, who had their eyes firmly fixed on the war to come.

The Greek government established a ministry for the air force for the first time in 1930, with Prime Minister Venizelos appointed its first secretary. The ministry assumed control of both the military and civilian air forces, initiating programs for the necessary modernization of the aviation infrastructure (“Enas syntomos apologismos,” 1930, p. 1). These upgrades could be justified on the grounds of national defense, but their benefit to commerce in general and tourism in particular was also not lost on government officials and business leaders. A series of articles appeared in the press that ostensibly sought to familiarize citizens with the latest developments in aviation, the public being led to believe that “the airplane [would] transform the world to such a degree that the old cities soon [would] be obsolete and new ones [would] need to be built” (“Ai sēmerine poleis,” 1929, p.5). Other articles encouraged the government to further invest in aviation because this would be a “necessary step to catch up in progress with the advanced nations of the world” (“Anagkē na eksoikeiōthē to koinon,” 1930, p.1). It was also during this time that the major European powers sent airplanes to Greece for exhibitions. These staged pieces of propaganda were turned into festivals with the participation of the political elites and front page coverage by the media (“To Giougkers,” 1930, p. 1). In this way public opinion concerning aviation was harmonized with the agendas of business leaders and the sitting government.

Up until 1937 the Greek civilian air force in Athens used the military airport of Tatoi; hydroplanes used the docks at Faliro Bay and Megalo Pefko. The discussions over the construction of a civil airport go as far back as in 1931, with proposed locations at Faliro Bay and at Liosia. The latter choice, however, was thought to pose too many challenges, and was soon rejected. Faliro Bay also presented many difficulties, the most important being the financing land expropriation. Still, it was preferred because of its proximity to Athens, its link to the wide Syggrou road, and its suitability as a military base. However, the high estimated costs (approximately 180 million drachmas) made the project prohibitive at the time (“Ē egkatastasis tou politikou aerodromiou,” 1931, p. 6).

Four years later the discussion about the new airport surfaced again. Officially the government denied that it had reached a final decision over a site (“Ta politika aerodromia,” 1935, p. 2). Two months after this statement the minister of the air force made an aerial inspection of the airport’s future location at Hasani and gave the green light for construction to begin (“O Kondylēs etoimazei,” 1935, p.6). Subsequently the government declared that the first civilian airport of Athens would be built at Hasani (“Enteinontai oi polemikes proetoimasies,” 1935, p. 4), and in November of the same year the Council of Ministers decided to proceed with the land acquisition (“Egkrithēke ē idrysē,” 1935, p. 3). Aside from the perfunctory aerial inspection of the area, the choice of the site was not the result of a deliberate selection process. Rather, it was a choice of convenience based on the ownership status of the land, its proximity to the city, and the level topography of the terrain (Alexandropoulos, 1970, p. 6-7). The land acquisitions initially took place at the Hasani, while the more affluent area of Elliniko was spared. The resident of Elliniko did not question or challenge the choice because it did not affect

them. It was a problem only for their poorer neighbors. And yet, despite its unreflecting boosterism concerning the age of the airplane and its peremptory call for Greece to join the technological revolution with an upgrade of its aerial infrastructure, the Greek government had chosen a piece of land ill-suited to handle the newer airplanes that needed longer runways, thus compelling a succession of expansion projects. The limited capacity of the airport would soon become such a pressing issue that it would shape the debate over the need of yet another new airport, and the possible decommissioning of Elliniko.

The potential airport location had greatly troubled the local inhabitants, who immediately started sending letters to newspapers in an effort to mobilize public opposition and overturn the decision.¹³ They first appealed to the sentiments of the public opinion about the second forced relocation of the 1,500 inhabitants who had managed under great difficulties to make a living in this arid place. A resident explained their frustration by saying that after their forced removal from their ancestral lands, they were finally relocated to the area of Hasani-Elliniko in the mid-1920s, and even though this settlement was one of the first to be completed, for two years they had to stay in the hills in tents before they gradually started to build their houses (“Tha tous paroun ta hōrafia,” 1935, p. 3).

With all the difficulties they faced, the residents of Hasani had managed to cultivate 170 acres of vineyard; 6,000 fruit trees; 40 acres of vegetable gardens; they raised 300 goats and sheep; 120 cows; 3,000 chickens; and 80 horses. Moreover, by

¹³ Maria Iordanidou (1978) very movingly describes the agony of the residents of Elliniko over the construction of the new airport in her novel “Like crazy birds.”

1936 they had paid back half the money they owned for the land they got as refugees (“1,500 atoma,” 1936, p. 5). In a letter sent to newspapers the president of the village stressed the hardships the people went through in order to make the land arable, but the prospect of a permanent settlement made them work hard. A second dislocation would have grave consequences on their well-being, so the villagers asked the government to revise its plans and build the airport in another location (“Kseklērizoun tous agrotēs,” 1935, p. 4). They also claimed that the decision to build the airport within the bounds of the city and in close proximity to urban settlements would have disastrous consequences in a period of war, as the airport would become the target of enemy fire (“Sēmeiōmata,” 1935, p. 3). This statement would be proven right during WWII, when the area suffered from extensive bombing.

On the other hand, the government and its proponents maintained that the construction of a civil airport was necessary as it was no more possible for the military airport of Tatoi to serve the needs of civil aviation. Also, the construction of the new airport was part of a larger effort to improve the tourist infrastructure of the country and enhance its role as a travel and commercial hub –especially between Europe and the Middle East, Africa and Asia (“Ē idrysē politikou aerolimenos,” 1935, p. 4).¹⁴ The new airport should be in close proximity to the center of Athens as well to the port of Piraeus. According to a navy officer and former director of the airport of Athens, Panagiotou, the three potential locations, which justified these criteria, were the Bay of Faliro, Elefsina, and Elliniko. The first had to be excluded due to the high cost for the land

¹⁴ Already in 1932, the government, in order to attract air traffic, decreased the airport use fees for foreign air-carriers all over the country (“Dia tēn episkepsin,” 1932, p. 2).

appropriation.¹⁵ The second hosted navy installations and the military opposed to the construction of a civil airport in close proximity. Thus, the Elliniko remained the optimal choice (“Endiaferonta zētēmata,” 1935, p. 1). Besides those who defended the choice of Elliniko on some objective grounds, there were also those who lobbied for the Elliniko choice, like the MP Ktenidis, or the former army officer Andreadis among others, who had bought land in the area, not for using it as a farming field but for profiting after the designation of the new airport (“Syntomes antapokriseis,” 1935, p. 5).

Those newspapers affiliated with the Liberal Party (which enjoyed wide support from the refugees), such as *Eleftheron Vima* and *Athinaika Nea* were sympathetic to the people’s concerns, and they refuted the above arguments, deploring the decision that would uproot the refugees for a second time. In response to the above rationale over the construction of the airport at Elliniko, *Eleftheron Vima* run a front page answer claiming that the list of potential locations should be expanded since the new airport did not need to be in very close proximity to the city’s center, as it was the case with airports in other European cities. Besides, the uprooting of the inhabitants should deem such an endeavor prohibitive (“Endiaferonta zētēmata,” 1935, p. 1). A few days later, the newspaper also hosted a letter by the president of the Hasani village, Themelidis (1936), who among other things he argued that the land acquisition through eminent domain would not be an easy process because as long as the refugees kept paying their mortgage obligations to the Agricultural Bank, they maintained ownership, as it was specified by the agreements

¹⁵ It seems that the location at Faliro Bay was the most suitable financially because the government already owned a large piece of land (where the airplane factory was located as well as the installations for the hydroplane facilities) and thus the land appropriation expenses would be minimal in comparison to the other locations (“To politikon aerodromion,” 1936, p. 4).

governing rehabilitation of the Asia Minor refugees. Moreover, he proposed other locations that might be more appropriate to host the airport like the Faliro Bay area, St. Andreas, and Sounio (Themelidis, p. 4). *Eleftheron Vima* also added to the above locations, the areas of Korydallos, Skaramangas and Elefsina. Moreover, the newspaper added that even though building the new airport further out would add a few minutes to the traveling time of visitors and airport workers to Athens's center, however, this should not be a reason for the uprooting of a whole community ("Sēmeiōmata," 1936a, p. 1). Even the pro-Royalist newspaper *Kathimerini* suggested that the most appropriate location would be along the coastal area between Skaramangas and Elefsina which was situated on the opposite site of the Elliniko area, to the west of Piraeus ("Neon aerodromion," 1936, p. 1).

The newspaper of the Communist Party of Greece, *Rizospastis*, underlined the social justice aspect of the problem and it run many stories on the second relocation of the refugees, urging them not to be fatalistic waiting for the inevitable to happen, or stay passive hoping for a substantial compensation; instead, they should organize and fight back ("Tha tous paroun ta hōrafia," 1935, p. 3). Indeed, the refugee farmers decided to organize and make an effort to reverse the government's plans. In December 11, 1935, 116 residents signed a petition to the King ("Oi katoikoi," 1935, p. 4),



Figure 2.7 Protest at the Royal Palace. A committee of Hasani peasants protesting against the construction of the airport. Retrieved from *Rizospastis* (1936, January 16, p. 3).

while two days later they formed a committee that would further coordinate their actions

and meet with government officials to discuss their concerns (“Sygkentrōsē sto Hasani,” 1935, p. 3).

On April 5, 1936, the residents gathered in the church and once again signed a petition addressed to the government, the leaders of all political parties, MPs, and the press, demanding the overturn of the decision to build the airport on their land. They also decided to raise black flags all over their settlement as a sign of mourning, and to close down the village’s offices, schools, and the church (“Diamartyria,” 1936, p. 6; “Gia na ftiaksoun aerodromio,” 1936, p. 4).

By April 1936, the villagers were in a state of desperation as the prime-minister Metaxas seemed unmoved by their anguish. They sent yet again a committee of fifty people to meet with government officials. Among others, they met with the prime-minister and aviation minister Metaxas on the 22nd of the same month. In response to their grievances, Metaxas explained that there was no alternative to the plans as Elliniko was the most suitable location for the new airport. He also assured them that the damage for the 1,500 residents would be minimal. When the representatives affirmed that this left them with no option other than to die fighting for their land, Metaxas declared that “We, military people, are not afraid of blood; when we decide something, it has to be done” (“O Metaxas apanta,” 1936, p. 4).

Metaxas probably meant what he said to the villagers. A few months later, on August 4th, 1936, after a boiling period of labor unrest, he staged a military coup the day before a general national strike, and he established one of the most repressive regimes in Greece’s history. Metaxas was a royalist general who had studied in Germany, and he

hoped to establish a fascist state, following the examples of Italy and Germany. He dealt with his political opponents with brutality, and he aimed at establishing an even more strongly centralized state which would not allow for any independent activities outside the established centers of power. His centralized administration was to be run from one center, the capital city, for reasons of greater control and for optimal administration (Sarigiannis, 2000).

Overall, in the case of Elliniko, all governments treated the local residents with contempt, and they never consulted with them in a meaningful manner over the proposed plans. One of the tactics used by government officials in the early stages of the discussion was to make promises to the locals that the plans would be reconsidered. Occasionally they would spread rumors that the airport would be finally built in another location

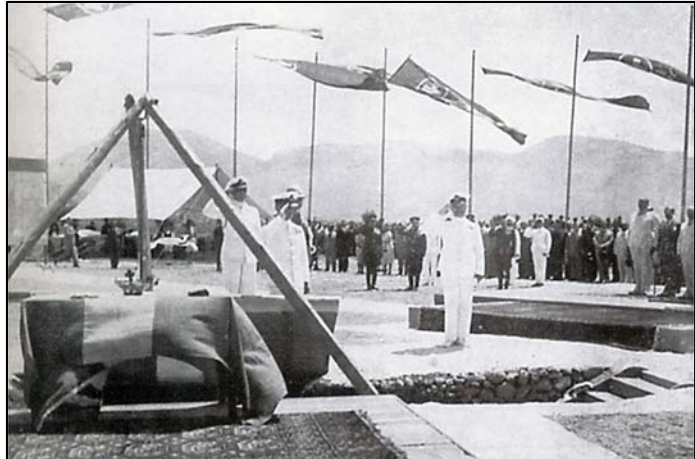


Figure 2.8 Foundation-laying ceremony of Hasani airport.
Retrieved from Hellenic Air Force Museum

and that the locals were safe from relocation (“O aerolimēn,” 1936, p. 1; “Sēmeiōmata,” 1936b, p. 3). Other times, the government would try to pacify the locals by “leaking” a cloud of rumors over the compensation they would get (“Dia tēn egkatastasin,” 1936, p. 5; “Tha tous paroun ta hōrafia,” 1935, p. 3; “To politikon aerodromion,” 1936, p. 1). Then, once again the government declared that the decision for Elliniko was final, and it accused the delay on the MP Glinos, one of Greece’s great intellectuals, who was affiliated to the communist party and was (“Dia to Hasani,” 1936, p. 1).

Finally, in 1937, September 15, the government acquired through eminent domain 530 acres for the construction of the airport (Government Gazette, 1937). The first civil airport of Athens was inaugurated in June 2, 1938. The ceremony was glorious, and was led by the King, the prime minister, political leaders, and government officials. It was proclaimed that Greece would join the club of an advanced web of countries connected with air transportation. The new airport would produce great financial and political benefits for the country, given its strategic geographical position

(“Sēmeiōmata,” 1938, p. 1; “To aerodromion,” 1938). Indeed,

Greek leaders anticipated an enhanced role for Greece in the international economy and specifically international trade. The story of the inauguration featured in the front pages of the main newspapers as a great breakthrough, while the credit was given to dictator Metaxas, who used it as a showcase for his effective leadership (“To aerodromion,” 1938, p. 1). In its first year of operation, the airport served 8,500 passengers and a ton of cargo (Kemanetzi, 2009), and it would serve Athens and Greece for sixty-three years as an icon of modernity. As naval officer Panagiotou (1938) suggested, the construction of the new



Figure 2.9 Aerial photograph of the airport in 1937. The red line marks the boundary of the airport as it was formed later. On the left part of the picture is the area where the airport was originally established. Retrieved from Organization for Planning and Environmental Protection of Athens.

airport provided the government with a unique opportunity to get rid, once and for all, of the “barbaric” name Hasani, by naming the new airport Elliniko (p.1).¹⁶

This early period in the history of modern Athens played a pivotal role in the ways the city developed over the years, when from a small town stricken by war, progressively became again the iconic city for Greeks and Hellenism. Yet, this was the result of decisions and processes taking place mostly outside the city’s boundaries. This was a period of great transformations in the world-system, witnessing the weakening of the once mighty empires and the strengthening of others, the creation of new nation-states, and above all the expansion of capitalism to new territories resulting into a new geometry of power of the inter-state system. Greece and other Balkan countries were integrated into this system “in a way that tended to keep them as underdeveloped and structurally backward as they had been before” (Ranki, 1985, p. 65). In Greek historiography, as in other parts of the periphery, the concept of foreign domination and its various forms has enjoyed widespread support in explaining the lagging behind western European societies. However, the explanatory appeal of this approach in academic circles seemed to fade away, especially after the 1990s, while lately it is gaining some popularity again because of the deepening economic crisis of 2007. A major criticism of those theories that place primary importance on the division of the world-system into core/semi-peripheries/peripheries and the dynamics of dominance of peripheries by core social formations, as described in Ghose (2001), is that these models

¹⁶ As back as 1898, the name Hasani was an issue of debate in the Greek parliament when Georgios Filaretos derided the government for using the Turkish name instead of the ancient name of the area Alimountas (Greek Parliament, 1898).

suffer from circular reasoning: “a country is poor because it is dependent, and it is dependent because it is poor” (p. 12). However, as shown in the case of Greece, the formation of the Greek state was indeed dependent on the Great Powers even before its very inception (this dependency had a multitude of economic, political, and cultural parameters all entwined together), while its mode of incorporation into the world-system reproduced and perpetuated this dependency. As Ranki (1985) again notes, “wherein the pull of the core did not operate simply through the automatic mechanism of the world market but on occasion took the form of administrative and political intervention as well, the limitations and distortions of the pattern of economic growth induced by the core were particularly obvious” (p. 65).¹⁷

Besides the obvious impact of financial dependency and its concomitant perceived or real economic difficulties, when it comes to urban space, this functioned as an ideological discourse of a constant state of emergency or a “state of exception” which foreclosed any possibilities and alternatives for a relatively egalitarian, relatively democratic city where the needs of the populace for a livable space would be the guiding principle of the decision making process, and at the same time it became the yardstick which would evaluate urban and social policy. Space and power became very tightly linked from the early years in the life of modern Athens. And even though those at the margins struggled to make their own spaces, the city building process was conditioned if not dictated by the power of elite groups. The marginalized reacted to the dominant vision of a city. The dominant cartography of power was reflected in the imposing primacy of Athens in the Greek system of cities, in the quarters of authority with their

¹⁷ See also the contributions in the same volume by Arrighi and Aymard.

monumental and/or elegant buildings, and in the exclusion of the marginalized and the spatial representation of social polarities. This interrelationship of power and space had a huge effect on people and moreover on how the society was organized.

Moreover, clientelistic networks were created as a substitute of democratic decision making mechanisms and institutions, and these networks would exert their influence to Greek politics until today. In this early period, the establishment of new regimes of property rights became critical for the city's future, where land grabs by powerful actors became normal, and formal planning processes had to succumb to the demands of private interests. In this process, public space became a resource that would allow for primitive accumulation to take place at a considerable scale. The political elites and their powerful allies consolidated their power in the center of the city, which was furnished with monumental architecture, in order to become the ideological center of the regime. On the other hand, in the periphery of the city planning procedures were absent or never followed. Instead, private planning proliferated to the benefit of land owners and at the expense of public property and public space. The advent of the Asia Minor refugees would exacerbate some of the problems, while it would further intensify uneven development, spatial segregation and political tensions. Political polarization would be halted by the force of military intervention, while it would resume again by the end of WWII. In the next two chapters we will see how the country would be caught once again into the geopolitics of Cold War, while economic development strategies and efforts to incorporate the urbanized working classes became a primary preoccupation of the ruling elites. Both of these two processes would have a great impact on the future of the city,

while decisions over the future of the airport would reflect the chosen strategies and tensions.

Chapter 3

Athens at War and the Transformation of Elliniko from a Flying Field to an Airport, 1940-1949

In September 16, 2011, Mikis Theodorakis, the most celebrated music composer of post-WWII Greece, and an iconic figure of the Resistance generation, despite his age and frail health went to the site of the former airport to participate in a festival against the Greek government's plans to privatize Elliniko. He offered his orchestra to give a concert as the culminating event of the festival, and he gave a speech about the significance of fighting against the site's privatization. He described the Elliniko land as the crown jewel of those public properties considered for privatization, and he added that "From this piece of land, that has the symbolic name Elliniko (which in the Greek language means Greek), they plan to start the selling off of our country." He made references to his generation's efforts to fight for freedom, democracy, and national sovereignty, and he urged the younger generations to do the same during these times of crisis. Theodorakis asked, "Are you ready to defend to the end this land that belongs to you?" (Local Web TV, 2011). In this way, he represented the particular demand for a public park as part of a wider struggle, or as Zizek (1999) puts it, "as a metaphoric condensation of the global opposition against Them" (p. 204). His aim was to politicize the struggle for Elliniko, and to paint it as a space of conflict, a truly political space.

Indeed, as this chapter will show, conflict and political struggle have been closely intertwined to the history of Elliniko. In fact, its story embodies the afflictions Greece went through during the tumultuous decade of the 1940s. This chapter will continue with the presentation of the Elliniko airport's history in relation to the steady transformation of Athens into a growing metropolis during the difficult years of WWII and the ensuing

civil war, between 1940 and 1949, a period that marks the transition of the airport from a plain airfield with dirt-covered runways and minimal equipment, into the only airport in Greece capable of handling international flights. This transition was instigated by the geopolitical dynamics of the time, and by the direct intervention of foreign powers. The protracted warfare stalled the discussion over the airport's relocation, and it secured Elliniko's status as the main airport hub of Greece. Surprisingly, the story of Elliniko during these years has escaped historians' attention. This seems to be an omission since, as this chapter will show, the histories of both the airport and the city were inextricably entwined over this period; Elliniko became a main theater of the drama played out in Athens, and its story is a stunning reflection of the city's history. In addition, as this study will later show, such an account will prove very helpful in drawing parallels with the present, as the debate over the future of the Elliniko's site is currently reaching its climax.

The destruction caused by the present sovereign debt crisis and the enormous plight of the Greek society is often compared in the public discourse to the devastation caused by war in the 1940s. Then, the invasion of the Axis powers turned Athens and Greece into occupied territories, leaving them shattered by the armed conflict and the plunder of their resources. In other European cities that suffered a similar fate, the massive scale of war destruction laid the ground for the peacetime reconstruction efforts and the implementation of innovative urban policies; this conjuncture prompted many intellectuals, politicians and planners to ask "Why not sweep away the defects of the past along with the rubble of the present and create a new urban world?" (Hohenberg & Lees, p. 341). Ideally, this would be the right moment for the implementation of

comprehensive development plans for Athens as well. However, in Greece this was not an option because the war was followed by civil strife, a second round of conflict, and a new series of interventions by outside powers.

Under these exceptional circumstances, concerns over urban planning and public space did not register in the public discourse. Politicians were consumed with the immediate conflict, and most people were preoccupied with the difficulties of survival. Yet, one should not be quick to assume that this period is of little relevance to the overall city's development, because it was at this time that massive transformative events would profoundly influence the subsequent urbanization patterns. In fact, even though the war ended in 1944, the spirit of resistance that Theodorakis mentioned in his speech continued to influence Greek society for a long time. Those who fought against the Nazis did so because they had certain hopes for the post-war period, and they demanded their right to influence the country's future. The same, of course, applied to those who collaborated with the occupying forces. The deep differences over the desired development trajectories, in conjunction with the direct intervention of the Allies, led to an acrimonious civil war that would critically impact the country's political landscape and shape its future development patterns. The destruction brought by the fight against the Axis powers, the intervention of the Allies and their tight grip on Greece's internal affairs; the role of their local allies, and people's resistance would all shape the history of Elliniko.

Following an early ambivalence of the Greek ruling elites towards the war, Greece entered into WWII on the side of the Allies after the Italian army invaded Greece through Albania in 1940. The Italian army had material superiority on the ground and in

the air, but, the Greek military successfully managed to push the Italian army back, then counter-attacked, taking control of territories in southern Albania. This was the first Allied land victory of the war, and given that Greece at this point was Britain's only "active ally," this early military success carried a profound psychological impact because it was "convincing proof that the Axis armies were not invincible" (Glogg, p. 136).

However, on April 6, 1941 German forces crossed the Greek border with Bulgaria and by April 27, had taken most of

the strategic sites, including

Athens. The rest of the

country was soon under the

control of Italian and

Bulgarian forces. The rapid

defeat and the subsequent

occupation of Greece

provided the Axis with

some geostrategic benefits. The Germans could free up military divisions as soon as

possible to reinforce their campaign against the Soviet Union, and also to support their

operations in northern Africa. But, they also recognized the regional utility inherent in

specific Greek sites and infrastructure. Upon their arrival, the Germans quickly identified

the airport of Athens as a critical location. They gradually built up their forces, and they

enhanced its operational capacity by upgrading its facilities and expanding its runway to

5, 900 feet (Avramopoulos, 1948, p. 7; Tzanavaris, 1947, p. 3).



Figure 3.1 German IV. Gruppe pilots at Elliniko airport. They met with the newly arrived Major Gustav Rödel, a Luftwaffe fighter ace, in August of 1943. Retrieved from Weal (2003, p. 97).

The Greek Resistance also made the airport a focus. They targeted it for sabotage and provided information about potential targets to Allied bombers (Agyralidis, 2013). This took place at multiple organizational scales, and sabotages were not always the result of well-planned missions. In many cases, spontaneous acts of resistance also caused damage to the airport's operation. The first incident took place in 1941. Dimitris Stefanidis, a seventeen year old boy, who lived with his family in Kalamaki, in an area adjacent to the west part of the airport, convinced his fifteen year old sister Eleni to assist him in his plan to fight the Nazis. He planned to sneak into the reserve fuel depot of the airport along an adjacent creek, and then open up the gasoline barrels and spill the fuel. After his first successful attempt, he repeated his mission many times. From their house, his sister Eleni kept watch for approaching German patrols, or at other times she approached the guard post pretending that she was herding her two goats in order to distract the guards. Overall, the two siblings would cause the loss of almost a thousand barrels of fuel. Eleni remembered that sometime later she heard that the Germans killed a boy who had tried to cut cable cords in the airport, but it was not her brother; he would be killed later, during the battle of Athens, by the British and their local allies ("To sampotaz," 1975, pp. 3, 12).

Many Greek fighters had a similar fate. Thanasis Kalampokas, who worked in the German-held Hasani airport as a translator, assisted resistance fighters who broke into the airport and stole guns. After the end of the war, he was exiled and killed during the civil war. Another resistance fighter named Tsaperis also worked in the airport during the occupation, where he repeatedly poured sand into the fuel tanks of German airplanes. He was caught and handed a triple death sentence, but he managed to escape while he

was hospitalized. Well after the Nazis left the city, the Greek courts condemned him in 1945 to twenty years imprisonment for allegedly having killed a collaborationist police officer during the occupation (“Germaniko stratodikeio,” 1945, p. 4). However, the most well-known sabotage at the airport was accomplished by Jerzy Szajnowicz-Iwanow, a Polish-born swimmer with the athletic club Iraklis, who lived in Thessaloniki. He was trained as a saboteur by the British in the Middle-East, and on May 1943, he managed to enter the airport disguised as a German soldier, blowing up fuel supplies and a large number of aircrafts (Nikoloudis, 2004; Varvounis, 2006). He was handed to the Germans by a Greek police officer and executed at the shooting range of Kaisariani, a site of executions during the occupation. His resistance activity during WWII was immortalized in Strumph Wojtkiewicz Stanislaw’s 1966 book *Agent nr 1*, and in a 1976 Polish movie with the same title (figure 2). The athletic club Iraklis of Thessaloniki has named its indoor stadium after him. Iwanow had also collaborated with the Evia-born Lela Karagianni, one of the iconic figures of the resistance, who, according to Manolis Glezos (2006), had also carried out sabotage against the airport by blowing up a fuel depot (p. 445).



Figure 3.2 Jerzy Iwanow.

A Greek newspaper advertisement for the movie Iwanow, Secret Agent Number 1. Retrieved from Themata Ellēnikēs Istorias.

Despite all these subversive efforts, the airport under German control never ceased to operate. On May 20, 1941, their aircraft embarked from the Hasani airport for

the battle of Crete, the frontline for control of the eastern Mediterranean. The airplanes that took off from Hasani were transporting paratroopers who were to participate in the first mainly airborne invasion in military history.¹⁸ Upgrading the airport became an immediate priority for the Germans, who sought to make it a refueling and supply post for Rommel's army, which was to be engaged in a campaign to capture Alexandria. In



Figure 3.3 German pilots. Reporting recent action upon return to Elliniko, probably from a mission over Crete. Retrieved from Third Reich color pictures.

addition, their top-secret unit *Kampfgeschwader 200* established a command unit at the airport, called *Kommando Sud*, with the purpose of establishing a chain of wireless posts in North Africa, and, eventually, of dropping agents there (Meredith, 2012, p. 206). In order to take by surprise the British forces in Egypt, German plans called for the speedy widening of the runway by employing forced labor. To this end, the quisling government in Athens issued an emergency civil conscription order.¹⁹

The National Liberation Front (EAM), however, devised a plan to derail the order with a heroic act of resistance: it called for a massive demonstration on the 22nd of December, 1942, during which organizers occupied the Ministry of Labor and burned all

¹⁸ This was also the first time in WWII that the Axis forces met massive resistance from a local population. In today's crisis-ridden Greece, the historic site of Crete's Maleme airport, where the fiercest battles took place, is also being considered for privatization, mostly for the construction of upscale housing.

¹⁹ Interestingly, in today's Greece, the Troika (the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund, and the European Central Bank) demand from the Greek government catalogs with the names of public sector workers to be fired as a precondition for the continuation of "financial assistance" programs.

the conscription catalogs (Hronakis, 1981, p. 9). This demonstration was the first coordinated mobilization that brought together, in the streets of Athens, students and different sectors of the working class, in an exemplary show of solidarity, and also in demonstrating the organizational maturity of EAM (Haralampidis, 2012). Though Germany and Greek's collaborative government subsequently responded with deadly force, Hasani was prevented from serving as a refueling post for Rommel, and his plans for attacking Alexandria were scuttled.

Ultimately, however, Elliniko went from an airport with no infrastructure and with a dirt-covered airstrip, to becoming fully operational with a proper runway under Nazi control. To accommodate its expansion, the Germans demolished adjacent residential areas –approximately 150 houses (“Tha gkremisoun,” 1947, p. 3).

Construction was achieved with the combination of forced labor and the collaboration of some Greek engineers, who availed themselves of the opportunity to make hefty profits, often paid in gold. These collaborators were also known as the “notorious engineers” for the services they offered to the Nazis in building airports, army barracks, military fortifications, and other defensive infrastructure. They were never brought to justice after the end of the war, and in the meanwhile many escaped to other countries (“Germaniko stratodikeio,” 1945, p.4).

In his diary, Hristos Hristidis (1971), a lawyer, who also served in the United Nations as a member of the Greek delegation, and whose house was demolished by the airport's expansion, provides a fascinating account of the efforts of the Elliniko residents to fight their removal by appealing to the Germans and their local collaborators. In his chronicle, and in stark contrast to the story of the working class inhabitants of Hasani

who, as we saw in the previous chapter, had fought against the construction of the airport many years ago, Hristidis describes his narration as a psychographic depiction of those upper-middle-class Greeks who inhabited the Elliniko settlement, and whose real personalities became apparent only because of the debacle of the airport's expansion. He notes:

The sudden storm that broke in the quiet community of Elliniko, where a few hundred quiet homeowners lived, refugees and locals, suddenly gave the opportunity to elucidate the vivid characteristics of various types and characters, to discover virtues and weaknesses, vanities, ulterior motives, selfishness, pettiness, and those other qualifications and defects that came then to the surface. Not only of those victims who lost their homes. But also of various benevolent others who hastened to offer their services, in their own way, seeking naturally to get the most out of it for themselves (p. 59).

The residents' disbelief that such a disaster could have happened to "upright" and law-abiding citizens of their social status led them to the illusionary impression that if they tried to appeal to the Germans, then maybe they could convince them to spare their houses. The loss of their homes did not only pose a material threat over their own very survival, as was the case of the poor peasants of Hasani, but it also jeopardized their own social status, as their houses in the garden city of Elliniko represented the quintessential "middle class assets" associated with position and privilege, functioning as visible markers of their own identities. So, with a fatalistic despair, and a shocking *mors tua, vita mea* approach, they hoped to persuade the Germans to opt instead for a northwestward expansion, into the Alimos settlement. Their initial meetings were convened to come up with plans to

make this happen. But, to Hristidis' astonishment, when the German Air General Hellmuth Felmy (accompanied by Prime Minister Tsolakoglou) visited the airport for an inspection, their tactic did not prove very ingenious: "As I found out, the plan was to have the ladies plead with him to spare Elliniko's residences" (p. 124).²⁰

Soon, they realized that the Germans were indifferent to their appeals, and that the Greek collaborationist politicians did not have any sway over the decision. Therefore, they turned to the quisling government for at least arranging the compensation details for their properties. The quislings, while they were ruthlessly authoritarian when they dealt with political dissent by Greeks, were totally submissive to the Nazi officers' orders. Hristidis' opinion of them and the people who manned the state apparatus was not very sympathetic, as he experienced their subservience to the German military officers, and their unwillingness and incapability to provide any worthy services to people:

... the bureaucrats of the government ministries added their own variety, believing that they served the national interest - i.e. the public - trapping or *slaughtering with cotton* [killing softly] the rights of the victims. Not from malice, of course, rather than from *work ethic conscientiousness and habit* [emphasis added]. Regardless of names and offices, the recounting of the adventure of the Elliniko residents contains the elements of a short-dramatic farce (p. 59).

²⁰ Hellmuth Felmy was commander of Army Group Southern Greece, who after the war was tried as a war criminal during the Hostages Trial (called officially, The United States of America vs. Wilhelm List, et al.). He was found guilty for crimes against humanity, and sentenced to fifteen years in prison. Like many other Nazi war criminals, he was set free after three years. In Greek history, his name is mostly associated with the massacre of Kalavryta; however, no Greek government ever requested his extradition, nor ever demanded war reparations for the Nazi atrocities to this day.

Hristidis' irony over the work ethic of the quisling system is very penetrating and relevant to today's circumstances, as increasingly we witness politicians and technocrats making choices with devastating results for millions of Greeks. They justify their actions on a strict adherence to the tenets of the political and economic orthodoxy, and also to their strong, or rather superior, professional work ethic. Their political behavior seems to have many resemblances to that of the Nazi appointed leadership of the Jewish ghettos, as it is described in Gustavo Corni's book titled *Hitler's Ghettos: Voices from a Beleaguered Society 1939-1944*. Nowadays, in many Greek oppositional newspapers, magazines, and popular websites and blogs, many references are made to the resemblances of the contemporary Greek governments to the quisling governments of WWII, especially their hollow nationalist rhetoric, and their obedience to the dictates of foreign politicians and institutions in exchange for their support. However, many residents believed that they had a chance with the Greek collaborationist politicians. Many tried to work individually, behind the scenes, declaring their loyalty to them by betraying any collective effort, especially after they realized that the demolition was inevitable.

When in the summer of 1941, the question over the relocation of the Elliniko residents was raised, there were given by the Tsolakoglou [the quisling Prime Minister] government official assurances that the people who lost their houses would be compensated 'immediately and in full' in order to be able to find housing elsewhere ... Then, with solemnity and profundity, a series of studies, debates, backroom consultations, plans and counter-plans began. A year and a half had passed, and when finally the law on the compensation for the expropriation of Elliniko was published, inflation had naturally carried out the job, and what the residents of Elliniko

and Hasani would receive for their lost homes, at the time of the payments it represented the value of a door, and perhaps even a sink of their house (p. 60).

Again, the resemblances to the reactions of the previous upper-middle class residents of Elliniko whose houses were to be demolished by the Metaxas dictatorship, and to the role of politicians and experts in disorienting and pacifying the locals with promises and technical analyses are striking, as we will see in the coming chapters.

But it was not only the residents around the airport who had suffered during the Nazi occupation. The whole population of Greece suffered enormously and in many ways. Malnutrition and starvation caused an estimated 300,000 to 400,000 deaths, mostly of people in urban, working class neighborhoods (Hionidou, 2006; Mpournova, 2005). The food crisis was particularly severe in Athens because the war destroyed Greece's transportation network, leaving the city's inhabitants in almost complete isolation. Sea ports were the only viable options for the transport of food and other products from outside the country. The Allied blockade of these ports, however, further constricted the flow of food and other necessities to Athenians. The port of Piraeus and the airport of Hasani were absolutely critical points in the Axis supply chain, and thus they became the targets of British and US bombers, especially at night. In efforts to delay the expansion of its runways and diminish its operational capacity, Hasani was bombed at least twelve times by Allied Forces. Hristidis (1971) mentions that after a round of Allied bombs that fell in the residential areas of the Hasani village, the residents

packed their belongings and found refuge at the slopes of Mount Hymettus, where they had already dug caves. He also notes that even though the people seemed desperate, the appearance of the

British airplanes gave them courage (p. 32).

Maria Rezan (2000), a

Greek journalist of

Jewish descent, who

upon the arrival of the

Axis armies in Athens

had to hide in an area

very close to the airport,

very vividly described in

her autobiography her

experience and the people's sentiment about the Allied bombings:

We decided to hide in the house of my mother-in-law's seamstress, the famous Magdalene in Ilioupoli. Just off Hasani, today's Elliniko. It was a sparsely populated area, one house here and the other a little further down, and almost all with gardens. It seemed a good place to hide.

And I remember our youthful audacity and true joy as we climbed to the roof of the house, we at home of Magdalene, others in other homes, and loiter the English planes, which first made a couple of rounds over the Hasani [airport], and then they threw the bombs on the premises of the Germans, trying to escape the anti-aircraft that hit them from below. "Well done guys, struck them" we shouted. And we didn't care if someone listened to us (pp. 68-69).



Figure 3.4 The airport being bombed by the USAAF 463rd Bomb Group (B-17's) on 15 September 1944. Notice the expansion of the airstrip by the occupying forces, and the further encroachment of the airport into the residential areas of Elliniko. Adapted from *Abandoned, forgotten & little known airfields in Europe*.

The Allies also targeted residential areas adjacent to the airport where the Germans had hidden military equipment. Thus, though the city proper was never bombed during the war, the settlements surrounding the airport were repeatedly targeted. What some locals had predicted many years before the construction of the airport was now happening.²¹ On one day alone, June 27, 1943, thirty-eight people were killed and sixty left wounded when an Allied airstrike tore through a large group of swimmers off the coast of the airport (“Ta thymata tou vomvardismou,” 1943, p. 1). Similar incidents continued to occur throughout the German occupation of Athens, with the many civilian victims left in their wake discreetly catalogued under the jargon of “collateral damage.” Even after the Germans departed from Athens its residents were not free of fatal hazards: the land mines laid around the airport continued to claim civilian lives (“Kindynos,”

²¹ In his book over the role of the Fifteenth Air Force on American strategic bombing operations in Europe during WWII, Kevin Mahoney (2013) provides details on some of the bombing campaigns against the German held Elliniko airport, also called Kalamaki airport by the Americans due to the proximity to the Kalamaki municipality. In this account no mention is made of any bombings of residential areas or damage done to the civilian population. --

November 17, 1943, “Forty-four P-38s of the 82nd Fighter Group also flew to Greece escorting more B-25s from the Twelfth Air Force during an attack on Kalamaki Airfield, near Athens. They engaged up to twelve enemy fighters on the mission and claimed one destroyed, later confirmed” (p. 12). --

December 6, 1943, “Fifty-six B-17s from the 97th and 301st Bomb Groups attacked Kalamaki Airfield, also near Athens. The raid destroyed fourteen aircraft on the field, despite moderate, accurate flak. Almost twenty enemy aircraft, including Me 110s, attacked the bombers and in the ensuing twenty minutes air battle the bombers claimed six destroyed and four probables. Fortresses from the 2nd and 99th Bomb Groups, escorted by the 14th fighter Group, reached their target, but could not bomb due to heavy overcast” (p. 24).

-- December 14, 1943, “At Kalamaki Airfield near Athens, also called Hasani in some group reports, seventy-five bombers of the 2nd, 97th, and 301 Bomb Groups, escorted by thirty fighters from the 1st Fighter Group, bombed the field. The raid destroyed eight aircraft and damaged runways, hangars, and the aircraft dispersals as the airfield put up mostly moderate, accurate flak” (Mahoney, p. 26).

-- September 24, 1944, “The 98th, 376th, and 450th Bomb Groups struck Kalamaki Airfield, near Athens, with eighty-four B-24s. This raid damaged the main hangars, aircraft dispersals, and a storage dump. The attack also destroyed nine aircraft” (p. 242).

-- September 15, 1944, “The 2nd, 97th, 99th, and 463rd Bomb Groups hit Kalamaki airfield near Athens. Their 109 Fortresses destroyed eight aircraft and cratered the landing field” (p. 235).

-- October, 6, 1944, “The 332nd returned to Greece as fifty-five Mustangs strafed Megara, Eleusis, Tatoi, and Kalamaki Airfields where they claimed the destruction of at least eight enemy aircraft” (p. 249).

1945, p. 3).²² Unexploded ordnances from this period would be found around the airport as late as 2003 when demolition experts were searching for old land mines and discovered five bombs (“Two World War II bombs,” 2003).

Though the Axis occupation lasted for only three years, the devastation it wrought within Greek society was overwhelming and long-lasting. Athenians, especially, would pay a particularly high price, even though the city-proper never became a primary target of Axis aerial bombing campaigns, as was the case for other European cities. One man in particular, Konstantinos Doxiadis (1946), played a critical role compiling statistics of the war’s devastation on the Greek people. Later he would come to prominence because of his planning ideas and his influence on Athens’s planning, but during the war years he made reports to the British and Greek governments as an employee of the Ministry of Public Works. The war exacted an extremely heavy human toll: Greece had the highest number of victims as a percentage of the population at 6.2 percent. For comparison, the Soviet Union, the country with the next highest percentage, had three percent. Twenty-five percent of Greek forests were cleared, with certain regions suffering a particularly high price: Attiki lost a staggering seventy-five percent of its forest.²³ The destruction of the building stock was also unprecedented: twenty-three percent of all existing structures were destroyed, leaving 300,000 homeless as of 1945. According to Lampropoulou (2009), the housing problem was the most tragic and the most pressing, especially for the

²² On 1944, a mine blast claimed the life of Dimitris Indukovic, who was a soccer player for the Ethnikos club. He died on his way home, on the central road to the airport, after a day’s work as a fisherman. He was twenty seven years old.

²³ During the war and the subsequent occupation, forests around Athens were cleared either by fires or by logging done by people who did not have any money and needed the wood as a source of fuel, and also by those who sold the wood as a source of income (Hristidis, 1971).

working class neighborhoods of Athens. Particularly vulnerable to starvation and disease were the urban refugees from Asia Minor. This group already led a tenuous existence on the fringe of Greek society, but the war made life in their adopted country almost impossibly difficult. They did not have extended social networks or access to the countryside that could help them survive, as did many native Greeks.²⁴ Agricultural production was reduced by forty percent and animal farming by fifty percent. The destruction of transportation networks was almost total: the rail network was destroyed, the road network was destroyed, four hundred bridges were destroyed, and seventy percent of the merchant fleet was destroyed, as well as the facilities of many ports. This situation stalled the transportation of food from the countryside to the large urban centers, especially Athens. Agricultural production declined by seventy percent, and industrial production did not exceed one third of pre-war levels (Nikolaidou, 1993). Making matters worse, the occupying army confiscated most of the production, expropriated many businesses, and emptied the state's coffers by demanding compulsory loans (Mazower, 2001). Sarigiannis (2000) notes that the Germans had devised economic plans for the plundering of Greece before the invasion; they intended to use Greece as an agricultural and mining country, keeping its industries fully dependent on Germany and its allies.

Overall, WWII and the Nazi occupation caused a severe blow to the productive base of Athens, and disrupted the social relations of capitalist reproduction. In the face of such an immense destruction, the successive collaborative governments proved totally

²⁴ Mouzelis (1978) also notes that upon their arrival in Athens, the Germans destroyed many refugee hovels as being hubs of the underground resistance movement (p. 139).

incompetent in managing the situation, and occupied themselves with their personal enrichment (Kofas, 1989). The basic state economic functions were paralyzed, monetary policy was in shambles, and the tax collection system totally impaired (Stathakis, 2004). Further humanitarian catastrophe was only mitigated by foreign humanitarian aid and the efforts of EAM.

Under these conditions, the rise of a black market was inevitable. As we saw above, the occupation and the ensuing crisis provided reasons for resistance, but it also presented opportunities for collaboration and personal gain. Many Greeks collaborated with the occupying army by operating a black market of foodstuffs. These black marketers became wealthy as they took advantage of people's desperate need for food. In order to survive, many Greeks were forced to sell their homes and other land holdings. It is estimated that 350,000 properties changed hands during the occupation. The entrepreneurs in position to take advantage of the buyer's market would later become a substantial part of the new bourgeoisie that arose after the 1950s.²⁵ For other Greeks, their predicament had no end, as they were transported to Germany where they worked as forced labor in factories –Mazower (2001) puts their number at 15,000, while thousands of others were driven to concentration camps. Hohenberg & Lees note (1995) that “The Reich's war machine tried to organize the urban economies of the occupied lands to

²⁵ Giorgos Theotokas (1980) vividly described the quandary of those who fell into the claws of the black marketers: “There is a lot of hidden misery. The old middle class dwindles financially, living by selling off their assets, artwork, furniture etc., utensils and clothes which are bought by the new rich of the black market. Essentially, these classes are bankrupt. The nouveau rich are adventurers acting in a jungle, seeking whatever they can grab. Of course, many of them are part of the old rich who adapted and now they make money using the methods of the nouveau rich, however, most of them are misfits, who plummet sooner or later from wealth to poverty” (as cited in Stathakis, 2004).

furnish labor and materials, but often opted instead to coerce the labor to Germany” (p. 341).

With the defeat of the Axis, Greece passed into the British, and then the US, sphere of influence. However, the defeat of the Axis forces did not mark the end of Greek people’s predicament. While in most European cities the end of the war was followed by massive reconstruction efforts, often inspired by innovative city-building ideas, in Greece the devastation of WWII would be followed by yet another invasion by foreign armies and a bloody civil war. Not surprisingly, the airport continued to figure as a critical theater in these struggles.

Upon the departure of the Axis forces, the British were preoccupied with the strength of the ELAS (Greek People's Liberation Army), the military arm of EAM, which, problematically for the British, desired a socialist future for Greece.

To thwart the political development of these resistance fighters, the

British employed Greeks who were former Nazi collaborators to persecute them and prevent them from taking Athens. In due course, however, Britain took the step of invading Greece outright. On October 12, 1944,

Elements of the 4th Parachute Battalion and the 2nd Parachute Squadron were dropped at Megara Airfield from whence they moved to nearby



Figure 3.5 Greek Prime Minister Georgios Papandreu at Elliniko.

Welcoming pilots of the 13th squadron in 1944.
Retrieved from Hellenic Air Force Museum.

Athens. On the following day, commando units and elements of the Sacred Squadron landed at the port city of Piraeus and proceeded to take over the Kalamaki Airfield. By 16 October, General Scobie was in Athens to be followed on the 18th by Papandreou and principal Greek governmental officials (Gardner, 1962, p. 192).

The British army presence would eventually reach 16,000, and it would regard Athens as an occupied city (Prevelakis, 2001).

Initially, the British general Ronald Scobie, fearing the ELAS forces that besieged the center of Athens, stayed in Hasani. In case of an all-out attack by ELAS, the British had plans to use Hasani as a regrouping ground (Leontaritis, 1986, p. 61), but in the absence of any offensive action by the ELAS forces, Churchill insisted that retreat was not an option, and he kept sending reinforcements (Rousos, 1978, p. 370). In fact Gabriel Kolko (1968) notes that Churchill was obsessed with the growth of the left in the Balkans, and especially, Greece. They handled the Greek mutiny with operation MANNA. Britain also wasted no time establishing its dominance in the air: At first, British troops occupied the airport of Megara, outside Athens, and then several squadrons flew into Hasani (Flintham, 1990). On November 16, a month after the first ground forces had arrived, additional squadrons of British airplanes landed in the airport, and later used to attacking working class neighborhoods; Hasani would become the main hub for RAF's operations. In December 18, Laird Archer (1983) notes that Field Marshal Alexander realized "the critical situation of his forces in Athens and with the city cut off

from both sea and countryside, over 200 planes loaded with men and munitions have been able to land at Hassani airport” (p. 184). So, as the airport became an essential site in their strategy, immediately upon their arrival they devoted a few thousand soldiers to guard it (Vlantas, 1977). The British Field Marshal Alexander ordered General Scobie to make the safety of the airport his first priority (Hellenic Army General Staff, 1973, p. 155) In fact, when Winston Churchill (1953) arrived in Athens (figure 3.6) in December 25, 1944, he encountered two thousand troops guarding the airfield (p. 312).

Moreover, the British army strategically focused its energies at securing the center of Athens, the nerve center of Greece; the Syggrou Avenue that connected the city center to the airport; and, the coastal route that connected the airport to the port of Piraeus. Due to the inadequate road network connecting the airport to the city, the interposition of working class suburbs between Athens and the airport posed many security risks. In order to maintain continuing transportation, the British army established a service of armored vehicles, the so-called Athens Taxi Service. Rupert Clarke (2000) explains that



Figure 3.6 Winston Churchill in Athens. He arrived at the center of Athens from Elliniko in an armored “taxi service” vehicle in 1944, December 25. Retrieved from M. Ioannidis “Dekembrēs 1944 stēn Athēna,” [December of 1944 in Athens]. *Avgi*, 2013, December 25, <http://www.avgi.gr/article/1568220/dekembris-1944-stin-athina-i-apopeira-anatinaxis-tou-xenodoxeiou-tis-megalis-bretannias>

Kalamaki was the only airfield now available to the British and 23rd Armoured Brigade had had to establish an armoured “taxi service” with scout cars and command vehicles between it and Scobie’s 3 Corps Headquarters in the centre of the city. Sniper fire was heavy, making that journey very unpleasant (p. 187).

The British directly engaged the resistance fighters in the Battle of Athens, using its airport to fly in essential supplies (Flintham, 1990; Robertson, 1984). “At first, things looked bleak for the Papandreou government, its supporters, and the small British garrison holding the center of the capital and the Hellenikon airport along the coast, but little else” (Iatrides & Rizopoulos, 2000, p. 94). Surprisingly, the ELAS fighters never attempted to take Athens, even though they initially had the capacity to do so, enjoying a clear military advantage over their opponents up until the arrival of the British forces.²⁶ According to Kolko (1968), “at the time the ELAS offered to disarm in the Athens area, on December 22, they controlled four-fifths of Greece, and Field Marshal Alexander warned Churchill that he would not be able to reconquer more than the Athens-Piraeus area” (p. 191).

Even more surprisingly, when the Nazis were leaving Athens, ELAS did not move to occupy and control the airport. Perhaps this had something to do with the upcoming Yalta Conference (Spencer, 1952). In fact, right after the Nazi departure, ELAS fighters prevented the soldiers of the Greek government from occupying the

²⁶ Mikis Theodorakis, who was a member of ELAS, explained that at that time the population of Athens was at the brink of starvation. The British supplied foodstuffs, and also controlled access to the port of Piraeus. In the case of a takeover, ELAS was expecting a blockade, and given that it did not have large warehouses stockpiled with food, it would have had an extremely hard time feeding the people (Malouhos, 2003).

airport because they feared they would hand it to the British. They argued that the airport belonged to ELAS. However, after the intervention of the minister of the national unity government Ioannis Zevgos, who was a member of EAM, they allowed the army to take over with the condition that the ELAS flag flew on the airport's flagpole (Hellenic Army General Staff, 1973, p. 83). The ELAS

fighters did overrun the British Air headquarters at Kifissia on December 20, 1944. Capell (1946) explains that "it was all along expected that ELAS would attack the Khasani airport, but not Kifissia. They chose Kifissia, which is lost. Not a vital loss, as Khasani would have been" (p. 131). To his surprise,

ELAS also attacked other locations, such as the Averof prison, hoping to arrest and try the quisling Prime Minister Ioannis Rallis, but he continues, "we are lucky that they did not make for the capture of Khasani airport before General Ward's division arrived; but they lost sight of this in their eagerness to mop up the Athens police, their old enemies. If they had kept their eye on the ball they would have let Rallis and the police wait" (p. 116). For Jackson & Gleave (1987), the mistake the national liberation fighters made was that they did not fire the first shot. In their detailed account, the authors, both British army officers, indicate that this hesitation caused the loss of the battle of Athens.

Just before the arrival of British forces, the commander of all armed forces in Attiki-Athens, including ELAS, General Spiliotopoulos, a former head of gendarmerie in



Figure 3.7 Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery at Hasani airport on 1946, June 22. Right behind him is General Spiliotopoulos. Retrieved from "O Montgomery eis tas Athēnas," 1946, June 23. [Montgomery in Athens]. *Empros*, p. 1.

the quisling government of Prime Minister Tsolakoglou, and who the British appointed as the military head in accordance with the Agreement of Caserta, gave the order not to occupy the airport, allegedly to avoid provoking any further destruction by the departing Nazi forces (Makris, 1985).²⁷ Upon their departure, the Nazis destroyed the airport's runways anyway (Capell, 1946). However, the British made an agreement with the departing Nazis that spared parts of the landing field (Hellenic Army General Staff, 1973, p. 83). Then, the British forces occupied it right after, allowing them to easily establish a line between the port of Piraeus, the airport, and Faliro, which was the landing ground for the British army.

The first act of the approaching civil war took place on December 3, 1944 when the British forces and the former Nazi collaborators opened fire at a huge peaceful rally in central Athens, leaving twenty eight dead and many more wounded. This well-calculated provocation led to a series of attacks: British snipers would fire at will, making the streets of Athens dangerous to navigate, and British airplanes would take off from Hasani to bomb working class neighborhoods for supporting ELAS (Gasparinatos, 1998, p. 329). "The Athenian landscape," writes Panourgia (2009), "was once more a war zone, only now with the incongruity of occupation by a friendly force. The German tanks had been replaced by British ones, the SS and Gestapo officers by British soldiers, Nepali Ghurkhas and various other armed groups not readily identifiable" (p. 70). Initially the former liberation fighters seemed to have a chance—the popularity of their cause was growing, and they had a substantial presence in most of Athens. There was

²⁷ It is interesting to note that the British gave an order of no harassment for the departing Nazis all over Greece.

also an even more significant force outside Athens, the “mountainous” ELAS which never entered the capital. But the superiority of the British army and its ability to use boats and airplanes tilted the outcome of the battle, and finally on February 12, 1945, the two sides came to terms in the Treaty of Varkiza. With this agreement, the left had to surrender their arms, with the promise of elections within a year, and the removal of the Nazi collaborators from all branches of the government. In addition, the Communist Party and EAM (National Liberation Front) would be legalized, and all political prisoners would be set free from prisons and internment camps. “Even before the ink was dry the agreement broke down, for it alone would not successfully eliminate the Left, and for the British there could be no respite” (Kolko, 1968, p. 193).

Internment camps could be found around Athens in Elliniko-Hasani, Kalyvia, Goudi and other places. The prisoners at Hasani were an assortment of the displaced and disinherited: disabled soldiers from the Albanian front, liberation fighters of ELAS, captured Germans, criminals, various invalids in need of medical attention, including patients suffering from tuberculosis and mental illness, as well as women and children who had been swept up in the vicissitudes of war (Nikolis, 1983). In charge of the camp was a thug named Morfis, a member of the notorious Special Security Unit who had closely collaborated with the SS (Farakos, 2000; Hatzis, 1982).²⁸ In general, Hasani’s 3,000 prisoners suffered in miserable and inhumane living conditions (“Apolysis,” 1945, p. 1), but some captives—notably the ELAS liberation fighters and their leadership—

²⁸ The Special Security Unit of Athens (Διεύθυνση Ειδικής Ασφαλείας του Κράτους) was a police force formed with the objective of smashing communist groups. During the occupation, it collaborated with the SS, and other Nazi security units, assassinating its political adversaries and sending many others to concentration camps in Germany and elsewhere. After the liberation, it fought along with the British against leftist and pro-independence groups (Handrinos, 2012).

were singled out and tortured mercilessly.²⁹ Beatings and other forms of torture occurred routinely and systematically in the maximum security camp of Hasani, which the newspaper *Rizospastis* labeled as the “death camp” or the “Decembrist Bastille” (“Antiprosōpeia,” 1945, p. 1; “Argopethainoun,” 1945, p. 1). The rightist Greeks Britain had installed—many of them former Nazi collaborators—cast a wide net in their attempt to snuff out the socialist movement, imprisoning many with nebulous or even circumstantial ties to the Left. In fact, the jails and detention centers became so overcrowded that the British had to send many political prisoners to El Daba, a detention center off the Egyptian coast. The camp at Hasani became the first stop of these prisoners before their extradition to Egypt. Estimates of the number of antifascist fighters detained in El Daba range from 8,500 to 15,000.³⁰

After the ELAS fighters handed in their arms, the British and their local allies refused to honor many of the tenets of the agreement, including the release of political

²⁹ Thimios Kapsis, known by his nom de guerre Captain Anapodos, was one of the well-known military commanders of the Democratic Army of Greece (DSE) who was imprisoned at Hasani. He managed to escape from his prison with the help of one of the airport workers, named Vlahoutsikos. He was from the island of Evia and had fought in the Albanian front against the Italians. After the departure of the Germans, he found a job at the airport, where appalled by the atrocities, he helped Kapsis to escape, and later followed him to the mountains of Evia as his number two officer (“Timēsan,” 2008, p. 21).

³⁰ Neni Panourgia (2009) recorded the tribulation of political prisoners who were sent to El Daba. She cites a song that described their ordeal: “[It] is from a folk song, whose lyrics were adapted to the realities of Al Dab 'a. The original song, from the islands, was a love song (of sorts) about a woman who owned a fishing boat. It was adapted by Vassilis Tsitsanis early in 1945 and was recorded in 1946 by Tsitsanis and Stratos Payioumtzis” (pp. 240-241).

I will tell you a story	At Goudi and at Hasani	And they gave us a drop
From captivity	And from there to the port	Of condensed milk
One day of the war	They put us in the boat	The English would not forget
I would never have believed it	And they took us to Port Said	The Greek cuisine
The English rounded us up	They brought us to El Ntampa	And they fed us regularly peas
With their tanks they captured us	On our back they put a stamp	
They took our wristwatches	They gave us two spoonfuls of	We don't want the milk
By force or by persuasion	marmalade, once a week	Nor the marmalade
In the lorries they put us	They gave us peanuts	The only thing we want
And we suffered much	That you use to feed the goats	Is to go back to sweet Greece

prisoners. The period known as the White Terror ensued, leading eventually to a civil war (1946-1949). Hasani's 3,000 prisoners, learning that their captors intended to renege on their promise, went on a hunger strike. In an exemplary show of solidarity, everybody participated, even the sick and injured. To their British wardens' surprise and consternation, they stayed in their tents the whole day, coming out only briefly in the morning to chant the national anthem ("Argopethainoun," 1945, p. 1). Under the pressure of public outcry, the next day, the government avowed that all prisoners would be released within a week ("O agōnas," 1945, p. 1). Gradually, those imprisoned in El Daba were given their release, but instead of going free, they were led back once again to Hasani ("Ērthan ston Peiraia," 1945, p. 2). In the following months, subsequent waves of prisoners from Egypt arrived in Greece, but many were returned to Hasani in accordance with the orders of the British forces. For example, out of the 800 prisoners who arrived in Greece on April 11, 1945, the British sent 145 of them back into the concentration camp of Hasani ("Kratēthēkan," 1945, p. 2). Besides containing a detention center during the war, Hasani was also the theater of another drama after the war had ended: its airport received those Greeks who had been forcefully transported to Germany in concentration camps or to work in German factories. The first group of 185 out of a 9,300 total arrived in Athens on August of 1945, and the rest would be gradually flown in by the Royal Air Force ("9,300 Ellēnes," 1945, p. 2).

During the years of the White Terror, rightist gangs undertook a campaign to eliminate any socialist, leftist, or progressive voices (moderate and radical) from the public realm through harassment, intimidation, or murder (Kofas, 1989). Even though they were organized and given their start during the occupation, after the Nazi's

departure, they remained armed and continued their practice of looting and terrorizing the population. Such was the case of a gang led by Kollias, which remained active in the southern coastal area of Athens, terrorizing the people of Glyfada. On June 23, 1945, this group attempted to steal fuel from the Hasani airport, but the British guards detected them and killed their leader and captured the others in the ensuing battle (“Oi Hites lēstevoun,” 1945, p. 2). Considerable losses by theft became a constant headache for the British soldiers guarding Elliniko, who constantly complained over the marauding gangs (Yoxall, 1965, p. 191).

These paramilitary organizations were subsequently sheltered and supported by the Greek army and police, acting with absolute immunity, with further guidance provided by the British. Thus, in the name of political stability and economic development, a regime of legal and political state of exception was established in Athens and all over Greece (Stathakis, 2004). The violence conducted by these shadow wings of the government in collaboration with the state mechanisms had the effect of collapsing the public sphere in numerous ways. Soon any traces of a public culture of democracy atrophied, public debate froze, and access to town squares, third places and other public spaces—potential platforms of dissent—became restricted. It should be noted here that the ideas of citizenship, public realm, and democracy in modern Athens never really thrived. As we saw in the previous chapter, the heavy hand of the state constricted the political process, and the establishment of a “state of exception” has been the norm rather than a rare exception. Of course, the advent of the Nazis established a much harsher order of repression, which lasted for a long time after their departure, as we will see in the following chapter.

Under these circumstances, issues over urban development and planning matters had to take a back seat, and did not register in the public discourse directly; people were preoccupied with the difficulties of survival, and the polarizing political conflict. Even though the city, at this time, was not densely populated, the lack of public and green spaces, that had so much bothered the Bavarians during their reign, remained conspicuous and stunned foreign visitors. “When Caresse [Crosby— a US inventor, writer, and publisher] first arrived at Hassani Airport in May 1947, the hills were the color of the sidewalks of New York, stripped bare of all living foliage” (Conover, 1989, p. 128). A few urbanists, like Konstantinos Mpiris, identified the problem and proposed the creation of public and green spaces at the center of the city in conjunction with a large scale excavation of antiquities (Papageorgiou-Venetas, 1999). Similar ideas would be proposed by other architects and planners later on, but these were generally intended for complementing Athens’ tourism at the city’s historic center, rather for improving the daily lives of the people.

As of 1945, the desperate need for public parks and open spaces, especially in the hot days of summer, was the subject a front page article of the newspaper *Empros* (“Ligē skia,” 1945, p. 1). The newspaper, however, tactfully ascribed the lack of public space to the legacy of the city’s Ottoman past and Greeks’ inherent resistance to modernity. The Greeks, the article went on to claim, are ultra-individualistic, and inclined to be suspicious or indifferent to notions of the public. As proof, the article noted that in the affluent garden-cities of the time, such as Elliniko, Ekali, Kifisia, the more civically minded wealthy residents devoted all their efforts to designing and installing personal gardens, with no concern for the provision of public spaces. Of course, the depiction of

public space in this account focuses on a narrow definition of the term, limited only to the provision of open and green spaces, while throwing no light on the underlying political and social aspects of public life of Athens during this period.³¹ The historical and cultural traits that supposedly explain the lack of public spaces, i.e. Greece's Ottoman legacy, predisposition to individualism, and resistance to modernity, have all been common rationalizations offered throughout the country's modern history. They mask, however, the material and structural causes of the dearth of public space, incorrectly ascribing blame to the ignorance or selfishness of individuals who (as the story goes) refuse to follow the example of the enlightened northern Europeans.³² However, given the extremely harsh material conditions of most people at the time and the deep social and political rifts in society, calls for conviviality and social responsibility in the urban environment of Athens would have sounded ironic, if not facetious, appealing at most to a very small subsection of the affluent audience.

The civil war that followed the years of the White Terror would have a devastating impact on Greek society. In this acrimonious fight, the newspaper *Kathimerini* wrote that the country's airports were the ultimate bastions against the "internal threat" because they allowed foreign assistance to arrive promptly (Kathimerini,

³¹ Mpiris (1966) too identifies a potential threat to public spaces in the post-war Athens, but for him the threat stems from avid business interests: "Generally, after the Second World War a great change prevailed in the principles regarding the public interest. The first case took place immediately after the liberation, at the expense of planning in Athens, the western part of the garden in the Champs de Mars was given away to businessmen. A similar practice followed at the expense of the National Archaeological Museums' garden. Then, the deforestation of other areas for the installation of outdoor theaters, both in the garden of the Champ de Mars and in the National Garden" (p. 367).

³² Even today, in the midst of a devastating economic crisis, especially for the working classes and the most vulnerable social groups, the mainstream media and many politicians claim that the common people bear a high degree of responsibility for the crisis because they have resisted modernization and social responsibility for their personal gain.

03/07/1947). The battles would rage from 1946 to 1949, and the role of air power was indeed decisive to its outcome. In this effort a pivotal role would be played by Hasani airport, which in 1946 it would finally be renamed as Elliniko; according to a government announcement, the old name Hasani was foreign, and therefore the Greek name Elliniko should be used instead (“Aerodromio,” 1946, p. 2). This was a display of a nominal nationalist gesture by an unpopular political elite that desperately needed to exhibit its patriotic credentials, mostly by resorting to hollow nationalist rhetoric. As we saw in the previous chapter, the name change was also based on an old demand of those who wanted to see the Ottoman name replaced by a Greek one, and Greece to be part of the western world. The incorporation of Greece into the western camp of the Cold War was also a priority of the US and British governments. But as the British became unable to financially support their political allies in Greece in their struggle against the Left, the US government stepped in by providing direct aid through the Truman Doctrine in 1947. At this juncture of the conflict, the odds were against the national government, and as Karabell (1999) explains, “generous estimates had the Greek government effectively in command of only a small portion of the country” (p. 28).³³

In the Cold War context, the Allies were keenly aware of the strategic position of Greece in the Mediterranean, with its close proximity to the Middle-East and the Suez

³³ Kofas (1989) notes that “The United States replaced England's paramount financial influence in Greece after July 1946, and its political and military influence after March 1947. That was an inevitable development, considering that most of the direct and indirect foreign assistance to Greece since 1944 emanated from the United States. It must be emphasized, however, that 54 percent of all foreign assistance before the Truman Doctrine went for military purposes, while only 21 percent was actually spent on economic programs” (p. 54). Concerning the role of foreign assistance, he also adds that the post-World War II legacy of Marshall Plan-style foreign aid to strengthen Rightist leaders and governments, as well as penetrate the internal economies of the recipient nations, shaped the economic and political landscape.

Canal. They were also very apprehensive of the fact that they had to defend their spheres of influence by any means, if they were to consolidate their international political power and expand their markets, especially in countries like Greece, which were deemed to belong to the western camp according to the Yalta Conference. So, the US government devised extensive plans for material and logistical support to the Greek state for fighting the civil war.³⁴ The head of the American mission in Greece, Dwight Griswold, a former Republican Governor of Nebraska, declared his unwavering support in initiating a concentrated effort to construct regional airports for war needs, and to rehabilitate the Elliniko airport (“Anoikodomēsē,” 1947, p. 3). Because of the projected works, the National Mortgage Bank (Κτηματική Τράπεζα) discontinued the provision of loans to residents for the repair of war-damaged properties, anticipating that more houses would have to be demolished. The residents sent a petition to the government asking to cancel these plans, to continue the provision of loans, and to relocate the airport (“Tha gkremisoun,” 1947, p. 3). When they visited the Ministry of Aviation, they found out that indeed the airport was to be expanded, but the Ministry did not have any more information, so they were referred to the American Mission for details (“Tha katedafisthē,” 1947, p. 5).

The US government was keenly aware that in a politically contested terrain like Greece, air force superiority and the accompanied infrastructure were paramount preconditions for security and political stability, and thus it would be very hard to be dissuaded by the complaints of the locals. Heavy reliance on air power during the civil

³⁴ Karabell (1999), notes that “... the manner in which the U.S. military assisted the Greek army in developing a counterinsurgency strategy led to a series of assumptions that would later influence U.S. policy toward Vietnam in the early 1960s” (p. 18).

war was so critical that it had caused traffic at the Elliniko airport to increase rapidly, until it even surpassed that of the Rome and Cairo airports (“Ellēnikē politikē aeroporia,” 1953, p. 4). The ability of the government and US forces to fly in supplies allowed them to avoid sabotage attempts on railroad and road networks. Most importantly, though, the state’s complete dominance of the skies meant they could counter the elusiveness and tenacity of the democratic fighters, who outfought their opponents on the ground though they were routinely outnumbered, outgunned, and under-resourced.

Yet, despite this massive imbalance of power, the outcome was far from certain, as the leftist fighters enjoyed popular support. In 1948, to bludgeon their adversaries and their supporters, the state used a recently developed weapon: US-made napalm II bombs. “In 1949, America vastly increased supplies, and on August 2 Operation Torch hurled hundreds of tons of napalm high explosives, and rockets against rebel redoubts in the Grammos and Vitsi Mountains” (Neer, 2013, p. 92). It was a desperate attempt to overcome the low morale and incompetence of the government forces to win, though they had tremendous superiority in weaponry, fighter numbers, supplies, and foreign logistical support. Faced with the solidarity many people felt for the rebels, the government tried a new tactic to stifle this popular support: an extensive program of forced relocations. The Germans had used this measure during the occupation to weaken resistance, but now these displacements were on a much larger scale. Whole villages would be evacuated in order to deprive the rebels of supplies and new recruits. These residents were mostly moved to urban centers, and the estimates of their numbers waver between 300,000 to 750, 000 (Laiou, 1987).

Though the airport of Elliniko was used for both military and commercial purposes during this time, it nonetheless lacked the capacity to serve as the international hub for Greece. It was run by TWA and the Royal Air Force: they operated the telecommunications services and maintained the runways and other facilities, but as the British were pulling out of Greece, its future operation was in jeopardy. Since 1945, the government had repeatedly pleaded with the Provisional International Civil Aviation (PICAO), later to be renamed International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), for financial and technical assistance. In fact, the Greek state asked the organization to intervene on Greece's behalf and secure loans for the airport's upgrade from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. PICAO was very careful in handling the Elliniko case because this would set a precedent for other requests of such magnitude (PICAO, 1946). However, this request was later denied ("Dyo Amerikanoi," 1949, p. 3). In 1947 the government sent a delegation, headed by professor Grigorios Kasimatis, a politician who served with many administrations, including the fascist Metaxas' dictatorship, to present the Greek case in front of the ICAO's assembly (ICAO, 1947; 1952).³⁵ The organization decided to look into the matter and asked its national delegations to provide assistance to Greece in cash or in kind for making the airport operational according to the established standards. The US delegation was the most forthcoming, pledging assistance in manning radio and landing facilities (Stuart, 1947). The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) awarded a contract for the airport's reconstruction to Atkinson-Drake-Park Company (Grathwol & Moorhus, 2009). According to USACE (2002), the Corp's involvement in Greece between 1947 and 1949

³⁵ Technically, the chairman of the Greek delegation was Konstantinos Sakellaropoulos, the Greek Ambassador to Canada, where the meeting took place.

set the pattern for other subsequent major international activities. Thus, by 1950 Elliniko would already have two airstrips of 7,380 feet (2,250 m) long each, and all the appropriate facilities to make it a symbol of modernity, “civilization,” and the only international airport of the country; this year, traffic would reach 234,000 passengers. Eventually, a new control tower opened in 1951. Control of the airport was handed over to the Greek aviation authorities much later, however, in 1956. Even still, US influence of the airport’s development and history would continue for many years.

One metric of America’s expanding postwar geopolitical influence was the number of military bases it soon established around the world, including four in Greece. A base strategically located right next to the Elliniko airport would stay operational until 1993. Initially, in 1945, the US used this Greek airport as a base of operations for Air Transport Command flights, but in 1947, after it had consolidated its grip on Greece, a semi-permanent facility was built, as part of the Truman Doctrine. The tremendous growth around the world of both the military and commercial aviation industries during this time signaled that countries recognized the critical role of aviation in projecting military and economic power. It should come as no surprise, then, that even in the midst of the Greek civil war, foreign airlines were interested in securing user rights to the airport. The British European Airways (BEA) and the American Trans World Airlines (TWA) were among the first foreign companies to include Elliniko in their networks. BEA had secured use rights already in 1945 (“Ἐ hrēsimopoiēsis,” 1945, p. 1), and a year later added Athens as an intermediary stopover from London to Ankara (“Ἐ aeroporiḱē sygkoinōnia,” 1946, p. 2). Likewise, the Greek government in 1945 had “authorize [ed] designated airlines of the United States to make use of Ellinikon (Hassani) airport”

(United States & Bevans, 1971, p. 393-394), and at the beginning of 1946, the predecessor of TWA, Transcontinental & Western Air (T&WA) used Elliniko as a stopover destination to its route from New York to Cairo.

In 1949, a TWA top executive team, led by its president Ralph Damon, arrived in Athens to inspect the company's offices and the airport itself. Their trip was part of an international tour to inspect various airports and to fine-tune the company's operations. Responding to journalists' questions concerning the future of the airport, the president assured them that the Elliniko airport would continue to operate, and that its facilities would be expanding with its airstrips reaching the coastline ("Dyo Amerikanoi," 1949, p. 3). These proposed developments, however, alarmed local residents who had never ceased to advocate for the airport's relocation. They were familiar with the Greek politicians who, while in the opposition, championed the idea of the airport's relocation. But when in power, politicians never kept their promises, as exemplified by the previous prime ministers, conservative Panagiotis Tsaldaris and liberal Themistoklis Sofoulis, right after the end of the war ("Tha gkremisoun," 1947, p. 3). However, the confidence of TWA's president over the future fortunes of the airport was a sign that expansion was a done deal. The residents knew very well that expansion would require demolition of approximately four hundred houses (ibid.). Besides, the state had not yet compensated the people who lost their houses for the expansion by the Nazis. In a letter distributed to the press, the residents explained the wider importance of the area for the whole metropolitan region, and they proposed a list of potential uses: new housing that would assist in the de-concentration of the center of Athens, recreational infrastructure for the needs of the whole metropolitan region, hotels to help create the "Greek Riviera," a new

Olympic stadium, a university level sports academy, other sports stadia, and hospitals (“Tha katedafistoun,” 1948, p. 2).³⁶ In a subsequent letter, a local politician and former head of the Komninon village, Vasos Themelidis (1950) by name, recapitulated the many arguments for constructing the airport on other grounds. In particular, he emphasized that this area had the potential to become a hotspot for vacationing and tourism—the “Côte d’Azur” of Greece, and that the presence of the airport nulled plans for economic development. Similar arguments would surface in the debate about the parcel’s use again and again up to the present time.

This opening up of the Greek air travel market alarmed the existing Greek carriers. The presence of foreign aviation firms in Athens placed the domestic airlines under intense economic pressure. The Greek airline TAE (Technical and Aeronautical Exploitations) appealed to the state for protection, while strongly criticizing the government’s decision to allow competition from foreign companies.

However, even though the

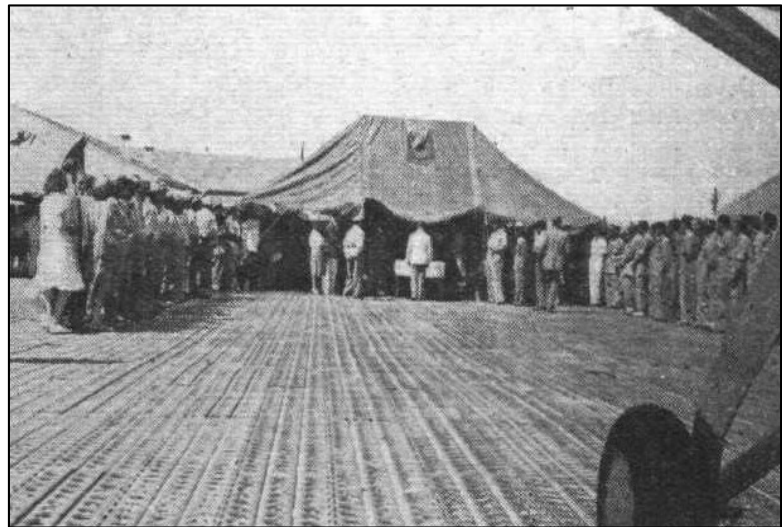


Figure 3.8 TAE’s office in 1946.

This photograph appeared in the pages of the magazine *Flight and Aircraft Engineer*. The magazine’s caption reads: “The beginning” The original ‘office’ of T.A.E., the first company to operate in Grece in September, 1946.” Retrived from Rumbelow (1949, p. 81).

³⁶ Interestingly, further construction is strongly opposed by today’s residents, while what a number of experts propose today does not exceed in creativity the imagination of the residents in the 1940s.

Greek state held ten percent of the company's stock, with the Bank of Greece holding another sixteen percent, the foreign-backed government failed to deliver any kind of protection. In this period, the Greek state offered some protection to the industrial sector, but it would be rather difficult to for a country that hoped to become a tourist destination to cut off airport access to international carriers. Besides, since the inception of the Elliniko airport, the state aspired to make it a regional hub, as we saw in the previous chapter. So expectedly, the Minister of Aviation, Panayiotis Kanellopoulos, only provided lip service to reassure the domestic airlines that he would make an effort to reconcile the interests of the competing companies. In a letter to the editor published in *Rizospastis*, a resident wondered why the government could always find ways to accommodate the needs of corporations, foreign and domestic, but it never found a way to address the needs of the people and compensate the residents who had lost their houses, and now lived in dilapidated housing around Athens (mostly in Kalithea and Elliniko), while the corporations made hefty profits out of their land ("Aerodromia kai thymata," 1947, p. 3). However, TAE found it hard to survive under the new market conditions, and finally in 1951, in an effort to stay competitive, it merged with the two other existing Greek companies, ELL.A.S. (Ελληνικά Αεροπορικά Συγκοινωνία) and A.M.E. (Αεροπορικά Μεταφορά Ελλάδος). Nonetheless, in 1955, TAE was forced to dissolve its operations and auction its assets. A buyer could not be found, however, and thus the company passed into the hands of the Greek state ("Dēlopoiēsis pleistēriasmou," 1955, p. 5).

In 1949, the civil war finally ended with the defeat of the leftists, who now had to find ways to survive in an increasingly hostile environment. Many sought refuge in the

socialist countries of Eastern Europe, while others disappeared into the big cities of Greece where they could more easily elude agents of the White Terror. By the end of the 1950s, more than half a million people had settled in post-civil war Athens, causing a staggering increase in the population – from 1.1 million in 1940 to 1.3 in 1951, and 1.8 in 1961 (Kotzamanis, 2007). This was the second substantial wave of migration to Athens. The first wave, as noted in the previous chapter, occurred in the 1920s with the arrival of thousands of refugees from Asia Minor. The third wave, which led to the substantial depopulation of rural Greece, followed in the next decade, as the next chapter will show.

With the end of the civil war, the victors and their allies were naturally preoccupied with Greece's political stability. Their strategy of asserting control within the country's urban centers had served them well during the conflict. Following their victory, they harbored a grudge against the rural regions, which had by and large thrown their support behind the leftists. Thus, Athens became the magnet of even greater political centralization, which in turn led to the centralization of state bureaucracies, economic activity, and social and cultural institutions. The capital, constituting the nerve center of the regime, received first consideration in the allotment of resources, while the periphery stayed very much neglected.³⁷ The state derived some advantages from the subsequent influx of immigrants to Athens: for example, it mitigated the problem of the restive or rebellious countryside, and it provided a huge pool of potential proletarians needed to tackle the post-war reconstruction effort and drive economic growth. However, it also posed numerous social, economic, and political challenges. The

³⁷ Leontidou (1990) notes that in the period from 1948 to 1954 economic centralization was largely due to the allocation of AMAG loans in the region of Athens.

expansion of the urban proletariat exposed the administration, transparently propped up by the British and the Americans, to a large degree of risk. The city lacked the necessary infrastructure to accommodate the needs of the newcomers. If frustrated enough, they might be brought into movements that agitated for political upheaval.

Indeed, the mass participation of the working classes and peasantry in the resistance had been a significant rupture point with the politics of the previous period, and it had deeply disturbed the Greek bourgeoisie, which preferred to either join the occupiers or to stay silent. As Mouzelis (1978) notes, the occupation by the Axis forces had unsettled the mechanisms for the incorporation of the peasants into bourgeois politics, thus increasing the appeal of the left and its call for social change and national independence (p. 26). It was the spirit of resistance that had also concerned the Allies, which decided to rely on state structures and political elites of the pre-war period in order to strengthen their position in Greece. The anti-communist agenda of the fascist dictatorship of Metaxas continued to dominate bourgeois politics, and the establishment of a “state of exception” was perpetuated into the 1940s, as well as in the next period. In this way, the long sought modernity, as it was experienced in post WWII Western Europe, would not take place, and instead repression, authoritarianism, and dependency would drive the effort for economic development and integration to the world market.

Chapter 4

The Makeover of Athens and the Golden Period of Elliniko, 1950-1989

There is a consensus today that the unprecedented economic crisis that hit Greece after 2009 has not been a temporal aberration of the markets. In fact it appears to be one of those transformative moments in the history of modern Greece, whose long-term consequences are not known yet, while its impact on Greek society and particularly on the city of Athens is easily detectable to visitors and long-term residents alike. It has been depicted as the worst peacetime economic crises of the Greek social formation, with an unparalleled depth and persistence that make it comparable only to the destruction caused by WWII and the subsequent civil war. While, the debate that has been unfolding in contemporary Greece over potential solutions and future prospects is causing once again deep political and social rifts, it also makes the revision of past political and economic choices that led to today's situation essential.

This chapter will continue with the presentation of the Elliniko airport's history in relation to the transformation of Athens as a growing metropolis, with the objective of providing the necessary context to the genealogical history of neoliberalism in Greece, and in Athens in particular. It will cover the period from 1940 until 1989, a period when the city of Athens, like other post-WWII cities, experienced its highest rates of growth, acquiring the shape and form that define its character even today. From this historical account it will become apparent that the Greek state continued to have difficulties in planning major urban interventions, and in implementing comprehensive urban planning. Proposals, ideas, plans, and designs have been offered in abundance, but their implementation has been a tenuous and very problematic process, reminiscent of

modernization processes in peripheral cities. The proliferation of piecemeal planning reflects the unstable nature of Greek politics that relied on the strong intervention of foreign powers and the military as its stabilizing elements; the characteristics of the Greek bourgeoisie and the weak economic development, whose legacy is still felt today; and the fluidity of the social structure that went through a series of multi-layered transformations during this time. So, even though the complex process of modernization has universally inherent elements of “creative” destruction, in the case of Athens, it greatly diminished the opportunities for a sustainable future and for planning a satisfactory urban environment.

This was also a period that spans most of the airport’s operational lifecycle as the first civil airport of Athens. During this time it became apparent that the original decision to construct the first airport of Athens at Elliniko was a rather hasty choice, as very quickly the chosen site proved very problematic. First and foremost, future expansions were never considered before the decision. From the perspective of the residents this was a disaster because the necessary expansions meant a continuous process of demolition of residential areas. Also, the quality of life really diminished in the surrounding areas, while property values were always subjected to the presence of the airport. An additional grievance has been that by locating the airport on a site of such natural beauty, the city of Athens sacrificed its coastal front, which could be used more advantageously for the residents and the city’s economy. Gradually, as the city started to expand at a very high pace, the areas around the airport became highly urbanized, adding more and more voices for its relocation.

The rapid urbanization around the airport stands as an example of the Greek state's chronic inability to provide a comprehensive strategy over the city's future. Short-term petty interests seemed to always override the long term trajectories of the city, producing often a chaotic and seemingly irrational urban web. So, even though the voices for the airport's relocation multiplied, the state appeared unable or unwilling to make a clear cut decision over the proper location of the new airport. It continued to invest in Elliniko, and simultaneously to entertain the idea of a new airport. It commissioned study after study to identify its proper location, and at the same time it allowed for the further urbanization of the surrounding areas. These inconsistencies might seem odd to the outside observer, however, a closer look at how the city itself grew during this period shows that these patterns were the norm rather than the exception. But it should not escape our attention that urban growth, whether it is based on comprehensive or piecemeal planning, is always an expression of the character and priorities of powerful interests, as well as the product of political struggles, as this chapter will show.

By the beginning of the 1950s Greece had clearly passed into the Americans' sphere of influence. Around the world the British was crumbling, its subjects gaining independence, while the US was becoming a dominant global force possessing significant means of influence over non-core territories. Horace Smith, who in 1947 was the second highest ranking diplomat on economic matters in the US embassy in Athens, sent a cable to the US Department of State describing the economic groundwork that presaged subsequent political control: "in practice we have imposed control over ... the national budget, taxation, the issuing of currency, pricing and salary policies, national economic

programs, imports and exports, the rates of foreign exchange, and military and reconstruction expenses” (Kontis, as cited in Sarigiannis, 2000, p. 137). It is not a surprise, therefore, given the outcome of the civil war and the direct involvement of outside powers in the state’s economic and political affairs that the pronounced influence of exogenous factors would once again largely condition Greece’s post-war planning, greatly shaping urbanization patterns, and more specifically Athens’ development and its position within the Greek system of cities. However, foreign powers did not unilaterally determined development patterns. Their primary objectives were to keep Greece under their sphere of influence and to safeguard the dominant role of their local allies. Therefore, they often had to take into account the interests of the Greek bourgeoisie, which, as Ioannidis and Mavroudeas (1999) note, from time to time came into conflict with the British and the American choices (p. 18).

Overall though, the debate over development greatly resembled similar debates in other parts of the world throughout the post-WWII period, especially in those regions that sought to break the chains of underdevelopment by “develop[ing] *themselves*, as opposed to being developed by the North” (Wallerstein, 2005, p. 1264). Two issues in particular — the role of industrial development and the role of urbanization — would be vigorously contested by camps with distinctly different visions of Greece’s future.

On one side of the debate there were those who dismissed industrial investment as inappropriate for the case of Greece. They suggested instead that the country should concentrate its efforts on tourism, small manufacturing, agriculture, shipping, commerce, and construction. Its proponents, influenced by the tenets of modernization theory, justified it in by saying that the Ottoman legacy, still dominant in Greece, did not foster

the indispensable entrepreneurial spirit which lay at the bottom of the advanced societies' road to prosperity. Prevelakis (2001) goes a step further suggesting that for the Mediterranean peoples, land ownership has historically been of special importance, and therefore the right wing governments of Greece were correct in formulating their development strategies on private ownership of land and the construction sector, instead of manufacturing (p. 25). Part of this reasoning, as expressed in the well-known "Varvaresos Report" was that Greece, besides the lack of the necessary cultural traits, was too poor and small for industrial development.³⁸ Besides, many claimed, industrial development would almost certainly strengthen leftist political forces because of industrial workers' propensity to unionize, and this could potentially have destabilizing political effects.

On the other hand, leftist intellectuals frequently dismissed the above notions as a mere canard perpetuated by the Greek elites who were in the pocket of the core capitalist countries. The imperialists, they argued, desired to continue exploiting the Greek markets. To this end they sought to protect their industries by keeping any and all competition in check. The stranglehold on industrial power enjoyed by the imperialists had to be broken, the leftists maintained, through the development of a domestic manufacturing base. For them, this path was a necessary step toward national independence: industrialization would break the chains of dependency that bound them to the core capitalist societies and foster the development of productive forces within

³⁸ Kyriakos Varvaresos, an economist who worked for the Bank of Greece, was the country's representative to the Bretton Woods conference, and also worked for the World Bank. In 1952 he prepared a report on the reconstruction strategy of Greece. The report, though not implemented in its entirety, nevertheless became a central piece of reference in the debate over reconstruction.

Greek society which, they believed, would lead inevitably to the establishment of socialism. It was thus seen as a means for a wider transformation of Greek society towards a more egalitarian and just future. Albeit for different reasons, this strategy was also endorsed by many bourgeois economists, Zigdis, Zolotas among them, who perceived industrial development as a precondition for a path leading to modernity. However, it should be noted that leftist arguments in favor of industrialization were seldom part of the institutionalized or formal debate. Instead, its primary proponents, the leftist intellectuals, were officially barred from political life, persecuted, exiled or assassinated.³⁹

From the start, then, Greece's path toward modernization was fraught with difficulties. In northern Europe, modernity at this period was constituted upon industrialization of production along Fordist lines, associated with the ideals of a liberal democracy, accompanied by the institutions of modern civil society, and by increased urbanization. In Greece, however, political elites and international institutions cynically employed the term as an ideological instrument to obscure their incorporation of Greece into the world-economy as a dependent peripheral state. Even though the question of modernization and development has been a consistent element in the rhetoric of the dominant political parties since then, the reality of: a fragile economic structure; the military's dominant political role — until 1974; the firm centralization of political power

³⁹ One such a figure was Dimitris Mpatsis, who in 1947 wrote the influential book *Heavy Industry in Greece*; he was sentenced to death and executed in 1952, March 30 next to Nikos Belogiannis, known as the "Man with the Carnation," depicted in the famous Pablo Picasso sketch.

and decision making; and the failure to adhere even to the most basic tenets of liberalism, has been more consistent with the experiences of other peripheral social formations.

Reminiscent of earlier experience in the city's history, as chapter one showed, political considerations led to the concentration of a centralized political and administrative bureaucracy in the capital city. This in conjunction with the clustering of foreign aid and of development projects in adjacent areas, set the conditions for Athens's high degree of primacy within the Greek system of cities, and its attractiveness for rural migrants. This preeminence, however, came at the expense of the outlying regions, which suffered from disinvestment and neglect. The "surplus labor" of the countryside was in desperate need of employment opportunities. Many of them joined the swelling ranks of industrial workers from other peripheral countries, heading off to the core industrialized societies of Germany, the US, and Australia. Leontidou (1990) shows that by the end of the 1960s "The Greek labour force in manufacturing was almost equally divided among three locations: Greater Athens, the rest of Greece, and Germany" (p. 102). Unlike the previous experience during Nazi occupation, this transfer of labor was not forcible but voluntary, and it was an indication of the new position of the Greek social formation in the post-WWII international division of labor: a source of cheap labor and primary products, and a destination for tourism and investment in low added value manufacturing production. As Arrighi explains (1990) "The fact that voluntary transfers are considered morally less objectionable than forcible transfers does not mean that they are less efficacious as mechanisms of core-periphery polarization (p. 13).

Migration abroad temporarily alleviated some of the pressure on the political elites: it reduced unemployment rates, it provided foreign currency remittances, and it

operated as a safety valve mitigating political dissent. But it was not enough to solve the problem of too many people with too few jobs in the rural areas. According to Mouzelis (1978), “In 1951 agricultural per-capita income amounted to 83.3 per cent of the average national income; the proportion dropped to 60.3 per cent in 1962, and 51.1 per cent in 1971” (p. 123). So through a series of “push” and “pull” factors, many continued to look to the urban centers, especially Athens, for employment opportunities. However, the massive deruralization of the regions and the hyperurbanization of Athens posed a potential threat for local elites: Athens lacked the necessary infrastructure to accommodate the swelling numbers of newcomers (see table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Athens’ population 1940-1991

Year	1940	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991
Population*	1,124	1,379	1,853	2,540	3,027	3,073
Average rate of change	-	18.8%	30%	32%	17.7%	1.5%
% Athens / Greece	15.3	18.1	22.1	29	31.1	30

Note: Adapted from Kotzamanis, B. & Androulaki, E. (2009).

*in thousands

Thus, in a highly tense political environment, the elites had the difficult tasks of mitigating social tensions while manufacturing their political and ideological legitimacy. Authoritarian rule has its own set of perennial limits and challenges, and as Prevelakis (2001) explained “Police oppression was not enough to break the spirit of resistance against a regime entirely dependent on foreign powers: the Americans decided the government’s make-up, economic policy and diplomatic relations (p. 23). So naturally as Chorianoopoulos (2008) observed, “the primary responsibility of national authorities was directed towards the provision of the minimum conditions that would prolong societal consensus” (p. 329).

According to Petras (1984), the shadow of the civil war and the lack of political legitimacy kept elites away from investing in long-term and large-scale economic activities, such as industrial production. Instead, the owners of capital opted for investing on physical assets and commerce, as many of them had done through the black market during the occupation, and also on tourism, shipping, or other “comprador” activities (Mouzelis, 1978, p. 27).⁴⁰ In addition, the massive infrastructural projects initiated by the US government for the civil war needs, such as the construction of airports, road networks etc., gave the opportunity to many government loyalists to generate “safe” profits and accumulate experience in the construction sector and real estate speculation. The reconstruction effort and the rapid urbanization of the post WWII period provided ample opportunities for this type of economic activities. The substantial growth of construction nurtured the proliferation of many companies of varying sizes and specializations – smaller operations focusing on the housing, and larger companies on the construction of infrastructure and more complex projects.⁴¹ For the ruling political elites, this type of economic development was commonsensical because it did not contradict the interests of its foreign backers, it provided quick profits, and it had the potential to

⁴⁰ While the role of shipping capital in the development of the Greek social formation has been a topic of heated debate among academics, investment in the shipping industry during this period was promoted by the US government which initially sold 100 surplus Liberty ships — cargo ships built in the United States during WWII — to Greek ship-owners with high risk loans guaranteed by the Greek state. This would be a decisive point for the expansion of the Greek shipping industry during the post-WWII period. Many accused the Greek government of corruption, favoritism and kickbacks for its decision to guarantee the loans while public finances were in shambles. Others pointed out that directing capital into the shipping industry prohibited investments into the sphere of industrial production (Dertilis, 1985; Mouzelis, 1978), while others pointed to the *cosmopolitan* nature of the Greek shipping capital, which even though it might be part of the production process, and thus not a comprador activity, however, in the Greek case, this capital being mostly located in cities like London and New York, “did not play the role of national capital, in the sense of directly supporting a domestic development process that would lead to the expansion of the internal market” (Fotopoulos, 1985, p. 80).

⁴¹ In the 1970s, this experience would allow Greek construction companies to expand their activities outside Greek borders, mostly in peripheral regions like the Middle-East and Northern Africa.

consolidate its narrow power base and expand its political networks by providing business opportunities to political allies, as well as jobs to the redundant agricultural labor force. It also provided an excellent opportunity to expand its political constituency and ideological appeal by incorporating lower class strata into the petty bourgeoisie through the proliferation of small property and clientelistic networks.

These networks have burgeoned upon the practice of incomplete implementation of master plans and the “flexible” enforcement of respective ordinances. Disregarding the example of the industrialized societies, the Greek state refrained from promoting comprehensive housing programs for internal migrants and the working classes. Instead, their housing needs were met mainly through unauthorized housing construction, known as *afthereta*. In this process, the migrants legally buy a plot of land around Athens zoned for non-residential uses, and then, they build a house, usually constructed overnight or within a few days in order to avoid detection by the authorities. The proliferation of this process reached such a scale that “in the period 1945-66, 45 per cent of the net population increase of Greater Athens (almost half a million people) were housed in illegally constructed dwellings” (Wassenhoven, 1984, p. 21). Eventually, after whole communities spring out of this process, the state legalizes the illegal settlements by incorporating them into the city plan in exchange for political loyalty, especially during election times. This arrangement, also described as a retroactive policy of selective involvement in issues of land use (Leontidou, 1990), helps explain the fact that while master plans and regulations were drafted according to dominant urban principles and best practices, the development of urban space frequently took place within the legal “gaps” of proposals, recommendations, and regulations. The result has been that these

settlements made maximum use of land, with high densities, and with no planning for public amenities, greenery and public spaces.⁴²

Another mechanism that allowed for the expansion of the construction sector was the proverbial *antiparohi* arrangement—agreements between landowners and contractors in which land is exchanged for construction. In Greek cities after the 1950s “small land owners gave a plot to contractors in exchange for part of the built structure. *Antiparohi* was the main mode for urban renewal of existing building stock within Greek cities” (Hastaoglou, Hadjimichalis, Kalogirou & Papamichos, 1987, p. 163). Once again, the state manipulated zoning regulations and building coefficients as instruments for political loyalty, usually during election periods. Parallel to the process of city expansion through illegal housing, the real estate sector and the state also promoted the vertical growth of the city with new apartment buildings—the *polykatoikia*—as icons of Athens’ modernization. Under this process whole sections of the city were razed causing an appalling destruction of the historic building stock of Athens. Besides the cultural loss caused by such a destruction, Prevelakis (2001) laments the fact that this renewal destroyed most private gardens in Athens, while no provision was made for their replacement with public gardens and green spaces (p. 32).

As a result, the proliferation of multistory buildings under conditions of extensive land speculation greatly increased housing densities by exploiting every inch of urban

⁴² Leontidou (1995) also notes that beginning in the 1970s it became popular to circumvent restrictions of land use and build large-scale villas, hotels and factories right in the forests, in the public spaces, even on the seashores of a city. Today, “Illegal building continues, but its social basis has changed from popular to middle-class—from subsistence housing to holiday homes and villas” (p. 160). This process has mostly taken place on the outskirts of Athens where the conurbation has sprawled at a high pace, resulting in the diffusion of the urban landscape into the whole Attiki region.

space, while in the periphery of the city the proliferation of illegal settlements circumscribed the successive directions of the city's expansion. However, urbanists have identified some positive aspects of the above arrangement: it accommodated the housing needs of the rapidly urbanized rural populations, who were otherwise at risk of poverty; it provided a substitute for a public housing policy; it provided the material ground for the start of family life; and it constituted a means of modest income redistribution (Leontidou, 2010; Tsoulouvis, 1996). In this way this arrangement seemingly strengthened the position of the working classes by turning them into small property owners, and gradually through the vertical expansion of their buildings, by allowing them to commercially exploit their properties as rentiers, a process that facilitated their integration into the petty bourgeoisie (Sarigiannis, 2008).⁴³

Many scholars also have been quick to point out that land speculation and frenzied construction, especially after WWII, have had undeniably adverse effects leading to a "distorted pattern of development" and the creation of a rentier parasitic urban economy (Kourliouros, 2003; Papadantonakis, 1985; Vasiliadis, 2008).⁴⁴ This

⁴³ Politicians have justified the state's tolerance of such practices by asserting that they have permitted Greece to avoid some of the worst side effects social housing programs have produced in industrialized countries, including class animosity and ethnic and social segregation. Be that as it may, this above arrangement suits the politicians in at least one other way: since the illegal construction takes place on land that is legally purchased, it does not undermine the legitimacy of the market system, but rather reinforces it as the only reasonable method for managing housing. Finally, with this route from the creation of use values to the production of exchange values, the otherwise restive social classes are elevated to the status of property owners and gradually incorporated into the existing political party system and clientelistic political networks.

⁴⁴ This kind of criticism, which is quite widespread among leftist circles and political parties of the left, is summarized by Economou (2000, p. 66) and Petras (1984, p. 56-57) in the following points:

- This development model absorbs very high rates of investment at the expense of investments made to other areas, mainly in industry and agriculture.
- It leads to an increase in land values and speculative activity, lowering profits and increasing the costs of productive activity.
- It produces inflationary pressures since it helps in the increase of incomes and consumption, without a corresponding growth of production.

development pattern created numerous challenges: it encouraged a compact city with very narrow streets and high population densities but provided for minimal public space; it created enormous environmental problems, especially after the increasing use of the private car which arose during the military dictatorship of 1967-1974; and most importantly, it circumscribed the possibilities of urban planning and conservation interventions in the future. In Athens, then, the net effect of the above practices is difficult to assess. These mechanisms have shaped the entire urban development of the modern city, paradoxically encouraging social integration while begetting a host of its most notorious problems. Consequently, the Athenian landscape provided temporal resolutions to the contradictions of the Greek political economy through geographical restructuring, while it provoked the formation of new contradictions that would appear much later.⁴⁵ Real estate and the construction sector were to play a critical role in propelling Athens' urban economy, in contributing to the reduction of both unemployment rates and housing shortages, and consequently in shaping the city's landscape, alas with heightened scarcity of public and green spaces: in 1960 Athens had 64 ft² (6 m²) of green and public space per capita, but in 1977 this number had already

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- Its ethos lowers productivity by emphasizing income generation through the nonproductive amassing of wealth.
 - It does not contribute to the development of the productive forces, at the expense of industrial development, perpetuating the dependence of the Greek economy.
 - It fosters income generation without investing in technological innovation, market competition, and in the employment and organization of labor. The extension of rentier activity curbs the ability of classes so engaged to progress from simple manufacturing or agriculture to complex forms.
 - It does not produce exportable products and therefore this development does not improve the trade balance.

⁴⁵ Interestingly, in the last twenty years and until the recent crisis, the Greek state maintained its absence from the provision of housing, but this time it encouraged private housing property through the twin processes of expansionary fiscal policies and the parallel deregulation of financial markets.

dwindled to 43 ft² (4 m²) per capita (Institute of Environmental Research and Sustainable Development, 2010).

Overall, after a series of initial sluggish economic results, this type of development jump-started the war-torn Greek economy based on the multiplier effects of effective demand (Skouras, 1985). But unlike the Fordist economies of post WWII Western Europe, among the chief drivers of this demand (along with the inflow of funds from abroad) were the systems that governed the distribution of land and housing. The role they played was based on the relationship between construction activity and multiple sectors of the general economy. The building boom supported related and dependent industries, such as those that produced building materials and construction equipment. There was another advantage derived from the Greek state's non-involvement in housing: by abstaining from investing in this sector, funds were theoretically more readily available to finance industry, and non-housing infrastructure, while to a large degree the cost of labor reproduction was switched to the workers themselves. In this way construction underwrote Greece's macroeconomic policy without utilizing one of the key components of the Fordist-Keynesian model—the stimulation of demand through wage increases (Economou, 2000).

In the late 1950s, industrial development did take place in Athens, initially in the form of small manufacturing largely concentrated in the Athens region, prompted by the internal demand generated by rising incomes (Leontidou, 1990). However, it started to take off after the mid-1960s and lasted up to the mid-1970s. This was mostly oriented at exports, producing mostly low-added value products, requiring low labor skills, and minimum use of technological innovation, and typically based on the extraction of

absolute surplus value. The spatial location of industrial development disproportionately favored Athens, which in turn helped reproducing a cycle of urban primacy (Fotopoulos, 1985). Athens was already the preferred destination of manufacturing investment, it had a strong surplus of available labor force; it was very close to transportation routes and existing infrastructure; hosted a very centralized state bureaucracy, and enjoyed a disproportionately high concentration of social and cultural institutions. Most importantly though, successive authoritarian governments, sometimes disguised under the veil of democracy, other times in the form of direct military rule made sure that labor demands stayed in check, and environmental regulations at a bare minimum, if nonexistent.⁴⁶

Indeed, Greek capitalism grew very rapidly in the post-war period, and in the early 1960s, it was one of the top fastest growing economies among the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development countries. However, Greek elites failed to capitalize on this industrial bonanza in the long term. Foreign industrial investment would soon gravitate to other locations with more advantageous conditions. Greek industry, for its part, could neither produce new monopolies nor sustain existing ones that would render its plants competitive in an increasingly open world economy. This became quite evident during the rule of the military dictatorship of 1967-1974, which in spite of its business friendly policies was unable to reverse the trend. In the face of its impotence the regime resorted once again to the “proven” methods for spurring economic growth:

⁴⁶ However, it should be noted that to a large degree this development was not induced by specific comprehensive industrial policies, or targeted state investments. It was rather a conjectural phenomenon, resulting from a changing geography in the international division of labor, and more specifically the relocation of manufacturing from core regions to the periphery, seeking overall reduction of production costs.

stimulation of the construction industry, easement of planning regulations, and toleration of egregious land exploitation. All of these practices, of course, exacerbated the city's perennial problems of overcrowding, insufficient social services, environmental degradation, and shortage of open public space.

The broad discussions concerning the inevitable reconstruction of Greece that took place after the civil war naturally brought attention to the airport's future. The Elliniko airport was elevated to the status of a first-class airport in 1951 at a conference in Istanbul ("Civil aviation news," 1951, p. 324). Any redevelopment effort would have to depend on adequate transportation infrastructure, and the utility of Elliniko became apparent as its traffic kept increasing (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Airport traffic in five year intervals

Year	Flight movement	Passengers*		Cargo**	
		Departure	Arrival	Departure	Arrival
1967	56,864	1,005	980	10,280	8,908
1972	88,618	2,321	2,310	17,587	15,817
1977	100,409	3,571	3,572	33,189	28,530
1982	100,852	4,386	4,392	37,964	31,212
1987	112,677	5,155	5,092	59,570	41,776
1992	112,919	4,563	4,504	50,747	42,406

Note. Adapted from Hellenic Statistical Authority

* in thousands

** in tons

Various constituents voiced contentious opinions about which economic strategies should be adopted, and these understandably each had their own vision for the airport's development. On the one hand there were those who favored the relocation of the airport from its current site. A primary incentive for moving the airport was that this course would free the prime land of Elliniko for tourist development and upscale housing. Indeed, right up to the present time, the potential this tract of land holds for tourist investment has been the central component of all discussion about the future of Elliniko.

The coast of Saronikos especially, with its natural beauty, proximity to the city of Athens, and proximity to the port of Piraeus, is a site naturally suited for the cultivation of tourism, but the presence of the airport nullifies these competitive advantages.

With designs on grandeur, *Eleftheria*, a newspaper affiliated with the liberal party, endorsed the idea of relocating the airport in a first page article that claimed “The coast of

Saronikos could easily become the *Côte d'Azur* of Greece”

(“To aerodromion,” 1954, p.

1). The paper also proposed a self-financing scheme to pay for the proposed relocation.

Revenue would come from three streams: payments from the original land owners who would have the option to buy back the lots previously

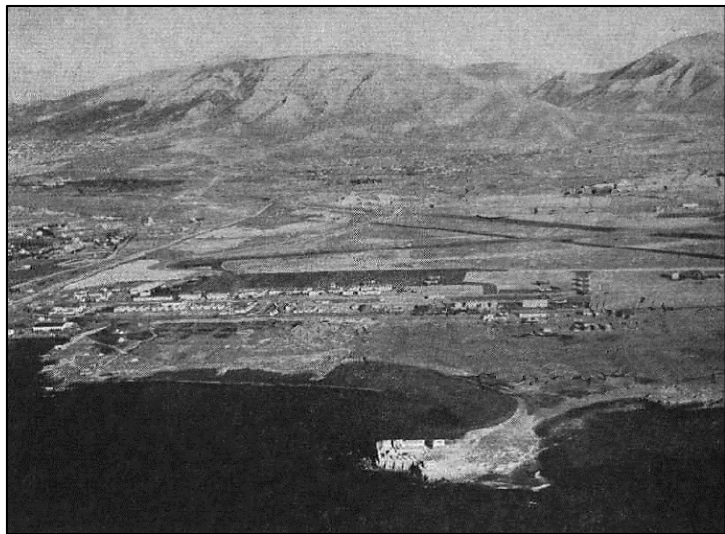


Figure 4.1 Elliniko in 1951.

This picture of Elliniko was published by the magazine *Flight and Aircraft Engineer* in 1951. In the original caption, the magazine states that: “The international airport at Hassani, Athens, has now become one of Europe’s most important terminals. In this photograph new taxi-ways are seen under construction” (p. 733). Retrieved from “Civil aviation,” 1951.

appropriated for the construction of the airport; available state funds already allocated for the expansion; and finally, sales income derived from the privatization of the rest of the area, approximately 428 acres. It is worth-noting that the plan made no provision for the allocation of open and public spaces. On the contrary, in accordance to the prevailing understanding of modernity, the article suggested that a high density of construction projects is itself an unquestionable good, enhancing the area’s attractiveness for

tourists.⁴⁷ The newspaper also proposed Spata as an appropriate site for the new airport. Located to the east of Athens, the area of Spata has been the traditional orchard of Attiki, though the newspaper portrayed it as merely an underutilized piece of land waiting for a higher, more profitable use (ibid.). Thus, this proposal reinforced the dominant notion then in circulation about the role of urban land in the post-WWII period. Imbedded in Greek society was the belief that the state might, should circumstances deem it necessary, drop certain of its public obligations and sell public urban land for the exercise of social policy or the generation of revenue, especially to close state budgetary shortfalls. The expediency of generating revenue trumped any and all concerns about social justice, environmental preservation, or the quality of life enjoyed by Athens' citizenry. As this study will later show, presently similar arguments still dominate the debate over Elliniko's future. Not surprisingly, however, proponents of this market-driven approach promoted it as a socially responsible course of action that would enhance the fortunes of the common Elliniko residents.

The residents of the surrounding areas continued to pressure the government for the airport's relocation. The site's unrealized economic potential (i.e. for tourist development) was only one of the arguments advanced for the relocation of the airport. Of concern to area residents was the incessant noise caused by the flights, which disrupted their normal lives. The president of Saronikos mayors Aggelos Metaxas, in a caustic letter to the press, once lamented the state's sensitivity to the health and happiness

⁴⁷ The proverbial phrase of Konstantinos Karamanlis "build, build, build" became the central motto of reconstruction efforts in Greece in the post-war period (Sakkas, 2010). It represents the dominant attitude for (re) building Athens, and it exemplifies Greece's complex path to "modernity." Karamanlis dominated Greek politics from the 1950s to the 1990s, whose urban policies have been criticized for most of Athens' problems. As we will see later in this study, his legacy still dominates Greek urban policy today.

of the residents of Ekali and Kifisia, affluent suburbs that complained on the occasion of a single military airplane conducting drills in the skies above their homes. Meanwhile, the government took no interest in the chronic predicament of the inhabitants around Elliniko since, according to Metaxas, they were viewed by officials as second-class citizens whose concerns could be safely ignored. It is very telling that in his letter Metaxas made sure to pay deference to reaffirm his political allegiance to the Prime Minister Karamanlis as well as to the former Prime Minister, Field Marshall Papagos, attributed the government's insensitivity to the gaffes of incompetent or corrupt advisors (Metaxas, 1956, p. 4).

As relocation of the airport had widespread, popular appeal, the governing conservative party (E.R.E.) was somewhat divided over what course to take. There were a number of politicians who favored the relocation, but they mostly represented the constituencies of directly affected areas, so their support may have been occasioned simply by an electoral calculation. In a parliament session on 1956, December 18, many conservative representatives asked their



Figure 4.2 The airport's terminal in the 1950s.
Retrieved from <http://www.4tforum.gr/phpBB3/viewtopic.php?f=16&t=49619&start=135>

government to “free” the Elliniko site because of the residential character of the area, and also because any expansion would be very expensive. Nonetheless Undersecretary of Transportation Karapiperis, after assuring them that the government had spent a lot of time weighing all options, informed them that, in accordance with the suggestions of

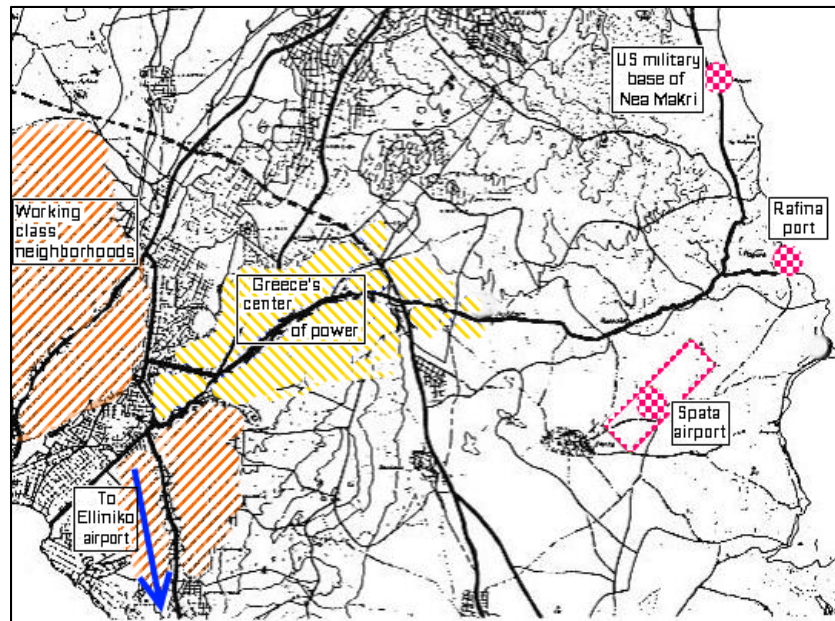
foreign experts, it had decided the Elliniko location was the more appropriate and the less costly choice. Besides, he reminded them, government finances did not allow for the allocation of the estimated 300 million drachmas necessary for the construction of a new airport (“To aerodromion tou Ellēnikou,” 1956, p. 5). On the other hand, the liberal party, as well as its later reincarnation the Center Union, unremittingly supported relocation. First and foremost they cited the economic case of tourist development, but they also argued that it was a matter of practicality, too, since sooner or later Athens would need a new airport to accommodate the ever-larger jet planes being built. Besides, in the words of Georgios Mavros, a prominent Greek politician in the parliament, the facilities of Elliniko were not adequate as they “resembled the shacks that housed the displaced of the civil war,” rather than those of a modern airport serving a major tourist destination (“Di’ eperōtēseōs,” 1956, p. 5). Finally, the left also supported relocation, consistently voicing its solidarity with the residents’ demands.

The relocation of Elliniko and the construction of a new airport were also favored by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which saw the current location as problematic. Greece had joined NATO in 1952 and a year later had signed an agreement with the US government for hosting military bases on Greek soil. However, it should be noted that the US air force had established a post at Elliniko since 1945. NATO’s dissatisfaction with the airport’s current location stemmed from security concerns: first, the road network connecting the airport to the city was not adequate for the movement of military forces with heavy weapons and armored vehicles; and second, the interposition of working class suburbs between Athens, the nucleus of state power, and the airport posed many security risks (Sarigiannis & Triantis, 1988). The British had already

experienced problems with narrow streets and hostile working class neighborhoods when they landed their army in the city in their effort to control Athens. Despite the left's military loss in the civil war and the ongoing political repression they faced afterwards, it still enjoyed wide

popular support, as it was shown in subsequent elections.

Given this situation, it was prudent to plan for a new airport with security concerns in mind. The new



Map 4.1 Security considerations for the location of the new airport. Adapted from Sarigiannis & Triantis (1988).

location of the city's airport had to address security concerns about the "internal enemy," in the case of a new uprising the state's nerve center had to stay functional and safe, if necessary through the direct intervention of foreign troops, or in the worst case scenario, it should have adequate escape routes. Thus, direct and easily defendable links had to connect Athens' command center and the airport. In 1956, NATO experts visited the Spata area, ostensibly to assess its potential for hosting the airport (Dikaios, & Tzanavara, 1981, p. 3; Patelos, 1979, pp. 7-8), all but signaling their preference for the site. The US ambassador to Athens, George Allen, denied any involvement in the decision-making process, claiming that the US government respected the sovereignty of the Greek state (Valsamakis, 1957a, p. 3). Later on, in 1978, Ioannis Alevras, a social-democrat

politician who later became president of the Greek Parliament, disclosed that the government had chosen the construction of a new airport at Spata because of political and military considerations (Sarigiannis & Triantis, 1988).⁴⁸

The government's first reaction to the relocation debate was to form an exploratory committee, one of many to follow, in order to study the issue. By 1954, the Minister of Transportation Konstantinos Karamanlis assigned a group of experts, led by general Kallinski, a battle-tested officer with extensive experience in the civil war, to make recommendations. The committee members proposed, by a vote of eleven to six, the relocation of the airport to Spata. Even so the government did not follow up with any concrete action (Valsamakis, 1957b, p. 5). At the same period the professional union of civilian pilots and a committee of the Greek airline TAE (Τεχνικάί Αεροπορικά Εκμεταλλεύσεις – Technical and Aeronautical Exploitations) declared their opposition to Elliniko's decommission, arguing that a new airport at Spata would pose great safety issues during landing and take-offs due to topographic and meteorological conditions (Sarigiannis & Triantis, 1988, p. 152).

On March 25, 1955 John Lerew arrived in Athens, invited by the Greek government to lead another team of experts in a study of the future of the airport. He was ICAO's Chief of Aerodromes, Air Routes and Ground Aids, whose aim was to recommend standardized methods for international travel, and implement common procedures in airports in many countries. He had extensive experience with airports as he advised aviation authorities around the world on problems of design, construction and operation. His study recommended the Elliniko site "as the best available, as it was in

⁴⁸ Also, a US military base was in close proximity to Spata, as well as the port of Rafina.

operation as an airport, was close to Athens and well-connected by road, was free of obstructions on three sides, and was capable of expansion for future use” (McAulay, 2007, p. 302). As for the Spata location, it “was rejected for several good reasons, the main one being that the site was ‘practically surrounded by mountains’ and hills with heights up to 350 metres (1,000 feet)” (ibid.).

His recommendation infuriated those who opposed the expansion of Elliniko, and they accused the government officials of corruption, incompetence, and insensitivity to the residents’ concerns. The Mayor of Glyfada, representing all the municipalities of the Saronikos Coast, accused Lerew of being an ignorant drunk who only represented the interests of Greek aviation companies and who lacked any technical and scientific expertise (“Symferonta tritōn,” 1957, p. 5). The American College of Elliniko, which was located within the zone of possible expansion, invited US architect Stuart Thompson to conduct his own study and present his findings. Thompson was familiar with Greece, having completed many projects in the country, most notably the Athenian Agora excavations. He came to the conclusion that the expansion of Elliniko would be very expensive, and that Spata would be a better choice to accommodate the needs of future traffic (Valsamakis, 1957a, p. 3). He also brought his partner Phelps Barnum to Athens to promote the Spata location.

To complicate the debate even further, the government declared that Greek airports urgently needed upgrades in order to be able to accommodate larger aircraft capable of carrying nuclear weapons. Of course, the Greek military neither possessed nor was capable of producing any such weapons. Obviously this was a clear show of compliance with NATO directives, even though Greek public opinion had consistently

been hostile to the idea of hosting nuclear weapons. In a feint typical of Greek politics, the government publicly denied having had discussions with the US government concerning the airport or given their consent for the deployment of nuclear weapons on US military bases in Greece. This was a transparently dishonest statement given that the government had earlier agreed to waive its sovereignty over the bases such as the one at Elliniko (“Ta Ellēnika aerodromia anaprosarmozontai,” 1957, p. 1). The immense influence of the US government in Greek affairs prompted those who favored the airport’s relocation to claim the US government was behind the choice of Elliniko because it wanted to continue using its military base there. The US embassy felt compelled to respond to these allegations with a letter addressed to the mayor of Glyfada, explaining that the US government had no involvement in the decision, and that the two governments had signed an agreement allowing the US air force to use the facilities of Elliniko (Valsamakis, 1957a, p. 3). Besides, from a security point of view it would be more beneficial for the US to have a new airport at Spata. This location provided more inherent security assurances, while having the added benefit of lying in close proximity to the US naval communications station at Nea Makri (Sarigiannis, 2001).

In this atmosphere of confusion, suspicion, and indecision, the government commissioned yet another committee of foreign experts in July of 1957 to provide a study of the potential relocation, even though it had already decided to expand the Elliniko airstrips by 2,300 feet (700 m), to reach a total 9,800 feet (3,000 m), enough to serve jet airplanes (“Ksenoi eidikoi,” 1957, p. 6). The government sticking to its line, kept insisting that no final decision on the possible relocation had been reached. Its minister of Transportation and Public Works Georgios Rallis contended that all options

were on the table.⁴⁹ Addressing concerns about the undeniably heavy involvement of foreign advisors on the issue and the even more troubling suspicion of direct foreign intervention, Rallis vowed that the final decision would not reflect the will of a foreign power or private firm but rest solely in the hands of the government. At the same time, the liberal party opposition leader George Papandreou through his support behind the demands of the residents who lived about Elliniko (“Meletatai ypo tēs kyvernēseōs,” 1957, p. 6), advocating for the relocation of the airport.⁵⁰ The debate dragged on, however, with no consensus or final decision in sight, perpetuating the resident’s anxieties.



Figure 4.3 A snapshot of the airport’s expansion in 1957.

Retrieved from personal archive of the Georgopoulos family, <http://www.tonanonymon.gr/category/topothesies/elliniko>

Many saw the delay of a final decision as an opportunity to position themselves favorably for a potential business opportunity. For example, the construction company Kadmos approached the government with a proposal wherein they would undertake the relocation of the airport and the construction of a new one. And to make its offer even

⁴⁹ Rallis was a prominent conservative Greek politician and prime minister. He was the son of the Ioannis Rallis, the Nazi appointed prime minister of Greece during the occupation who organized paramilitary groups to persecute leftists and former liberation fighters.

⁵⁰ Papandreou was a very prominent Greek politician. An ardent anti-communist, he would closely collaborate with the British during the post WWII period and later serve as a prime minister. He was also the patriarch of the Papandreou political family that came to dominate Greek politics: in time his son and grandson would also serve as prime ministers of Greece.

more appealing, it announced that the whole project would be completed without recourse to the public coffers. It proposed the area of Loutsa-Rafina for the new airport. In exchange for its construction Kadmos would take possession of the land constituting the present Elliniko airport. The company suggested that any further expansion of Elliniko would cost the Greek state more than twenty million dollars, whereas the construction of a new airport would only require nine million dollars, an investment that the company was ready to make (“Oikonomikos omilos,” 1957, p. 5). But finally, on November 10, 1957, the government declared that the airport of Athens should have to be located within a twenty mile radius of the city center. It also stated that relocation and construction costs would play a decisive role in its final decision. In the meantime, the government went along with the recommendations of ICAO and decided to upgrade the facilities at Elliniko, in order to make it suitable for increased traffic and the substantially larger aircraft already under production (“Kyvernētikē anakoinōsis,” 1957, p. 4). Indeed, in the late 1950s most European airports were inadequate for hosting the new models of commercial aircraft, like the jet engine Boeing 707, which were introduced to the market in 1958. The director of Panamerican in Athens explained that these types of airplanes needed at least 11,000 feet of airstrip (3,660 meters), and that inevitably European airports like those of Athens, Rome, and Milan would have to either be decommissioned or expanded if they were to participate in the changing international networks of air travel (“Provlēmatikē ē prosgeiōsis,” 1958, p. 2).

However, although the government had decided to continue the operation of the Elliniko airport, the debate did not cease. At a conference focused on the issues facing the Attiki cities, the mayors of the airport’s surrounding municipalities along with a

number of liberal party parliamentarians chastised the government for its insistence on Elliniko. Pushing back, government officials and the mayors from the Spata area defended the decision to keep the airport at its current location (“Ē diatērēsis tou aerodromiou,” 1957, p. 6). In a classic case of NIMBY (“not in my backyard”) politics, twenty-eight mayors from Spata crafted a letter asserting that the construction of the proposed airport in their region would result in the catastrophic destruction of highly productive agricultural land. They also accused the government of class bias, suggesting that the needs of the Saronikos Coast residents were being given precedence over those of the Spata residents, who were perceived as “simple peasants” (“Sēmeron tha syzētēthoun,” 1957, p. 6).

The governing power block fully exploited the divisions between the Elliniko residents and those of other areas likely to host the new airport. Uncertainty over the state’s real intentions and secrecy over the decision making process created an atmosphere of anticipation and high hopes of the respective stakeholders. Moreover, governing politicians deflected attention from the political and financial constraints that usually plague projects of such a scale by disseminating various rumors to the effect of neutering local opposition. The state in no meaningful way engaged the affected residents; instead it relied on communication management to produce confusion and to pit one group of people against the other, the residents of Elliniko against the residents of Spata. This seemingly standard governing practice aimed at de-legitimizing genuine localized demands; at presenting the state as the impartial arbiter of conflict for which it was partially liable; and at concealing its difficulty to produce results with a minimum level of consensus. This study will later show that today, as the future of the Elliniko site

is hotly debated, this practice is also under full sway; government officials and those who advocate for Elliniko's privatization present their case as an issue of social justice: the residents around the airport oppose the privatization because they defend their quality of life, disregarding the overall well-being of Greek society and most notably of those Athenians who live in less desirable neighborhoods of the metropolitan region.

By the end of the 1950s, after a long period of indecision, the government felt compelled to take action and speed up the process of upgrading Elliniko. The decision acquired a new sense of urgency when the president of the United States visited Greece. Even though it appears that the government had already opted for the expansion of Elliniko and had started the related works, Pelkonene & Albrecht (2006) suggest that "the need for a new airport had been determined after President Dwight D. Eisenhower's trip to Athens in 1959 necessitated the destruction of existing buildings to allow his Boeing 707 to land" (p. 221). The safe landing of his airplane required that ten houses be demolished (Valsamakis, 1960, p. 3).



Figures 4.4, 4.5 President Eisenhower's arrival at Elliniko in 1959.

Retrieved from The Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum.

In 1960 the government signed a contract with the US engineering firm Ammann & Whitney to upgrade the airport and further expand its airstrip. Additionally it commissioned the famous Finish-American architect Eero Saarinen to design a new terminal (“Ai ktiriakai egkatastaseis,” 1960, p. 6). The project’s budget was ten million dollars, of which 8.2 million would come as a loan from the US (“Athens airport,” 1961, p. 11). Saarinen first unveiled his designs on October of 1960, and after a few modifications he presented them to his client and the Greek public on May of 1961 (figure 4.6) (“Kentriko ktērio,” 1962). Its completion date was set for 1964, but additional modifications requested by the Greek government (“Ellēnika Tehnika,” 1961, p. 50), and the death of Saarinen on September of 1961 delayed the project. By 1962, two years after the contract was signed, the minister of Public Works, Solon Ghikas complained to Ammann & Whitney for the delays, asserting that his government would not accept additional charges (Ghikas, 1962).⁵¹ The overall process followed by



Figure 4.6 Eero Saarinen in Athens explaining his plans for Elliniko to Greek architects in May 1961. Retrieved from “Ta oristika proshedia,” 1961, p. 9.

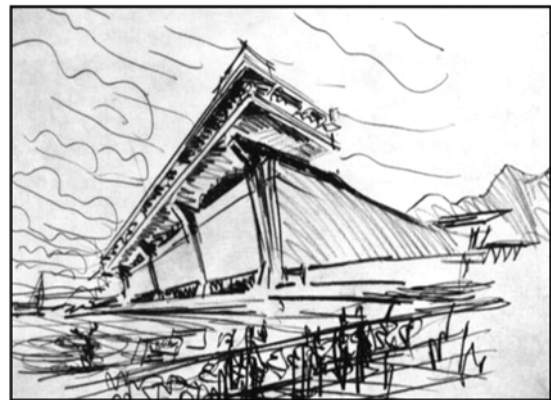


Figure 4.7 Saarinen’s sketch of East Terminal. Retrieved from Eero Saarinen Collection, Box 571, Folder 1592.

⁵¹ Solon Ghikas was a military officer—turned politician, credited for the creation of parastatal organizations and their involvement in political life during the post-WWII period. He was also a very close advisor to the Prime Minister Konstantinos Karamanlis.

the government on the issue of the airport angered Greek architects because their opinion was never solicited through institutional channels (“Protasis diamorfōseōs,” 1960). Instead the Greek government chose to consult a few Greek architects to review the designs individually, such as Konstantinos Mpiris, whose first reaction was very negative, requesting additional alterations to the original plans, further delaying the project which was finally completed in 1969 (“Expansion delaying,” 1966). Saarinen’s final creation was a clear example of modernist architecture that took inspiration from the monuments of ancient Greece and the monasteries of Mount Athos (Santala, 2006, p. 305). Modernization, the glory of ancient Athens, and orthodox Christianity would be the threefold leitmotifs promoted to potential tourists abroad, in addition to being the lodestars of a new Greek identity. The airport’s East Terminal would be Athens’ second signature building in the post-WWII period designed by a world-famous architect.⁵² In 2003 the Central Council for Modern Monuments declared Saarinen’s East Terminal as a designated landmark.



Figure 4.8 Saarinen’s model of East Terminal. Retrieved from Eero Saarinen Collection, Box 571, Folder 1587.

The newly constructed East Terminal was dedicated to international flights, and the existing West Terminal was used by Olympic Airways and the US base. After the bankruptcy of the Greek airline TAE (Τεχνικά Αεροπορικά Εκμεταλλεύσεις – Technical and Aeronautical Exploitations) in 1955, the company passed into the hands of the Greek

⁵² The first was the US Embassy building, completed in 1961 and designed by Walter Gropius to evoke the stateliness of the Parthenon.

state. The next year, the government signed an agreement with Aristotelis Onassis giving him ownership of the state-owned TAE, and granting exclusive rights of air transportation to his company, Olympic Airways. This was an example of state-monopoly capitalism so typical during the “golden era” of Greek capitalism that lasted until the early 1970s. It was characterized by very high rates of capitalist accumulation and profitability and by the fusion of the interests of big corporations with the state, through a preferable legal framework, and myriad exemptions and subsidies.

While the state was proceeding with its investment in upgrading Elliniko, the discussion concerning a new airport continued. This was a particularly turbulent time in the history of modern Greece: instability surrounded the Center Union’s successive election victories in 1963 and 1964, and continued following the constitutional coup d’état in 1965.⁵³ As the project at Elliniko got under way, it gradually became apparent that its planning would not be sufficient to accommodate the ever increasing tourist traffic. Besides, the advent of the jet airplane was transforming air travel, forcing many cities to reconsider the relocation of their airports. The considerations of space necessitated by larger aircraft and increased air travel were not the only challenges facing modern airports. Increasingly the attendant rise in noise and air pollution became a major issue as well. By 1966 the residents around Elliniko were showing signs of compromised health due to the constant noise. The number of people suffering from hearing impairment, neurological disorders, emotional problems, and high stress levels became so high that the alarmed government approached other European cities to learn how to

⁵³ In the two years between 1965 and 1967 Greece would see six prime ministers and unprecedented political turmoil. The political stalemate would end with the military coup of 1967.

minimize the airport's negative impacts on the surrounding residents ("Pentamelēs Ellēnikē antiprosōpeia," 1966, p. 4).

The government remained divided over the airport's potential relocation. Some politicians argued that it was nonsense to plan for a new airport while a serious upgrade of the old airport was taking place.⁵⁴ On its first page the newspaper *To Vima* reported that a consortium of foreign investors was willing to put an end to the impasse by undertaking the construction of a new airport at Spata. The condition was that in exchange the government had to hand them the land of Elliniko ("Tha metaferthei to aerodromion," 1966, p. 1). Responding to all of these issues, the Minister of Transportation Yiamas stated that at this point the government was considering two options: either to relocate the airport on a new site, or to expand the existing facilities into the sea of Saronikos. In an effort to respond to the by now continual allegations of corruption and foreign meddling, he felt compelled to stress that the final decision was to be taken "solely" by the government following the recommendations of yet another committee, this one headed by urban planning professor Kriezis, with Doxiadis, government officials, and air force officers filling out the slate of experts ("To aerodromion tha metaferthē?" 1966, p. 5). The minister also noted that at that time the government had not considered any specific plans for the Elliniko site in the event of the airport's decommission. He gave his assurance, however, that its future redevelopment would benefit not only the tourist industry, but, as usual, society as a whole

⁵⁴ Many years later during a parliamentary discussion of the choice to build a new airport at Spata, the leader of the Center Union Party Georgios Mavros would describe the construction of the east terminal as a clear example of bad planning that cost tax payers 100,000,000 Drachmas ("Sfyrokopēthēke ē kyvernēsē," 1976, p. 7).

(“Proypothesis metaforas,” 1966, p. 8). Interestingly, he also noted that, should the Greek state decide to build a new airport, the project would be given to US companies, due to their experience with similar projects. This decision seems to have resulted from the multiple discussions he held with the representatives of US construction companies over the issue (“Amerikanoi kataskevastai,” 1966, p. 10; “Ē promeletē dia neon aerodromion,” 1966, p. 8). Following the completion of its study the Kriezis committee recommended that Elliniko continue serving as the main airport of Athens. Nonetheless, it stated that it would be prudent to initiate preliminary studies for its eventual relocation to Spata (“Tha diatērēthē to aerodromion,” 1967, p. 8). By 1967 the expansion and upgrade of the airport was almost complete, with Minister of Transportation Stasinopoulos declaring that Elliniko was one of the most modern airports in Europe, comparable to those of London, Paris, and Rome. With the installation of new communications system it was ready to serve jet airplanes and facilitate higher volumes of traffic, an essential step towards a more vigorous tourist development strategy (“Syghronon diethnes aerodromion,” 1967, p. 8).

After many delays, the east terminal was finally opened in 1969. Saarinen’s building provided a major lift for the image of Athens and its airport. However, this was not enough to silence the debate over the airport’s relocation. Traffic estimates provided to the airport’s planners soon proved to be woefully inaccurate. Despite the airport’s renovations and expansions, the volume of traffic passing through Elliniko clearly exceeded its intended capacity. The projected traffic for 1968 was 2,400,000 passengers. This number, however, would be surpassed much earlier: already in 1967 the airport would host 2,451,886 passengers and 35,511 tons of cargo (transit passengers and cargo

included). In 1971 the travel guide *All the Best in the Mediterranean* informed its readers that despite the Saarinen-building addition, Elliniko was already too small (Clark, 1971, p. 287). Increasing traffic and poor planning at Elliniko guaranteed that the decision to keep it open would be second guessed. Thus, even in the middle of the major upgrade and expansion, the discussion concerning a new airport did not cease (“Den tha metaferthē to aerodromion,” 1967, p. 12; “Tha kataskevasthē mikron aerodromion,” 1967, p. 12). By the early 1970s it became clear that the military government had decided to move forward as quickly as possible with plans for a new airport at Spata. It commissioned two US companies, Airways Engineering Corporation and Burns & Roe Inc., to conduct a new study of the project. The report they delivered in 1971 concluded that a new airport at Spata had to be ready before 1990 in order to handle that year’s estimated traffic of 22,350,000 passengers.⁵⁵ In the meantime, major improvements were encouraged at Elliniko, including the construction of a new runway in the Saronikos Gulf. The two US consulting firms were assigned the contract to make the improvements their report advised. The main runway was subsequently lengthened to more than two miles (3,500 m), and additional buildings were added to Elliniko’s infrastructure. By 1973 the airport’s facilities had so much improved that the French manufacturer of the supersonic Concorde 001, Aérospatiale, decided to carry out a series of test flights to check the aircraft’s performance at Elliniko, and also to explore the interest of Olympic Airways to acquire this type of airplane (“World news,” 1973, p. 4).

⁵⁵ Obviously, this estimation is purposefully inflated; in 1990 approximately 10,077,000 passed through the airport.

However, at this time it became clear that the airport could not expand forever. As the conurbation of Athens was growing, so the areas around the airport became more densely populated (Table 4.3). The proximity of the area to the Saronikos Gulf and the steady proliferation of cars allowed the affluent classes to either abandon the center of Athens and move in the area, or to build their weekend and summer houses there. Also, many of the Olympic Airways employees moved closer to their jobs. Finally, the expansion of the US military base also contributed to the areas growth. By 1984, 1,500 military personnel and 2,500 dependents lived in the areas around the airport (Kamm, 1984).

Table 4.3 Population increases in municipalities around the airport

	1940	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991
Elliniko	1,701	2,221	4,631	*	11,498	13,517
Komnina / Hasani	1,232					
Sourmena	508	552				
Alimos/Kalamaki	1,452	2,930	8,383	26,957	27,036	32,024
Argyroupolis	192	224	4,021	13,956	26,108	31,530
Trahones	165	201				
Glyfada	3,148	8,256	12,361	23,449	44,018	63,306

Note. Adapted from Hellenic Statistical Authority

*between 1968 and 1975 Elliniko was annexed by Alimos

But as it became clear an airport at Spata would be built, foreign companies tried to rally their respective embassies in order to improve the chances of their bid for the project. In 1973, the first acquisitions of land took place through eminent domain. That same year the US Department of State sent a cable to the US Embassy in Athens to the effect that a consortium of US and British companies had asked the Department to pressure the military government of Greece to award them the contract for the airport's master plan. The US-British consortium was also aware that a German-French consortium was bidding for the same project, and they even knew price differentials

between bids. Therefore they asked that the US and British embassies coordinate their promotional efforts in order to improve the chances of American and British bid (US Department of State, 1973).

In early 1974 Edmond Laitmer, head of the Greek Civil Aviation Authority, endorsed relocating the airport. A cable from the US Embassy at this time, however, reveals that Prime Minister Androustopoulos was concerned about the financial burden of such an endeavor (Embassy of the United States, Athens-Greece, 1974a). Laitmer, a retired Air Force General and former speechwriter for the dictator Colonel Georgios Papadopoulos, would later change his mind, favoring the construction of a landfill runway in the Saronikos Gulf. The US Embassy cable also noted that the Greek aviation company Olympic Airways, owned by the powerful Aristotelis Onassis, opposed decommissioning Elliniko (Embassy of the United States, Athens-Greece, 1974b). In spite of these headwinds the dictatorship pressed on with its plans, and in 1973 it made public its intention to expropriate a total of 10,378 acres (42 km²) of land at Spata. It also planned to commercially develop the land at Elliniko in order to raise funds for the new airport.

The dictatorship, however, would fall only the next year in 1974, and thus the airport issue would be inherited by the next government, a democratically elected administration. The restoration of democracy led to, among other things, the end of exiling political enemies, the legalization of the Communist Party, and an overall higher degree of freedom. This was to be a managed democracy, however. Greece's failure to oust and prosecute the inner core of the junta (except for its very top leadership), and its failure to democratize the state apparatus resembled in many ways the failure a few

decades earlier to identify and sanction Nazi collaborators. Thus, the people who manned the levers of state power during the junta continued to do so. The harassment of leftists continued as well, though this time it was more restrained. At the economic level, the conservative government of New Democracy felt the pressures of the 1973 international crisis which ended the unprecedented post-WWII economic boom, but also the “golden age” of Greek capitalism. This caused a serious drop in all key indicators of the system and a long restructuring process. Paradoxically, this process was initiated by a conservative government — during the so-called “social-mania” period — characterized by stronger state intervention in the economy and Keynesian attempts to stimulate aggregate demand. The objectives were to reverse de-industrialization through state involvement in key industrial sectors, and to also diffuse radicalism (Mavroudeas, 2013). Indeed, the international spirit of revolt had finally caught up in Greece after the fall of the dictatorship. It was fueled by dissatisfaction with the continuous rule of the far right, and had potential destabilizing effects that alarmed the ruling classes.

In this difficult political and economic environment, the government continued the process of analyzing potential relocation sites for the airport in the same plodding manner as the previous governments. In 1975 it commissioned the Franco-German consortium of Aeroport de Paris and Flughafen Frankfurt am Main A. G. to study all possible locations for the new airport. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the results of their study supported the administration’s desire to build the new airport at Spata. On July 10, 1976, the government decided to speed up construction of the Spata airport while simultaneously upgrading the facility at Elliniko. The government plan called for the privatization of the Elliniko land, with the accruing revenue earmarked for the financing

of the new airport. From the government's perspective, this was pragmatic course of action demonstrating prudent management of public resources, especially since, at that time, now familiar issues such as quality of life and environmental protection did not register as critical political topics ("Sta Spata tha ginei to neo aerodromio," 1976, p. 16). It also decided to award Aeroport de Paris and Flughafen Frankfurt am Main A. G., in collaboration with Doxiadis again, the contract to prepare the master plan ("Epispevdonai oi diadiakasies," 1976, p. 1; "Kyvernētikē spoudē," 1976, p. 1).⁵⁶ The land expropriation at Spata, initiated by the military dictatorship, now took place under the new regime. The new government soon learned, however, that it faced the increasing opposition and even militancy of the Spata residents ("Sovara epeisodia," 1976, p. 1).⁵⁷

Now the government coyly suggested it was considering another site, one at Megara, for the new airport. The purpose of this subterfuge was to play the option of Megara against that of Spata, disorienting the locals who opposed any talk of a new airport in their areas. The residents of Spata shrewdly claimed that the decision had already been made a long time ago, and that the myriad of studies, rhetoric of due diligence, and vacillation between potential sites were used only for buying time and

⁵⁶ Doxiadis had proposed the construction of the new airport on the island of Makronisos, a place of exile for leftists just outside of Athens. Such a project, however, would have been extremely costly and enormously harmful to the environment. Later, seeing that the government was not in favor of such a choice, he changed his position, favoring the Spata location (Dikaios, 1976, p. 2). What is striking though is that the Communist Party, through its prominent member Grigoris Farakos also proposed that the government consider the potential of Makronisos, even though this was historically a site where many of its members were tortured ("Sfyrokopēthēke ē kyvernēsē," 1976, p. 7). Also of note is that only at this relatively late date did the Greek government select European companies to work on the airport project. This might be because of the government's desire for European Community membership. In the next chapter we will see that the commission of large development projects to foreign consortia has always been related to wider political calculations.

⁵⁷ The US Embassy showed concern over this popular opposition, recording detailed accounts of the violent clashes between residents and police (Embassy of the United States, Athens-Greece, 1976).

pacifying the people (Fotakis & Dikaïos, 1976, pp. 1 & 9). Thus government officials would assure the residents of Spata that the airport would be built at Megara, and vice versa.⁵⁸ Finally the protests died down, especially after the government started the land expropriation payments and ramped up a public relations campaign which promised the airport's construction would bring economic prosperity (Sarigiannis, 2001). Opposition to the substance of the plan may have been tamped down, but now concerns about the process came to the fore: A committee from the Technical Chamber of Greece requested that the government revoke the contract for a feasibility study it had conferred on a foreign company and establish a new competition open exclusively to Greek scientists. The Chamber criticized the government not only for the lack of transparency in its decision making process, but also for its blatant disregard of parliament, local authorities, and the scientific community of Greece ("To Tehniko Epimelētērio," 1976, pp. 1 & 7). However, as Sarigiannis (2001) notes, the final opposition of the Chamber was tentative, vague, and lacking in conviction.

But as had occurred with the announced construction of the Athens subway and other projects, construction of the airport was indefinitely delayed due to budgetary constraints and poor financial planning ("Pros mataiōsē," 1976, pp. 1-2; "Se deka meres," 1976, p. 2). The government continued to promise that the new airport would be ready in ten years. It would be financed by privatizing fifty percent of the Elliniko land,

⁵⁸ In 1973 Megara became the scene of one of the few popular uprisings during the dictatorship and one of the first environmental protests in all of Greek history. The military government, committed to a pro-business policy orientation, used "fast-track" procedures to sell 617 acres (2.5 km²) to the ship owner Andreadis for the construction of a refinery. Though the government violently expropriated their land, in a rare show of combativeness the locals organized to avert the theft, even uniting with protesting university students of the Athens Polytechnic School. Though their efforts ultimately failed, it was a seminal event of organized opposition against the dictatorship.

which according to a government estimate would generate twenty-six billion Drachmas. For its part the cost of the new airport was estimated at twenty-two billion Drachmas (“Sta Spata oristika,” 1978, p. 10). In 1978 the parliament passed Law 811/1978, which provided for the creation of a public company responsible for the construction of the new airport. The first plan initially stipulated that thirty percent of the Elliniko airport land be used for the construction of a conference center, banking center, maritime center, numerous restaurants and hotels, as well as necessary supportive infrastructure. The revenues received from this commercial development would be used to finance the construction of the new airport at Spata. The remaining seventy percent of the land would be turned into a park. In 1980 the government published Athens master plan, also known as Manos’ plan named after the minister of Urban Planning, Housing and the Environment Stefanos Manos, designating Elliniko’s site a zone for holiday homes and recreation.

At the end of the conservative government’s term in 1981, Minister of Transportation Panagiotopoulos admitted that mistakes in the master plan by Aeroport de Paris and Flughafen Frankfurt am Main A. G. had caused delays, but again he reassured the public that the airport’s timetable for completion remained unchanged: it would be ready by the end of 1986. The government commissioned the Dutch company NACO to draw up preliminary plans, and in 1981 contracted with the British firm Airports International for advice and general oversight of the project. Repeated delays would cost the government dearly, however, as extra time in one stage of the project often necessitated raising the compensation of the companies involved in subsequent ones. This situation was fortuitous — for the contractors — causing the newspaper *Rizospastis*

to speculate that the frequent delays were not coincidences (Dikaios, 1981, p. B8; “Fiasko oi eksaggelies,” 1981, p. 11). The actual earthwork on the project finally began in 1981. However, as we will see shortly, the national elections of the same year would again change the fortunes of the new airport.

In the post-dictatorial period, Elliniko had also become a symbolic site for foreign intervention in Greek affairs. The support of the US government to the authoritarian regimes of the post-WWII period and especially its connection with the 1967-1974 military dictatorship had greatly elevated anti-Americanism in Greek society. The Turkish invasion of Cyprus and the partition of the island on 1974 with alleged NATO involvement were perceived by many Greeks as a proof that NATO’s security assurances aimed only at the “internal” enemy, while these were hollow promises to the country’s territorial sovereignty and security concerns. Following the Cyprus debacle, the US government tried to help the Greek government save face with its people promising the closure of the Elliniko base, but this remained just a rhetorical gesture (“Gains on Greek bases,” 1975, p. 34). In 1976, the US and Greek governments signed an agreement extending the presence of the military bases, and as for the conservative Prime Minister Karamanlis’ bravado rhetoric, this was aimed at the Greek audience only (Wright, 1981, p. A27).

The same tactic would be used by Karamanlis’ successor, Andreas Papandreou, a social-democrat who became Prime Minister in 1981 leading the Panhellenic Socialist Movement, PASOK, to a landslide victory. The social-democrats of PASOK rode on the anti-American sentiment pledging the closure of all US bases in Greece and the exit from the NATO alliance. But in practice the PASOK government had different things in mind.

So in 1983 it signed an agreement with the US that guaranteed the operation of the Elliniko base for five more years. The locals were ambivalent on the continuation of the agreement. Many welcomed the increased demand for housing by American personnel stationed at the base and their dependents, because it raised local revenues and housing values. Also, increased business for restaurants, coffee shops and bars provided a steady source of income for local establishments. On the other hand, the presence of the military personnel created many problems for the locals. The mayor of Glyfada Theodoros Spondylidis explained, “American troops were responsible for a subculture centering on bars that provide prostitutes and narcotics and are the scenes of frequent fights” (Kamm, 1984, p. A16). Even those who welcomed the economic benefits to the area wished that the Americans would drink less and that they would not break the windows of local houses (ibid.).

Finally, the base was closed in 1993, but the military presence in Greece would continue in other locations. Simon Duke (1989) describes the decision to close the Elliniko base as a plot designed to appeal to domestic political consumption. “The choice of Hellenikon was an obvious one; the location next to Athens International Airport means it is highly visible, and US military aircraft use the same runways as commercial flights into Greece. Hellenikon is a constant reminder of the US military presence in the country” (p. 174). This served both parties well. On the one hand, the US appeared willing to listen to its allies’ sensitivities and to accommodate them, even though the Elliniko base was only one of the many US foreign military installations around the world that closed down with the end of the Cold War, due to financial and logistical reasons (“Military bases being weighted for cutbacks,” 1990). On the other hand, the

closure of Elliniko also served the Greek social-democrats who appeared as tough negotiators and guarantors of Greek sovereignty.

The social democrat's electoral victory in 1981 marked an important point in the political history of Greece. For the first time a center-left party would win the election, bringing with it a major shift in the country's politics. More intense Keynesian initiatives, along with the introduction of social justice policies, in a modest form at least, was now part of the political agenda, renewing hopes that Greece would soon enter upon a period of modernization and prosperity that would be enjoyed by all. However, the incorporation of Greece into the European Economic Community in 1981 would have long-term consequences that would limit the government's capacity to reverse de-industrialization and improve the position of the country's economy in a shifting international division of labor.

PASOK's successful rhetoric effectively brought about the alignment of large segments of the society behind broad and often abstract initiatives. In the case of the airport the party made promises to various communities that helped secure their support in the elections. So while PASOK declared that it did not favor the airport's relocation to Spata, a relief to its residents, it nevertheless assured the residents surrounding Elliniko that, should it win in the elections, the unwanted airport would leave its community as well ("Ti tha ginei," 1983, p. 4). This dubious proclamation was in fact in accordance with the party's agenda to curb Athens' primacy within the Greek system of cities and to initiate a systematic process of decentralization.

By the early 1980s life in Athens had become almost unbearable due to the inherent contradictions and inefficiencies of the previous model of growth. High population densities, interminable traffic lines, dangerous pollution levels, and the almost complete absence of public space were just some of the major problems residents had to cope with on a daily basis. To mitigate these problems the socialists' plan called for the government to "starve" Athens of public investments, sending these expenditures instead to the periphery of the country in the hope that people and businesses would follow suit. With respect to the airport issue PASOK's plan was to alleviate some of Athens' worst problems by diverting air-traffic and the commerce associated with it to regional airports. Theoretically, with lower traffic rates, Elliniko would be able to continue functioning without further expansions into residential areas.

Initially when it came into office the PASOK government was ambivalent and split over the future airport of Athens. Some government officials favored the construction of the Spata airport, while some were against it. Likewise some officials favored the complete decommission of the Elliniko airport, while others envisioned it continuing on in a lesser role after a new airport had been built ("Ē kyvernēsē meleta," 1982, p. 9; "Stis protheseis tēs kyvernēsēs," 1982, p. 9). Akis Tsohatzopoulos, Minister for Public Works, favored the Spata solution. However Antonis Tritsis, Minister of Planning, Housing and the Environment, declared that a Spata airport would not be constructed. Instead he suggested that a university campus should be built on the site ("Panepistēmio anti aerodromio," 1982, p. 11). The residents of Elliniko continued to fight for the airport's relocation, while the residents of Spata continued to oppose construction of an airport in their area. The lobbying efforts of the Elliniko communities

appeared to carry the day: earthwork was begun at Spata. And yet a plan for the redevelopment of the Elliniko site was not forthcoming, because as the government claimed no final decision had been reached (“Oi dēmoi,” 1982, p. 10). In early 1983 the state officially reinstated the stalemate with the announcement that it was postponing all construction at Spata for two years. The reason: it claimed that more time was needed for the study of such a large scale urban intervention (“Anavallontai gia dyo hronia oi ergasies,” 1983, p. 10; “Pagōnei ē kataskevē tou aerodromiou,” 1983, p. 2).

Subsequently Athens’ master plan of 1983 (published in 1985) made no mention of an airport project at Spata, while Elliniko was to continue serving as Athens’ international airport. In 1986 the government decided to invest approximately eleven million dollars for Elliniko’s face lift—mostly for anti-terrorist installations following criticism of lax security (“News scan,” 1986, p. 8).

By 1985, however, at the beginning of PASOK’s second term in office, it had become apparent that the social democratic party, like other social-democratic parties at that time, gradually became bureaucratized, and its government was moving further and further away from the rhetoric of redistribution and decentralization that had brought it to power. Soon these policies were either effectively undermined or abandoned completely, and monetarist programs were introduced to tackle the crisis tendencies of Greek capitalism. Minister of Planning, Housing and the Environment Antonis Tritsis had already been removed, signaling a policy shift in which Athens would again resume its privileged status as the preeminent destination of public investment.⁵⁹ In 1988 Greece

⁵⁹ In 1984, Prime Minister Papandreou adroitly dismissed Tritsis by saying “Antoni, you made history”, and then transferred him to the Ministry of Education. This department was known in government circles as

placed Athens squarely at the center of its bid for the 1996 Olympic Games, indicating a clear reversal of earlier PASOK attempts to slow the growth of the conurbation. The bid for the 1996 Games bid proved to be a harbinger for subsequent development patterns that greatly compromised public space, as it will be shown in the next chapter.

Thus a series of public works that had been suspended indefinitely now reappeared on the government's agenda for Athens' urban development: notably the construction of a subway, highway network, and of course, a new airport. However, in 1990 construction of the Spata airport was still held up, as the government had failed to either allocate necessary funds in the national budget or benefit from European Community programs that supported regional development. Affairs had reached such pass that, according to the president of Airport of Athens (the special purpose entity responsible for the construction of the Spata airport), the airport could not be made ready for the 1996 Olympic Games unless loans were secured or some mechanism of self-financing was devised, such as a private firm assuming the management of the new airport (and the profits derived therefrom) for an initial period in exchange for bankrolling its construction ("To aerodromio tōn Spatōn," 1990, p. 28). Thus the numerous delays in the planning and construction of the new airport, along with the Olympic Games deadline, made the privatization of the new airport seem not only inevitable, but even commonsensical.

The 1980s would end in political turmoil. The social democrats had degenerated into a bureaucratized and corrupt elite, unable to provide solutions to the challenges of

the "electric chair" for the finality with which it ended the political aspirations of ambitious officials. Tritsis was replaced by Evaggelos Kouloubis, who had close ties to the construction industry.

Greece's incorporation into the European and global markets. The bureaucratic apparatchiks established a managerial approach in administrative functions, divorcing these functions from political ideologies, and thus legitimizing technocratic transformation in governance. Also, the party's increasing distance from its popular base made the reliance on business interests necessary for financing its campaigns. This in turn led to corruption and de-politicization, initiating a gradual shift of the political body to the right that benefited the conservatives, and later on the far-right. Thus, in the early 1990s the conservatives of New Democracy would come back to power with an outright roll-back neoliberal agenda, which now seemed commonsensical. Even though the dominant narratives of neoliberalism's periodization may not apply directly to the Greek case, nevertheless, as the next chapter will show, neoliberalization would become the dominant trend, exacerbating Greece's chronic problems, and transforming Greek society and the city of Athens.

Chapter 5 The Era of Mega-Projects and the Decommission of Elliniko, 1990-2004

While the 1980s ended with the issue of the new airport unresolved, in the 1990s, the Greek state finally moved forward with the construction of the new international airport of Athens at Spata. Naturally, the question over Elliniko's future resurfaced, and in the ensuing debates the various stakeholders—state and local politicians, the business community, the scientific community, and residents—presented their aspirations, calibrated their arguments, and devised their political strategies. The public ownership of the site, its sheer size, and its favorable position, right off the waterfront of Saronikos Bay, made the land of Elliniko a valuable target for private investors and construction companies. Governing politicians also saw the potential of attracting investments in upscale tourism and real estate, hoping to reposition this sector of the city as a thriving business center and entertainment destination. On the other hand, a coalition of diverse actors contested the government's plans by arguing for the creation of a metropolitan park. The opposition included the mayors of the surrounding municipalities, community groups, scientists, and progressive political parties concerned with the social and environmental implications of real estate investment at Elliniko. Overall, the debate reflected the balance of political forces both at the national and local levels. The proposed ideas and plans included a wide array of solutions, but in the end, the state opted for a compromise, as it was forced to do in only a handful of other cases of social policy. In fact, one of the paradoxes over Elliniko in the early 1990s was that the state's plans reflected the increasing influence of the neoliberal agenda for growth at all costs.

But at the end of this period, the state's solution was for balanced growth rather than more speculative real estate development.

This is a paradox, because the period from 1990 to 2004 was the time of triumphal neoliberalism in Greece. The country had sided with the winners of the cold war, and now was the time to reap the fruits of belonging to the “club of the mighty” as the social-democratic Prime Minister Simitis asserted. The rising waves of neoliberal globalization reached the Greek shores with the promise of pulling the country out of the periphery, right into the core of the world-system. This path called for the introduction of neoliberal policies, which went through two distinct phases that at the same time hindered and facilitated this process. On the one hand, the conservatives of New Democracy and the social-democrats of PASOK alike implemented neoliberal policies that harmed the subordinate social classes. Widespread privatization of public assets and services, cuts in the welfare state, labor market deregulation, changes in taxation, and income erosion, due to the introduction of the euro currency, led to the weakening of the political hegemony of neoliberalism in Greece, especially in the early stages. On the other hand, the influx of European structural funds, access to cheap credit, and higher rates of growth allowed for the formation of consensus, based to a large degree on the petty bourgeoisie (Ioakeimoglou, 2004).

The PASOK social democrats, through the rhetoric of a strong Greece, their influence on labor unions, and the ability to maintain a social partnership between capital and labor were more adept at executing neoliberal restructuring with the minimum possible friction. Panos Totsikas, an experienced urban planner, notes that they were also instrumental at reconciling the interests of competing segments of capital through

elaborate joint ventures (personal communication, 2011). As table 5.1 shows, the social democrats contributed greatly, much more than the conservatives, to the process of deregulation and privatization. They managed to provide social peace by juggling between social progressive rhetoric on the one hand, and adherence to a social-partnership ideology with the capitalist classes on the other. Elliniko's redevelopment stands as an exemplary case of this strategy: Faced with opposition to privatization plans from within and outside the party, they opted for a partial privatization of 250 acres.

Table 5.1 Privatization of State-owned enterprises in Greece, 1992-2000*

1992/93	1994/95	1996/97	1998/99	2000
Conservatives	Social Democrats	Social Democrats	Social Democrats	Social Democrats
35	117	1,953	8,772	1,384

Note. Adapted from Schneider (2003).

*Amount raised from privatization, in million USD

When the conservatives returned to power in 2004, they capitalized on building a centrist profile, and they adhered to a similar politics as those of their predecessors. Thus, in this period the Greek political landscape transformed, ala Poulantzas (1973), from an early stage, when governing political parties formulated alternative plans for the political hegemony of the bourgeoisie, to a post-political consensus based on the acceptance of the capitalist market and the liberal state as the organizational foundations of society, and on “the pacification of conflicts that arose from ideologies of social struggle” (Ranciere, 2004, p. 4).

This democracy of the center was underpinned by the aspirations of the Greek ruling classes to play a wider role in the region of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Balkans. The changes that took place in Athens, and the interventions to transform the

urban landscape expressed these ambitions, and aimed at facilitating the further integration of the Greek social formation into the global economy. A series of mega-projects such as the new international airport; the Attiki Odos expressway; the suburban train; the tram/light train; expansions of ports surrounding Athens –i.e. the ports of Piraeus, Rafina, Lavrion, etc., all provided profitable opportunities to the large Greek and foreign construction companies. The projects also put in place the necessary infrastructure for the efficient movement of products, and people. These new transportation systems have led to more intense development of the areas adjacent to the new transportation routes (Chorianopoulos et al., 2010). This in turn has led to a new round of urban sprawl, loss of urban open spaces, abandonment of many central city neighborhoods, and heavier car dependency (Leontidou et al., 2007). The Olympics also reigned supreme in this effort of Athens’ restructuring with billions of dollars poured into tourism, the construction and real estate sectors of the city. Athens was to be transformed into a metropolis of regional importance, as a transportation hub, tourist destination, financial and trade center, and ultimately as a safe place for investment (Economou et al., 2001).

In the case of Elliniko, this restructuring of the Athenian landscape meant the destruction/decommission of the airport as an obsolete piece of infrastructure, and the availability of this large lot of land for future redevelopment. The possibility of a massive residential and commercial investment mobilized the surrounding communities into fighting such plans. Albeit this alliance was based on different political ideologies, and thus divergent conceptions of environmentalism, it represented the distrust of localities for the central government. Dimitris Efstathiadis as a long time mayor of

Argyroupolis (1975-1994 & 2007-2010), and prefect of Athens, supported by the social-democrats, noted that this alliance of the mayors was not based on a solid vision over Elliniko's future redevelopment. He and others believed that some entrepreneurial activity was necessary for covering the costs of the park's maintenance. He feared that if the upkeep of the park was left exclusively with the state, then the park would slowly deteriorate. The central state would gradually decrease the necessary resources, while the budgets of the surrounding municipalities would not be enough to cover the maintenance expenses (personal communication, 2011). On the other hand, the mayor of Elliniko, Kostas Kortzidis (1976-1998), supported by the Communist Party (KKE), insisted that the park's expenses should be covered by the state; first, because this is part of its responsibility, and second, because this is the only way to have a public park, free of charge and accessible to all.

With similar debates looming in Greece during this period, the 1990s started with the temporary curtailment of the social-democrats' dominance in the political affairs of Greece. In 1989, their ailing leader, Andreas Papandreou, was accused of corruption. Greece's right and left-wing parties, adept enough to understand the moment called for righteous indignation, united under the banner of clean government, proclaiming that the episode would prove a proverbial *katharsis* for Greek politics. In the process, the political debate was mostly stripped of ideological arguments and reduced to managerial discussions over the various mechanisms of state governance. This was a critical development in Greek politics, reinforcing a deeper transformation in the political landscape. The two main leftist parties, adopting this narrow managerial approach to state affairs, unwittingly migrated to what had formerly been the preferred terrain of the

political right. Doing so allowed the more conservative elements within their ranks to strengthen their political positions. This misstep, in conjunction with the wave of regime changes in Eastern European countries and the sobering realities of a globalized economy, triggered a period in which the left questioned its history, objectives and strategies. The Communist Party of Greece (KKE) joined forces with their arch enemies, the Euro-Communists (KKE Esoterikou), and together they formed a government with the conservatives in order to facilitate the legal prosecution of the social-democrats of the Pan-Hellenic Socialist Party (PASOK), with a view of precipitating their political death. Their efforts to unseat PASOK from their usual privileged position, however, resulted in more problems than they had originally anticipated, as the political debate swung to the right. In a major botch of tactics and strategy, the Left's short-term electoral objectives implicitly undermined a principle that was seminal to their thought: that corruption is an endemic feature of the capitalist system.⁶⁰ With the social-democrats largely discredited and the leftist parties allied with the right in "cleaning up" Greek politics, the conservatives started to gain some credibility as the only viable political bloc able to lead the country out of the stalemate.⁶¹

With the social-democrats severely weakened and the Left busied with self-defeating investigations and prosecutions, the conservatives had finally managed to set an

⁶⁰ At the end of this process a few years later, the Communist Party was split into three: many joined forces with the Euro-Communists and other smaller political groups in forming the Coalition of the Left (Synaspismos ths Aristeras); others, claiming allegiance to a truly communist vision, formed the New Left Current (NAR); the rest remained in the Communist Party, which now retreated from earlier efforts to collaborate and form coalitions, opting gradually for a solitary course of political action.

⁶¹ It is interesting to note that around the same period in Italy a similar process called *mani pulite* (clean hands), aiming to end the corruption of the political system, resulted in the disappearance of many political parties, the (neo) liberalization of the economy, and the eventual political dominance of the extreme right.

agenda of post-ideological consensus based on the acceptance of the capitalist market and the diminished, strictly administrative role of the state. Their election platform centered on the efficient management of state affairs and the revival of economic growth through trickle-down economics. Rhetorically they aimed to divorce economic affairs from the political and social realms. Thus, the market economy was presented as a separate sphere with its own logic, best managed by technocrats and experts, and sealed off from the demands of labor unions and political parties. This narrative was compatible with the wider political developments of the time, particularly the processes of integration into the European structures and the global economy, which were presented as inevitable and unsupportive of interference by local or national politics, indeed all societal controls. The invisible hand of the global market, conveniently located outside the society, free of rationality, free of responsibility, was now the ultimate force pushing the tokens around the game board.

Ideologically, this was a major victory for the proponents of market forces; yet, the Greek case was not unique. In the 1990s, waves of privatization also swept many countries, and the advisability of so-called “market solutions” seemed so irrefutable that it prompted some to proclaim the end of history. In Europe this wave was more visible because of the dismantling, also euphemistically

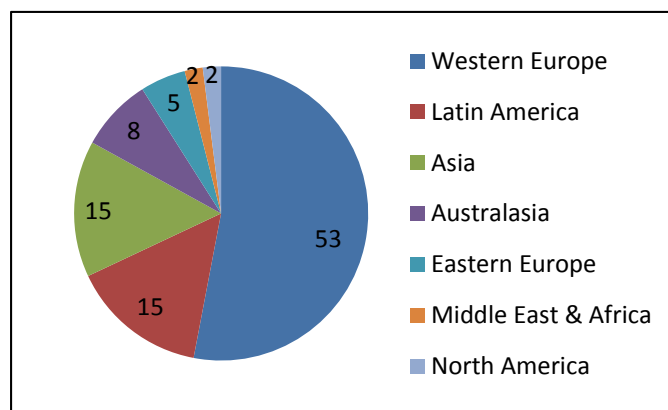


Figure 5.1 Privatization proceeds by region 1990-2000 %
Adapted from Henry Gibbon, as cited in Meggison, 2005.

called *creative destruction*, of the structures of social economy established in the post-

WWII period (table 5.2). In Greece, during their three year tenure in the early 1990s, the conservatives initiated the privatization of public assets and services at full speed in conjunction with a restrictive macroeconomic policy (Mavroudeas, 2013, p. 303). The privatization effort was deemed necessary because the Greek state was an inefficient and corrupt institution, and thus the private sector alone was in position to make the economy competitive. The scandals that dominated the news media in the preceding years made this argument appealing to vast segments of voters. Of course, it was never mentioned that the right-wing political forces (both conservative and far-right) that decried the inefficiency and corruption of the Greek state had themselves molded and managed it since at least the post-WWII period (if not from the beginning of its existence). Besides, promises of a smaller state and the adoption of strict fiscal policies were only rhetoric: in the three years between 1990 and 1993, the conservative administration's programs and policies caused the national debt to skyrocket from 69.9 percent of the GDP to 111.6 percent.

It was at this time that a US foreign policy decision played a key role in the internal affairs of Greece. Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney proposed a number of cuts to the US defense budget, including the closure of several military installations around the world. Among those singled out for decommission was the base at Elliniko ("Pentagon targets 47 base closures," 1990, p. 21). The agreement in 1993 between the governments of Greece and the US over the closure of the base naturally raised the question of what was to be done with the site of the former base. The municipality of Elliniko declared its interest in the land. Various government departments, like the Ministries of Defense and Transportation, also had their eyes on the land. The Minister

of the Environment and Public Works, Stefanos Manos, proposed that the area of the Elliniko airport would be converted into an upscale residential district. After the airport's decommission, the land would be sold, and the revenues would cover part of the state's budget deficit. Manos, explained that at that time he did not have any concrete plan, just a general framework for Elliniko's redevelopment (personal communication, 2011).

This proposal, however, ran counter to the work done by the Organization for the Master Plan and Environmental Protection of Athens, which included the site of the former base in its plans for sorely needed public green space in Athens. In fact, during this period, some state planners were thinking about how to develop a comprehensive approach for dealing with the lack of public spaces in the metropolitan region, and Elliniko held a prominent place in their vision. This plan provisionally included the use of various brownfield sites, and the closure or relocation of military installations that the state had previously strategically placed in the city for combating the "internal enemy." Ideally, these sites would be converted into public parks and green spaces, thus alleviating some of the city's worst problems. Another specific target area was the coastal front of the city, which was to be opened to the public (Omirou, 1991, p. 41). The land in question within Elliniko, situated right on the coastal front, and hosting military installations, which included the US base and a unit of the Greek Air Force, seemed the ideal site for the city planners' green space initiative.

But the resolution of Elliniko's redevelopment was also inextricably tied to the future of Athens' new airport, whose construction plans were frozen since 1985 by the PASOK government, as we saw in the previous chapter. However, PASOK gradually switched positions, and in 1987 when the state submitted an application for hosting the

1996 Olympic Games, it included the construction of a new airport at Spata as part of its obligations. In fact, in the original budget, funds were allocated for both the construction of the new airport and the upgrading of Elliniko (Stereopoulos, 1990, pp. 63-65). Even though Athens' chances of being awarded the 2004 Games were thought to be slim, as the title of the above mentioned article indicates, the Olympic bid presented an opportunity for a series of urban interventions deemed inevitable for future attempts to host the Games. Though PASOK had championed policies of decentralization in the early 1980s which sought to disperse power and resources from Athens, they selectively reversed this position in the end of the decade, and this reversal was more than welcomed by the conservatives in the early 1990s.

Indeed, the conservatives immediately revived their efforts to construct a new airport at Spata. Initially, the idea was to privatize the Elliniko land in order to raise funds for the construction of the new airport. In 1991 the government hired the US-based firm Salomon Brothers as a financial adviser and the British-based firm LinkLaters & Paines as a legal consultant to facilitate the tender process. Their recommendations pointed towards raising funds by: creating a public-private partnership that would oversee the project and self-finance through a BOOT scheme (Build-Own-Operate-Transfer). Under this arrangement a private entity, usually a consortium of companies which specializes in big projects, raises the necessary funds to finance the project. Once construction is completed, the company assumes ownership and the right to operate the facility for an agreed period of time. During this concession period the company uses the revenues to pay off its debts and make a profit, thus compensating itself for providing the initial capital and assuming some initial risks (Merna & Njiru, 2002, p. 92). At the end of

the process, ownership is transferred to the state. International institutions such as the World Bank have widely promoted this arrangement as a mechanism that serves the public good: new infrastructure is created without emptying the public coffers. It is also argued that in some cases, absent these public-private agreements, the meager public funds or a low credit rating of a country or municipality would make debt-financing a very expensive endeavor. Be that as it may, many developing societies have attracted criticism by using this controversial mechanism of neoliberal policy to transfer public utilities to the private sector. A standard criticism is that more often than not the projected construction costs are inflated and the user fees increase dramatically. More importantly, though, through the provision of public guarantees to private developers, the public assumes most of the business risk. In the case of a project not producing the expected returns within an agreed time frame, the state pays the difference to the private entity. In this way the profit for the developers is guaranteed, while the proclaimed public savings are very much in doubt. Another important aspect of these deals often deemphasized is that all infrastructural projects have a given life span. When a project is returned to the state many years after its construction, it is often outdated and depreciated to the extent that it requires continuous investments for maintenance and necessary upgrades.

In the case of Athens' new airport, the 2.3 billion dollar project was awarded to a consortium led by the German company Hochtief Aktiengesellschaft. This entity formed a partnership with the Greek government, such that their stakes in the project were sixty and forty percent respectively. As we saw in the previous chapter, many residents voiced opposition to the chosen location. Some objected to the proposed location on the grounds

that it was inadequate and unsafe; others suggested that the airport would be “too close to the rapidly expanding city of Athens” (Moxon, 1993, p. 8). The PASOK social-democrats also opposed the contract, accusing the government of corruption, insufficient environmental planning, and the irresponsible privatization of nationally sensitive services (“Antipolitefsē,” 1993, p. 29). They claimed that the transit taxes imposed in 1992 on the Elliniko airport for the construction of the new airport (the proverbial Spatosēmo) would raise enough funds to make the involvement of the private sector unnecessary (Haikalis, 1993). In fact, the Technical Chamber of Greece also claimed that the proposed taxes, in addition to funds from the European Community and the European Bank of Investment, were more than enough to finance the whole project, without ceding ownership to private interests. At a conference it organized the Technical Chamber of Greece insisted that there was no reason for rushing the decision, since Elliniko could stay operational until 2005 (Haralampidou, 1993). Cool heads and common sense would not prevail, however, and the false sense of urgency created by the inexorable deadlines of arbitrary time-tables was permitted to carry the debate in favor of the public-private partnership. Interestingly, an important side-effect of the BOOT arrangement was to undercut the rationale for privatizing Elliniko: since a secure source of funds for the new airport was found, the putative need to sell off the land and assets of Elliniko to finance the project no longer existed.

Choosing to ignore this unwelcomed fact, however, the conservatives were determined to push ahead the privatization of Elliniko once the Spata airport was completed. Since the 1985 Athens’ master plan did not include a relocation of the city’s airport, in 1992 the New Democracy administration had to make the necessary changes to

the plan in order to allow for the construction of a new airport at Spata. In this revision to the city's master plan, four new poles of urban development (besides that of Athens and Piraeus) were identified: Marousi, Menidi, Haidari and Elliniko. Sarigiannis (2006) notes that the common characteristic of these poles was the availability of public (that is, cheap) land. As might be expected, the site of the Elliniko airport was central in this planning process of urban expansion.

The privatization agenda of the conservatives was also aided by the processes which were to integrate Greece within the European Union—particularly the European Monetary Union. In 1992 Greece joined other European states in signing the Maastricht treaty which stipulated further monetary integration. Ultimately, this accord led to the introduction of the Euro currency. This treaty and its successor, the Lisbon Treaty of 2007, through their imposed convergence criteria, essentially took away all of the Keynesian instruments formerly available to the state, including control of inflation rates, exchange rates, interest rates, and public debt. As with any trade or monetary bloc, this union greatly benefited the large, powerful member states while it disadvantaged the poorer states, like Greece. European and Greek elites, however, promoted it as an answer to the challenges of globalization: by galvanizing the entire European economic space, Greek capital would supposedly find a safe harbor. The convergence criteria established under this treaty, however, would prove a devastating handicap to the Greek economy. Burdened with an overvalued currency and lacking controls over its monetary and economic policies, Greece was completely unprepared to compete with the larger and more advanced states in an environment of free trade. In addition, the strong neoliberal constraints on fiscal and monetary policy imposed by the treaty would “indirectly

promote privatization as a resource for budgetary revenues” (Bohle, 2009, p. 168). In the summer of 1993, the government’s Vice-President, Tzanis Tzanetakis, announced that the government planned to sell half of the former Elliniko airport site (740 acres), using the revenue to create green spaces in dense areas of the city.

In the early 1990s, however, as the conservatives’ agenda of privatization and neoliberal policy started to gain traction in the Greek society, discussion of Elliniko’s redevelopment had to be postponed once again due to political instability. New Democracy’s privatization drive had caused popular dissatisfaction and a massive wave of protests. In spite of their rhetoric, which chastised an inefficient and profligate state sector, the conservative government had managed to substantially increase the country’s debt, lower standards of living, and embroil themselves amid allegations of scandal and mismanagement. In this case their efforts to implement deep neoliberal policies were short-lived, as the social-democrats returned to power in 1993. The conservative government fell and the parliament dissolved just before the vote on the new airport’s contract. For their part, the social-democrats had campaigned on the promise to re-examine the whole project from a new basis should they win the election. Even though the social-democrats returned to power amidst popular dissatisfaction with neoliberal policies, they did not consider challenging the prerogative of market logic in the public sphere. PASOK’s ailing leader continued the European orientation of the Greek society, and once again promised a better management of public affairs along reformist lines. Further incorporation with the European Union had become the *sine qua non* component of Greek policy, and it became apparent that the logic and values of the market had won the ideological battle and become hegemonic.

In 1995 the Greek state finally ratified the Spata airport deal with the original German contractor. The terms of the final version were slightly more beneficial to the Greek state than those of the previous agreement. The new agreement, now Greek law (N. 2338/1995), designated Elliniko as “intended mainly for a green belt.” Consistent with the time-honored tradition in politics of speaking with a forked tongue, this specific provision left the window open for future claims. The word “mainly” introduced a convenient sense of abstraction into the state’s plans that reassured all of the competing interests. Those who sought commercial development of the land translated this as a welcoming nod by the government; the battle could be fought at a later time when the balance of power would be more advantageous. The important point was that the idea of privatization—though nebulous at this stage—was now officially part of the plan because it was not expressly proscribed. On the other hand, those who favored the creation of green space had won a *pyrrhic victory*: the idea of a metropolitan park became official state policy. Finally, for those predisposed to compromise, this solution struck an acceptable balance between market forces and the environmental needs of Athens. Borrowing a locution from Laclau (2007), the proposed green belt at Elliniko became an empty signifier to which various constituencies ascribed their preferred meaning: for the locals it was a public green space of high vegetation (versus shrubs and grass), and for the governing politicians and market proponents it was a business opportunity, a new urban development decked out with some greenery.

But again, the Spata airport needed to move forward if Elliniko’s redevelopment was to take place. Unfortunately for the politicians, significant opposition still existed within the Spata municipalities to locating the new airport in their area. This opposition

was based on three main arguments. First, there was the economic aspect of the agreement, which some opponents described as a scandal, others as a form of colonial extortion. Second, residents and scientists cited the inevitable negative impacts to the area's environment resulting from the anticipated conurbation of the Mesogeia region. Third, criticism revolved on procedural issues, such as the lack of transparency and democratic decision making within the process ("Epimenoun," 1995, p. 23). In 1995, however, Minister for the Environment and Public Works Kostas Laliotis was able to curb the Spata municipalities' opposition to the project through his shrewd use of rhetoric. First, he declared that there was no way back: as construction of the new airport was inevitable, local residents should focus their energies on the potential benefits of the development, instead of wasting their efforts on a lost cause.

Greece's bid to host the 2004 Olympic Games also aided Laliotis' argument. With the pride if not the vanity of the nation at stake, an immense amount of pressure was brought to bear on anyone who might directly or indirectly hurt Greece's chances of landing the Games. Construction of a new airport, understood to be an essential part of the state's bid, would need to begin almost immediately if the project was to be completed in time. Politically the governing politicians felt safe defending such "fast-track" procedures because Greece's bid for the Games had secured overwhelming public support.

Another step Laliotis took to blunt criticism of the project was to draw the attention of the locals to the host of benefits and revenue streams they would realize from the privatization of Elliniko. In this fashion the discussion moved away from objections to the new airport toward details of the offset benefits which would flow to the area. The

government did not have anything concrete to offer the locals, but it won critical time by holding meetings that cost it nothing and appeased some of the skeptical residents (“Antistathmistika,” 1995, p. 19).

At the same time that the construction of the Spata airport was being pushed through, the government also moved to resolve the fate of Elliniko. In a short time the state would make its intentions clear, and the ambiguousness of the term “mainly,” having served its purpose, would end. In 1995, the Ministry for the Environment and Public Works, along with the Organization for the Master Plan and Environmental Protection of Athens commissioned professor Louis Wassenhoven of the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA) to conduct a study concerning the future use of the site. The study undertaken by the NTUA’s Lab of Planning and Urban Development was supposed to take place in three phases. The first phase was exploratory in nature. It had the goal of providing a general overview of the site, identifying the existing building stock, assessing the conditions in the surrounding municipalities, and pointing out any potential problems. The second phase of the study would contain its suggestions, outlining the various options that might be implemented. In the third phase of the study a final proposal would be presented. Wassenhoven notes that this last phase never materialized because the leadership in the Ministry of the Environment changed in 2001, and the new political leadership decided to call an international competition instead of moving forward with the NTUA study (personal communication, 2011). The government asked Wassenhoven to produce different scenarios for the creation of an urban park which would be funded by the partial privatization of the area. The government tasked the research team with providing plans that would not only fund the

creation of the park and cover its maintenance for the first ten years, but also generate enough additional income to defray other expenses, including the amelioration of the Spata airport's negative externalities, and the creation of green spaces inside Athens' dense urban fabric. In effect, the redevelopment of Elliniko was asked to single-handedly solve several of the city's worst problems. No doubt a certain amount of sleight of hand was embedded in this approach: creating green space within Athens came at the price of destroying green space in the abstract at Elliniko. The government was asserting, with dubious logic, that ostensibly good ends (the amelioration of Spata's negative externalities, the creation of green space within Athens) could only be then realized through questionable means (the privatization of a large amount of public land). In



Figure 5.2 Wassenhoven's "Thematic Parks"



Figure 5.3 Wassenhoven's "Arts and literature"



Figure 5.4 Wassenhoven's "Conference center and EXPO"



Figure 5.5 Wassenhoven's "Aeronautics, telecommunication & space technology"
Retrieved from Greek Ministry for the Environment, Spatial Planning & Public Works, 2007.

the end the research team concluded that the privatization of one fifth of the area would be enough to satisfy the state's demands and raise the necessary revenues. The remaining 990 acres would be dedicated to a park with spacious areas of greenery completely free of private automobile traffic. Wassenhoven's study produced four scenarios in all, each maintaining the same ratio between green space and commercial space. Depending on the scenario there were provisions for a water park, aquarium, and book center (figure 5.2); arts center, aquarium, and literature center (figure 5.3); EXPO center, museum, book center, and conference center (figure 5.4); book center, conference center, and airstrip (figure 5.5). In all four scenarios there is a lake, as well as provisions for housing and office space.

In 1996 the social-democratic leadership passed into the hands of Kostas Simitis, who also won the national elections of the same year as the leader of PASOK. He had served as Minister for the National Economy for the period 1985-1987, in which capacity he introduced stabilization policies and economic reforms. These measures, though popular with European officials, were unpopular with the Greek populace, and ultimately led to his dismissal. His term as Prime Minister from 1996 to 2004 was marked by a deep liberalization of the economy, Greece's further integration into the European Union structures, and preparations for the 2004 Olympics, and the introduction of the euro currency. It was during this period also that the social democrats chose to sever their ties to the laboring classes and, under the banner of "modernization" (Eksynchronismos), turn substantially to the right.

As the NTUA conducted its study, the European Bank of Investment, which was partially financing the new airport at Spata, proposed that the government privatize the

land of Elliniko, suggesting that its high monetary value would make this step inevitable (“Ohi dēmarxōn,” 1996, p. 25). About the same time the newspaper *Rizospastis* brought to light plans for the privatization of 620 acres in Elliniko. Purportedly, government officials wanted to relocate some of their offices in Athens’ center to this parcel (“Oikopeda to aerodromio,” 1996, p. 32). The government’s justification for the privatization of the Elliniko site was that part of the revenues would compensate the municipalities at Spata for the negative externalities of the new airport and to remediate the environmental damage to their area. The measure also aimed at pacifying the residents of Spata who opposed the construction of the new airport. This also legitimized the sale of the Elliniko land on grounds of public good and the benefit of the environment in the wider region of Athens. However, the damage to the environment would be double: The construction of the new airport would damage the area of Spata, sacrificing prime agricultural land and urbanizing a peri-urban area that would then become the new target of the expansion of Athens, and the construction at Elliniko that would sacrifice a potential open space. Further construction in an already overburdened environment. An idea that was circulated at that time was that the government planned to relocate many of its ministries at Elliniko (ibid.).

These reports alarmed the mayors of the surrounding municipalities. They opposed further encroachments on Elliniko and pledged to fight its commercial development. Though these mayors belonged to various political parties, they had previously joined forces in a movement to close down the US military base at Elliniko. That venture was called *Initiative of the Four Mayors for Peace and Disarmament*. After the US base closed, their collaboration continued, this time focusing on the future

redevelopment of the airport's land ("Ohi dēmarxōn," 1996, p. 25). Particularly active was the popular mayor of Elliniko, Kostas Kortzidis, who was supported by the Communist Party in the local elections and served from 1976 to 1998. He argued that the government consistently left the adjacent communities and their local politicians in the dark and seemed to purposefully disseminate conflicting reports about the Elliniko project to the press. He also clarified that the mayors were committed to organizing the people against any privatization of the Elliniko airport land, but he averred that a necessary condition for their success in this effort was the formation of a wider metropolitan movement that would spearhead the preservation of all public spaces. He proposed an inclusive strategy, involving many actors and social groups, centered on issues of quality of life ("Na sōsoume to hōro," 1996, p. 2). He clearly understood that the Greek state did not intent to satisfy the popular demand for a public park of high vegetation. Thus framing the matter of Elliniko as a wider political issue aimed at transforming the particular demand for a park into a universal call for a different urban politics beyond its local character (Zizek, 1999). In fact, the politicization of Elliniko's particularity would become a centerpiece in the strategy of those who opposed its privatization.

Kortzidis' foreboding about the ultimate end of the government's policy of equivocation was painfully confirmed by the Minister for Planning, the Environment and Public Works during a visit to the site of the Spata airport. Here the Minister clarified that, once the Elliniko airport was closed, the intention of the government was to convert the land into lots for sale in order to compensate the municipalities at the Mesogeia region. The surrounding municipalities would not have a decisive say in the fate of the

area. The remaining of the area was to be turned into green space. Both the airport's decommission and the creation of green space would raise property values, and thus, according to the Minister, residents should expect to pay additional taxes ("Se plēre eskeliksē," 1997, p. 32). According to his narrative, which was to resonate in later debates, the residents of Elliniko and its surrounding communities would live in one of the most beautiful and vibrant areas of the country once the airport was decommissioned and the subsequent commercial development and green space creation were completed. Indeed proponents of privatization had long argued that justice and equity would be decreased if a large park was created out of the Elliniko airport. Those living in the area, they suggested, already lived disproportionately privileged lives, and that in fighting for a park they selfishly sought to increase their own access to green space at the expense of the poorer neighborhoods which, practically speaking, had none at all.

In 1996 the Harvard University Graduate School of Design and the Hellenic Harvard Foundation collaborated on a study with the stated goals of supplying "objective research" and "proposing practical design solutions" to problems facing Greek cities (Rowe & Sarkis, 1997, p. 7).⁶² The School and Foundation chose the site of Elliniko as

⁶² A few of the individuals who made contributions to the project include:

- Alexandros Samaras, the brother of the current Prime-Minister of Greece, who among other things initiated the whole project, accommodated the visits to Greece, and served as a visiting critic. Today he serves as chairman on the board of the Hellenic-American Educational Foundation, which owns Athens College, a well-known school in Greece with a long history of educating the children of the Greek elites.
- Spiro Pollalis, a Harvard professor, who became known to the Greek public through his involvement in Elliniko's redevelopment. In his biographical blurb on Harvard's website, he emphasizes his interests in issues of sustainability and quality of life, his involvement in various projects in the countries of the Persian Gulf, and his close ties to Qatar. He would later move to Athens to become one of the key figures promoting the site's privatization. There he became a member of the Organization for the Master Plan and Environmental Protection of Athens, and served as the director of Athens College, and president of Helleniko S.A.
- Nikolaos Manesis, the owner of Hellenic Halyvourgia, one of the largest steel companies in Greece. In 2011-2012 he made headlines during the nine month strike in one of his factories, which ended with the

their test case, directing a number of graduate students to conduct their research under very specific guidelines. These inquiries had as their point of departure the question of how to redevelop publicly owned urban land with the involvement of the private sector. The Harvard study assumed that “a balancing of claims usually ensues between the public interest and private gains. Moreover, these claims normally operate simultaneously at different scales of redevelopment and publicly-minded or individually-promoted entrepreneurial activity” (p. 9). Pointing to Athens’ acute environmental problems, the study accepted as self-evident the city’s desperate need for public open spaces. On the other hand, it also peremptorily assumed that the involvement of the private sector was necessary because it was more efficient than the public sector, and could thus produce results more quickly. To the study’s contributors, the expedient of the private sector’s involvement in financing urban projects was commonsensical given the precarious state of many countries’ finances.

The whole project was named *Isopolis*, which can be roughly translated as *egalitarian city* or *city of equity*, and it led to the publication of a book with the same title. Obviously, the choice of this name was a direct reference to the principle of equity in relation to public space and the environment. The authors claimed that it was possible to reconcile the different objectives of the public sector, the private sector, and the community as a whole in a socially-just, environmentally-friendly manner. However, the

violent intervention of the riot police.

— Yiannis Filippou the owner of FAGE S.A., one of the largest dairy companies in Greece. The firm relocated its headquarters to Luxemburg in 2012 in order to benefit more favorable taxation.

— Periklis Panagopoulos, a well-known ship-owner. He published a book in 2013 where he described his philosophy: “No matter how much you earn, and even if you keep earning more and more, there comes a time when you want even more, because your earnings are never enough.”

design proposals, adhering to the guidelines, just laid out the orderly construction of a new town. From the figures 5.6-5.11 it is obvious that green space was used only for aesthetic reasons, as a way to dress up the town streets and to raise the value of the new construction. Meanwhile Athens' environmental problems and sustainability concerns did not make their way into the proposals in any sort of meaningful fashion. After all, it is standard practice for city planners to include a few small parks and tree-lined streets in their proposals for cities that do not face Athens' environmental problems and unparalleled dearth of public space. The main objective of the whole project appears to be the normalization and entrenchment of privatization in public policy as a way to preempt the discussion over the site's future redevelopment.

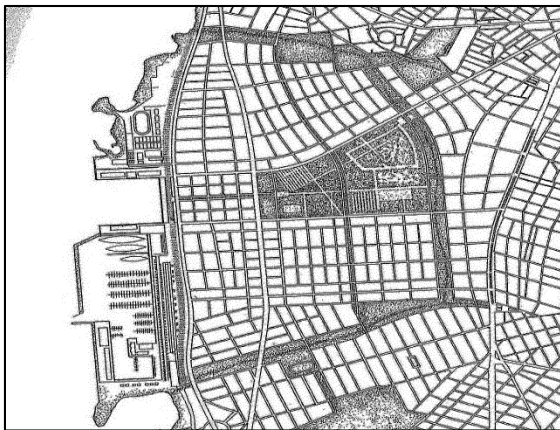


Figure 5.6 Proposal by Nancy Conger.

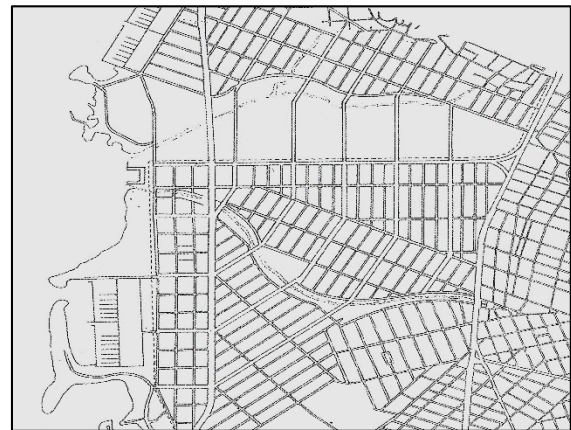


Figure 5.7 Proposal by Ayman Zahreddine.

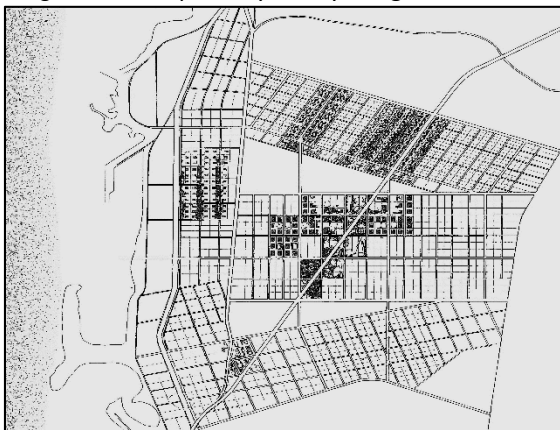


Figure 5.8 Proposal by Gwang Ya Man.



Figure 5.9 Proposal by Justine Lovinger.

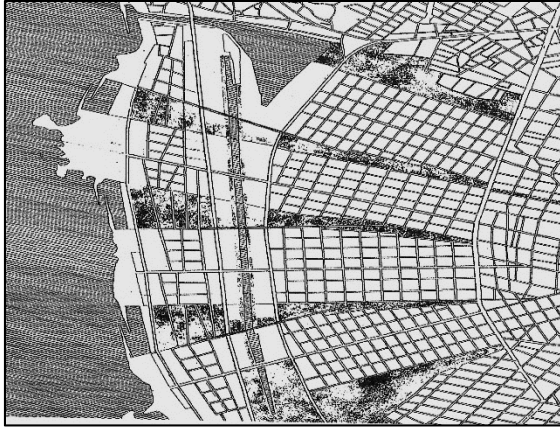


Figure 5.10 Proposal by Jeanie Yoon.

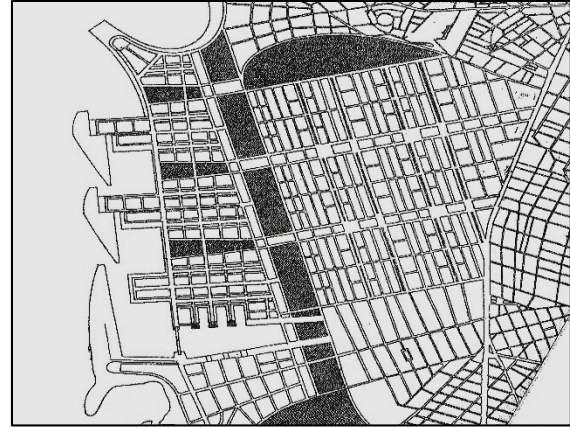


Figure 5.11 Proposal by N. Stanos and A. Rodis.
Retrieved from Rowe & Sarkis, 1997.

Reviewing the names of the project's sponsors one finds several prominent members of the power bloc in Greece, a fact which, though not definitive in itself, points toward the assumptions and attitudes which molded and circumscribed the design of the project. Although graduate students conducted the study's research, their work had to take place within certain parameters and guidelines. Thus, whatever their specific merits, each proposal of *Isopolis* ratified the notion that privatization was appropriate and expedient for the completion of public projects. The language of the book has a twofold objective: first, to divorce power relationships from discursive practices and the production of knowledge; and second, to normalize neoliberal logic as the only approach which benefits everyone and equitably resolves conflict, while at the same time it closes off alternative choices. *Isopolis* thus stands out as an excellent example of how the discussion of public development projects was successfully framed within a neoliberal ideology, legitimizing the transfer of public goods and services to the private sector.

Harvard University's reputation as one of the leading learning institutions in the world obviously contributed to the project's prestige and lent the study's proposals for privatization a patina of scientific authority and expertise. Those voices which wanted a

public park created out of the whole area of the airport now seemed uninformed, immoderate, emotional—even hysterical—in contrast to the proponents of privatization, whose calm, reasonable, considered arguments were now endorsed by no less an authority than Harvard University. In spite of the small space granted to a fractured and almost negligible park system in the *Isopolis* study’s recommendations, it occupied a predictably larger one in the socially-conscious rhetoric of its high-minded *raison d’être*. Here Peter Rowe, Harvard Professor and Dean of the School of Design, would ask, without any detectable irony, “How can this redevelopment take place in the most socially and environmentally beneficial manner?” (p. 9). He laid down the following objectives of Elliniko’s redevelopment:

-- “Providing a place where a broad cross section of society- the young, the old, the rich, and the poor-can mingle, recreate, and live together” (p. 11).

-- “... as well as important opportunities to contribute significantly and permanently to the civic and cultural life of Athens” (p. 11).

-- “... better equalization of the opportunities for the quality of housing, accessible places to work and available recreational amenity within the entire region” (p. 12).

It is striking, however, that these concerns for social justice only preoccupy the preparers of the study in its forward and other introductory materials. Studying their proposals, it is unclear how or why the rich and poor would mingle in the high class neighborhoods of the new town; how the civic life of Athens would improve; or how the region would benefit from equalization opportunities for quality housing. Instead, the study focuses on the allocation of financing, the maximization of property values, the enhancement of aesthetic and environmental conditions, and the implementation of

adequate transportation systems—all within the narrow scope of the new town (as opposed to the whole region). It is only at the end of the book that a piece written by Professor Pollalis clarifies this paradox. First he counters that a single park occupying the site of the former airport would be unrealistic, due to its high maintenance costs, and also unhelpful, since small localized parks within Athens would serve it better than a large one. Like others, he suggests that establishing a system of smaller parks could be accomplished through land exchanges between the city center and the airport. For Pollalis, Athens does not need a park even larger than New York’s Central Park; commercial use of the “extra” land is only reasonable. Housing provisions should target high-income residents and be accompanied by other facilities such as athletic venues, conference centers, a zoo, an aquarium, a maritime museum, and above all, a marina. In the case of this last project he proposes the implementation of a Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) scheme, which would essentially privatize access to the coastal front as well. As for the critical environmental issues plaguing Athens that the new development was supposed to address at a city-wide scale, he offers that the “absence of free parking on the streets would act as a deterrent to increased car traffic and would therefore do much to reduce this potential source of air pollution” (p. 97). If at the beginning of the study a reader was hopeful enough to believe that the public good might be brought home safely inside the vehicle of private gain, by its end he is certain this favorite trope is little more than a cynical and purely symbolic use of language used to anesthetize the mind.

In his contribution Peter Rowe explains that essentially the title *Isopolis* “means inevitably balancing public interest with the private gain necessary to secure that public interest in the first instance” (p. 11). In other words, in the case of Elliniko’s

redevelopment, business interests and the public good are inseparable. The book's insistence on the inadequacy of public financing is the central assumption that conditions the expedient of a mutually beneficial relationship between the state and private sector. The stratagem of portraying the state as lacking the financing mechanisms and expertise to provide social services is part and parcel of the greater neoliberal framing strategy which seeks to discredit all government as an inefficient or incompetent bureaucracy. Entman (1993), working from the perspective of framing theory, notes that 'to frame is to select some aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described'' (p. 52).

However, if the main goal of this planning exercise was to promote the construction of a new up-scale town with gorgeous gardens and all the amenities of a modern city, why then, the reader might ask, imprudently raise the issues of inclusion, public space, civic culture, equity, and sustainable development? Moreover, why choose such a potentially embarrassing title instead of something more bland, diversionary, and nebulous? But by preemptively foregrounding their opponents' values in their own rhetoric they anticipate their opponents' criticisms and neutralize them. Neoliberal ideology as a representational mechanism, articulated on behalf of specific social interests, frames social issues in such a way as to justify the implementation of neoliberal policies. As Holbrow (2012) notes, "neoliberal ideology draws a picture of the world to suit its ends; starting from the real world, it misrepresents it" (p. 29). Proponents of neoliberalism frame the involvement of the private sector in public works as inevitable and essential, shaming alternative discourses into silence with the mention of

impressively sober and weighty terms such as “the “bottom line,” “fiscal realities,” and “new urban realism” (Short, 1999).

The *modus operandi* of neoliberalism, with respect to issues of equity, social inclusion, public space, civic culture, and sustainable development, has always been to appropriate their meaning and then reconstitute it under a different context. In fact, the political effectiveness of neoliberalism is dependent to a large extent on the capacity of politicians and intellectuals to frame issues in ways that simultaneously anesthetize our critical understanding of them and facilitate their ideological objectives (Smith, 2002, p. 99). Besides, in a city like Athens it would not be prudent to claim scientific and even political legitimacy without addressing the above issues, and especially the problem of environmental degradation, which would appeal to a wider audience. And in that sense, the study’s designs for the creation of greenery looks rather as an effort of greenwashing, in order to improve the perception of the study’s results. Many years later, Spiro Pollalis would claim that the creation of a park would be a waste of a national resource, and he fought hard against such an option.

In retrospect, the *Isopolis* project set the tone and provided an intellectual or at least academic underpinning for the arguments of the privatization proponents. It reflected the desires of those who welcomed the business opportunities provided by such a project, and it functioned as a field manual that consolidated and refined many of the arguments used in later debates. In fact, the arguments presented in the study for the privatization of Elliniko would be reiterated in the Greek parliament by the conservative MP Miltiadis Varvitsiotis, who presented it as a paradigmatic work for subsequent urban interventions (Greek Parliament, summer 2000, session B).

Overall both the Wassenhoven and *Isopolis* studies had a long lasting impact on the debate over the future of the old airport. They were both based on the assumption that privatization is essential, albeit to different degrees, and thus they were part of long and systematic process of framing the issue of redevelopment. In 1997 Giannis Spraos, an advisor to the Prime Minister, sparked an intense national debate when he submitted five reports on the future of the Greek economy which reformulated several of the arguments for privatization. Spraos, a professor of economics and instructor at several British universities, was influential among Greek policy makers, having served at both the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Other aspects of his record show him to be a man well-ensconced within the halls of power. In the period 1985-1987 he was an adviser to the Minister of Economics Kostas Simitis, who attempted to introduce the first stabilization packages to the Greek economy. When Simitis became Prime Minister in 1996, Spraos served as the president of the Council of Economic Advisors.⁶³

Spraos too proposed the privatization of Elliniko land, 865 acres in all, but he offered a different rationalization than the preparers of the earlier studies. These bureaucrats and academics had generally advanced “soft neoliberal” proposals which justified privatization as a means to raise revenue that in turn would, one way or another, benefit the physical and social environment in the metropolitan region. Conversely, Spraos’ recommendation for the privatization of Elliniko was aimed at raising revenues in order to pay for the financial obligations of the Greek state. Without apparent

⁶³ Another member of the committee was Giannis Stournaras, a prominent advisor in Greece’s financial sector who has provided council to the Union of Greek Industrialists. Currently serving as the Minister of Economics, he is responsible for the implementation of the strict austerity measures introduced under the auspices of the International Monetary Fund and the European Union.

cognizance of the profound irony, given the extent of Athens' environmental problems, Spraos explained that the Elliniko project was a classic example of the state pursuing a pro-environment agenda at the expense of more legitimate economic goals. Even more interesting, though, is the express intent of the study's authors to subvert the law which stipulated that the Elliniko airport "mainly" be turned into public green space. "In our view [the financial parameters] support an interpretation of the term "mainly" that will allow for a high rate of urban development, as opposed to the minimalist 10-20%." Not mincing words, the authors go on to say that "The wording of the of the law N. 2338/95 which states that the site is intended mainly as a metropolitan green belt, should be interpreted in such a way as to financially exploit as large an area as possible" (as cited by the Greek Ministry of the Environment, Spatial Planning and Public Works, Organization of the Master Plan and Environmental Protection of Athens, 1999).

Greece's power bloc received the Spraos team's deep neoliberal policy proposals with great enthusiasm and hailed them superb scientific inquiry. The prominent newspaper *To Vima* gushed that their arguments could not be refuted even by their most committed opponents (Tsaousis, 1998). Sarigiannis (2000), on the other hand, described these recommendations as designs to promote the privatization of everything public under the mantle of science's supposed objectivity. He suggested that Spraos was a modern day Varvaresos who did the bidding of the International Monetary Fund and other international organizations (p. 280). The reality was that the study's call for austerity measures and extensive privatization caused an uproar even amongst the base of the PASOK party. Some of these provisions obtrusively echoed the agenda of their purported opponents the conservatives. Causing even more embarrassment, the Spraos

study recommended adopting some of the same Draconian measures which the World Bank imposed on Chile under Pinochet in the 1980s (IOS, 1997; Mousgas, 2001, p. 12). These gaffes led to a backlash: proposed cuts in health care and the liberalization of the pension system sparked massive demonstrations and strikes in both the private and public sectors. For the time the Greek government had to backpedal the implementation of neoliberal policies due to this public outcry.

As the ruling class sought for the most effective blend of “soft” (incremental, muted) and “deep” (aggressive, peremptory) neoliberal policies to carry out their cooption of public space, the communities surrounding Elliniko organized to fight privatization and preserve the vision of a public park. On April 1st 1998 the municipality of Elliniko formed a committee (Citywide Action Committee) for preserving the public character of the area. Participants in the committee included local labor unions, PTAs, teacher associations, athletic groups, women’s organizations, environmentalists, and peace activists. Elliniko’s City Hall claimed that though it repeatedly appealed to the Ministry of the Environment for involvement in the process, the Ministry turned down all of its calls for collaboration. Rebuffed, City Hall had no other choice but to find other means for local residents to fight the unilateral privatization of the airport land (“Kinētopoiēseis,” 1998, p. 36; “Ohi sta katastrofika shedia,” 1998, p. 18). The new construction planned for the 2004 Olympic Games proved to be an additional headache for locals and their elected representatives. Initially it was decided that a marina was to be built on the coast of Agios Kosmas for hosting the sailing events. The newly founded committee feared that the venues would be used as a backdoor for bringing in private interests after the end of the Games. Therefore they stipulated several provisions: that

the size of the marina should not exceed the minimum required by the Olympic Committee; that self-financing mechanisms should not be used in its construction; and that, following the Games, its control should be handed to the Greek Federation of Sailing and local sailing clubs. In 2007, the mayor of Elliniko Hristos Kortzidis went on a twenty four day hunger strike, demanding a business-free coast with free access to all



Figure 5.12 The marina of Agios Kosmas.

Retrieved from J&P-AVAX Group, <http://www.jp-avax.gr/jp/default.aspx?pid=286&prjid=1047>



Figure 5.13 The marina in relation to the airport.

Retrieved from Helleniko S.A

people. This struggle was successful and the entertainment centers operating at the coast had to close down.

Their demand for a park resonated with the scientific community and cut across many political constituencies. But in a 1998 conference organized by the Technical Chamber of Greece, the Prefecture of Athens, and the Local Union of Municipalities and Communities of Attiki, it became apparent that there were competing visions for the park. The representative of the Attiki prefecture, Hristos Kostis, lamented the disingenuousness of the government and voiced his support for a park. He added that the creation of a green park covering the whole area of the former airport would greatly improve the ratio of green space per capita in the metropolitan region from 27 ft² to 43. He also explained, however, that for the Prefecture a proposed park should include more than green space. His proposal specified the creation of a theme park, conference center, and EXPO center, as well as sports facilities and restaurants. The representative of the Technical Chamber, Nikos Mpanias, also defended the idea of a park, and he too complained about the ambiguous language used by the government. He criticized the government's plan to disperse revenues raised by the partial privatization of Elliniko to the greater metropolitan region, advocating instead that these funds be used to cover the maintenance costs of the park. The speech of the prefect Efstathiadis was in the same vein. Spyros Lykoudis, the representative of the Coalition of the Left party (Synaspismos), also proposed that plans include some sort of commercial development, such as a theme park, but he agreed with the president of the Chamber that they should avoid a name like Disneyland because of its negative connotations. The representatives of the other political parties took similarly ambiguous lines, except for the Communist Party, which flatly opposed both privatization and entrepreneurial activity within the area. Its representative Spyros Halvatzis warned over the intentions of businesses to

invest in the coastal front of Athens, and he explicitly opposed the idea of self-financing projects, as well as the management of the future park by a legal entity governed by private law (Technical Chamber of Greece, 1998). This confusion of competing visions for the park could potentially weaken the alliances between the various municipalities and constituencies, decreasing the likelihood that their common demands would come to fruition. On the other hand, the prospect of massive investment in a large area such as the former airport would potentially destabilize the local economies, and this possibility united a diverse array of local actors.

As the Olympics approached, more and more people proposed that the Elliniko airport site be developed to house sports-related venues. In January of 1999, Stratis Stratigis, president of the Greek Olympic Organizing Committee, proposed to Prime Minister Simitis that the mechanism of self-financing be used to construct the Olympic Village at Elliniko. Stratigis was a member of New Democracy who had held various government posts. Basing his recommendation on the previous Spraos proposals, he explained that by building the Olympic village at Elliniko, the government would avoid encroaching upon and degrading the previously designated location, which was only 4,000 away for the Parnitha National Park. This perspective had at least some merit: the aforementioned area, some 300 acres in all, was characterized in 1998 as highly productive agricultural and forest land. In the event however Stratigis' proposal was denied and the original site approved. Stratigis was dismissed from his position a few months later.⁶⁴ Around this time others proposed that the Media Village be built at

⁶⁴ He was replaced by Gianna Aggelopoulou. She was the daughter of a former general secretary of the Greek federation of labor unions during the dictatorship (appointed by the military junta), and the wife of a very dominant Greek industrialist. Many claimed that her tenure as President of the Greek Olympic

Elliniko.⁶⁵ The large area of Elliniko was viewed by many as a “dumping ground” suitable for hosting any type of activity. Even though it was not finally designated an Olympic site in Greece’s candidature file, many interests nonetheless thought the Olympics provided an opportunity for its development.

Finally, Elliniko was not spared the construction frenzy of the Olympics. The biggest blow for local residents came in late 1999 when the Greek Olympic Organizing Committee, through the government, asked Wassenhoven—whose team had just finished the second phase of his study—to alter its objectives and integrate the construction of several sports stadia into his plans. The Committee had encountered difficulties implementing its original plans, and had therefore decided *post hoc* that Elliniko would be hosting Olympic athletic events. Wassenhoven lamented the decision to relocate Olympic venues to Elliniko, decrying the poor planning that had brought the Committee to this pass. Instead, he argued that the Olympics provided an excellent opportunity for

Organizing Committee was imposed upon the government, to the great dissatisfaction of Prime Minister Simitis, by the International Olympic Committee (particularly by its former president, Juan Antonio Samaranch, who had served as a military officer and minister for the Francoist regime in Spain).

⁶⁵ After much manipulation of the regulatory framework and other illegal maneuvers, the Olympic Media Village and the International Broadcast Center were constructed on the top of a 3,000 year-old olive grove in the area of Marousi. Both of these venues were built near the Olympic stadium in open public land through public-private partnerships with Lamda Development, a company owned by the Latsis family—one of the richest families in Greece. Following the Olympics these venues were turned into giant shopping malls (Frementitis, 2008; Sarigiannis, 2004). This story and its peculiar circumstances, considered one of the biggest political scandals in modern Greek history, somehow escaped the media’s attention at the time. In January 2014, eight years after the resident brought the case to the court, the Hellenic Council of State, the supreme administrative court of Greece, declared the construction of the eighteen acre Mall of Athens illegal. In very close proximity, Lamda Development also built a gated housing complex. It is interesting to note that Giannis Latsis, founder the Latsis companies, was allegedly a Nazi collaborator and a black marketeer who became rich through illicit trade during Greece’s occupation. He subsequently became the owner of oil refineries, shipping interests, banking and other financial institutions, and a real estate empire. He was tried after Greece’s liberation and was acquitted, like the vast majority of those accused as collaborators. He also had very close ties to the 1967-1974 military dictatorship. Today, Lamda Development is the frontrunner on the shortlist to win exclusive rights to the Elliniko site.

the creation for an urban park. In the end, however, the site was chosen because the land was public and thus no additional expense would be incurred for land expropriations

(personal communication). In an area of 540 acres Elliniko hosted the Fencing Hall, the Olympic Canoe/Kayak Slalom Center, the Olympic Hockey



Figure 5.14 The Olympic venues inside Elliniko.

Retrieved from Kathimerini, <http://www.kathimerini.gr/757225/article/oikonomia/real-estate/krinetai-h-tyxh-ths-ektashs-toy-ellhnikoy>

Center (plus two training fields), the Olympic Baseball Center (plus two training fields), the Olympic Softball Stadium (plus two training fields), and the Hellenikon Indoor Arena for basketball and handball events (plus two training fields). In addition to these venues, a series of other supportive infrastructural projects had to be completed (roads, a tram depot, electricity station, etc.).

Thus, all of a sudden, Elliniko had become the second Olympic pole of the Athens 2004 Games.

The Olympic



Figure 5.15 Aerial view of Olympic venues at Elliniko.

Retrieved from Kathimerini.

Organizing Committee assumed “fast track” planning powers that superseded the

stipulations of the city's master plan and effectively trumped the government's power to plan the city's future. This would be a decisive moment for the future of Elliniko. It created a *fait accompli*, because when a major construction project of that scale takes place, it is nigh impossible for it to be undone, and it alters the character of the area permanently. Consequently, subsequent discussions over Elliniko's redevelopment would have to take the new landscape into consideration.

Before signing off on the proposed Olympic construction in Elliniko, the Ministry of the Environment and Public Works insisted on an important stipulation: that all but one of the sports venue structures be temporary, to be dismantled by the contractors after the end of Games. The Organizing Committee, however, had different things in mind, and it planned for permanent structures, despite the government's assertions. In the end the Organizing Committee was proven to have read the situation correctly: the new buildings, along with the accompanying infrastructure, would become the dowry of the Greek state, which was in turn transferred to investors as part of the post-Olympic utilization of the venues. The residents' fear that the Olympics would bring the privatization of the area in through the back door had come true. It became obvious that developers were intent on commercially developing the area, and that they had the power to impose their will on public policy. For the time being, however, they would just have to wait for the official decommission of the airport and the end of the Games to advance Elliniko's redevelopment.

Finally, on March 28, 2001, the Elliniko airport ceased to exist as such. After sixty-three years of serving Athens and Greece, it closed its doors amidst uncertainty over the land's future. Even though the government was supposedly waiting for the final

results of the Wassenhoven study's third and final phase, one of its departments, the Organization of Greek Tourism, announced that it was accepting tenders for the construction of a conference center, and that eighteen companies had already shown interest ("Dekaoktō," 2001, p. 21; Ntanou, 2001). This took place the same year that Prime Minister Simitis pledged the state's resolve to create a park, promising that in a few years Athens would be the capital city with "the largest" park in Europe. Then, as had happened so many times before, a new development switched the project onto other rails. The leadership of the Ministry of the Environment and Public Works changed. Its new minister, Vaso Papandreou, asked Wassenhoven to abort his project. The government had decided to open the planning process up to an international design competition.

But Elliniko's suitors kept multiplying. The soccer team of Panathinaikos, playing in a downtown stadium they deemed too old and inadequate, also eyed the Elliniko property as a potential site for a new stadium. The recently erected Olympic stadium, they argued, did not fit the specific needs of the team, or meet the guidelines of FIFA (the track and field oval which separated the soccer field from the spectator seating was deemed inappropriate). The list of potential sites in Athens with the capacity to accommodate a new stadium was a short: Goudi, Eleonas, and Elliniko. The Goudi site was designated at one time to become a public park. As the years have passed by, however, nothing has been done, while continuous encroachment has made the park's future questionable. The site of Eleonas is a former small manufacturing area very close to the city's center. There has been a long-standing debate over whether this parcel is best suited for the proposed Panathinaikos stadium plus a shopping mall, with the

powerful owners using the team fans to threaten the political parties that oppose their project. As for Elliniko, the team had reservations about its location because it was far from the team's original base. Another problem was that, following the examples of similar projects in Europe, the team was demanding a mini shopping/entertainment center be built in conjunction with a stadium. If such an accessory commercial development occurred, however, it would greatly undermine the desirability of the remaining land for potential investors, who were understandably wary of competition from other retail spaces in the area (Ntaliani, 2004, p. 13).

By 2002 it became apparent that the state did not have any intention to create a park. The Social Democrats, severing ties with their progressive elements, had become "the party of the markets." Promises to create the largest park in Europe now sounded hollow in the ears of residents and public officials alike. Social Democratic officials now explained that when they had spoken of "green spaces" they had not only meant trees, but also large areas for sports and entertainment (Ntaliani, 2002, pp. 14-15). Be that as it may, the future use of the site remained as uncertain as ever. New claimants to the property surfaced, including the Ministries of Defense and Transportation. The mayors of surrounding municipalities declared their right to inherit the site. The International Olympic Committee, for its part, thoughtfully proposed that an airstrip be preserved to accommodate the planes of VIP visitors during the Games ("Kleinei to Martē to Ellēniko," 2002, p. 28). Before the 2002 municipal elections in Athens, the conservative candidate Dora Mpakoyianni, made the redevelopment of Elliniko one of the central themes of her campaign. She claimed that the municipality of Athens should also have a saying over the future use of Elliniko. Her proposal endorsed the argument that the

privatization of the site is necessary, and the revenues to be invested in other areas in the city of Athens.

In 2003, with the Olympics fast approaching, the government concluded that the actual expenditures necessary for staging the Games would far exceed the original budget projections. Cost overruns were rampant, and the difficult question for government officials was how to raise additional funds. Debt-financing appeared to be the obvious choice, since Greece's rating status allowed it to easily secure loans. The only problem was that the Stabilization Agreement signed by members of the Eurozone did not allow, in theory, for government deficits above three percent of their GDP, and debt above sixty percent of GDP. It is worth pointing out that this policy was inconsistently enforced in the past: the EU had not deemed it necessary to bring sanctions against France and Germany, but punitive proceedings had been started in the cases of Portugal and Greece. Nevertheless, the Greek government opted for different sources of funds. Another option was to form quasi-public institutions that would operate as private entities, able to borrow funds without formally burdening the government's budget. These entities would secure loans using public properties, such as the land and buildings of Elliniko, as collateral. Of course, the quasi-public institution would still need to pay back these loans, meaning that the public properties would have to be commodified and eventually privatized. Initial estimates suggested that 250 acres of the Elliniko land would suffice to securitize the necessary loans. Elected officials from the municipalities that had hosted Olympic venues, however, had different designs for this land. They contended that the various properties and their associated stadia should pass into the hands of their respective municipalities for the use of their constituents. Not surprisingly government officials

vehemently opposed such a possibility (Tsouparopoulos, 2003). The mayors of Alimos, Argyroupoli, Elliniko, and Glyfada, met again to reaffirm their resolve to create of a public park and to oppose all plans for the privatization of the site (“Katageloun,” 2003, p. 27). At the end of 2003 after several delays, the Ministry for the Environment, Planning and Public Works published the parameters of its international design competition for the Elliniko project. The guidelines included urban development as an integral part of the redevelopment effort. The original NTUA study’s rationale for this commercialization—the necessity of raising funds for the creation of a park—was repeated here as well.

2004 was a pivotal year for Greece because, not only was it staging the Olympic Games, it was holding national elections. The issue of Elliniko was part of the pre-election agenda, and various politicians positioned themselves on the issue. PASOK ran with a new leader, Giorgos Papandreou,⁶⁶ who endorsed the previous leadership’s position on Elliniko. However, the PASOK prefect of Athens, Fofi Gennimata,⁶⁷ aligned herself with the mayors against any plans for privatization, insisting that a public park should cover the whole site. The candidate of New Democracy, Kostas Karamanlis (2003),⁶⁸ cultivating on a centrist profile, also endorsed the idea of a park. In a visit to the municipality of Argyroupolis he said the following:

⁶⁶ He is the son of Andreas Papandreou, three-time Prime Minister (1981, 1985, 1993) and founder of PASOK, and the grandson of Georgios Papandreou, who entered national politics in the 1920s and was twice Prime Minister (1944, 1963).

⁶⁷ She is the daughter of the prominent PASOK politician Giorgos Gennimatas.

⁶⁸ He is the nephew of Konstantinos Karamanlis, six-time Prime Minister (1955, 1956, 1958, 1961, 1974, 1977), two-time President of Greece (1980–1985, 1990–1995), and founder of New Democracy after the restoration of democracy in 1974.

I think that after the extensive dialogue we had with the representatives of the local authorities, we all agreed that Elliniko is one of the last opportunities to increase green space in the city. There is no dilemma between cement and greenery. The answer is clear and obvious. Be assured that the vacated space, for the most part, will only be used to create a park. A small percentage of the space will be used for creating cultural and sporting facilities, in collaboration and after a dialogue with the local communities. The neighboring municipalities will have a significant say in the selection of the final solution. The management will be handled by a special fund, with participation of the neighboring municipalities.

New democracy won the elections handily, ending eleven years of rule by PASOK, and Karamanlis became Prime Minister just a short time before the Olympics. The first priority of the new government was facilitating preparations for the Olympic Games and protecting the various projects from potential disruptions. Resolving the fate of Elliniko would have to wait until after the dust of the Games had settled. Surprisingly, the conservatives abided by the decision of the previous government over the international design competition, and did not cancel the process.

A month after the elections, the winners of the international design competition were announced. The committee, whose president was Peter Rowe from Harvard, awarded the first prize to DZO Architecture (David Serero, Elena Fernandez, Philippe Coignet). The study planned for new construction in the best areas of the site that could facilitate a higher rate of return. The architects tried to maximize the city frontage to the park; “we increase the interaction between the park and the new buildings and therefore we increase the real estate value of those buildings” (Serero Architects). The team had to

satisfy the competition's parameters which stipulated that 250 acres had to be privatized in order to pay for construction costs. The cost of the project was estimated at 400

million euros. The state also stipulated that the project needed to raise an additional 300 million euros to go for the creation of smaller parks in high density areas. So, the overall costs added up to 700 million euros (Local



Figure 5.16 Aerial view of the DZO study.
Retrieved from http://www.serero.com/index_en.htm

Union of Municipalities & Communities of Attica, and the Cities of Alimos, Argyroupoli, Glyfada & Hellinikon). The construction was set to cover an area of approximately 250 acres: 90 for housing, and 160 for business activity. The road that

divides the coastal zone from the airport would be submerged, while the runways would stay intact to be used as pedestrian boulevards. The creeks would be restored (even though it is unclear how



Figure 5.17 Areas of new construction (in dark green).
Retrieved from the Greek Ministry for the Environment.

they would overcome the concrete structures of the runways), and large reservoirs would

retain the water for the park's plants. Overall, the design plan was hailed by all sides for its innovative ideas, and the disagreements revolved around the underlying financial parameters set by the state.

Also a month after the elections, the Technical Chamber of Greece organized another conference over the future of Elliniko. The roster of speakers included representatives of all political parties; the Greek Union of Architects; the Greek Union of Urban and Regional Planners; The Organizing Committee for the 2004 Athens Olympics; the Federation of Civil Aviation Employees; the Honorary Vice-President of the Hellenic Council of State, the supreme administrative court of Greece; local representatives, government representatives and other scientists. This conference, like the previous one, came to confirm the divergent understandings of sustainable development, and to conform the different objectives of the stakeholders. At the same time though it proved that the need for a park has been recognized by a diverse spectrum of actors, especially the scientific community.

Once the Games were over it became apparent that the government had failed to conceive of how the Olympic venues might be repurposed, or how the tourist image of Athens might be redefined. In the heated debate over its post-Olympic strategy, or lack thereof, the government resurrected the plan of constructing a "Greek Riviera" along the Athenian coastline. In this vision the entire swath of land would be converted into an upscale tourist destination. A central element of this plan was the "strategic" use of public land and building stock. Plans called for zones focused on entertainment, culture, tourism and water sports to be complemented by posh residential neighborhoods. Such

an area would include cultural, convention and sports centers, marinas, casinos, and upscale tourist hotels replete with all the amenities (Karakousis, 2004, p. 64).

The private interests involved in developing venues for the Games had, with the acquiescence of the state, deliberately constructed permanent structures instead of temporary ones. There were several reasons for this. Permanent structures were more expensive to construct, and the inevitable cost overruns guaranteed the contractors higher profit margins. Also, as private firms were counting on eventually “inheriting” these venues at bargain prices. And finally, the permanence of these structures provided the state with a rationale for passing them on to the private sector instead of integrating them into the localities. Small, underfunded municipalities, officials argued, would not be able to manage these structures, which were very expensive to operate and maintain. Bequeathing them to these local communities would place an insupportable burden on the public coffers. To bolster their case government officials asserted that approximately 130 million Euros per year were needed for the maintenance of these venues (Pasakyriakos, 2004, p. 12). Within the confines of its assumptions neoliberalism has a sort of irrefutable logic: venues need to be managed primarily with an eye toward generating revenue that will ease the burden on public coffers. For this to happen, their use should change in order to attract private investors and accommodate commercial activities. That the public character of these buildings will inevitably be lost—despite the fact that they owe their very existence to public money—simply does not figure. The premise at work here is that what is good for the investor is necessarily good for the citizen. If this is accepted, then the state serves the public best when it unloads all public properties onto the private sector.

Moreover, in the period following the Games, the real estate market showed signs of saturation, and thus new opportunities were needed. The large construction companies that made large investments and worked feverishly preparing for the Games, now had to find solutions to their idle capacity. The US-based consulting company CB Richard Ellis identified such areas of growth in the Olympic sites, because they had received substantial investment and their accessibility had been substantially improved. They also identified Elliniko and Faliro as such places, both located along the coastline. However, the report by CBRE was not very optimistic over the of real estate market prospects in other areas of the city (“Diethnē efsēma,” 2004).

The land of the former airport was the ultimate prize for any planning in the post-Olympic Athens. Many companies showed interest in building large retailing structures, and according to Kathimerini, a right-wing newspaper close to the business community, large foreign retailers were looking for local partners in order to facilitate their future presence in the city (Terzis, 2004b). In this logic, government officials began to advocate for the commercial development in the area. The Secretary General of the Ministry of the Environment, Dimitris Katsigiannis, actually declared that either there is going to be some commercial development in the area, or there is not going to be any park at all. Opponents vehemently dismissed these plans, and along with the Technical Chamber of Greece, rejected the logic of self-financing projects, explaining that any commercial development goes against the purpose of a public park (Terzis, 2004a).

During this period public spaces in Athens came under multiple forms of pressure. The loss of open land in the metropolitan region that took place had not been counterbalanced with the provision of other spaces. Sprawl, expansion of the city,

proliferation of new shopping centers that privatized all social interactions, new expressways and proliferation of car use, heavy policing, ghettoization of central city neighborhoods, rising crime, and unabated illegal construction all played a role in the diminishing of public spaces. The state advanced the idea of creating a public park at Elliniko, but it never took any action. Had it got the will for a public park of high vegetation, it would have done so. Given the vast amount of resources dedicated to the Olympics, for questionable projects, the costs for a green park would be miniscule in comparison; especially, given the fact that such projects usually materialize in stages, thus spreading the costs over longer periods of time.

However, what is striking is that Greek governing politicians, in spite of their neoliberal agenda, felt obliged to promise a park. The public's anxieties over the city's environmental problems were something they had to address, or at least find ways to coopt and circumvent with minimum friction. In this balancing act, they communicated a series of reasons for selling parts of Elliniko to private interests. The argument that the funds raised from the privatization would be directed into the creation of smaller parks in high density neighborhoods of the city was a logical justification for privatization, with the potential to resonate with large segments of Athenians. However, it failed to generate widespread support. The reason was that the record of the Greek state on environmental issues has not been stellar. Many were skeptical because of the nature of Greek politicians who one day say one thing, and the next they do something different. This mistrust was confirmed by previous initiatives to allocate resources for a green fund: either through extra taxation for legalizing illegal construction, special gasoline taxes.

The problem was that these funds have been either unaccounted for, or have been used for other purposes.

By the end of 2004, it seemed that Elliniko's redevelopment was a done deal. Both governing parties had agreed that the demand for a public park of high vegetation in the whole area was not an option. They also agreed on the scale of privatization: It was decided that 250 acres would be privatized, and developed commercially. The results of the international design competition were well-received and provided a blueprint for future action. However, as we will see in the next chapter this consensus did not prove enough to finalize the deal. Delays over the plan implementation, and changes in the political leadership of the country would once again derail this process. Furthermore, the economic crisis that hit Greece in 2009 would not only cancel the existing plans, but it would make the creation of a park an unlikely contingency.

Chapter 6 Athens in Crisis and Elliniko at a Crossroads, 2005-2014

The conclusion of the international design competition was expected to provide at last a resolution to the problem of Elliniko's redevelopment. The ruling political parties had agreed to the general provisions of the project, including the proportions of private development and public green space. The next steps would be the finalization of the state's requirements and the commencement of the tender process to identify potential investors. However, this did not happen. It took the state mechanisms two years to transform the winning design into an actual master-plan and then disseminate this updated version. Another obstacle to the project was the persistent opposition of the surrounding municipalities who continued to fight against any privatization and commercial development. With the 2006 municipal election Hristos Kortzidis became mayor of Elliniko, and since then he would prove an important player to reckon with. His presence provided a new impetus to the struggle for a public park. In addition, the catastrophic fires of 2007, especially those on Mount Parnitha, provided new visibility to the environmental problems of Athens, and made the creation of a park seem a judicious choice.

The redevelopment process however was once again derailed by the 2009 national elections and change of government. The new political leadership had promised a fresh approach to the issue of Elliniko, and shelved the previous plans. But a short time after the new government took over, a new development would overturn all previous planning, and Elliniko's redevelopment would take a radical turn. The new variable that changed the whole process was the unprecedented financial crisis that hit Athens and Greece after

2009. This radical event would unleash a most aggressive cycle of neoliberal reforms that would make the creation of a public and green park an ever receding dream.

Certainly, Greece's economic problems did not appear out of nowhere in 2009. After the end of the 2004 Olympics, it was abundantly clear that the investment in the Games was not going to produce the promised results, and to advance Athens' role in the various networks of the global economy. The much expected foreign investments and the forecasts for new jobs never materialized. Moreover, the state had to determine what to do with a large number of Olympic venues that had stayed vacant. It was decided that the venues would be privatized in order to alleviate the government's responsibility for maintenance costs. However, the combination of bad planning with the paramount ineptness of the governing political class left the overpriced Olympic stadia deteriorating. The state failed even to generate revenues from those venues that finally were leased to private interests. Overall, the narrative of greater economic opportunities stemming from a global mega-event proved to be a myth in the case of Athens, and the spatial fix of the Games did not prove enough to overcome the structural problems of the Greek economy.

The preparations for the Games, the availability of cheap credit due to the introduction of the euro currency, and the inflow of European structural funds provided a false sense of greater economic development. However, all these did not provide real solutions to the weaknesses of the economy. There is an abundance of scholars from all ideological persuasions, both Greek and European, who admit that the adoption of the euro currency had devastating effects for the country. The participation of a weak economy like that of Greece's in an economic and political union with members of much larger and efficient economies has been at the basis of country's current economic

debacle. Similar to other peripheral societies of Europe, Greece has lost competitiveness, resulting in external debt, which was financed by banks of the core. Moreover, cheap credit exposed Greek banks to high speculative risks, and at the end, the state had to pay the tab. Added to the prevalent tax evasion, corruption, and favorable treatment for big businesses, the incorporation to the Eurozone stripped the state from significant tools for monetary policy (Fotopoulos, 2010; Lapavitsas, 2012).

The results became painfully obvious after 2009, when the government asked for financial assistance from the European Union (EU) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The European Commission, the IMF, and the European Central Bank formed a group of international lenders, the so-called Troika that laid down stringent austerity measures for providing loans to Greece. As a result, this deepened Greece's economic and political dependency, similar to the previous experience of many developing countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. A shadow government of foreign financial and administrative experts was established in order to make Greeks "do their homework," as Horst Reichenbach, the head of the task force explained (Heyer, 2011). The terms for these rescue packages have been uniform for all receiving countries, irrespective of the causes of their financial woes, aiming at the reduction of labor costs, cutbacks in social provisions, and massive privatization programs. And while it is generally agreed that the prescribed policies will not work for Greece, "the European consortium [keeps] testing out austerity measures in Dr. Mengele-like fashion" (Zizek, 2012b, p. 15). In some ways, this process resembles the destruction of the productive forces of those countries that fell under the influence and domination of the imperialist powers of the previous centuries, when the looting their national wealth was characterized by foreign rulers and their local

collaborators as leaps of progress and economic modernization. And this has been a

prevalent interpretation of the

persistence of the international

financial institutions to privatize all

public properties, despite the efforts

of governing politicians to prove

otherwise. Cartoonist Elias Makris,

expressed this sentiment when he

impugned the loss of important

resources of the Greek state, such as

the major port of the country, that of Piraeus, the Skaramangas shipyards, and the former

airport of Elliniko (figure 6.1).⁶⁹

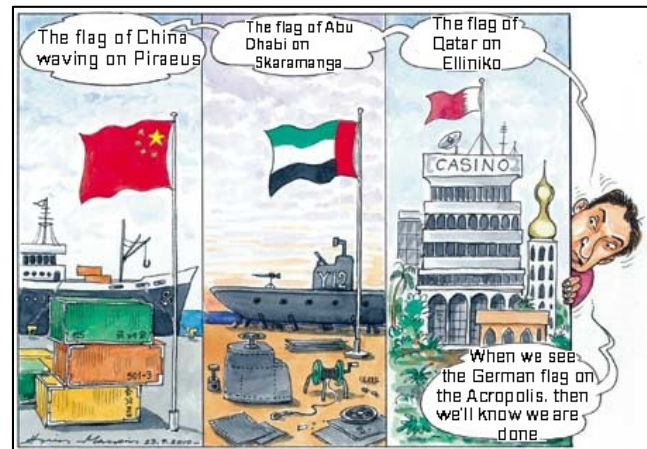


Figure 6.1 Privatizations in Greece.

Cartoonist Elias Makris published this in the conservative newspaper *Kathimerini* (2010, September 25). Retrieved from <http://www.kathimerini.gr>

Table 6.1 offers a glimpse of the tragic results for Greek society. The fall in the GDP brings to mind similar reductions during war periods. The extreme unemployment rates have led to a steep increase of suicides, while due to high youth unemployment, many call today's young the "lost generation." With the production base of the country in shambles, the debt is not going to reach sustainable levels in the foreseeable future, while the efforts to reduce the deficit are centered on massive cuts, the withdrawal of the state from the economy, and high taxation of the working classes. In fact, increased taxes on the consumption of heating oil have forced many Athenians to burn firewood and

⁶⁹ Throughout this chapter a number of political cartoons from major Greek newspapers will be presented depicting the privatization of Elliniko. This is because cartoons historically have brought awareness to current issues, and they play an important role in the public discourse, combining serious commentary and humor.

painted scrap in unsafe braziers, a Dickensian practice that has claimed a few dozen lives, and created “a blanket of smog over the Greek capital” (Apostolou, 2014).⁷⁰

Table 6.1 Economic indicators 2004-2013.

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
GDP	5.9	4.4	2.3	5.5	3.5	-0.2	-3.1	-4.9	-7.1	-7.0
Government gross debt % of GDP	98.6	100	106.1	107.4	112.9	129.7	148.3	170.3	156.9	-
Government gross debt in billion Euros	183	195	224	239	263	299	329	355	303	-
Government deficit	-7.5	-5.2	-5.7	-6.5	-9.8	-15.7	-10.7	-9.5	-9.0	-
Unemployment	10.5	9.9	8.9	8.3	7.7	9.5	12.6	17.7	24.3	27.3
Unemployment less than 25 years	26.9	26.0	25.2	22.9	22.1	25.8	32.9	44.4	55.3	58.6

Note: Data compiled from Eurostat.

Thus, the crisis ended the post-dictatorial period of “normalcy” and ushered in a permanent state of emergency, a familiar feature of the Greek social formation, as we saw in previous chapters. The domestic ruling classes and the international financial institutions have introduced exceptionality measures in planning and policy procedures, associated with what Swyngedouw et al. (2002) call “new forms of governing urban interventions, characterized by less democratic and more elite-driven priorities” (p. 196). The implementation of similar planning processes had been introduced with the Olympic

⁷⁰ Assessing the situation after the crisis, the Hellenic Red Cross (2013) identified a dangerous mix of environmental, social, and health problems, stating: “The current economic crisis has had a serious impact on public health, since it is connected to malnutrition and unhealthy living conditions, increase in unemployment, depression, increasing rates of suicides, health problems for children and adolescents, violence, drug addiction, environmental problems, and often inaccessibility to health and welfare agencies. The significant increase in poverty levels and social exclusion, the reduction in social welfare budgets and the transfer of responsibility for health and social care provision from the state to private organizations, communities and families, create challenges to cope with the new circumstances” (p. 29).

Games, whose “successful” legacy continued to be present. When financier George Soros visited Greece in 2011, he suggested that the country has the potential to attract foreign investors, especially in the real estate market because of the low prices. And in an optimistic tone, he said: “You can do it, you can find the spirit of 2004 again” (Papadopoulos, 2011). The elites have decided to resolve the crisis on their own terms by resorting to the proven example of the Olympics; Elliniko’s redevelopment was not going to be the exception.

The crisis proved more than ever the need for a public and green park at Elliniko, both on environmental and social grounds. Besides the obvious benefits to the physical environment, the park could also provide a destination for people who need to get out of their houses but have no place to go in an increasingly privatized city. Instead, the crisis provided an opportunity for those who

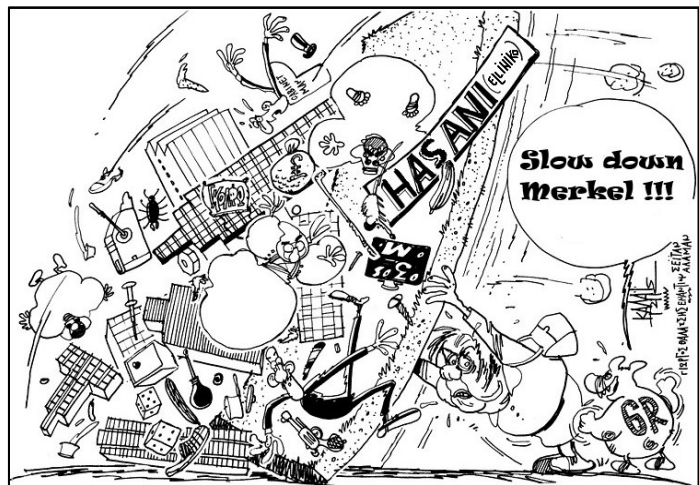


Figure 6.2 The impact of the financial rescue package on Elliniko.

It appeared in the Greek daily Eleftherotypia (2001, May 4, p. 9). Retrieved from www.enet.gr

pursued Elliniko’s privatization to discard the previous plans and expand the scale of privatization. The well-known cartoonist Giannis Kalaitzis depicted the change of plans for Elliniko due to Germany’s insistence on privatizations and restructuring (Figure 6.2).

Yet, at the beginning of 2005, Elliniko’s redevelopment seemed to be a done deal.

The customary disagreements between governing politicians that had caused delays in the

past were overcome in this case by the social-democrats of PASOK and the conservatives of New Democracy, who agreed to proceed with the winning design of the international competition. Their acceptance of the forthcoming decision was predicated on a prior agreement in which they agreed on the ratio between greenery and private development. More importantly, the mayors of the surrounding municipalities, despite their internal disagreements, signaled their willingness to negotiate a potential deal by taking a “middle of the way” approach. They welcomed the idea of a conference center, and possibly an EXPO center, built through self-financing. It was felt that this type of development would not antagonize the local economies, while the attendant financial revenues could be channeled into the park’s maintenance (“Lene nai oi dēmarhoi,” 2005, p. 27). The mayor of Argypolis, Giannis Tsarpalis, even entertained the idea of selling small plots of land, as long as the revenues would go to the municipalities (Papadopoulos, 2005). The mayors, however, adamantly opposed any residential development and almost all types of commercial activity within the future park—excluding a conference center, of course. They were well-aware that the future redevelopment had the potential to destabilize the local economies and the demographics in their municipalities” therefore, they fought to exert some control over the form of development. Politically, they tried to balance the often clashing tendencies between their political affiliations to the governing establishment, and the desires of their constituents, and they always insisted that the Ministry of the Environment would consult with them and work collaboratively (Galati, 2005).⁷¹

⁷¹ Interestingly two of the mayors of that time were elected with the support of PASOK and the Coalition of the Left (SYRIZA), one with the support of DIKKI (former PASOK), and one with support of New Democracy.

While some of the mayors genuinely tried to maintain an evenhanded approach, others temporized, adjusting their rhetoric to the audience they happened to be addressing. In this manner, they might publicly gesture towards one or several courses of action while organizing support for a different agenda at the grassroots level. A number of local political groups, cultural associations, and others formed an alliance across the four municipalities to oppose the state's plans for privatization and commercial development. On March 16 of 2005, the alliance occupied the coastal street of Poseidonos that connects the southern suburbs to Athens and Piraeus (figure 6.3). Hristos Kortzidis, at that time a city council member of Elliniko and an active



Figure 6.3 Demonstration against the privatization of Elliniko in 2005. Retrieved from Rizospastis (2005, March 17, p. 20).

member of the alliance, unequivocally denounced the government's plans as a gift to big capital. The mayors of the four municipalities, however, while they appeared at the demonstration, took a more cautious line, stating that they favored pursuing their common goals through dialogue and negotiation instead of street protests. The newspaper *Rizospastis* chastised them for this position, reminding them that historically the most effective method for local governments to win concessions has been by taking to the streets ("Oute ena metro," 2005, p. 20). What is interesting in this initiative was the participation of residents from all leftist political parties, a move away from the historical divisions of the Greek Left. A central figure was Hristos Kortzidis, the son of the former long-standing communist mayor of Elliniko, himself a communist and member of the

party until November of 2005. On the issue of Elliniko Kortzidis played a central role in bringing together progressives from different political groups. He had to overcome the historic suspicions among the various left factions, and even, on occasion, overlook some incidents that might have been the cause of personal bitterness. For example, in the past, the center-left Synaspismos had supported local PASOK candidates of questionable integrity. No doubt this development affected a relatively small number of votes, but it ultimately cost Kortzidis the 2002 Elliniko mayoral election: he received 49% of the vote in the second round (Frouzakis, 2005). Yet his efforts to create a large political alliance that cut across party lines led to his expulsion from the communist party, which accused him of opportunism (“Anakoinōsē tēs Kommatikēs Organōsēs,” 2005, p. 12). He ran again in the 2006 elections as an independent and won.

The mayors managed to meet with Minister Souflias and present their concerns. The Minister explained to them that one-fifth of the area would be privatized, with the remaining four-fifths converted into a park that would take its shape from the winning design of the international competition (“Anadiamorfōsē ton prodiagrafōn,” 2005). The Minister informed them that residential development was part and parcel of the state’s redevelopment scheme; he reasoned that it was unfair to ask the Greek taxpayers to pay for the park’s construction and maintenance. The newspaper *Kathimerini* noted that after this meeting it was apparent that the mayors were willing to budge, and finally accept the state’s plan (Terzis, 2005).

At the end of 2005, the Council of State, the Supreme Administrative Court of Greece, removed an additional obstacle to the government’s plans. The court ruled that the ownership claims of the original owners of the land were unsubstantiated. In 2002,

seeing that the Greek state was going to sell Elliniko to private interests, the descendants of the original land owners formed a committee for recovering their properties. They claimed that, since the land was not going to be used by the state for the benefit of the public, the successive waves of land expropriations justified by the invocation of eminent domain were invalid. The rejection of their appeal by the Council of State did not end their efforts to regain control of their former lands. They appealed to the European Court of Human Rights, but their case was rejected again a few years later without going to the plenary session. The secretary of the association, Dimitris Amiridis, explained that the owners were in agreement that they would take receipt of only a portion of their properties, donating the rest to the proposed park. Besides, they were also willing to abide by very strict plot ratios and setback regulations that would in effect stipulate large gardens. After the negative outcome of their legal battles, the owners continued to operate their association, this time with the aim of turning the land of Elliniko into a public and green park (personal communication, 2011).

After years of foiling the public's interest and expectations regarding the international design competition, Minister of the Environment Giorgos Souflias finally announced the government's decision in June 2006. The winner was the DZO study. In their plan, the state allotted 250 acres for new construction: 90 acres for upscale residential development and 160 acres for other business activities. According to estimates, the plan would create a town of 20,000 people. The integrity of the future park would be immediately compromised by the decision to locate within its boundaries various commercial structures: the Airport Traffic Control Tower of the Civil Aviation Authority; the airport's runway, as well as several related buildings; an electricity

substation; several tram and bus depots; and the Olympic venues, which would be privatized following the completion of the Games (Daliani, 2006, p. 15). With respect to Elliniko's coastline, the state decided to designate the area around the marina of Agios Kosmas for additional construction. By integrating this expansion project into the wider plans for tourist redevelopment along the entire length of Athens' coast, the government hoped to make it an entertainment destination ("Mahē gia ta fileta," 2006, p. 80).

Though the state now expressed interest in renewing Athens' waterfront, it seemed content to abandon another important tract of land: the former airport. The existing buildings became targets of extensive looting, and the whole area was turned into a rubbish dump (Manolas, 2005, p. 20). Privatization proponents would cite these unfortunate facts as a justification for the area's redevelopment. Moreover, the coastal front continued to be plundered by mafia-type business interests with the consent of the state. Since the 1970s, many nightclubs had set up on the coast, more often than not without adequate licenses, in clear disregard of the laws and regulations which prohibited their presence in the area. Some of the owners, like the ship-owner Victoras Restis, were very strong and influential businessmen. Their operations restricted the public's access to the coast, and brought all the negative externalities of the trade to the area. The state, for its part, often closed a blind eye to any irregularities because it received rent payments from these entrepreneurs.

The municipalities often tried to enforce the planning codes on the books, but every summer the situation repeated itself and the coast was transformed into an entertainment district. Municipal officers often faced intimidation and threats, and there were instances of actual violence. Mayor Kortzidis and the new city council, elected in

2006, were determined to do something about this issue. They kept a close eye on the building activities that took place on the coast, reporting any irregularities. In April, however, fifteen henchmen badly beat the deputy mayor and a council member who were monitoring the coast of Agios Kosmas (Kyriakopoulos, 2007).

A month later, realizing that the state would not do anything to resolve the issue, Kortzidis took the situation in his own hands by starting a hunger strike, demanding public access to the beach of Agios Kosmas and the removal of the private businesses. It was a bold move that jeopardized his health. His strike lasted for twenty four days, and it attracted the attention of the public, which was not used to politicians fighting with such determination for the public good. Finally, the beach was opened to the general public, and the mayor ended his strike. City workers and local residents entered the beach and cleaned it up, dismantling the metal fences that sectioned it off and creating access corridors for people. They placed umbrellas and showers on the premises, and made the site accessible to people with mobility problems. Kortzidis' actions occupied the news for many days, and got the support of national politicians such as PASOK leader Giorgos Papandreou, SYRIZA (formerly Synaspismos) leader Alekos Alavanos, the president of Athens' Bar Association, the president of the Technical Chamber of Greece, as well as others. The mayor had won. However, keeping the coast open was a difficult endeavor. Every summer, municipal officers and volunteers had to return to clean up the beach, tear down fences, and face the businessmen's henchmen. The central state and the police continued to remain silent, but open and free access to the coast was for the time being restored.

The advantageous position of the area—next door to the waterfront of Saronikos Gulf—made it a desirable site not only for nightclub owners, but also for other investors beyond Greece hoping to exploit its natural beauty and proximity to Athens’ center. In 2007, many press articles revealed that the leading casino and resort developer in the world, the US-based Las Vegas Sands, had held talks with the Minister for Economy and Finance of Greece, George Alogoskoufis, for exploring the possibility of a large-scale investment in Elliniko. Allegedly, the proposal involved a ten billion dollar investment for an integrated resort. The meeting was never acknowledged by the government, and it did not produce any tangible results. Miltiadis Varvitsiotis, a New Democracy politician currently serving as the Minister of Shipping and the Aegean, confirmed that Alogoskoufis held two such meetings, but that the issue of a casino resort raised too many eyebrows in the government, it being an inherently polarizing form of development (personal communication, 2011). Hara Tzanavara, a journalist who focuses on environment issues for large newspapers, also entertained the possibility that the Karamanlis government dismissed plans for a new casino under pressure from existing casino operators, who operate on clauses of exclusivity. The arrival of a new player in the casino business would necessarily introduce competition and conflict (personal communication, 2011).

For the mayors, casino-based development was also very controversial. Hristos Kortzidis asserted that a casino in the area would only create precarious, low wage employment opportunities with minimal benefits for the community (personal communication, 2011). Moreover, the mayor of Glyfada, Kostas Kokkoris, suggested that if investors really wanted to make money and “help” the city with new employment

opportunities, as they proclaimed, then they should be able to use their intelligence and skills within the boundaries set by the society, instead of trying to circumvent them with easy solutions such as casinos (personal communication, 2011). In fact, opposition to casino-type redevelopment does not come only from leftwing politicians. Kyriakos Mitsotakis, the current conservative Minister of Administrative Reform and e-Governance, believes that for Elliniko all options should be on the table except the casino option. For him, it is counterproductive to build a large casino in a city that tries to promote culture-based tourism (personal communication, 2011). Since then the idea for a casino has resurfaced many times, but government officials have consistently discouraged it. And yet, in 2013 the Greek state again expressed interest in the idea of a casino, provided that the terms of a proposal were sufficiently attractive. The developer Sheldon Adelson was quick to react to the government's coy overture. In an interview with Bloomberg News, he explained that after a thirty-billion dollar deal for a mega-resort in Spain fell through, (according to reports because he had sought assurances that tax rates and other conditions would not be changed by future governments), he was considering other European cities, including Athens, for a large-scale investment (Odenheimer & Gotkine, 2013).

While the arguments over the future uses of Elliniko continued unabated during the summer of 2007, Athens and Greece as a whole were in the midst of a major environmental disaster: thousands of forests fires broke out, claiming the lives of eighty-four people and burning 670,000 acres of land. It was the one of the worst fire seasons in the history of the country. The first fire broke out in June in the Parnitha National Park, situated just north of Athens, and considered the city's main lung. According to Minister

of the Environment Giorgos Souflias, the fire covered an area of 13, 800 acres, and devastated the park's wildlife (Ministry of the Environment, Planning and Public Works, 2007). The scale of the destruction raised concerns about its impact on the city's microclimate. Additionally, the hillsides denuded of vegetation created a risk of flooding. Hara Tzanavara asserted that the scale of catastrophe also had an impact on people's relationships to their physical environment. "The destruction of the pine forest of Parnitha was a big deal. We woke up one morning and we found our balconies full of ashes, even in long distances from the fire. It was surreal. It aroused the public opinion, and since then people are very sensitive to environmental issues" (personal communication, 2011). Professor Ioannis Ziomas, an expert on environmental pollution, suggested that the Parnitha fire should attract everybody's attention to the lack of green space in Athens. After this disaster it would only be common sense to turn Elliniko and other available open areas into parks and other green space which could assume the role of air filtration that Parnitha could no longer provide ("Parko," 2007).

In the highly charged post-fire atmosphere, Minister Souflias had the unenviable task of presenting the state's final plan for Elliniko's redevelopment. Based on his previous announcements, an upscale new town would be constructed, along with business offices and entertainment centers. Moreover, the new development would be connected to the Spata airport via a tunnel that would cut through Mount Hymettus just north of Elliniko. Souflias estimated that the construction could start approximately in 2009, and that it would last six to seven years ("Parko mesō tsimentopoiēsēs," 2007, p. 7). Funding for the project would be secured through self-financing mechanisms and the partial privatization of the land. The revenues created by the redevelopment would go toward

the park's maintenance. The minister also announced the formation of a green fund which would collect revenues from Elliniko's redevelopment and contribute to the creation of small parks in highly dense areas of the metropolitan region.

The plan unfolded by Souflias attracted criticism both by the political right and left. Some found it too timid (in a commercial or business sense) because it prioritized creating a park instead of maximizing the land's exchange value (Varvitsiotis, personal communication, 2011). Others, like Kyriakos Mitsotakis, complained that the plan lacked a single, unifying concept and that it subsequently exhibited a deplorable lack of vision (personal communication, 2011). PASOK's criticism was nominal, merely

accusing Souflias for taking credit for a plan originally submitted by PASOK (Filis, 2007). Pollalis (2008), too, censured the plan for its lack of vision, while noting that it provided much less greenery than the original DZO design. Indeed, as it is shown in figure 6.4, most



Figure 6.4 The updated DZO master-plan. Retrieved from Serero, D., Fernandez, E, & Coignet, P. (2007, March). Hellenikon Metropolitan Park. *C3 Magazine*, 272, 116-123.

open areas are covered by dry grass and low vegetation, whereas high vegetation covers only the vertical corridors.

Stefanos Manos, the veteran politician and most orthodox proponent of neoliberalism in Greece, opposed both the partial privatization of Elliniko and the

creation of a single, large park. He pointed out that Minister Souflias' plan was so sloppy that the number of trees stipulated in it (two trees for every 1,195 square yards) made it questionable whether it could with any honesty or accuracy be termed a park. His main objection though was that the state did not take advantage of this opportunity to use the market forces in order to ameliorate Athens' urban environment. His proposal was to build an upscale town in Elliniko, aiming at the very high end of the housing market. This development had the potential of generating four billion euros, enough to buy many parcels of land inside the city's dense web, demolish their existing buildings, and create twenty smaller parks or gardens of 10 to 15 acres. According to his scheme, the exchange of land would increase real estate values not only at Elliniko, but also in the neighborhoods around the new gardens, some of the most underprivileged, high-density sectors of Athens. This intervention, he posited, would improve the lives of many more people than the creation of a single park covering the whole area of Elliniko (Manos, 2007; personal communication, 2011). According to Manos, Elliniko's redevelopment, if pursued with an eye toward its social justice aspect, had the potential to improve the lives of the less privileged.⁷²

The political Left also critiqued Souflias' plan on grounds of social justice and environmental protection. The Communist Party rebuked the plan and called the idea of a partial privatization as a Trojan horse for gradually handing the rest of the area to private interests. The state's stated justification for privatization—that there were no

⁷² Aristidis Romanos, an architect with experience in urban redevelopment projects, conducted a study on the benefits to the center of Athens based on Manos' proposition. The study led to the publication of a book titled "Elliniko and the revival of the center: An issue of urban egalitarianism." Exchanging the land of Elliniko with that at central Athens has the potential to provide solutions to a number of environmental and social problems in less privileged neighborhoods.

funds available for a park—was only a pretext, they argued, repeated every time the state was called upon to satisfy the needs of the people. They suggested that if the government was eager to raise additional revenue, the sensible thing was to try to get it from the rich (“Oute ena stremma,” 2007, p. 7; “Parko mesō tsimentopoiēsēs,” 2007, p. 7). The leader of SYRIZA, Alekos Alavanos, criticized Souflias for presenting his plan as if the Parnitha fire had never taken place. It was the state’s disregard for the needs of the people, Alavanos noted, that forced them to implement the provisions of the constitution themselves, as they did in the case of the Agios Kosmas beach. Souflias’ response was that his plan was the last chance for the establishment of the park. If the catastrophic fire season of 2007 had not occurred, he asserted, the state would not have allocated any funds for a public park. It was only because of this environmental disaster that the current compromise was possible at all. A modest park was better than no park. The proposed redevelopment was the lesser of two evils (Poulakidas, 2007a).

Souflias’ plans further polarized the discussion over environmental protection in Athens. In addition to the construction planned for the area inside the former airport, it called for the construction of a tunnel through Mount Hymettus, just north of Elliniko, in order to grant the future affluent residents of the area easy access to the new airport at Spata. Local groups won a tough fight to postpone these plans, which currently have come back with the new plan for Elliniko. Moreover, the government’s frequent claims of environmental sensitivity became transparent when it stubbornly refused to consider a line of credit offered by the European Union. In fact, the EU was ready to provide up to eighty-five percent of the necessary funds for a park at Elliniko, but the government declined to make this request (Perperas, 2007, p. 24). Questioned in the European

Parliament, Danuta Hubner, commissioner for Regional Policy, confirmed the accuracy of this story and the eighty-five percent figure. The Greek state lamely defended its choice not to pursue EU funding on the grounds that the loans would only cover the construction of the park and not its maintenance (Poulakidas, 2007b).

In light of the government's refusal to use EU money for the park, proponents of the park felt that they had to intensify their struggle. On January 18, 2008, they organized yet another conference in an effort to present the creation of a park as a political imperative supported by scientific corroboration. The three day conference was called "Three Days for a Life," and the large and diverse body of participants reflected the increasing public recognition that Elliniko's redevelopment was of critical importance to the city's future. The roster included the leaders or political representatives of all of Greece's political parties, the Minister of the Environment, representatives from all levels of local government, university professors, scientists, and the EU Commissioner for the Environment.

Manthos Samantouris, a professor at the University of Athens, showed that the temperatures in Athens' metropolitan areas had been constantly increasing, and he explained that in order to stabilize this situation there was an urgent need for three million trees. In his presentation, Professor Giorgos Kallos corroborated Samantouris' findings. He provided evidence that the area around Elliniko suffered from temperatures that were identical to those in the center of Athens, and that further, the concentrations of certain gaseous pollutants such as nitrogen oxides and carbon monoxide also compared with those recorded in Athens. He reasoned that Athens' pollution was following the

natural channel formed by the basin at the foot of the bare mountains until it reached the southern suburbs.

However, the unexpected surprise came from the presentation of the European Commissioner for the Environment, Stavros Dimas. Dimas, a prominent member of New Democracy, clearly sided with the mayors of the surrounding municipalities in his speech, underlining the urgent need for an urban park and reaffirming his opposition to any



Figure 6.5 EU Commissioner Stavros Dimas. Retrieved from *Foni tou Alimou* [The voice of Alimos], (2008, January, issue 308, p. 1).

commercialization of the site. He started his speech as follows:

Let me tell you from the beginning that I agree with the slogan behind me [Liberation to open spaces, figure 6.5]. In our country, when we see an open space, we regard it as a plot destined for construction. That's very bad. We should view it as a park. We shouldn't see open spaces as plots, but as parks; after the fires [of 2007], this is a necessary condition, if we want to be able to live in this region of Attiki.

And he continued:

I have a basic principle, which I think is indispensable. If a plot of land has to be built, or used in some way, then another plot needs to be freed/released. And because this is very difficult, and because promises are not enough, it is best to keep the remaining open spaces really open/free, and not to fill them with cement. In the long run, it is better to wait a little, instead of destroying what we already have, because afterward it will be impossible to return to the previous state ("Polites," 2008).

His position attracted criticism from his political colleagues, and it especially enraged the Minister of the Environment, Giorgos Souflias. He accused the Commissioner of hypocrisy, suggesting that he was exploiting popular support for a park—and thus undermining the government’s plans for Elliniko—for the sole purpose of increasing his political profile (personal communication, 2011).

At the end of the conference, high school students from the surrounding areas planted 10,000 trees. Since then tree planting drives have been repeated many times. These drives were not merely symbolic gestures of hope, but pragmatic, hard-nosed strategy. Those who favored a park wished to create a *fait accompli*; as the time of indecision continued, the trees would grow taller, making it more and more politically untenable for advocates of privatization and development to have them cut down. In fact mayor Kortzidis wanted to start this effort much earlier, but the meager finances of the municipality constricted such efforts. For him, the active involvement of the people in defending their community from private interests is crucial because it signals a change in consciousness about personal empowerment, and for creating a different kind of spatiality (personal communication, 2011).

The need for a different kind of relationship to urban space—material, imagined and lived—became evident at the end of 2008, when Greece’s city centers became the flashpoint of considerable strife. The assassination of a fifteen year-old high school student by the police on December 6 sparked mass insurrections, first in Athens, later in numerous other cities. These demonstrations had a tremendous impact on Greek society: not only did they aptly illustrate the limits of the post-dictatorial political arrangement of representative democracy, they signaled widespread disillusionment with the neoliberal

vision for prosperity. For large numbers of Greek youth especially the neoliberal dream had become a nightmare of constant unemployment or underemployment, feckless political representation, and empty consumerist culture. This uprising was not the callow grumble of disaffected youth; it was an intense political moment that sought to address much more than state violence. The fact that the protest lasted for fifteen days and was eventually taken up in fifty cities secures it a special place in the world history of urban movements (Kotronaki & Seferiades, 2012).

According to Stavros Stavridis, the December events were an experience in which the city became not only the terrain of expressing discontent, but the also the object of the discontent (personal communication, 2011). Among other things, the December revolt raised issues of democracy, participation, and the right to the city. It enriched existing efforts for reclaiming public spaces, and it opened new possibilities for new ones. The unrest was an answer to the mainstream claim that the exchange and use values of public space are not mutual exclusive. Chryssanthi Petropoulou (2010) explains that in the center of Athens the map showing the destruction during the events departs from previous uprisings where public buildings became the targets, and it coincides with the spatial map of new spaces of consumption that symbolized their domination over other neighborhoods (pp. 219-220). December released the power of the possible, and in its aftermath, a number of grassroots struggles sprang up in many neighborhoods of Athens reclaiming public spaces, at Zografou, Kypseli, Nea Smyrni, Eksarheia, and other places. Not all of these attempts stood the test of time. Their significance however is that they added new experiences and understandings to the fight for protecting urban public space. For Stavridis this was the main legacy of the events: people did not just demand the right

to do things, but also by doing things they produced new forms of political engagement and political consciousness. In this effort, he adds, the spirit of the December riots and the efforts of the people of Elliniko to reclaim the public spaces in their area are closely related; for him it is very important that people say, “Yes we will manage the Agios Kosmas beach, we will manage our city’s public spaces, those spaces that you destroyed in the name of the public good” (personal communication, 2011).

In the spring of 2009, Mayor Kortzidis led a group of residents onto the premises of the former Greek Air Force base and claimed the land for the Elliniko municipality. It had formally requested this 7.5 acre piece of land, but the central state’s indecision prompted the takeover. Neighborhood residents broke down the metal fences and cleaned up the area. They built a playground in one area. In another, they erected a summer cinema that was opened to the public free of charge. Kortzidis also continued to give battle to the private interests which had closed off the coastal front to the public with the government’s tacit consent. His actions attracted attention, and he soon became known as a champion of the public’s right to access these beaches for free. In fact, his uncompromising stance on this issue prompted many politicians on the left to repeatedly visit the area and swear their allegiance to the Mayor. The leader of PASOK, George Papandreou, also visited the area many times, both as leader of the opposition and as Prime-Minister of Greece.

Before the national elections of 2009, Papandreou emphatically declared that not a drop of cement would be poured into Elliniko:

Recognizing the extreme situation that exists in the [Attiki] basin, PASOK has recently proceeded, with courage and responsibility, to the proposal to

convert the entire area of Elliniko into one of the largest metropolitan parks in Europe.

And on another occasion he noted that

The sell-off of the remaining open spaces of our city is a criminal policy, and not a development policy. It will degrade the city, will degrade the economy, will degrade its infrastructure, will degrade the prospects for actual growth. Real development is the protection of these sites (Lialios, 2010).

The Social Democrats won the 2009 national elections with promises of redistribution, environmental protection, transparency, and increased democracy. At this point, it was obvious that Greece was in financial trouble, and the crisis of the global economy caused great anxiety to the people. Even though Papandreou lacked charisma, his neo-Keynesian rhetoric and his call for real change gave hope to the electorate. His choice to head the Ministry of the Environment was a non-traditional politician, Tina Birbili. Not even a parliament member, she brought the spirit and approach of NGOs to issues of environmental protection. The “green” Tina, as she was called, tried to introduce stricter environmental policies, but she faced strong opposition from governing politicians who accused her of undermining the country’s potential for economic development.

However, any hopes that PASOK might bring change to Greece were dashed immediately. In early 2010 the Greek state applied to the European Union and the International Monetary Fund for a financial rescue package. Terms of the deal stipulated that Greece would initiate a large scheme of privatizations, pass economic reforms of the type prescribed to developing countries, and refrain from funding its deficits with a source outside the Troika. Immediately upon signing the deal, the government hired the

investment bank Lazard as a consultant for its public finances and privatization program. This bank had previously advised countries such as Ecuador, Argentina, and the Ivory Coast when they found themselves in acute financial distress. And, in fact, the Greek government already had a relationship with the firm, having consulted it prior to the privatization of Olympic Airlines, Greece's state carrier (Sakoui & Hope, 2010).⁷³ The conditions of the rescue package and the involvement of Lazard made it clear that the Greek state was determined to move rapidly with economic reforms and the implementation of a large privatization program. The high real estate value of Elliniko would clearly place it at the top of the government's priorities.

During the fall of 2010 Prime Minister Papandreou visited New York where he announced his government's resolve to sell public properties worth 270 billion euros. He also signed a memorandum of understanding with the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA), a state-owned wealth fund. This agreement, involving prospects of investments in real estate, tourism, banking, and the energy sector, had a total potential worth of five billion dollars. According to information leaked to the press, Qatar, long dependent on hydrocarbon sales and eager to diversify its assets, sought Elliniko in order to turn it into a resort district replete with luxury hotels, conference centers, a casino, a marina, and a small airport to accommodate wealthy visitor's Learjets. Regardless of whether this development ever took place, the Greek state was able to present the signing of the memorandum as a vote of confidence in the Greek economy by international investors. This obscured the reality, however, of Greece's dire financial situation and dark future

⁷³ The same month that Lazard became Greece's adviser, it facilitated the sale of the luxury London department store Harrods to Qatar.

under the stipulations of the “rescue package.” In this sense, the memorandum’s political significance was as a dream or fantasy that could pacify the people. The government had written a blank check of promises that would never be cashed. Trumping up Greece’s prospects for the future allowed it to press ahead with a privatization agenda in the present. The message to the Greek people was that even though austerity would be painful, the future of Greece’s economy looked hopeful, even auspicious. In this atmosphere blended of optimism and desperation, the government tried very hard to bring about real reforms to the Greek economy. The necessity of substantive pro-market reforms was even endorsed by the opposition party New Democracy, which signed on to the agreement with Qatar. With respect to the development of Elliniko, the conservatives raised concerns only about issues of transparency and environmental protection (“Stasē anamonēs,” 2010; Tsitsas, 2010a).

Indeed, the motivations and propensities of the Qataris along with their previous record on city-building were not good omens for the future of Elliniko. Asked how it was possible to reconcile the construction of a casino, marina, and high-class hotels with prior declarations in support of sustainable development, Papandreou explained that investors needed to generate returns on their investments, but that capital alone could not be allowed to impose its wishes. It was the job of the state to show its determination and dictate the guidelines of future development (Tsitsas, 2010b). For Prime Minister Papandreou, sustainable development was reconcilable with the profit motive of the private sector. He explained that his previous proclamations for a green park in the whole area of the former airport were not vigorously supported by the experts, and that the Catalan architect Josep Acebillo convinced him that a green park would turn into a

ghetto (O G. Papandreou, 2010). The undersecretary of Foreign Affairs, Spiros Kouvelis, reassured the public that the business development proposals would not jeopardize the creation of a metropolitan park (“Den tha ginoume Las Vegas,” 2010). Yet, the memorandum that granted Qatar most-favored prospective investor status and the forthcoming enactment of the so-called fast-track law were proof that the negotiating capacity of the Greek state was nominal.

The inconsistency of PASOK’s proclamations for green development added to the resentment it had already incurred with its false promises for a social-democratic economic model and its handling of the economic crisis. The government’s rhetoric on sustainable development had become transparent, and was understood as a hollow promise from an administration that had lied repeatedly to the Greek public. Figure 6.6 depicts a cartoon from the conservative newspaper *Kathimerini* in which the promises of green development have been transformed into casinos fitted out with the customary green felt of gambling

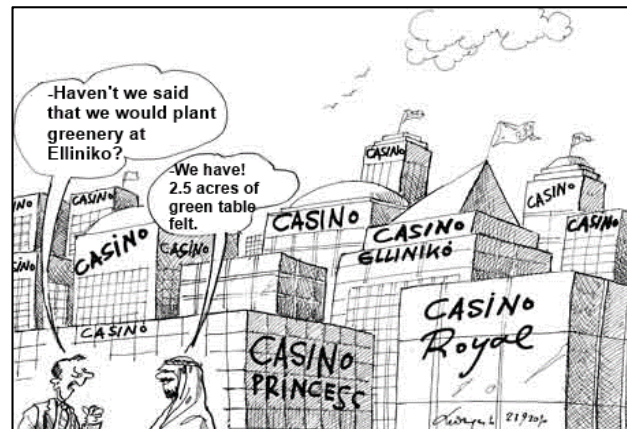


Figure 6.6 From a green park to casinos. This cartoon by Antreas Petroulakis was published in the conservative newspaper *Kathimerini* (2010, September 24). Retrieved from <http://www.kathimerini.gr/authors?id=4824/09/2010>

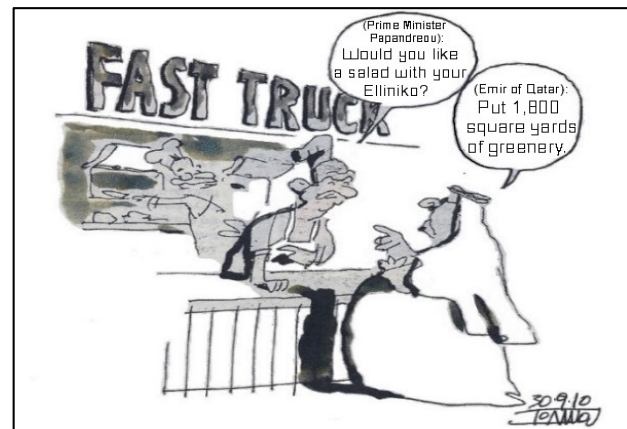


Figure 6.7 The green washing of Elliniko. By Yannis Ioannou (2010, September 30). Retrieved from http://anokatostokalamaki.files.wordpress.com/2011/02/scan_pic00011.jpg

establishments. Bringing awareness on the Elliniko issue, the well-known Greek cartoonist Yannis Ioannou also satirized Papandreou's attempt to "green wash" the deal with Qatar. In his representation, greenery is cynically used as an aesthetic overlay to new redevelopment (figure 6.7). Stathis, another famous cartoonist and social commentator, described the docility of the Greek governing politicians, and implied the deal impinged on Greece's national sovereignty when he pictured a

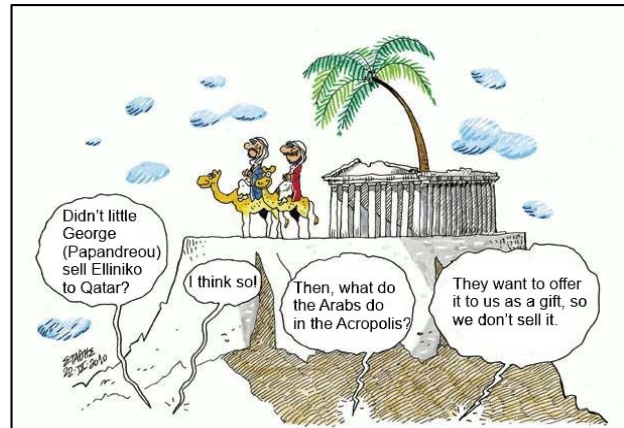


Figure 6.8 Elliniko and the Acropolis. Published in *Eleftherotypia* 2010, September 22). Retrieved from <http://www.enet.gr/?i=news.el.gallery&id=35&m=89483&page=2#gallery-item-container>

government willing even to sell off the Acropolis (figure 6.8). The public relations fiasco of the Qatar agreement caused PASOK's popularity to take a nose dive, its forty-four percent approval rating of 2009 crumbing to only twelve percent in 2012.

In fact, the contract signed with Qatar caused discontent even within the ranks of the PASOK government. Particularly dissatisfied was Minister of the Environment Tina Birbili, who felt sidelined in the whole process. Her only comment following the announcement of the agreement was to note defensively that the Greek state reserves the right to define the type and scale of future redevelopment in Elliniko (Lialios, 2010). She had built her profile as an ardent environmentalist who could think outside the box of traditional politics. Papandreou enlisted her in his government as an example of the new political ethos that he was bringing to Greek politics. Birbili's previous announcements about Elliniko were supposedly aimed to break the deadlock and move beyond the

boundaries of the long-lasting debate: a park would be created, but it would neither cover the whole area of the former airport, nor would it include residential, commercial, and office development. Instead, it would feature thematic parks, sports facilities, and perhaps an aquarium (“To Ellēniko vgainei,” 2010). These announcements, however, were not accompanied by any specific details, as Kyriakos Mitsotakis, the opposition’s section-head for the Environment, noted. Birbili reportedly disagreed with the secrecy of the Qatar deal, preferring a policy of active engagement with the public, which would have lent necessary legitimacy to any future plan (Lialios & Nedos, 2011).

However, the public’s consultation and involvement on the redevelopment of Elliniko would be further circumvented with the introduction of so-called “fast-track” legislation. Market proponents explained that the country’s financial woes were caused by the entrenched anti-business practices of the Greek state. The irony of this position—in light of the fact that many if not most important government posts were filled from their ranks—was lost on them. Thus, the PASOK government introduced a piece of “fast-track” legislation, ostensibly to solve the public sector’s chronic bureaucratic inefficiencies and to synchronize and expedite business activity behind government initiatives. This was a radical measure that superseded existing state regulatory mechanisms and environmental protections, and which consequently facilitated the smooth privatization of public assets. The passage of these provisions were celebrated by euphoric state politicians who explained that even a few years ago these measures would have been impossible due to a public outcry. Greece’s dire financial crisis, however, allowed them to move forward without any significant negative reactions (Sokos, 2010).

In many ways the introduction of fast-track legislation and certain other reforms of labor policy made Greece a type of a special economic zone. The Minister of the State now had the freedom to determine taxation levels and special taxation provisions, assume planning powers to circumvent environmental hurdles, determine the conditions of eminent domain, and decide which projects would go through an international tender process and which would be awarded as direct contracts. Obviously this raised constitutionality concerns and worries about corruption and transparency that proponents of the legislation were eager to mute. Having followed the debate concerning Elliniko's redevelopment closely and been active in the parliament on this issue, Dimitris Papadimoulis, a prominent politician of SYRIZA , noted that the main argument for the passage of this legislation was actually the privatization of Elliniko (2011). In this case, Professor of Architecture Eleni Portaliou suggests that *fast-track* can be translated as *illegal*, because the goal of the legislation was to circumvent the existing legal framework and redevelop Elliniko according to the wishes of investors (personal communication. 2011). Given these developments, the possibility of a public park was becoming increasingly remote.

The compact with Qatar was widely derided by parties on the left as neocolonial. It exercised the mayors of the adjacent municipalities sufficiently for them to ask for an emergency meeting with the Prime Minister. They pointed to the recently announced findings of a study by the Urban Environment Lab at the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA), which discredited all of the privatization arguments and made a strong case for a public park. By commissioning this study, the mayors had hoped to reinforce the merits of their demand with scientific evidence. Indeed, the significance of

this study proved invaluable for their cause. Stavros Stavridis, a professor at NTUA with a long history of involvement in protecting public spaces, notes that a study by an institution of higher learning provides a level of prestige to the arguments of those who oppose privatization. He, moreover, explains that having a public university conducting a study in defense of public space has a certain symbolic importance in a time characterized by attacks on all things public. It at least suggests that those who support the privatization of Elliniko may be entering into the debate on behalf of interests other than those the public (personal communication, 2011).

The NTUA research project was directed by Professor Nikos Belavilas (2010). He and a team of students assembled a detailed alternative plan that could be set beside those of the state and private developers. Since then, this research group has become one of the central actors championing a public park at Elliniko. The first thing they did was to deconstruct the financial justifications for privatization. Their analysis revealed that the state intentionally inflated the price tag for the creation of a park in the hope that this would make privatization appear commonsensical. The study provided examples of other parks with much lower costs than the state's projections for Elliniko. According to the government's estimates in 2007, the cost of creating the park would be 304,000 euros per acre. The study showed that in similar redevelopment cases like that of Tempelhof, the former airport of Berlin, and the Maurice Rose Airfield, the former airport of Frankfurt, the cost was 64,000 and 18,000 euros per acre respectively. According to the study's projections, construction costs of a park at Elliniko could run to approximately 100 million euros by the time the project was completed, with maintenance expenses estimated at five to ten million euros a year. Interestingly, if even some modest

commercial uses were allowed in the existing buildings at Elliniko, the rents generated would suffice to meet the park's maintenance expenses.

The study also showed that other cities around the world have similar or even larger parks than Elliniko, though Athens has the lowest score of green spaces among European capitals, with only twenty-seven square feet per capita. But even if Elliniko became a park in its entirety, Athens would still have a negative balance on public and green spaces compared to other European cities. Therefore the study also identified other areas in the metropolitan region that combined with Elliniko would potentially improve this deficit of green space. An important point of the study was that at present, given the presence of the Olympic venues, various buildings, and the runways, the area actually available for a park is approximately five hundred acres (figure 6.9). So the study's recommendation was to turn into greenery as much space as possible without demolishing the structurally sound buildings.

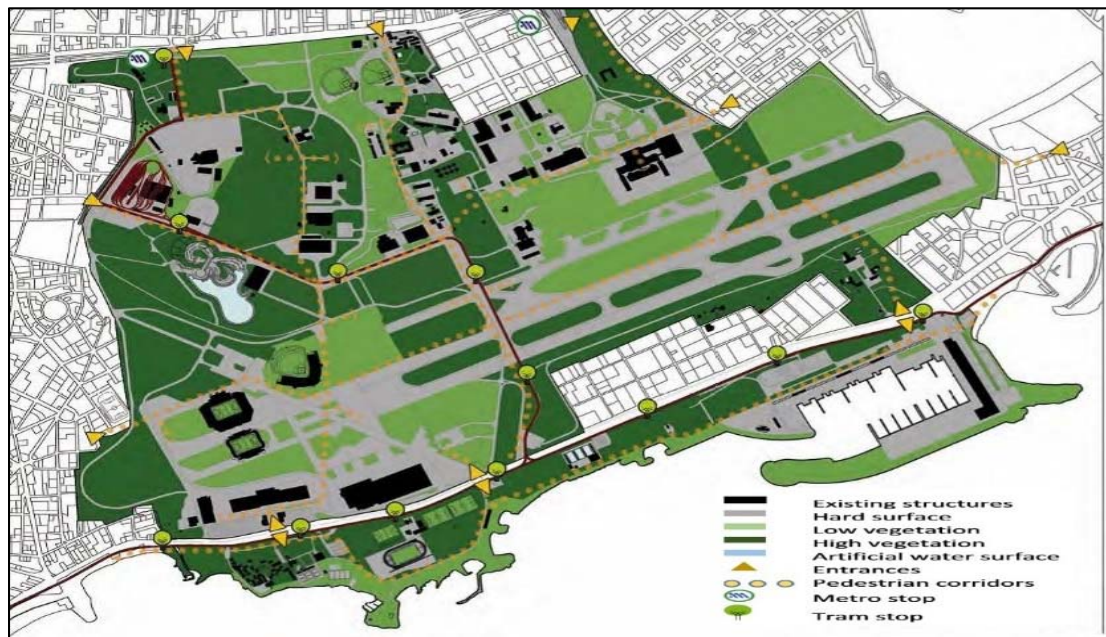


Figure 6.9 General layout of the NTUA study.

Retrieved from Belavilas, N. & Associates (2010). Basic planning & design principles for the creation of the Metropolitan Green Park at the former Elliniko International Airport of Athens. Athens: National Technical University of Athens, Urban Environment Laboratory.

The study became the target of multiple critiques. While most hailed its scientific merits, some dismissed its financial feasibility. Stefanos Manos found the study's proposal preposterous because the authors are planners and do not know anything about money. For him, it is unthinkable to just fill with trees one of the best real estate assets in Europe (personal communication, 2011). Aristidis Romanos, a well-known planner who endorses Manos' ideas for Elliniko, found the NTUA study short of expectations. He explains that its major limitation is that while on the one hand it allows for some form of commercial development, on the other hand it stipulates that the funds will be used only for the maintenance of the park, and not for the amelioration of the environment in other areas in Athens (personal communication, 2011). Giorgos Souflias accepts that the creation of a park of that size would have a positive impact on the city's climate; however, Elliniko's location away from the city's dense neighborhoods did not warrant the creation of a park there (personal communication, 2011). Surprisingly, Miltiadis Varvitsiotis, who also supports the privatization option, found the study feasible, and economical. He also underlined its great significance in exposing the myth that the available space for a green park is less than 500 acres (personal communication, 2011).

Another source of criticism has to do with the idea of mild commercial uses that the study entertains. Thodoris Liapis, the mayoral candidate of the Communist Party for Elliniko-Argyroupolis, accepts that the study is a good starting point for the creation of a public park. But he is concerned with the study's conditional admission that some sort of mild commercial development might be warranted, if for example it is managed by the municipality. Liapis adds, if this is the case, then the public character of the park will be

negated, because visitors will have to pay for services inside the area, regardless if it is the city hall that acts as the entrepreneur (personal communication, 2011).

Similarly, architect Panagiotis Koumoundouros, who has been heavily involved in the issue of Elliniko's redevelopment, argues that the study's suggestion for using the Saarinen building as a conference center is problematic, and it might function as a Trojan Horse for private interests, because it promotes the logic of self-financing. Once this logic is established, then it is hard to draw a line and to delineate the distinction between private and public. He warns that with such an approach there is a real danger to fall back into the politics of the possible. What he alludes here is the danger to view politics as the art of the possible, that is accepting the parameters of "what is considered possible in the existing constellation," which Zizek (1999) considers the opposite of authentic politics (p. 199). The problem, Koumoundouros explains, is not the small vendor of ice-cream or hotdogs, but those commercial activities that put a price tag to the visitors. For him, the threat of commercialization is always present; therefore, it is critical to be clear on how construction and maintenance funds will be raised, who is going to manage the park, and what the role of the private sector will be (personal communication, 2011). The argument over commercial development became an issue of scale even among the proponents of the park choice: how much land should be devoted to commercial activities within the new park? What kind of activities? These are not mere technicalities, but expressions of ideological positions and political commitments.

Echoing the above arguments, Professor Georgios Sarigiannis notes that once the proposed plans stipulate some sort of commercial development, it is the governing politicians who are going to decide its scale and form, a process that is out of the control

of the planner. For him, the debate on Elliniko reflects a wider ideological battle, with the NTUA's study sitting somewhere in the middle, reflecting the logic of the old social-democracy (personal communication, 2011). Sarigiannis points out that in order to preserve the public character of the future park, funding needs to come from the state coffers. The state has the financial capacity to provide a truly public and green park. It has decided to spend its resources for many projects of questionable merit, but not for creating a public and green park. So in the final analysis, it is an issue of priorities (personal communication, 2011).

Alexis Papahelas, editor of the influential newspaper *Kathimerini*, claimed the NTUA study was of dubious scientific merit, and therefore, of questionable value. It merely reproduced, in his judgment, the reflexive negativity of the Left towards entrepreneurial activity. Negativity, in fact, is often invoked as an obstacle to the normal flow of free markets and consequently the development of Greece's economy. In a similar fashion, as we saw in chapter two, the Metaxas dictatorship blamed the public intellectual and MP Dimitris Glinos of being stubbornly obstructionist and delaying implementation of the decision to convert Elliniko into the first civilian airport of Athens. In the case of Elliniko, the opposition of the mayors was frequently characterized as destructive of the free market's positive order. Thus, any time political parties, labor unions, social movements, or local municipalities object to a corporate or state decision that promotes entrepreneurialism, the reaction is painted in negative terms, because it disrupts or impedes the mechanisms of balance that are supposedly built into the market. As Zizek (2012a) puts it, negativity is presented as "the disturbance of the Whole which occurs precisely when something gets stuck, fixed, refuses to move, thereby disturbing

the cosmic balance of change, throwing it out of joint” (pp. 482-483). Asked in the Parliament about Qatar’s potential investment in Elliniko, PASOK’s Minister Pampoukis maintained that the debate was really between “paralysis and action” (“To thema,” 2011). Thus, Papahelas called for the judiciary, the Department of Social Security, and even the Department of Archaeology to expedite their operations and accommodate imminent investments by waiving the enforcement of regulations and laws. In effect, he was saying that the time for talking was past; it was now time to act. He also called upon the two governing parties to close their ears to the peoples’ demands and to “do the right thing,” as the saying goes. If they didn’t, Elliniko’s redevelopment would never happen (Papahelas, 2010a; 2010b; 2011).

At the beginning of 2011, residents against the privatization of Elliniko formed the “Initiative for a self-managed urban garden at Elliniko.” They set up their facilities inside the area of the former airport in an effort to redevelop Elliniko from below. They claimed that “We have the inalienable right to make decisions for the environment in which we live, and also the obligation to bequeath to our children and the future generations a basic level of quality of life” (Karagiannidi, 2011). In March of the



Figure 6.10 Serge Latouche at Elliniko. The French political theorist and distinguished figure in the post-growth debate visited Elliniko in May of 2011. Retrieved from http://parkoellinikou.blogspot.com/p/blog-page_10.html

same year, residents also formed another initiative for saving Elliniko from privatization. They aimed at bringing awareness on what is at stake at Elliniko, and to mobilize the

public, to engage the scientific community, and to apply pressure on politicians. In addition, the committee also tried to coordinate its efforts with other social movements and collectivities, and to be part of a wider network for the protection of public spaces in the metropolitan region. It also set up a website providing the latest developments, along with opinion pieces. Both efforts managed to attract



Figure 6.11 David Harvey and Mayor Kortzidis. Harvey visited the grounds of the former airport, the coast of Agios Kosmas, and the city hall on June of 2012. Retrieved from <http://www.elliniko-argyroupoli.gr/article.php?id=1017>

international visibility to their struggles as well. Many international academics have visited Elliniko and expressed their solidarity with the residents (figures 6.10 & 6.11). In addition, many European newspapers, magazines and TV stations, such as the Swiss Schweizer Radio und Fernsehen, and the German Deutsche Welle, among others, featured the story of Elliniko. Activists and university students from European Universities regularly visit the urban garden.

Also in March of 2011, the government commissioned a number of financial and legal firms to facilitate the seedy privatization of Elliniko. Among others, it appointed Lamda (a Latsis family company) as a special financial advisor, and Josep Acebillo as a technical consultant. It also formed an entity known as a Special Purpose Vehicle entity. It was named Hellenikon SA, and its goal was to facilitate the privatization of the former airport. Thus, the management of the Elliniko land and its buildings passed into the purview of a company specially tasked with preparing the “asset” for its subsequent sale.

An academic named Spiro Pollalis, whose name had surfaced a few times during the lengthy debates over Elliniko's redevelopment, was chosen to head up Hellenikon SA. After moving from Harvard back to Greece, he had become Director of Athens' College, a private secondary school that trained the children of Greek elites. Coincidentally, this school's president, the brother of Prime Minister Samaras, was a collaborator in the Harvard study on Elliniko. As we saw in the previous chapter, Pollalis had long been an ardent proponent of Elliniko's privatization. Now, however, as head of Hellenikon SA, his opinion commanded the public's attention and carried significant institutional weight.

In 2008 Pollalis had been commissioned by the Hellenic Public Real Estate Corporation, which is supervised by the Ministry of the Economy, to provide a study exploring Elliniko's future redevelopment.⁷⁴ In this work, he criticized the government's decision to go with the DZO plans, though in fact he adopted many of its concepts. He concerned himself primarily with the question of how Elliniko's redevelopment might generate revenues, and he criticized other proposals on their lack of a clearly defined business plan (personal communication, 2011). In his opinion, the elaboration of a business plan should be a prerequisite and precede any debate on the merits of a specific design proposal (Tratsa, 2010). Repeating the arguments presented in the Isopolis study, Pollalis suggested that a 1,500 acres green park was not a suitable solution for Athens because it would be very expensive to maintain. Of course the proponents of a green park never demanded that everything inside the former airport should be demolished and replaced by trees. As we saw above, the NTUA study showed that the area available for

⁷⁴ A few months later, the Hellenic Public Real Estate Corporation would be implicated in a real estate scandal, the so-called Vatopedi scandal, which allegedly cost the Greek state 100 million euros.

greenery is between 450 and 600 acres; that is the area not covered by buildings and hard surfaces. This misrepresentation has been consciously repeated time and again.

Like others, Pollalis also supported the idea of land exchanges between Elliniko and Athens' dense neighborhoods, under the auspices of a green fund. He proposed that the redevelopment be facilitated through a public-private partnership, and he unveiled a logo that was meant to promote the development and provide the area with a new identity (figure 6.12). The proposal suggested that if Elliniko could be transformed into a striking, vibrant destination it would soon



Figure 6.12 Promotional logo for Elliniko. Retrieved from Pollalis, S. N. & Associates (2008, June 20).

become integrated into the existing stock of landmarks or special features associated with Athens' identity. So, he proposed that Elliniko consist of several sectors, including those of housing, commerce, and entertainment. Government offices, too, could be moved there from Athens' center to facilitate decentralization (Pollalis & Associates, 2008).

At the time Pollalis was appointed as the head of Hellenikon SA, the only known interested investor was Qatar, with which he had close relations in his capacity at Harvard. His proposal aimed at restarting of the Greek economy and make Athens competitive worldwide (personal communication, 2011). For doing that, he envisions Elliniko as the second center of Athens that will hub the talented and highly educated

Greeks. His new approach was centered on the creation of a “starfish” shape of greenery with the “intention to create a sustainable space” (p. 10). “The larger perimeter of the park multiplies the number of adjacent properties,” the real estate value of the adjacent properties, and thus, the potential revenues, as figure 6.13 shows (Pollalis et al., 2013). The number of the inhabitants is projected to 33,000-44,000, while special attention is paid to modern sustainable construction techniques.



Figure 6.13 Pollalis' land use plan for Elliniko.

Retrieved from <http://pollalis-hellinikon.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Land-use-plan.jpg>

From a point of view of ecological rationality, it would be hard to imagine how these plans would contribute to the sustainability for a city with deep environmental problems like Athens. Certainly, these plans offer solutions for the internalization of negative externalities associated with the new development, such as an on-site waste and wastewater treatment facility, but these solutions are only partial. The focus is mostly on the very local level, and on the financial aspect of the development. When the claim is

made that the new development will not generate as much pollution as a traditional settlement in Athens, this does not mean that the project will help Athens' environment. Any pollution produced will be in addition to the existing levels of pollution.

Moreover, the creation of green lawns, a few trees on streets, and fragmented patches of greenery do not constitute an ecological approach to urban development; the small mass of trees areas cannot have an impact on the metropolitan environment; lawns do not support any type of life, and small patches of trees, isolated by roads and buildings, do not provide a viable habitat for animal life (figure 6.14). If that was the case, then most of US suburbs would be the prototypes for sustainable development. But



Figure 6.14 Digital representation of Pollalis' plan. Aerial view of the main mass of greenery. Retrieved from <http://pollalis-hellinikon.com>

it is now widely accepted in the US academia that the suburban model and its new urbanist offshoots, even in its more evolved version presented by Pollalis, cannot be called environmentally friendly. Environmental concerns for the metropolitan region scored extremely low in Elliniko's priorities, if at all. Professor Pollalis kept referring in his speeches to the former airport as a *fileto* (fillet), a prime cut to be eaten and to provide gratification to the eater. This is in contrast to the terminology used by those who are preoccupied with the social and physical environment of Athens. In fact, a member of the Board of Directors who prefers to stay anonymous, was very disturbed to hear in meetings with financial advisors people referring to Elliniko, in half English-half Greek,

as the asset. “It was like listening to somebody referring to your mother’s jewelry, which has a great sentimental value for you, as the goods; something that has a great exchange value, while for you its value derives from your bond to your mother” (personal communication, 2011).

From the perspective of social sustainability, an upper class development that aims to attract affluent residents and rich tourists does not necessarily contribute to the social cohesion in the metropolitan region, nor does it secure societal endorsement as the authors hope. In fact, the public’s contribution was never solicited, and everything has taken place behind closed doors. As for the projection for 15,000 permanent jobs, since this is not substantiated by any study, it should be viewed rather as a public relations effort. Moreover, the idea to rebrand Athens through the construction of a new iconic buildings aiming at increasing the city’s visibility is rather problematic. As if Athens lacks recognition, when it has the ultimate iconic building that very few cities in the world have, the Parthenon.

Three months after the establishment of Hellenikon SA, the ownership of the land and its buildings passed to the Hellenic Republic Asset Development Fund (HRADF). This fund, established by the order of Greece’s foreign lenders on July 1, 2011, was one of Greece’s obligations stipulated in the Troika’s (that is, the European Commission, International Monetary Fund, and European Central Bank) financial rescue package. The state transferred its possessions in real estate, company shares, and natural resource extraction rights to the Fund, whose role was to facilitate their privatization “within a fully professional context.” Once public assets are placed in the fund, their return to the State is not allowed. Revenues generated are allocated for the repayment of Greece’s

external financial obligations. One observer on the Fund's Board of Directors is appointed from the Eurozone and another from the European Commission. The Council of Experts, theoretically providing additional oversight, is composed of seven persons: four persons are appointed by the Board of Directors, three by the Troika. According to the Fund's website, "The Hellenic Republic privatisation scheme is the largest declared divestment programme in the world. It is aiming at attracting significant international capital flows that will contribute to restarting the Greek economy and fuel economic growth. HRADF efforts will be based on three pillars: clarity of purpose, transparency of process and speed" ("The Fund").

While the purpose of the Fund has been clear enough, any claims of transparency and speed on its behalf are rather dubious. Even though Hellenikon SA and HRADF were invested three years ago with absolute authority over the Elliniko privatization process, including complete freedom to circumvent all existing regulation, no deal on Elliniko's redevelopment has been reached. Slow progress, asset sale delays, and shortfalls in targeted revenues have attracted criticism by international lenders. These have been some of the reasons that HRADF has already had three CEOs. Another problem has been the complete lack of transparency. Even though the fund facilitates the privatization of properties and services owned by the Greek public, it does not disclose any information about the privatization process; all deals are made behind closed doors. This fact has predictably resulted in numerous allegations of corruption.

The Fund's first chairman, Takis Athanasopoulos, had to resign due to a prosecutorial investigation into his possible malfeasance with 100 million euros during his tenure at the Public Power Corporation. Eleni Papakonstantinou, daughter of a

prominent New Democracy politician and cousin of a former PASOK Minister for the Economy, had to resign from her post on the Fund's Council of Experts after her name appeared in the so-called Lagarde list which enumerated the names of potential tax evaders with undeclared accounts at Swiss banks. However, the case that attracted the most attention was that of Stelios Stavridis, a businessman, chairman of the Anti-bureaucracy movement, and rightwing politician with a history of serving in many public companies. In the early 1990s he played an important role in the privatization of one of the largest cement companies in Greece, AGET-Heracles. This was a robust, profit-generating industry strategically positioned to play a significant role in the international market. No other Greek company of comparable size had been privatized before. Its sale sparked a controversy over involvement in bribes. It was sold to the Italian firm Calcestruzzi, which had ties to the Italian mafia. Eventually, AGET-Heracles passed into the hands of its main rival, the French Lafarge, and it is now a small subsidiary of this company.

He became the new CEO of the Fund on March of 2013, but a few months after he assumed his duties, he too had to be replaced amid swirling conflict of interest concerns. He was sacked in August of 2013, right after the "successful" privatization of OPAP, Greece's profitable state monopoly of gambling and Europe's largest betting firm. Emma Delta, the corporation which purchased OPAP, had curiously submitted the only valid binding offer, which raised questions about the transparency of the tender process. The decidedly low sale price also raised concerns regarding the overall privatization effort ("Eksēgēseis," 2013). The same day the final deal was signed, the chairman of the Fund used the buyer's Learjet to fly back and forth between Athens and his vacation

home. He actually disseminated pictures of himself and the buyer traveling together in the plane. For the government, the episode did not cloud the sale of this profitable public corporation to a businessman with ties to the Prime Minister. The sale caused an uproar in Greece, launching a legal probe into possible conflict of interests and other issues of transparency that had emerged prior to the sale (Hope, 2014). However, the Greek judiciary finally shelved this investigation, in all likelihood because it jeopardized the government's privatization drive. Days before his dismissal, Stavridis gave an interview to journalist Christina Pletten (2013) for the Norwegian newspaper *Bergens Tidende*. Asked for his response to those people who support the creation of a park at Elliniko, Stavridis, with admirable candor, replied with a piquant "fuck you." In the same interview, he called Greeks a people with less than average intelligence, and said he would much prefer living in Norway instead of Greece. When the journalist reminded him that in Norway the role of the state was very strong, his response was "I know, I know, but you don't have enough sun." [!] Stavridis was replaced by Konstantinos Maniatopoulos, who had served in the consultancy company Kantor SA. Kantor offers consultancy services to the Fund, and according to the company's website, twenty five percent of its stock belongs to Eurobank, which was owned by the Latsis family of Lamda Development ("Growing within Greece"). Incidentally, the first CEO of the Fund, Konstantinos Mitropoulos, had also served in Kantor SA, and he was also the CEO of Eurobank Equities, a Latsis family owned firm.

Corruption has always been an issue in Greek politics, but after the crisis, the tremendous deterioration of the material conditions of millions of Greeks added an extra element of indignation. Suddenly, the celebratory narrative of the "strong Greece," the

2004 Olympics, and the superiority of the free markets had changed into a critique of a system, which is based on the alliance between a handful business oligarchs with political families who pass their influence from one generation to the next. The financial crisis of 2008 had a similar effect in other parts of the world as well, and in 2011, popular dissatisfaction climaxed with a number of popular uprisings in Spain, England, Chile, the US, and other places. A series of occupy movements contested the dominance of the proverbial one percent, and provided a ray of hope that change is possible. It was the year of dreaming dangerously, as Zizek (2012b) titled his book. For a moment it appeared that this was a time of great possibilities for Greece. Wide popular participation in demonstration and strikes created an atmosphere of hope. The radical emancipatory potential of the events provided the proponents of the park at Elliniko with confidence that its privatization might be avoided. However, the wished change did not happen.

During the month of September, the privatization opponents organized an art exhibition in the premises of the former airport. One hundred thirty artists lend their pieces for promoting the creation of a public and green park. The crowning event was the concert by the Mikis Theodorakis Orchestra, and the speech by Theodorakis himself. The events received extensive coverage by all major media outlets. However, many activities had to be canceled because people opted for participating in the Occupy Syntagma Square instead. In fact, during the exhibition there was a meeting organized with the title “The squares send a message.” The participants came from many groups that operated in the surrounding municipalities, and their goal was the greater coordination of actions among themselves, and with urban movements.

However, the state continued unabated its drive for privatizing Elliniko. The Catalan planner Josep Acebillo became the new expert that attracted the attention of the media. His name circulated in Greek society over his potential involvement in Elliniko's redevelopment for quite some time. In 2006 he was invited to speak about Athens' problems by PASOK's think tank ISTAME, while newspapers throughout the years hosted interviews with him. Acebillo was credited for the transformation of Barcelona in the 1990s into a tourist destination, and many hoped that his expertise would help Athens as well. Given the dearth of public space in Athens, the remedy according to Acebillo is to start demolishing buildings, opening up the city's dense urban fabric, and in the process redefine its image (Tzanavara, 2006). Later, he was invited by Prime-Minister

Papandreou, and was asked to come up with a plan for Elliniko's redevelopment. His plan (figure 6.15) aimed at transforming Elliniko into a new financial, business, and political center. A town of 28,000 inhabitants would be



Figure 6.15 Josep Acebillo's plan for Elliniko.
Retrieved from Acebillo et al., 2012.

constructed, along with universities, and other structures to support “neotertiary activities.” A big role in Elliniko's redevelopment would be played by the state, which, according to the plan, should relocate there many of its offices currently located in the center of Athens.

Acebillo's proposals received a cold response by the public. The sloppiness of his presentations, and his continuous improvisations during press conferences, gave the sense that this was one more attempt to facilitate the passage of Elliniko to private hands. In post-crisis Greece, the fact that Prime Minister George Papandreou had called him his friend did not add as much to his credibility. Cartoonist Giannis Kalaitzis describes Acebillo's contribution as a mere land grab among the Greek state, politicians, Qatar, construction companies, banks, and technocrats like himself. His depiction resembles similar illustrations of world powers dividing the world into spheres of influence (figure 6.16). This proposal of course would have greatly exacerbated the problems at the center of Athens, which suffers from

disinvestment, abandonment, and a high degree of social segregation; the departure of the remaining public offices would give it the final blow. On the other hand, from a business point of view, his enlisting of the state as a secure tenant to guarantee the



Figure 6.16 Cartoon depicting Acebillo's involvement in Elliniko.

Retrieved from Eleftherotypia (2011, June 10).

success of the new development makes sense in today's Athens. The real estate market is in shambles, with thousands of empty stores, business offices, and houses. In fact, this is one of the greatest challenges for any future investor at Elliniko: how to exploit profit opportunities in a shrinking economy. And by the same token, this is one of the greatest threats to the communities surrounding Elliniko: the arrival of new players in the market would destroy their local economies.

The implication of the state as a guarantor for the developers' profits ostensibly contradicts the distaste of pro-market advocates towards a Leviathan state. But aside from rhetoric, these proposals are exemplary of neoliberal practice. Elliniko's privatization is supposed to bring new economic activity and create new private sector jobs, while in reality it would geographically move around existing jobs and services with grave consequences for both the city's center and the city's environment. It is a standard practice in cities around the world for states to generously reallocate public resources in order to help an investment to take off; however, in a city strained by a massive collapse of the economy, and a profound restructuring of its internal geography, this would be an unwarranted endeavor.

Acebillo's premise for Elliniko's privatization, like that of previous plans, was based on a land exchange scheme that would provide public spaces in high density neighborhoods. This has not been a new idea, and analogous arrangements have existed in Greece for quite some time. The immense environmental problems caused by the post-WWII mode of urban development have prompted many governments to try to allocate funds for the amelioration of the environment from the failed role of the state and private planning. In 1972, the military dictatorship introduced the National Fund for the Implementation of Regulatory and Planning Projects (ETERPS). The Fund was financed by a special tax on gas consumption and fines imposed on construction irregularities. Among other things, the money would be used for the implementation of planning ordinances, land expropriations, creation of public spaces, and other environmental initiatives. Nevertheless, lack of transparency in the operation of the Fund, and the unaccountable use of its resources, made the whole effort ineffective. It is indicative that

the Ministry for the Environment never gave to the public the Fund's budget, and specifics on its activities. That is why throughout Elliniko's debate, the proclamations that the revenues produced by Elliniko's privatization would finance the Fund were not convincing.

In 2010, Tina Birbili replaced ETERPS with the Green Fund, hoping to establish it as a valuable tool for environmental policy. However, her successor in the Ministry restricted the Fund's scope, and announced that only five percent of the Fund's revenues would go to environmental actions. By 2012, this percentage went down to 2.5 percent, and the rest of the revenues went to the government's budget (Tratsa, 2012). That was the official death of the Green Fund as a meaningful initiative for urban interventions. Miltiadis Varvitsiotis notes that if the money from Elliniko go to the Fund, then they will disappear (personal communication, 2011). Even Stefanos Manos, who as a Minister for the Environment championed the idea of the Green Fund, does not have faith in the state's capacity to manage it effectively. The reason, he claims, is the corruption that emanates from the use of the state's resources by the governing political parties for their narrow objectives (personal communication, 2011). Kyriakos Mitsotakis pursued this issue in the parliament, and he notes that the Fund's failure, or rather corruption, raises a major issue on the state's legitimacy: people do not trust the state because it does not deliver on its promises and does not fulfil its role (personal communication, 2011).

For the Greek government and the Hellenic Republic Asset Development Fund, it was of crucial importance to have as many companies as possible bidding for the project. This was important because the state would have been in a better position to negotiate the terms of the final deal, at least in theory. It was also important because this would add to

the integrity of the process, and in this way the final choice would be presented as the result of a functioning competitive process, and not of a direct award to one bidder, like other privatizations that have already taken place. In times when the legitimacy of the markets is low, it is imperative to show that real and effective competition exists, and so the sale of public assets takes place through a legitimate process.

The privatization of Elliniko was the first project undertaken by its new owner, the Hellenic Republic Asset Development Fund after its establishment in 2011. The project was presented as a litmus test for the state's capacity to restructure the Greek economy, and to attract investors. However, despite the effort to show that the Greek state has transformed after the crisis and that greater freedom for the markets could finally turn around the sclerotic weaknesses of the Greek bureaucracy, the tender process of Elliniko turned out to be a misadventure. It proved wrong all those public and private interests that blamed the counterproductive role of the state mechanisms in promoting economic development: The process took much longer than the Troika would like; the introduction of fast-track legislation proved that it was just a means to circumvent existing planning mechanisms; corruption has been an endemic feature of the professional and technocratic new institutions; transparency and openness suffered greatly, much more than the previous model of decision making; and above all, investors did not flock into the Greek market in scores, as the state had promised.

Initially, the sole interested investor for Elliniko was Qatar. Its role in the privatization efforts of the Greek state appears to be questionable, and it resembles the role of pacemakers (also called rabbits) in athletic races of long distance running. Every time the government announced the privatization of a major public asset, Qatar was the

first to jump in and show interest. This was very much publicized by the government as a sign of success and its ability to attract investors. Thus, with a promised investment of five billion dollars, the state was eager to move fast with the sale of Elliniko. However, Qatar demanded a direct award of the property instead of the standard practice of an international public tender, even though it was well-known that this was not acceptable within the legal framework of the EU, because it undermines the right of other interested investors to participate in the process. Expectedly, the EU protested such a prospect, and finally the government had to announce an open international tender. Then Qatar withdrew its interest, only to come back again and participate in the open process. At the end of 2013, during the final stages of the tender process, once again Qatar withdrew its interest in investing in Elliniko. Purportedly, in order to participate to the final round of offers, Qatar demanded full ownership to the area, guarantees that the state would lease part of the properties, and exemptions from the value added tax, from property taxes, and additional tax exemptions to the companies that would operate in the area (Kourakis, 2013).

As of this writing, the process appears to be almost over, but not yet. On January 2014, the Hellenic Republic Asset Development Fund selected three companies for the second round of bidding: Elbit; London Regional Properties; and, Lamda Development. The government had to continuously change the terms in order to keep the three investors in the bidding process. Among other things it decided that the investors can pay only a quarter of the price at the signing of the deal, and the remaining seventy five percent can be paid within fifteen years (Mandravelis, 2014a). Markedly, out of the three companies that bid for the project and made it to the last round, and after a three year process, two of

them withdrew their offers at the last minute, leaving only one company in the race. Obviously, this raised many eyebrows: to be left with only one bidder for one of the best real estate properties in Europe right now raised a lot of suspicion.

The first company that withdrew was London & Regional Properties. The London-based company is one of the largest property companies in Europe, with investments in Russia, the United Kingdom, Germany, Ukraine, Scandinavia and other places. The company is currently involved in one of the largest urban development projects in the world called Panama Pacifico, with a size of 3,500 acres. It is located at a former US air force base on the banks of the Panama Canal. The company is obliged to pay 405 million dollars during the first eight years to turn this area into a mixed-use development, aiming at attracting international businesses. This development is a Special Economic Area, a paradise for footloose capital, providing colonial-type incentives to investors (“Panama Pacifico special economic area incentives”). Right after the outbreak of the economic crisis in Greece, there were many who suggested that the government should provide similar incentives to the potential investors in Elliniko, and essentially turn it into a Free Trade Zone. London & Regional Properties hinted at a possible withdrawal from Elliniko even before the exit of Qatar; however, it stayed in until a couple of days before the deadline for the final bidding. It explained that it pulled out of Elliniko because of intense competition, and the very large sums of capital needed for the project. Obviously, the company with a lot of experience in similar processes was well aware of these factors when it bid for the project. These justifications were received with skepticism and many wondered over the real reasons (Fintikakis, 2013).

The second company that withdrew from the final bid was Elbit Cochin Island, a property development company based in Israel. It operates as a subsidiary of Elbit Imaging Ltd, and it specializes in shopping malls, residential development, entertainment centers, and hotels. It operates mostly in Eastern Europe, India, and the US. In 2013 the company defaulted on its debt payments, and it faced cash flow problems (Appelberg, 2013). Its dire financial situation raised questions over its participation in the tender process for Elliniko, and its selection to the second round was met with suspicion. Given the company's economic problem, some speculated that if Elbit was to undertake such a big project as Elliniko, then this could only be possible if Sheldon Adelson's Las Vegas Sands backed up the project (Fintikakis, 2014). Expectedly, Elbit pulled out of the race on February 25, a day before the deadline for the final binding bids. In a letter to the Prime Minister and the Fund, the company claimed that it would like more clarifications over taxation and regulatory issues (Mandravelis, 2014b).

Given that the above two companies abandoned the tender process, Lamda Development was left as the sole candidate for Elliniko. An added surprise is that the company was allowed to participate in the process in the first place, as its Athens Mall project was found in violation of the building code, and the Greek court imposed penalties or possible demolition. For Elliniko, Lamda had already leaked in 2013 that it will bring the well-known architect Norman Foster, to deliver the design (Kanellis, 2013). On February 24, 2014, when the mayors visited the offices of HRADF to protest the sale, the Chief Executive Officer of the Fund, Yiannis Emiris, inadvertently revealed that the office of Norman Foster was already working on the design of the new development. This came as an indication that the final decision had been taken a long

time before, and it confirmed earlier suspicions that the tender process was rigged (Tzanavara, 2014). Lamda also announced that the total amount of investment will reach approximately seven billion euros, and that the consortium involved the Chinese Fosun International, Al Maabar from Abu Dhabi, and other investors that were not disclosed. Potentially, the non-disclosure of the funding sources could be a reason for disqualification, but obviously this is not the case in Greece.

Another proclamation that needs scrutiny is the promised public revenues of two billion euros in taxes. Given the company's recent record, this seems to be very unlikely. During the recent recapitalization of Greek banks, the Latsis Group, the major shareholder of Eurobank, refused to pay its share of 2.5 billion euros for recapitalizing the bank, like other banks did. The Greek state, fearing the negative consequences of a possible bank failure, merged Latsis' Eurobank with the National Bank of Greece, and suddenly, instead of paying, the Group exchanged its Eurobank shares with shares of the national Bank. With so much power, and a history of such business practices, it seems extremely unlikely that Lamda will pay so much in taxes to the Greek state.

Lamda also announced that the new development will create 50,000 jobs. Similar estimations have been made by privatization proponents in the past, but Lamda's number exceeds even the wildest expectation. Zafeiropoulos (2014) notes that Volos, the sixth largest city of Greece, provides a total of 47,000 jobs. He also reminds his readers that before the sale of the port of Piraeus, Cosco, the Chinese owner, promised 5,000 new jobs; as of today, there are only 250 workers with permanent employment.

As for Elliniko's price, Lamda's original offer was very low, and allegedly, it did not satisfy the HRADF, which asked for an improved offer. The final price was set to

915 million euros, which is approximately fifteen euros per square foot. This was presented by state politicians as a huge success. Of course, this is much less than the government's estimates of four to six billion two years ago. The company will have to pay 250-300 million within the first two years, and the rest within ten years. Besides the low price, an important aspect of the deal is that the state did not place any clause to restrict the future sale of the land. Theoretically, if Lamda decides to sell parts of Elliniko in order to raise capital for the completion of the construction, then it is free to do so, possibly at a higher price than the one it had to pay. Finally, according to the well-informed newspaper *Kathimerini*, a right-wing newspaper close to the business community, Lamda is already trying to involve Elbit and London & Regional Properties into the project in order to raise capital (Mandravelis, 2014c). As of this writing, most of the details are not known, while the government and the HRADF continue to be very secretive over the deal.

The leftist political parties decried the privatization process, and the leader of SYRIZA visited the municipality. In his speech he denounced the government's secrecy, claiming that it is unprecedented that the government does not disseminate any information on the privatization process to the opposition, especially for such a large redevelopment project that will affect the city of Athens for many years to come. In a theater full of people, he declared that

The HRADF is an unbelievable scandal in itself, a kennel of scandals. It's unprecedented and inconceivable that a clique decides on the future of public wealth, without transparency, without parliamentary oversight and control, as if they are deciding for properties they inherited from their grandparents ("Tsipras," 2014).

The municipalities organized a series of protests outside the HRADF's offices, and a two day festival with sports events, cultural activities, and discussions about the privatization. According to the schedule of activities, on the second day students would participate in track and field races, a chess tournament, painting workshops, and a book fair. The government, however, forbid students and teachers participation because the event was about a political demand. In March 12, the next day after the government's ban, the newspaper *Eleftherotypia* made the story front page news with the title "They bring us back to the junta years." At this point, the government has two options: one is to suspend the process and start all over again, hoping to attract more significant offers. The other is to sell Elliniko to Lamda, and violently crush dissent. On the other hand, the residents can only hope to buy time, waiting for the social balance of power in Greece to change and then create the park they so much long for.

During this last period in the debate over Elliniko, all studies entertained by the state have been based on the assumption that a wave of "creative class" potential residents will flock to the new development, and make Elliniko a thriving sector for the city's economy. However, in all of them it is unclear where these people will come from; from what areas of the metropolitan region; and, what the consequences will be for these areas if the most well-to-do leave. Besides, in an economy that is shrinking at an unprecedented pace, with rapidly decreasing salaries, and with more and more people having difficulties to put food on the family table, it is also unclear if this abstract "creative class" even exists in such numbers envisioned by governing politicians and developers.

Another revealing aspect of the debate has been the discouraging lack of imagination of all those experts invited to advise the Greek state on Elliniko. They have promised to make Elliniko the Côte d'Azur of Greece, Monaco, the Greek Riviera, Canary Wharf, Zurich, and Singapore. But as we saw in previous chapters, these are the same ideas that some locals proposed fifty years ago. Their treatment of the Greek public resembles those colonialists who offered beads, steel knives, mirrors, and other intriguing novelties to the indigenous in exchange for their compliance and their valuable resources. These experts, part of a denationalized elite, claim that the new development will help the Greek economy to overcome its difficulties, that the planning of the new town will stimulate an upswing spiral of growth based on the “new economy,” or that the new development will be contagious and gradually Athens will be transformed into an international and sustainable city. However, they obfuscate that fact that even the adherents of new urbanism and creative class approaches insist on the existence of public spaces, greenery, and a clean environment as factors that improve a city’s attractiveness.

However, these experts deny the people of Athens a real metropolitan park. Most likely, if their plans move forward, and after these experts have moved to another place, then Athens will suffer from the same type of problems as the southern coast of Spain, while the locals will have to stay and suffer the consequences. Their proposals are mere exercises in greenwashing, focused only on the generation of profits. If their vision materializes, then the city will be covered with islands of wealth surrounded by seas of poverty, and Athens will turn into a highly polarized metropolis, which will be neither socially nor environmentally sustainable.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

Thirteen years after the decommission of Athens' first civilian airport, and in spite of an abundance of redevelopment plans, the land of Elliniko remains vacant as of this writing. Its future use has become a polarizing topic in Greek politics, and it has sparked a debate that transcends particular proposals to grapple with the more universal issue of Athens' urban development. In discussions of Greece's future development trajectory, Elliniko has assumed deep symbolic and political significance. This political dimension, however, is not a new development of the last decade, though the tenor of the debate has never been more contentious; it extends over a much longer period because the land of the former airport is a site full of history. In fact Elliniko has been a microcosm of the events and forces which have driven the evolution of modern Athens—not only in terms of its material space, but also as a place of discursive representation and struggle. The public's awareness of such issues as class struggle, environmental activism, the public good, and the role of the state have been heightened by the struggle over the airport's future. But ownership or control of Elliniko's land has always been a point of contention in one fashion or another. During the post-liberation period the land-grabs in the area became engraved in people's minds. Subsequently it provided a safe harbor for many refugees from Asia Minor. These immigrants were displaced in turn by the construction of the airport. As the first civilian airport of Greece it was a monument to modernity and a source of national pride. And yet, after episodes of internment and torture occurred on the site, it eventually came to acquire the new symbolisms of totalitarian state control and, foreign domination. Recognizing all this can be very fruitful in contextualizing the

contemporary debates for its future use, and in understanding the conflicting narratives over Athens' urban development.

At present neoliberalism in Greece has taken an unapologetically ambitious line. The Greek state aims at attracting investments in upscale tourism and real estate to Elliniko and the surrounding area, repositioning this sector of the city as a thriving business and entertainment center. Yet, given the severe environmental and social problems of Athens, the implementation of an urban development agenda which promotes the further commercialization of urban space will make a livable city—so dependent on open public space—a more difficult and unlikely contingency. It is precisely this possibility that has led a diverse group of community of activists to oppose the state's plans and to unite behind a movement of insurgent citizenship that works instead for the creation of a metropolitan park. The redevelopment process of the Elliniko airport is a central node in understanding the symbolic construction of Athens' restructuring as a competitive city, while on the other hand, it figures as a paradigmatic case in the analysis of conflicts between economic development and sustainability.

The state's decision to privatize Elliniko underscored its historical indifference to Athens' environmental problems and its residents' quality of life. Instead its agenda was dictated by purely economic considerations: to repay foreign lenders and to restructure Athens' urban space with the goal of making it a competitive city. Since the merits of these objectives are vigorously contested on both ideological and political grounds, the form Elliniko finally takes will ultimately be determined by the social and political balance of power. This contingency is exacerbated by the persistence of the economic and political crisis, which adds an element of volatility to Greek politics. If, for a

moment, we assume a neo-classical economic framework and view the crisis as a cyclical phenomenon, as a deviation from a state of equilibrium, then the return to normalcy will indicate another, temporary point of equilibrium that lasts for a period but ultimately fluctuates to a different point than before, a moving equilibrium as Wallerstein (2013) calls it. This new equilibrium is conditioned by the various forms of class struggle, and thus it may be either more or less favorable to the demands of the working classes. In this sense, in order to chart Elliniko's prospects we need to take into account the forces that condition the political struggle in present day Greece. We already know that social and economic crises are integral in the capitalist system, and do not necessarily lead to political upheaval capable of bringing about deep systemic change. To the contrary, crises, in the form of massive devaluations and increased rates of exploitation, play a critical role in the system's reproduction (Poulantzas, 2008).

Keeping these points in mind, there are at present two important political processes under way in Greece, both related to neoliberalism's false promise of general prosperity. The first is the attempt to invoke a state of emergency and claim special powers for the state. This is a power play the Greek people are unfortunately all too familiar with. Following the end of WWII, the state seized the right to suspend certain legal protections, purportedly to safeguard the republic from the threat of the "internal" enemy. The state joyed this exemption from constitutional constraints until 1974. Today it seeks to re-establish its extra-legal prerogative, this time, it claims, in order to avert the collapse of the Greek economy.

During the 1990s and the first half of the 2000s, cutbacks in social spending were relatively limited and presumed to be temporary: once the rising economic tide lifted all

boats, spending on social programs would, as a matter of course, resume. Today, it is clear that the massive devaluation of the Greek economy will be an enduring phenomenon. In the midst of a protracted global recession it is unlikely that Greece will be able to restructure its economy and achieve sufficient growth rates comparable to the post-WWII period. Thus, when the economy eventually stabilizes at a new point of equilibrium, the vast majority of the population will find themselves in a much worse position than they occupied during the previous cycle.

In the face of the Greek economy's structural problems and the gradual erosion of its productive base, the Greek state has launched a massive privatization program and reformed the regulatory framework in order to facilitate the uninterrupted transfer of public goods and services—even those that are profitable—to the private sector. The introduction of fast-track legislation was conceived with precisely this objective in mind. Since then it has become ordinary for the government to rule by decree. Voices that are critical of the government's policy or that advocate an alternative approach are summarily branded as extremism; even the center-left SYRIZA is portrayed as a fanatical organization whose methods embrace violence and border on terrorism. Many known neo-fascists have joined the ranks of the state apparatus, reaching ministerial positions. Coalition governments—including New Democracy, PASOK, and occasionally Laos and the Democratic Left—have pushed strict law and order policies with the collaboration of the judiciary in an effort “to take our cities back,” as Antonis Samaras put it a few months before he became Prime Minister (Samaras, 2012). Dissent is met with brutal police force. Prior to public protests preemptive arrests and detentions are made; participants in demonstrations are subjected to clouds of dangerous chemicals, rubber bullets, and

indiscriminate beatings. The new authoritarian state has repeatedly teamed up with neo-Nazi and other parastatal groups, the ideological descendants of pro-Nazi collaborators, to crush dissent and spread fear. As Poulantzas (1978) has shown, these type of groups often serve as the unacknowledged arms of authoritarian states. In the Greek case these groups operate with the tacit approval of the police and the judiciary.

The various disciplinary measures pushed by the Greek state and the EU have been accompanied by a decline in formal political democracy. When the Greek Prime Minister Papandreou proposed a referendum on the proposed austerity measures, it led to his dismissal and replacement by a banker, Lucas Papadimos, who had served as a Vice President in the European Central Bank. In similar fashion, Italy's Silvio Berlusconi was replaced by Mario Monti—another banker—when he challenged the EU's economic orthodoxy. In both cases, economic stability took precedence over democratic process. Rescuing the economy trumped the politicians' usual ideological positions, or their difference of opinions, for that matter. Political parties of the right and the former left participated in coalition governments under the banner of a post-political consensus and the close supervision of international organizations.

This transformation of the state, or rather the reincarnation of the post-civil war state, has successfully restored class power, curbed the actions of social movements, and shifted the political debate to the right. This atmosphere has facilitated the uninterrupted implementation of ever harsher austerity measures and privatization schemes. This type of authoritarianism, unlike the earlier approaches of a more interventionist state, aims neither at building consensus nor at producing the kind of sustainable development capable of giving hope to the millions of people on the fast track to pauperization.

During the post-WWII period the Greek state gave its consent to encroachments of public urban space which benefited thousands of internal migrants and working class families. It was a response, however passive, to the housing crisis and an effort to head off internal unrest and dampen class conflicts. Today, the subordination of all forms of social policy to alleged economic imperatives leaves little room for state intervention in consensus-building demand-led policies.

The second general phenomenon evident in Greek politics today is the failure of the governing political parties to reestablish their political hegemony, and to propose viable policies capable of restoring general prosperity. In fact, the post-dictatorial political order is in a process of disintegration. From the recent election results (table 7.1) it is possible to draw a few conclusions.

Table 7.1 Legislative elections since 2000

	2012 (June)	2012 (May)	2009	2007	2004	2000
New Democracy (right)	29.6% (129)*	18.8% (108)	33.4% (91)	41.8% (152)	45.3% (166)	42.7% (125)
PanHellenic Socialist Movement – PASOK (center-right)	12.2% (33)	13.1% (41)	43.9% (160)	38.1% (102)	40.5% (116)	43.7% (158)
Coalition of the Radical Left – SYRIZA (center-left)	26.8% (71)	16.7% (52)	4.60% (13)	5.04% (14)	3.26% (6)	3.2% (6)
Communist Party of Greece -KKE (left)	4.5% (12)	8.48% (26)	7.54% (21)	8.15% (22)	5.9% (12)	5.52% (11)
Independent Greeks (extreme right)	7.51% (20)	10.6% (33)	-	-	-	-
Golden Dawn (extreme right)	6.92% (18)	6.97% (21)	0.29% -	-	-	-
Democratic Left (center-right)	6.25% (17)	6.11 % (19)	-	-	-	-
Popular Orthodox Rally – LAOS (extreme-right)	1.58% -	2.9% -	5.63% (15)	3.8% (10)	2.19 % -	-

Note. Adapted from the Greek Ministry of the Interior, www.ypes.gr

*Number of parliament seats in parenthesis

The most noticeable development is the collapse of the political center. PASOK had enjoyed a dominant position for many years, but after the economic crisis its power diminished: within three years it had lost more than thirty percent of the popular vote. This was hardly surprising. PASOK introduced more brutal austerity measures than any other party in the history of modern Greece, essentially delivering the country into the hands of its international lenders. Today, its political life seems to be over. To be sure, new political groups will try to occupy the space that PASOK leaves behind, but they will have the difficult task of reviving the social-democratic agenda at the time of its worldwide demise. The social-democrats' traditional support base, the petty bourgeoisie and middle class, have seen their living standards fall dramatically. In the absence of alternative economic proposals capable of restoring economic growth and social peace, "new" social-democratic groups will have to focus on secondary issues if they are to differentiate their agenda from that of the political right. Such a strategy will have the support of some segments of the elites as Poulantzas has shown, but the difficulty to maintain the necessary conditions for the reproduction of ever growing segments of the population makes this task increasingly harder.

The centrist profile of New Democracy, carefully constructed during the 2000s, also collapsed under the weight of the economic crisis and the subsequent austerity measures. The nineteen percent of the vote it received in the May 2012 elections was unprecedented for the party that had historically dominated the state mechanism. Its turn to the extreme right can be viewed as an effort to consolidate its base and to limit its losses. Even though it continues to have control of the state mechanisms and resources, and enjoy the unwavering support of the mass media and the international organizations,

the party's ideological appeal, however, is no more hegemonic and continues to be vitiated by its incapacity to articulate a persuasive plan for exiting the crisis. Besides, its spirited, nationalist rhetoric is not convincing when it is manifestly clear that the Greek government has been sidelined by the economic crisis: important decisions are made by the international lenders and the shadow government of Horst Reichenbach, head of the EU Commission's Task Force for Greece.

Predictably, the surrender of national sovereignty to the technocrats of the EU has given rise to nationalist sentiments. The neo-Nazis of Golden Dawn have made handsome gains by exploiting the Greeks' natural dismay over this issue. The emergence of this party is yet another indicator of the growing strength and appeal of fascist political parties throughout an increasingly polarized

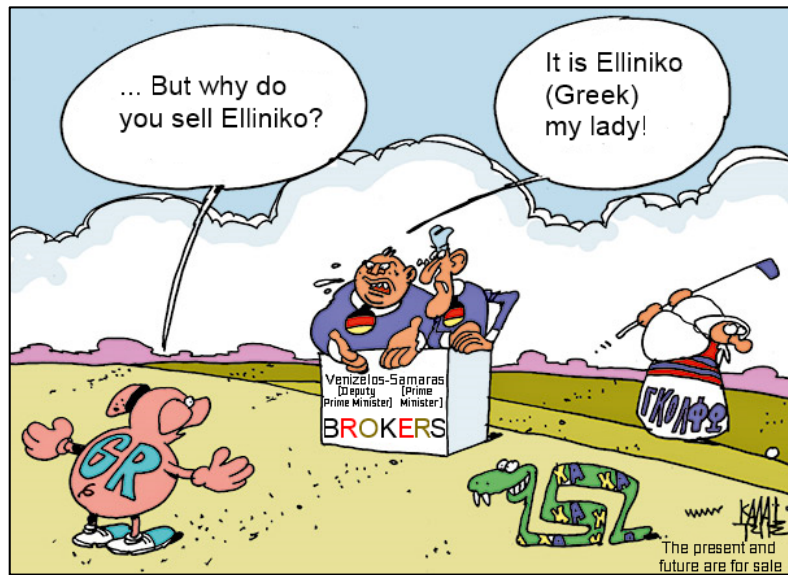


Figure 7.1 Cartoon illustrating the sale of Elliniko.

This cartoon by Giannis Kalaitzis for the Greek daily *Efimerida ton Syntakton* depicts the Greek Prime-Minister and Deputy Prime-Minister as real estate brokers. They appear to be on a mission to sell everything Greek. Note the German flag on their bow ties. The snake at the bottom symbolizes the Golden Dawn party, lurking to profit politically from the privatization process. On the right, there is a Greek woman dressed in traditional clothes playing golf. It was published on the March 3, 2014. Retrieved from <https://www.efsyn.gr/?p=185881>

Europe. Even the countries which experienced relatively minor repercussions from the economic crisis, and which traditionally have been home to robust civil society institutions—even these countries have witnessed, for some time now, ground fires of

fascist and other authoritarian ideologies flare up amongst their populations. In this sense, the crisis has indeed brought Greece closer to its European allies.

The decadence of Greece's bourgeois political parties has the potential to unleash the social forces. The majority of the population feels detached from the traditional institutions of representation that have dominated the political landscape since the restoration of democracy in 1974. In the post-crisis period, it seems that it is easier for the two governing parties to publicly express their views, which are converging. The economic crisis neutralizes the demands of the people for quality of life, as the immediate survival comes first. In this sense, the crisis appears to favor the changes in political and social balance of power, allowing for the most conservative qualities of the society to surface. Above all, PASOK has distanced itself from its traditional electoral base, and thus it is not a legitimate exponent of the classes that used to represent. This leads to a deep crisis of representation, and it undermines the foundations of the political system. But even though the objective conditions for the formation of a strong social movement exist, the left political parties have been unable to capitalize on this dynamic. This was never more apparent than in 2011, when Greek society waited like a tinderbox for a spark that never came. Five years after the introduction of austerity measures, the two governing parties are still in power, the protests have proved more or less ineffective, and the crisis has failed to ignite a social or political rebellion, proving the aptness of Leo Panitch's dismissive retort, "Crisis of what?" (2013). Indeed, if it has been anything at all, it has been first and foremost a crisis of the Left, which has demonstrated its incapacity to formulate either a unifying message or to build the necessary organizational structures that could challenge the neoliberal policies undertaken in Greece. Limiting

themselves to an abstract rejection of the austerity and privatization measures, the left parties failed to produce an alternative narrative and a feasible plan that could potentially move the society away from the TINA (There Is No Alternative) prescription of the Troika.

Despite the ascendance in Greece of some reactionary or fascist groups such as Golden Dawn, it should not escape our attention that Greece is the only place in crisis-stricken Europe where the political Right did not come out triumphant. Instead the Left has made significant gains. The Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA) came very close to taking over the government in 2012. Many European theorists and activists see in SYRIZA a hope for a progressive revival in Europe. Its leader, Alexis Tsipras, has been nominated by the European Left as their candidate for the presidency of the European Commission.

However, SYRIZA's failure to organize a broad social movement coupled with the inconsistency of its positions (veering to the right, then to the left) has left many uncertain about the party's future policies. As the potential for an electoral victory increases, the party's positions become more ambiguous. Given the increasing difficulty of fiscally-strapped governments to retain their autonomy, it is unclear at present how a SYRIZA government could escape the disciplinary power of international financial institutions and the EU. Despite many observers pointing to Greece's membership in the EU as the main cause of its present economic problems, SYRIZA has remained strongly committed to staying within the bounds of the EU and the Eurozone, a position seemingly at odds with its often brash rhetoric of radical change. More and more it resorts to doublespeak, or, less sinisterly, the usual temporizing characteristic of a party

ensconced within the dominant bloc. To give one example. SYRIZA has consistently condemned austerity measures. It maintains, however, that these are a consequence of the corrupt policies introduced by evil Greek politicians, greedy bankers and shady businessmen. Get rid of the charlatans and the crooks, they argue, and the capitalist economy would operate efficiently and justly. SYRIZA's leaders assume there is another, benign incarnation of capitalism (to paraphrase the anti-globalization slogan, "another world is possible"). Thus, though they profess opposition to neoliberalism, they would have us believe we can, as Hamlet suggested in another context, "throw away the worser part of it, / And live the purer with the other half!" (Shakespeare, 2008, pp. 148-9). They do not accept that capitalism's perennial problems are structural; the system is perfectly sound, they say, provided it rests in the hands of the right managers (Fotopoulos, 2013). This approach does not necessarily contest the supremacy of the market as an advantageous mechanism for allocating resources and organizing society. Instead, as proponents of post-neoliberalism suggest, the current flops of neoliberal policies can be seen as a deviation from the liberal ideal.

Naturally the question arises: what would SYRIZA do with Elliniko should it come to power in the near future? Would it reverse the present administration's plans? Would it go so far as to make the whole of Elliniko a public park, or would it resort to a middle-of-the-road solution, similar to the ones proposed earlier by PASOK and New Democracy? SYRIZA has been a staunch proponent of a public green park, devoting a lot of its political energy to supporting the residents and mayors in their struggle. Many SYRIZA members have become heavily involved in the issue and taken risks to see a park come to fruition. Eleni Portaliou (2013), a professor of architecture and a SYRIZA

member who has worked tirelessly for this cause, considers that Elliniko will become a public park only if the Left is placed in power.

If indeed SYRIZA assumes control of the government soon, it is widely expected it would construct a park at Elliniko adhering to the principles set out in the NTUA study. In this event there are two possible scenarios. The first is that SYRIZA would move along with the mayors to implement the originally-conceived, full-scale public park. The second, however, is that the party would sidle to the right once in government, as SYRIZA's opponents from the left have predicted. In that case it would not be a surprise if a toned-down version of the NTUA's design were sponsored. SYRIZA's present endorsement of the study's design does not constitute a binding contract, and the form the park ultimately takes will be the result of a political decision. Since a hypothetical SYRIZA government, no less than the current administration, would face the economic squeeze of domestic and international organizations, it too would be visited by the temptation to adopt a quasi-self-financing mechanism for the construction and maintenance of the park.

There is plenty of evidence to suggest the SYRIZA, following the trajectory of PASOK, has already toned down its radical rhetoric in its effort to form wider coalitions. An example is the recent sidelining of Eleni Portaliou from further involvement in urban politics. She is a true public intellectual with a long history of participating in urban movements and defending public spaces in Athens. She was also the party's mayoral candidate for Athens in 2010. SYRIZA's decisions to run a more conservative candidate for mayor in Athens' 2014 local elections and to exclude her from electoral strategy talks and decision making might be symptomatic of the party's new "pragmatism." In a

speech before the party's central committee, Portaliou, sounding a note of resignation, said that her struggle "to keep the party open to the people and to establish a cooperative model for politics at the local level was useful in the push to win the party more votes, but is no longer what is needed as the party draws closer to occupying the government" (Portaliou, 2014).

The case of Portaliou may be an indication of how SYRIZA is gradually being transformed into a party of the old order. But supposing for a moment that this is true, would a sitting SYRIZA government actually pull back from its previous positions and try to sideline mayor Kortzidis if he won office in the coming local elections? Kortzidis is not a member of the party, but it supports his candidacy in the local elections scheduled for May of 2014. The stakes are significant. Kortzidis has been the main force behind the efforts to stop Elliniko's privatization; the mayors of the neighboring municipalities are much more likely to compromise. Should he lose the election, the prospects for a public green park are extremely slim. His determination to protect public space and property has been proven time and again. He staged two hunger strikes, one to keep the coast open to the public, the second to reverse the government's local administration reform. Under the motto "nobody alone during the crisis," the Kortzidis administration marshaled its meager resources to set up a food bank, a public pharmacy, and a public dental service. It also organized various networks of trained volunteers—doctors to provide medical services, lawyers to advise indebted households, and tutors to help the young with their studies—all in an effort to alleviate the effects of the crisis on the poorest residents. One project that has drawn special attention has been the municipality's metropolitan Community Clinic. This facility, located inside the area of

the former airport on the grounds of the former US base, is yet another staffed by volunteers. It provides free medical assistance to those citizens living on social security or other small incomes. Since 2011 it has had twenty-two thousand visits. Perhaps not surprisingly the government has been embarrassed by its popularity. At one point it sent the police to raid the clinic, reportedly in a search for drugs, which evoked a huge public outcry.

These efforts have clearly underlined the critical role local governments can potentially play when the central state abandons its social responsibilities through privatizations and cutbacks, or when other traditional sources of social advocacy, such as labor unions, have been corrupted, coopted, or simply undermined in their efforts to advance social issues. Local governments can provide citizens with a sense of self-empowerment, and prove that municipal resources can be organized to support people in the midst of social movements. Energized municipalities have demonstrated that they are the bedrock of a more democratic polity. It is significant that Mayor Kortzidis is not a professional politician, and that he has a history of involvement in social movements. Moreover, he established his credibility not only with his political activism, but with his open and efficient management of the city's affairs, which won him the respect and trust of the people.

The coalition of actors working for a public park have not relied on one approach to achieve their goal. Instead, they have opened up numerous fronts of activism. Among other things they have created a committee for saving Elliniko, set up a website, established an urban garden inside the airport, formed links with other urban collectivities around the metropolitan region, planted trees, collaborated with scientists and other

professionals, and organized conferences, cultural events, athletic contests, and concerts. As Kortzidis explained, the people's participation is the movement's best weapon to contest the privatization of Elliniko and secure a public park (personal communication, 2011).

Of course the question remains: what can the supporters of a park do if bulldozers enter the area to start construction on new commercial development? One of the problems with social movements in Athens is that their energy is typically diffused over a wide area. Ilias Ganniris, professor of planning, argues that there are too many efforts going on, and that activists have a hard time coping with all of them (personal communication, 2011). The failures of the mass strikes and protests of 2011—"the year of dreaming dangerously," as Zizek calls it—showed that there is a need for a more coordinated effort in setting specific priorities, strategies, and tactics. Of course, centrally managing a protest movement comes with potential conflicts of its own. For example, disagreement can occur over which battles should be fought, or how resources should be allocated amongst several efforts. However, if all the groups working for a park at Elliniko do not find a way to coordinate their actions, it seems unlikely that they can reverse the state's course of privatization. If they remain fragmented, Harvey warns, they are relegated to weakly hoping their "small scale-actions and local activism can ultimately add up to some kind of satisfactory macro alternative" (2014, p. xiii).

Organized, concentrated mass protest may be one of the more effective method of contesting the state's power, but it is also probably one of the more dangerous. Under the pretext of a permanent state of emergency, the Greek government has shown zero tolerance for dissent, repressing demonstrations with astounding ferocity. The Greek

police's brutality during the mass demonstrations of 2011 made the international news time and again, the reports reading like those sent from war zones. The violent "clean-up" of the Greek Indignados (aganaktismenoi) in Syntagma Square caused an outcry over the excessive use of force and tear gas.

Under these circumstances, the question is what the proponents of the park can do to reverse the state's decision to privatize Elliniko. From a strategic point of view it seems that they have very limited options. One obvious expedient will be to play for time. Public opinion, growing in their favor, may eventually cause the current political stalemate to swing in their favor. To this end getting their case brought before a court would be a helpful development. However, given the complicity of the judiciary to the dictates of the state and the Troika, it seems unlikely that they can accomplish much via this tactic. Another method of protecting the land, as Mikis Theodorakis has pointed out, would be to physically prevent construction crews from entering the site. However, this action has several disadvantages, and would seem a means of last resort for those who oppose privatization.

In the recent past, a number of environmental struggles might provide an indication of how the state might react to such a possibility. In 2008, inhabitants on the island of Corfu protested the state's plans to locate a waste landfill there. A massive force of riot police responded with violence. When an officer hit a motorcyclist who was passing by, he lost control of his bike and struck a woman, killing her. In 2010-11 in the town of Keratea, eighteen miles outside Athens, residents opposed the state's decision to allow a private company to install a garbage incinerator in their area. The state kept the area under siege for almost five months, with riot police routinely using intense violence.

In many ways, the standoff was reminiscent of popular struggles in Latin America, such as the one in Cochabamba over the privatization of water. Securing municipal waste collection contracts has been the target of private companies for quite some time as it is a very lucrative business. It should not escape our attention that waste management is also contentious in Italy, where the industry is mostly controlled by the mafia. Behind the Keratea project was the ever-present Latsis family, which wanted to diversify its business operations into this former public sector. In fact, the newspaper *Eleftherotypia* reports that the transfer of waste management from public to private hands has created an industry duopoly, that of Latsis and Mpompolas families,⁷⁵ who have neatly divided the pie amongst themselves (Gelantalis, 2011).

When riot police accompanied the construction crews into the area, the locals responded with unprecedented dynamism. In fact, anticipating the actions of the state and contractors, they had had time to plan out their response. Setting up guard posts and barricading the streets, they prevented the construction machinery from approaching the site. As the standoff continued other groups outside Keratea joined the struggle in solidarity. Numerous acts of cooperation among the people and the creative use of the municipality's resources proved invaluable in sustaining the struggle for a long period of time. Finally the project had to be suspended, signaling a victory for the locals. Now that the dust has settled, however, the Latsis consortium is trying again to circumvent the obstacles and start the project all over again (Vasileiadou, 2013).

⁷⁵ Mpompolas is the owner of one of the largest construction companies in the country, in addition to many mass media outlets.

The locals' struggle in another environmental conflict in the north of Greece did not result in such a favorable outcome. In Skouries, a town in the prefecture of Halkidiki, residents protested the opening of a gold mine by the Canadian company Eldorado Gold. They raised concerns about the impact of the industry on their ground water, noting that the mines would require vast deforestation, and that the proposed mine would rest above the region's main aquifer. Moreover, the locals argued that the operations would have negative impacts on traditional economic activities, including beekeeping, farming, fishing, forestry, and tourism. Indisposed to see it from this angle, police and private security forces waged a campaign of intimidation and brutality against the protesters that was unprecedented. Residents had to guard the entrances to their village in order to prevent the police from searching their homes. As in Keratea, it was a surreal situation in which the citizens appeared to be defending their quarters from an invading army. When the troops recklessly used chemicals, rubber bullets, and beatings to terrorize the protesters irrespective of their age, Amnesty International was prompted to protest the violation of human rights (Amnesty International, 2013).

If the residents around Elliniko decide to physically defend the land of the former airport, they can safely assume the state's response will be punitive and probably brutal. The area has the disadvantage of being enormous and flat. Mechanized police units could easily disperse the crowds and protect the construction crews, while there are no entrance points demonstrators could defend. On the other hand, public protest always entails an element of unpredictability. The state has to be wary of inadvertently galvanizing its opposition through a single rash act: in the case of state violence, one incident may be one too many. The recent events of 2013 at Taksim Square in Istanbul,

Turkey show that environmental and urban renewal issues, long thought to be marginal in the public consciousness, resonate with large numbers of people. They can, in fact, mobilize people and spark their protest of even larger societal grievances. The proposed redevelopment of Gezi Park elicited a public debate about land use, but ultimately morphed into demonstrations in support of democracy, secularism, and the freedom of the press. More recently, in January of 2014, riots broke out in the city of Burgos, Spain when the government decided to redevelop a working class neighborhood. The fights with the police lasted for four consecutive nights, spreading to Madrid, Barcelona, and Zaragoza. Finally the government announced that the project was suspended. These examples, however, like most urban confrontations between citizens and the state, took place within densely-populated urban centers. Taksim is a relatively small square with deep political symbolism located in the center of the city. In contrast, Elliniko is a vast area located on the periphery of Athens. These spatial considerations render the former airbase vastly more difficult to defend, theoretically requiring the mobilization of a much greater number of people.

Surely, at this particular juncture, the governing parties cannot countenance a defeat at Elliniko because of the symbolic significance it has acquired. The state and the business community have heralded Elliniko as the crown jewel of the privatization effort. In their eyes, transforming the area with commercial development would irrefutably prove the efficacy of the neoliberal agenda and convince foreign lenders and international institutions that they are capable for implementing the restructuring agenda prescribed for them. If their efforts to privatize Elliniko fail, they fear it could embolden their opposition and serve as a tipping point for the popular disapproval of neoliberal policies,

potentially dragging the whole austerity program down. Given that Elliniko is freighted with this significance, violent repression of dissent and civil disobedience can be expected.

On the other hand, it is by no means certain how park proponents would react should the state press ahead with its privatization plans. That contingency would test their emotional and political investment in Elliniko and indicate the import assigned to this battleground in the context of the wider neoliberal assault of Athens. Since the introduction of the “financial rescue package” the political atmosphere in Greece has been extremely polarized. It remains to be seen whether the struggle to save Elliniko will manage to ignite universal dissatisfaction with austerity measures and disgust with the corrupt political system, uniting a movement that is, for the moment, highly fragmented.

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