

Field trip 3 - Post-Olympic real estate games

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This field trip focuses on some recent re-development projects in Athens, projects whose rationale and methodology reveal a lot about the “peculiar” relationships between (local) government and real estate interests. May be we can see how some long-standing characteristics of (weak, clientelistic, ad hoc, ex post...) public planning tradition fit perfectly with neoliberal restructurings.

departure from NTUA

Metro Omonoia station → “Nerantziotissa”

stop no.1: The (shopping) Mall

“The Olympic Games, which took place in Athens in 2004, provided the pretext for the building of the largest illegal construction in Europe – “The Mall”. The stars in this urban horror-movie include real-estate, construction and commercial corporations, heads of government, ministers, mayors and, last but not least, the media. A Greek drama about a transnational event – the Olympics - and a transnational corporation – the Latsis Group.”

Metro from Nerantziotissa → “Doukissis Plakentias” → “Ampelokipoi” station

stop no.2: Ktima Thon (“Thon Estate”)

A privileged lot, a small area of land designated for urban square, targeted some years ago, in the pre-Olympics period, for the development of an office building by a well-known developer – named “Babis Vovos”. After a series of complicated administrative and legal episodes, a 'worst-case scenario" was finally realised...

stop no.3: Prosfygika

A mid-war modernist housing complex, built to accommodate Greek refugees from Asia Minor (Turkey). Today it stands abandoned, with few disempowered inhabitants, between the headquarters of the police and the central High Court premises. Since 10-15 years, Prosfygika complex has been targeted for demolition, although for its defenders, it embodies high aesthetic and historical significance. Today the complex is again in danger, since the Municipality's' & Ministry's plans to create a big park across Alexandras Avenue, in the area of PAO football stadium & nearby “Koundouriotika”, may expand...

stop no.4: Koundouriotika area

A series of open spaces, aprox. 18.000 m², on the lower side of Lycabettus hill that - miraculously- have remained un-built until today. If unified with the area of old Panathinaikos football stadium (16.000 m²) which is to be demolished, it can provide precious green space and public uses. Private interests are occupying today de facto

positions while the Municipality appears to promote a high-profile redevelopment of the wider area. The Church –miraculously– also owns a nearby empty lot.

Metro from “Ampelokipoi” → Elaionas

stop no.5: Votakinos project

Elaionas, an area of total surface 9 km² that extends among 4 Municipalities, with characteristics of derelict brownfield, informal economic activities and housing of marginal social groups, a historically invisible “backyard”, where “dirty” activities were located and functioned –in times, successfully, in a non-planned fashion.

Today, with some previous plans being “updated”, there is the tendency to attract large-scale, business, commercial and entertainment investors and activities. Implemented plans include the construction of the new Panathinaikos sports complex (53.000 m² buildings), the new Town Hall building with commercial uses (!?) (42.500 m²), the central Bus station of Athens, large commercial centres etc. An asset that according to existing master-plans (mid-1980’s), was designated for public green open space is transformed rapidly, in a piecemeal fashion, without the presence of empowered inhabitants (few/poor) and businesses (“outdated”) able to directly oppose those plans.

Since 2005-6, the Elaionas redevelopment scheme is the hallmark project of the Municipality of Athens, a project that also involves active roles for the central Government, private developers, banks etc. On the other hand, there is strong critique and campaigning from citizens’ and scientific associations and the political groups of the Left. Today the works are well-underway.

>>See also:

- Press release of the Mayor of Athens on Votakinos project: <http://greeceinfo.wordpress.com/2008/02/20/agreement-for-new-football-stadium-in-athens/>
- Some nice photos of Elaionas area from the blog for projects’ opposition → <http://www.flickr.com/photos/14676940@N04/>
- Athens report by "Gien International Corp." [established in 2008, services in Real Estate Investment Market worldwide (with a focus in the Greek and Cypriot market)] >> http://gien-int.com/re_market_rev.html
- Text on "new local government / entrepreneurial practices"
- The Mall: notes from Galera Magazine
- Text on Prosfygika (2000)