

Making Visible:

The inhabitation of urban public space by
irregular immigrants.

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I, Lilika Trikalinou, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the work.

Abstract

Focusing on irregular immigrants, people without any official status in their country of habitation, the research explores the relationship between urban public space and groups deemed to be marginal. Irregular immigrants' experiences of 'institutional invisibility' are combined with their in-between socio-economic and political condition, reflecting, partly, immigration's transnational character. Therefore, irregular immigrants' social reproduction is dependent, partly, on informal, often illegal, means to sustain a living that are linked to their usage of urban public space. Their everyday experiences, and the ways they negotiate their institutional invisibility and irregularity, are investigated as a means to explore the appropriation of urban public space in relation to the conditions of their habitation, thus opening up issues relating to their right(s) and claims to space.

The research underpinning the thesis was conducted during 2011-2012 in Athens, Greece, with the empirical focus on Omonoia, a place of significant 'settlement' by irregular immigrants. Its core was in-depth interviews with eight irregular immigrants' households, supplemented with a mapping exercise and participant observation. Additionally, the research documented institutional responses to, and influences on, the lives of irregular immigrants, through interviews with officials in key positions. The data show that urban public space is the primary means of survival and social reproduction for irregular immigrants, with it acting as both shelter and a place to network. The thesis highlights the use of invisibility and irregularity as a means to conceal immigrants' marginal ways of securing basic needs away from the eyes of the State. However, their uses of public spaces are usually at odds with official, 'legitimate', governmental discourses about what public spaces are or ought to be. This opposition emphasizes the role of everyday

activities in the production of space, but also the right to space - in the absence of other rights - by the plain instantiation of bodily existence of the institutionally invisible, irregular, immigrants in urban public space.

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Chapter 1

Transnational migration in urban public space: democracy in practice

1.1. Research aims and purpose

The aim of the research is to contribute to sociological and geographical debates about the contemporary shaping of public spaces by groups deemed to be marginal or part of an 'outcast' society. More specifically, the aim of the thesis is to contribute to theories on the appropriation and shaping of urban public space through the use and empirical application of Lefebvre's conceptualizations in order to explore (1.) the right to space by groups deemed to be marginal and (2.) the specificities of irregular immigration in relation to the urban public space. Additionally, theories on transnationality can be further enhanced with the introduction of the element of irregularity that constitutes the identity of at least some immigrants, even if for a specific time-frame. The focus in the thesis is irregular immigrants, that is, a group defined as unrecognized by the State and thus pushed to the margins because of its invisible condition. Following the work of Lefebvre (1991, 2003) and Simmel (1971), the research will investigate the social production and appropriation of public space and the reciprocal relationships between space and its inhabitants. More specifically, the thesis concentrates on the interrelation between irregular immigrant groups and their inhabitation of public space environments in Central Athens, Greece. The research documents their daily routines as they are reflected in, and influenced by, the changes occurring in public spaces.

Both academic research and empirical observations acknowledge the notion of 'outcast' attributed to immigrant groups (Boehnke 2004, Burchard 2002), the presence of whom is increasingly evident in EU societies. This is the context of the research since during the last decade the inflow of immigrants in the EU has attracted much attention by media and politics (EU 2009, 2010, MIPEX 2011, OECD 2010). The importance of the phenomenon in the European context becomes apparent through the sheer numbers of immigrants. According to EU data (2010: 60) 31.9 million foreigners, internal (EU) and external (non EU), were living in the EU 27 in 2008. There were 11.5 million from EU member states and 19.5 million were non-EU nationals, covering 6.9% of the total EU 27 population (EU 2010: 60). Even though migration is larger in other parts of the world, the EU, as a free-movement, unified, continent, celebrating human rights as one of its basic tenets, is of specific research interest to me because the existence of (irregular) immigrants raises questions on the actuality of the character of human rights in the EU.

The numbers of immigrants, including irregular ones, have been rising in the EU (EU 2010, OECD 2010), even though the exact number of undocumented ones/irregulars, defined as lacking any official status (EU 2009) can only be estimated (EU 2010, MIPEX 2011, OECD 2010). As I will discuss in this chapter, the ambiguous status of the specific group can be used as a lens to explore phenomena like urban change and, in particular, the ethnicization of public space. Because of the transnational character of immigration, the concept of ethnicization has been used in relation to phenomena of urban change in order to highlight the growing importance of ethnic identity as a "shift in focus from socioeconomic hardships to racial conflicts" (Tissot 2008: 5). The term will be used in this chapter in relation to its describing the "boundary formation towards 'others'" (Faist 1994: 449).

My preliminary research, both theoretical explorations and piloting that took place in my first year of the PhD program in 2010, indicated that the term 'irregular immigrant' is commonly used to describe undocumented migrants. As EU documents state, these are people "without any legal resident status [...] and whose presence in the territory, if detected, may be subjected to termination through an order to leave and/ or expulsion order because of their status" (EU 2009: 1). The term is often used interchangeably with the term illegal and/or undocumented. However, the term irregular, coined by the EU in the pilot project, *Clandestino*, (EU 2009) is, firstly, less value laden than the term illegal and, secondly, it is more accurate of the position that many immigrants find themselves in, since it includes, and implies, the possibility of being in transit or outside of legalization procedures. Therefore, this is the term that will be used in the thesis when referring to undocumented immigrants. It is estimated that large proportions of asylum seekers, if unsuccessful in gaining refugee status, do not leave places such as Greece but remain undocumented and illegal/irregular (GCIM 2005, EU 2009). These cases are strongly connected to the socially 'unwanted' or 'outcast' characteristic of urban dwellers, because they still inhabit the city although there is a question whether they officially have the right to do so. Socially unwanted groups, like irregular immigrants, pose a challenge and/or an opposition to the status quo, as is reflected in public space at many levels, ranging from the symbolic and aesthetic to the political (Zukin 1995, Low 2000, Lefebvre 1991, Castells 1989). Their sheer presence, and their uses of (urban) space, may challenge what is perceived by the mainstream population as 'right' at symbolic and aesthetic levels when their culture is different to the dominant one manifest in alternate uses and markings of space relating to ethnic cultural characteristics. At the same time, their existence poses a question to the given order as to whether they have a right to be present

and how this is expressed. For this reason, this thesis aims at broaching and developing questions about how far the everyday activities of ‘unwanted’ groups influence public space environments, and whether or not, and in what ways, marginal groups have a right to public space.

This chapter provides the theoretical framework of the thesis and as such explores issues on the nature of public space, concepts on transnationality and the irregular immigrants’ condition of invisibility. It is divided into two parts. The first engages with issues on the nature and character of urban public space and more specifically Omonia Square, the case study in relation to the irregular immigrants’ institutional invisibility. The second part focuses on the concept of transnationality and explores the ways that transnationalism can be used as a tool in understanding the relationship between the irregular immigrants, their communities and urban public space. In order to explore the social production and appropriation of public space through its occupation by immigrant groups, a central task is to understand the existence and nature of unregulated ethnic communities. What becomes of importance is the immigrants’ status and the ambiguous position, the ‘in-between-ness’ of the immigrant(s) between the cultural and communal ties with the country of origin and the social standing in the host country, especially when attempting to understand their relationship to the urban space as the locus of their community formation (Mitchell 2004, Smith 2005, Conradson and Latham 2005, Kuah-Paarce and Hu-Dehart 2006). The complexity created by their position in-between (at least two) countries, and the expression of their culture and their ‘outcast’ status, may produce a mixture that (a) does not allow them to assimilate easily into the given society (Faist 2000) and therefore (b) leads to uses of public space environments that may differ

from the dominant ones. The different cultural practices are, arguably, reflected in the different uses of space. The question then is how such practices of one group interact with those of others (immigrant and indigenous), what power relations are revealed, and with what impact on the nature of public space.

A related point of inquiry is why and how the irregular immigrants' communities are formulated and how they operate given their urban character (Mitchell 2004, Smith 2005, Conradson and Latham 2005). This will be examined as being part(s)/ingredient(s) of urban public space, since the ethnic communities are formulated and operate in it. The formulation and existence of ethnic communities, and their role in the given society, is contextualized and connected to the legal framework existing in the host country since this is shaping in part their character. The position and the status that a person holds in a country, his/her access to what is generally referred as mainstream society, depends largely on his/her legal characterization. Therefore, the concept of citizenship and human rights in the context of sovereign nation-state(s) is to be investigated since it provides an understanding of (regular and/or irregular) immigrants' everyday lives. A question related to the use of public space environments is what are the relationships created when one belongs to a nation but maybe not to a state and how is this shaping the person's everyday activities?

Connected with the position and the status that immigrants hold in a country is the concept of visibility. Since migration might be regular/legal but also irregular/illegal and undocumented, a way to understand the social production of public space environments in relation to ethnic communities is to explore the different ways that people who might be considered 'invisible' might also bring about visible changes in the space that they occupy and/or use. One of the main

characteristics of public space is supposed to be its visibility and access by all (Carr et al. 1992, Low 2000, Mitchell 2003). However, in practice it is not necessarily so. When 'outcast' groups use public space their presence and its effects might become quite visible. These visible effects might take form in many different ways; from the use and/or avoidance of use of the place by the general public, to a change in the way that the image of a public place is perceived that can reflect socio-cultural and political consequences.

The focus of the research is the presence, the physical existence and the visible effects of people considered invisible by the State and society. The paradoxical nature of being visible and, at the same time, considered invisible builds on the concept of 'institutional invisibility' when addressing groups of immigrants. This concept refers to the situation where immigrants receive no official recognition of their presence and are 'ignored' by the State (Puggioni 2005). Institutional invisibility can then provide an insight into power relations that create one's position in a society, given that the latter is linked with notions of oppression and domination (Puggioni 2005, Brighenti 2007). Additionally, this concept can be used as a filter to view the right that 'institutionally invisible' people have on space, the possible tensions that might be created and ultimately the change in the public environment that might be brought about. So, what happens when the invisible becomes visible? What are the relations created and reflected in the public space environment? In seeking to address the above issues the objectives of the thesis include:

1. To document and evaluate the occupation and inhabitation of public space environments by socially 'unwanted' groups, with a focus on irregular immigrants.

2. To explore the social construction of urban public space and more specifically Omonoia Square in Athens, Greece, as the intersection of structure and agency, where structure is reflected in the socio-political, economic, institutional forces that shape the position of the individual.
3. To explore how far the everyday activities of 'unwanted' groups influence public space environments, and whether or not, and in what ways, the 'unwanted' have a right to public space.
4. To describe and evaluate the tensions between the visibility and invisibility of immigrants and the impact of such ambiguity on the form and content of urban public space through its everyday uses by different groups

1.2. The case of central Athens

As a native Athenian and a resident of Athens I have witnessed significant changes within the past five years in its public spaces. This is particularly so with regards to the transformation of the heart of the Athenian centre, namely Omonoia Square and its adjoining streets (see Figure 1.1), from a vibrant economic, political and entertainment place to an empty, marginalized, area.

Uses of the area that were considered normal for any native Athenian have more or less ceased to exist. One example is the 'habit' of Athenians who used to go to Omonoia Square on Saturday nights to buy the Sunday edition of the newspapers. This practice has been abandoned as can be illustrated by the decrease of the number of newsstands that existed in the Square until recently. Another example is the past use of the Square as a regular meeting point, with this disappearing in a context of the closing down of the cafes and its gradual 'domestication' by homeless immigrants and further marginalized by its use by drug addicts and dealers as well as prostitutes. This change took place literally in front of my own eyes in the early 2000's when I was studying sociology and working in an NGO combating social exclusion. This synchronization of real life experience, coupled with an academic awareness, generated my interest in urban studies.



Figure 1.1. Map of Omonoia Square

Motivated to pursue further an understanding of urban matters, I know now that what happened, and is still happening, in Omonoia Square, is not unique. However, Omonoia can serve as an example to explore my main research interest, that is, the interactions between public space and its inhabitants, specifically the claim to urban space through the formation of unregulated irregular immigrant communities. In Omonoia today there are more factors coinciding than just being a 'high-profile' public space, symbolically loaded in Greek culture, and transformed by the concentration of a large number of irregular immigrants. The factor that I find important is that irregular immigrants actually *live* there and they have done so for the past years without any authority ever taking any measures whatsoever in respect to their status and/or habitation.

The numbers of irregular immigrants entering the country are growing, probably because of the combination of: Greece's growing appeal as an entrance point for immigrant flow in the EU (MIPEX 2011, Frontex 2010), the EU decisions that aim at discouraging immigrant establishment in the western EU member-states (EU 2003, 2008), and the practices that Greek border authorities have developed in

order to deal with the growing numbers of people trying to enter the country. Since this will be further analyzed later on, suffice to say here that the current practice in Greece is to provide immigrants with a deportation document and then let them be. According to published research, the majority of immigrants are directed to Omonoia Square to be absorbed by the ethnic networks that operate there (Checkimoglou 2010, personal contact¹). The end result is, I believe, a unique situation in the heart of an EU city, where, supposedly at least, human rights are established, cherished and carefully guarded.

I find that the coincidence of all the above factors is, at the present time, an opportunity for research to further explore the changing nature of public space in a context whereby there are growing numbers of outcast groups that are claiming their rights to the city. The unregulated migrant settlement in urban public space, as in the case of Omonoia Square in Athens, reveals a web of interrelations that need to be further pursued in the exploration of the contemporary shaping of public spaces by 'unwanted' groups, like irregular/illegal immigrants.

In relation to immigrants, academic literature provides strong evidence that there is great concentration and formation of ethnic communities in urban environments (Portes and Manning 1986, Schelling 1972, Taub et al. 1984, Waldinger and Bozorgmehr 1996, Mitchell 2004, Smith 2005, Conradson and Latham 2005, Kuah-Paarce and Hu-Dehart 2006). Urban public environments are the loci of concentration of socially 'unwanted' groups. The irregular immigrants' lack of citizenship rights poses a question on the ways and the rights

¹ In the first year of the PhD program, as part of the preliminary research, I conducted interviews with long-term residents of the area of Omonoia and with journalists who have been publishing articles on matters relating to immigration and to the urban environment. One of these interviewees was A. Checkimoglou, a journalist in the newspaper Vima.

that they have in claiming and occupying space. Their physical existence in urban space and their use of it challenges the relation of the right to space as a reflection of political rights. Irregular immigrants' existence and literal visibility in a place where they are not supposed to be gives rise to the question of who actually has the right to be visible within a society, given that visibility implies recognition and participation (Mitchell 2003, McCann 1999). The formation of irregular transnational- communities, through the use of symbols and signs, such as the creation of exclusive ethnic stores with signs in ethnic languages, different operating times and different cultural traditions, brings forth the ethnic dimension in the way that urban space becomes contested, created and appropriated. This becomes clearer through questions that come to light when using the irregular transnational communities as a lens in the understanding of the relation between the inhabitant and space.

Urban public space, migration and ethnic/transnational communities have been the focus of much research (Portes and Manning 1986, Schelling 1972, Taub et al.1984, Waldinger and Bozorgmehr 1996, Mitchell 2004, Smith 2005, Conradson and Latham 2005, Kuah-Paarce and Hu-Dehart 2006). The creation of urban public space, and its appropriation by users, has been in the spotlight of urban sociology and human geography since the writings of Walter Benjamin and Georg Simmel. The issues of ethnic and transnational communities' entwinement in urban spaces, and the use of public space by people that are denied the right to do so, are also major themes in the social sciences (Portes and Manning 1986, Schelling 1972, Taub et al. 1984, Waldinger and Bozorgmehr 1996, Mitchell 2004, Smith 2005, Conradson and Latham 2005, Kuah-Paarce and Hu-Dehart 2006, Borjas 1987, McGovern 2007, Portes and Sensebrenner 1993). As far as the

issue of transnational and ethnic communities is concerned, the literature has provided insights on the relationship between social exclusion and urban decline (Wilson 1987, 1994). However, the focus has been more on the immigrants and/or the socially excluded than the urban environment.

The present research aims at an understanding of the urban environment *through* the use of irregular immigrants and their community formation as a lens. The relationship between the irregular immigrants and the urban environment serves in exploring the appropriation of space as the combination of ethnicity in relation to migration and urban public space. The concentration of large numbers of immigrants with ambiguous status in the urban centre can be seen either as freeing them from societal constraints when it comes to the use of space, or as a restraining mechanism, depending among other things on whether or not there are in force regulative policies. Therefore, a case for the exploration of the right to the city that irregular immigrants claim through their occupation and the creation of ethnic/transnational communities will be further explained in the next pages.

1.2.1. Public Space

According to Simmel “spatial relations are not only determining conditions of relationships among human beings, but are also symbolic of those relations” (1971: 143). Having this conceptualization of space in mind, public space can be seen as the “stage upon which the drama of communal life unfolds” (Carr et al. 1992: 3). Public space is the juncture of different elements that comprise society. It is the physical place where the manifestation of the political meets individual habitation. More importantly, because it is the juncture of structure and individual agency, it may shed light on questions about democracy and participation. Through understanding public space as the manifestation of institutional forces, and interrelated to social, political and economic forces, and as the field where individual agency is manifest, public space environments can be seen as the juncture of structure and agency. Democracy and democratic practices, in terms of who has the right to be, can be reflected in the relationships that arise in public space environments.

According to Carr et al. “public space is responsive, democratic and meaningful” (1992: 19). It is responsive because theoretically public space is designed according to users’ needs. It is democratic because as public it offers access to everyone and freedom to act in it. Also, it is characterized as meaningful because it gives the chance to users to “make strong connections between the place, their personal lives and the larger world” (Carr et al. 1992: 19) and allows for the relationship between the physical and the social context. These characteristics of public space seem to hold true at first glance, or at least, although ideal(ised), can be considered reasonable. As Massey (2005: 152) emphasizes, there is a romanticised notion of public space being “unproblematically open to all” as “an

emptiness which enables free and equal speech”, that does not hold true given that public space is a product of social relations and identities. Without ignoring the importance and the actuality of Massey’s claim, the characteristics of public space are to be explored since they point to the ideal theorization of what public space means and ought to be.

It is generally claimed that most public spaces are designed according to users’ needs, however, in many cases, these ‘users’ needs’ are what the authorities have identified as such (Low 2000, Carr et al. 1992). Whether the actual, practical needs of the users are driving the design of urban public spaces by the authorities, or the design imposes these needs, it is a matter that cannot be generalized and needs to be explored separately and exclusively for each case of public space. The determination of the ‘needs’ and the identification of the ‘user’ can come from the grassroots through the observation but it can also be imagined as something ‘supposed to be’. The democratic notion that stems from the concept of a place being public as well as its ‘meaningfulness’ are to be examined in greater depth in the next pages, since it is my belief that these two concepts are highly contested in everyday life.

Carr’s et al explanation of the meaningfulness of public space brings forth the question of who is the carrier of meaning. It is generally acknowledged that space is produced and is vested by meaning by its inhabitants and users (Lefebvre 1991, Simmel 1971, deCerteau 1984). The design and the proposed functions of public space are, according to Lefebvre, the representations of space that reflect the “decisions about what- and who- should be visible and what should not [when talking about] concepts of order and disorder” (Zukin 1995: 7). Thus, this duality between (a) the uses of space (decision-making process), and (b) the user(s) as

actively shaping space, generates the query of *who* the user is. "Public spaces retain cultural and political meanings symbolically encoded in their spatial relations and built environment" (Low 2000: 238). Again, when dealing with the issue of who is the carrier of meaning and the symbolisms that create space and in this case public space, the issue brings us back to the question of its democratic nature. Who is the carrier of meaning and symbolism, to whose needs is the public space responsive? Consequently the characterization of public space as being democratic ought to be a focus of investigation and evaluation.

1.2.1.i. The democratic nature of public space

When investigating the democratic nature of public space, there are different but related aspects to be looked at. Specifically, since the focus of the research is the relationships between 'unwanted' groups and public space, the exploration of the democratic nature of public space environments is of key importance. By characterizing a place as public the assumption is that it is open to everyone and therefore constitutive of democracy. This is the spatial expression of multiple views and values. Characterized by people's diverse encounters with one another in public space environments, the concept of democracy takes on a geographical notion being reflected spatially. Public space then, symbolically expresses and materializes aspects of democratic practices in a given society. This symbolization incorporates structural characteristics, since public space is moulded by economic, political and sociocultural forces (Lefebvre 1991, Harvey 1989, 2009, Castells 1989, Sennett 1992). So, public space, as any urban space, is created by, and reflects, the political and economic order. At the same time, because of its being public, the order in public space may be challenged by different users.

Another force shaping public space is connected to inclusionary/exclusionary practices. As Mitchell highlights "the public space of the modern city has always been a hybrid and certainly a contradictory space" (2003: 137). A main reason for this is that in public space one can always encounter those that are different (Young 1990: 240, Massey 2005). Therefore, public space can become contradictory since it allows for the different to be visible. More often than not, the differences take the form of struggles over space which are ideological struggles (Mitchell 2003, Low 2000, Carr et al. 1992). According to Mitchell

(2003: 152), public space can be the arena where the contestations take place because ultimately these are “struggles over the practice of democracy, a practice that is as often determined in the streets, on the sidewalks and in the parks as it is in the halls of the legislature or in the courtroom”.

The contestation of and the claim to space by different groups are linked with patterns of inclusion/exclusion and become the “barometer of justice” in a city (Van Deusen 2002). If public space is shaped by structural forces connected with political and economic regimes, then the accessibility of public space by all potential users becomes an indicator of justice and democratic practices of a society. The premise here is that space is shaped by its users through the means of social construction and appropriation (Lefebvre 1991). As Low (2000: 127) has shown the “social production and social construction of space [are] contextualizing the forces that produce [public space] and showing people as social agents constructing their own realities and symbolic meanings”. Therefore, when exploring public space, especially in relation to matters of democracy, it becomes central to investigate users’ actions.

Symbolically and physically a space becomes contested when different groups or users claim their right to use it. Often though, these different uses might be opposing (Allen and Pryke 1994, Mitchell 2003, Low 2000). A prime example is Mitchell’s (2003) work on People’s Park in Berkeley, California, that illustrates the discrepancy between the ‘official’, and the spontaneous, everyday uses of space. Another, more subtle example is provided by Low (2000) that illustrates the contrasting uses of public squares in Costa Rica by diverse groups at different times. In these examples, empirical research has shown how urban public spaces acquire different meaning and a different feel when the uses of space change

during the day and the night-time and throughout the years. In the case of Costa Rican squares, the age and the social standing of the users becomes of importance on how a square is being perceived by the users. Another element that comes from these examples is the conflicting uses of space between groups; e.g. pensioners spending their time during the day and minor illegal activities taking place later on in the day.

Conflicting uses of space raise issues related to territoriality, which reflects “the need of individuals and groups to claim some geography as their own” (Lyman and Scott 1967: 238). The previously mentioned examples illustrate the ways that this need of groups to claim their own geography through the different uses of space can bring forth a wide range of consequences. One aspect of these consequences is the ways that other users of space/residents of the city understand, imagine and conceive public space under the ‘new’ conditions (i.e. ‘unwanted’ groups claiming and using space). This notion derives from Lefebvre’s (1991) conception of representational spaces, meaning the ways that space is understood and imagined by its users. The outcome of the different uses of space and the different groups claiming it through their actions can be viewed as the physical manifestation of the society’s democratic practices. Public space is “always in a process of being shaped, reshaped and challenged by the spatial practices of various groups and individuals whose identities and actions undermine the homogeneity of contemporary cit[y]” (McCann 1999: 170).

1.2.1.ii. Claiming space: the expression of power relations

The struggles over space by different groups expose the existence of multiple, overlapping realities that are shaped by public space while also shaping it (Allen and Pryke 1994, Lefebvre 1991). When such struggles involve socially 'unwanted' groups, such as irregular/illegal immigrants then two issues are raised. The first one is related to power and dominance over irregular immigrants: different forms of power are exercised over them defining and creating their conditions of living. Subsequently, the second issue is related to the irregular immigrants being rendered institutionally invisible and to their ambiguous situation of being physically visible. Attempting to understand where and how the socially 'unwanted' are located is the first step in exploring their social reality, it becomes important to explore the different sources of power exercised over them.

Power, as Weber (1978: 43) defines it, is the "ability of an actor to realize his/her own will in a social action even against the will of other actors". It follows then, that in the case of contestation of public space, the different actors involved exercise power for the realization of their own will over others and/or space. One angle of power exercised over space, as has been expressed in Lefebvre's writings, is the dominance of 'abstract' space as represented by those in power as a uniform, coherent space with a specific nature and uses. However, when groups challenge the domination of space through their everyday practices and uses of it, contradictions of space emerge. These contradictions might take the form of practices that go against the 'official' use of space. An example of such 'unofficial' and therefore 'unexpected' use of space is the case of homeless people using as a shelter a part of a public park next to a playground, highlighting the contested nature of public space and the fact that official discourses and

representations of space tend to marginalize particular groups (Allen and Pryke 1994, Mitchell 2003).

Following Lefebvre's conceptualizations, marginal groups should remain hidden from the public eye, in "concealed spaces [...] without formal presence of recognition" (Allen and Pryke 1994: 471). The notion of 'concealed space' could also take the form of a parallel, hidden use of space parallel to its 'official' one; e.g. cleaning personnel working after hours when no one sees them (Allen and Pryke 1994). Even though Lefebvre's ideas have been criticized for lacking empirical grounding, as becomes obvious in the notion of 'concealed space', since marginal groups are to be seen and do not remain 'hidden', there is still an interesting notion to be further explored. This is the conception of the parallel reality instantiated in the use of space. The question then is how are parallel realities manifested in space, and how do these relate to people's everyday uses of space?

The geographical location and the concealed/hidden use of space, as in the case of cleaners working during the night where no one sees them, and/or the use of public space during night-time for illegal activities, can be exemplary of concealed activities as a tactic of survival for marginal groups (Simone 2004). The parallel realities that are revealed through the concealed/hidden uses of space create the question of how some groups become marginalized and thus how and why their use of space needs to be concealed. In the case of irregular immigrants, 'institutional invisibility', as the non-recognition of immigrants' presence by the State can shed light on these questions and/or issues (Puggioni 2005).

1.2.2. Different sources and forms of power rendering the socially 'unwanted invisible

To begin identifying the powers that place 'outcast' groups in a position of invisibility, the Weberian (1978) concept of power will be employed as a stepping stone, since it gives to the actor the potential of using his/her agency in the realization of his/her will. The potential given to every actor to realize his/her will can help in the understanding of how different, even conflicting, interests are operating in any social situation. Having this in mind, an exploration of the different sources of power that create the irregular immigrants' invisible position will be attempted here. This exploration is building on the concept of institutional invisibility, understanding it through the notion of 'non-action' as a form of power employed by the State in order to avoid acting on a problem (Puggioni 2005, Lukes 1974). The instance of power exercised by a State over someone and/or something by not offering a solution can shed light on the marginalization of groups like irregular immigrants by their non-recognition (Lukes 1974).

Moving a level downwards but staying in the realm of the State, other sources/factors make their appearance. An instantiation and action of power over outcast groups appears when examining bureaucratic authority (Weber 1978). Even though the concept of the State is mostly connected to abstract notions of sovereignty and power, there are a number of institutions consisting of the State that are far from abstract and do hold power over people under their authority. In an every day, empirical context, for its citizens the State is conceived as the bureaucracy that they come into contact with. Following Weber (1978) on the notion of bureaucratic authority, the perpetuation of institutional but also institutionalized invisibility may be found in the ways that bureaucratic

authorities treat or avoid treating 'outcast' groups. For example, as I have witnessed through the fieldwork, low rank bureaucrats are allowed to choose whom they serve, thus exercising power over these groups of people. One of the instances that I witnessed was when one of my participants in the research had his bag stolen where his application for asylum and the consequent permanent stay papers were. The officer in charge in the police department where he went to declare the theft (and to acquire certification by the police ensuring that he indeed had permanent stay) denied him service because his Greek was not fluent enough. Actions like that are instances that the marginalized position of a person might change to one of invisibility.

The notion of bureaucratic authority, where personnel are following strict rules, guidelines and a hierarchy that cannot be questioned, points to a minor instance where the invisibility of groups becomes institutionalized. For example, in police stations in central Athens, officers dealing with paperwork, such as mandates, and the issue of passports, may force immigrants, or those who look like immigrants according to the standards of police officer(s) in charge, to create a separate queue from the indigenous Greek people in attendance. Another example is the occasional refusal of personnel in services, such as the revenue office, to deal with people who do not speak fluent Greek. Therefore, the concept of institutional invisibility is diffused to different levels of the State through its bureaucratic organization, thus marginalizing the irregular immigrants' disadvantaged position even more. Since the State exercises power over irregular immigrants by not acknowledging their existence, it is not only depriving them of any rights but also condemning them to institutional invisibility. The authority exercised over outcast groups is indicative of the systemic, institutional aspects

that stem from the organization of the State that can provide an answer to what constitutes institutional invisibility.

Instances like these everyday examples during the fieldwork illuminate aspects of the relationship between the mainstream society that bureaucrats and public officers are members of and irregular immigrants. A useful insight in understanding the irregular immigrants' position in Athens comes from the concepts of 'stranger' by Simmel (Wolff 1950) and the 'pariah' by Arendt (1978). Simmel's notion describes the condition of being but not belonging since his 'stranger' is:

“fixed within a particular spatial group, or within a group whose boundaries are similar to spatial boundaries. But his position in this group is determined, essentially, by the fact that he has not belonged to it from the beginning, that he imports qualities into it, which do not and cannot stem from the group itself” (1950: 402).

The positioning, as described by Simmel, provides a useful insight since it brings forth the element of spatiality, the notion of being but not belonging having specific characteristics that differentiate the person from the group. This is more than often the case when referring to groups of outcasts and irregular immigrants. However, the definition of the stranger also allows for an interpretation of this positioning as an act of will. In the case of outcasts dwelling in public space the power to position oneself as a wilful act, can be questioned. Arendt's definition of the 'pariah' (1978) sheds light on the inequality dimensions of belonging or not, which seems more probable in the populations under investigation.

Viewed as 'strangers' and/or 'pariahs' the outcast urban dwellers are subjected

to another form of power that renders them invisible to the extent that they are seen as a single group. As Bourdieu has explained “symbolic power is a power of consecration or revelation, the power to consecrate or to reveal things that are already there” (1989: 23). This is a power that can create or ‘name’ groups. Taking Bourdieu’s definition a step further, it can also be seen as the power to conceal or render a group invisible: by naming it a group while probably it is more than one by any definition, its members acquire a new identity, that of no identity. Due to the above-mentioned invisibility that results in lack of knowledge on the group’s members, coupled with the popular imaginations created by the media, it is probable that the invisibility of outcast groups like irregular immigrants becomes enhanced. Their social positioning at the margins and even further allows for an interpretation of power exercised over them by mainstream society. Connecting the notion of symbolic power to the concept of symbolic violence, the rendering of the outcast groups as completely invisible and subordinate becomes clearer. According to Bourdieu and Wacquant (2004: 339), symbolic violence is the normalized and perpetuated domination of the less powerful as being categorized irregular thus marginal on the border of illegality.

1.2.3. Invisibility used/ reversed

At the same time though, invisibility is used as a means of survival by socially unwanted groups (Simone 2004, Scott 1985). The 'outcasts' use their invisibility to hide from the system. Given that irregular immigrants are not recognized and lack official status, a primary means of survival is operating in underground, illegal networks and activities that can provide them with a living. Scott (1985) named this reversed use of invisibility 'weapons of the weak' because the anonymity and the lack of identity secure these groups, the weak, from the 'eyes' of the State. In the case of irregular immigrants, the 'weapon' is the precise nature of their weakness, their invisibility, because it can be reversed and used to achieve goals that otherwise would be unattainable. A prime example is that their invisibility, the denial of their existence, allows them to get out of the country in similar ways that they entered, without them being noticed and/or recorded. Additionally, their ambiguous and invisible condition can be used in finding illegal employment that will secure a day's work much more easily than going through official means, since that, even if possible, would take too long.

Given their marginal position in the society, it is reasonable to expect that the outcast groups/irregular immigrants will react. Reaction does not necessarily mean violent acts. It may mean attempting to control the situation for their own benefit, as Scott (1985) has shown in referring to people in disadvantaged positions. In seeking to secure their primary needs, like having food and a place to stay, including creating, or being part of, illegal economic networks becomes the way that irregular immigrants use their weakness, invisibility, as a 'weapon' to react to, and overturn their problematic situation. Forced, institutional invisibility can be manipulated since being hidden from the State's eyes provides a kind of

freedom to act on the margins. Even though aspects of underground economic activity might be deviant, they are still a means for people to make a living (Simone 2004).

Turning the focus specifically to immigrants, the issue of community formation as an empowering mechanism arises. The concept of ethnic enclaves is useful to shed light on the closed, ethnic based networks that are usually created when there is a mass presence of immigrants in an area. It emphasizes how immigrants are located in a society and, given the factor of geographical proximity, leads to a better understanding of the relation between 'outcast' groups and urban space. The theory of ethnic enclaves, originally presented by Portes and Manning (1986), captures the way that immigrants, when moving to another country, create associations based on ethnic origin and geographic proximity. According to Portes and Manning (1986), the goal is to cover the economic and social needs of the ethnic group(s). This, results in the emergence of entrepreneurial activities (of multiple kinds) covering the needs of the ethnic group and providing a supporting mechanism as extended social networks. An important result of this type of organization is that the minority group(s) does not need the majority group to address its needs.

The formation of ethnic communities is seen in the literature as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it is estimated that ethnic enclaves contribute to the creation of ethnic segregation, and reinforce social exclusion (Portes and Manning 1986, Yiftachel and Yacobi 2003). On the other hand, ethnic communities are regarded as part of a coping mechanism that may help minorities in disadvantaged circumstances (Peach 1996). Specifically, Peach (1996) notes that ethnic enclaves create what he calls "good segregation" because they facilitate the

newcomers to the new country. In the case of irregular immigrants this might be even more so. The focal point and the reason to examine theories on ethnic enclaves and community formation is their focus on the creation of networks based on ethnicity. The combination of ethnic specification and identity as a prerequisite to belong to the network coupled with the geographical proximity and the local element that ethnic enclaves usually operate in the host country, can be the first steps in the investigation of the relationship between immigrant settlement and urban public space. Moreover, the formation of ethnic communities can be treated as a form of power when viewing the situation through Arendt's (1958) definition that power is "something that holds people together in their pursuit of their common, agreed ends". Even though a specific common goal other than the survival and the preservation of ethnic identity through networks might not be clear, still when exploring irregular immigrants and their communities, survival as a goal is more than enough to keep the group together.

Emphasizing the concept of networks based on ethnicity and placing their existence in a wider perspective, there is another parameter to be taken into account. Insofar that networks are formulated on the basis of ethnicity, there is a connection between the country of origin and the host country. First and foremost, this connection is because of the ethnic identity, the cultural norms and the traditions that the immigrants bring with them to the host country. Secondly, there is the practical, everyday aspect of this connection: the flow of information when keeping contact with the people in the country of origin. This contact more than often is also related to the transfer of money from the host to the country of origin as support to the immigrant's(s') relatives. Additionally, because of the

existence of networks and ethnic enclaves that embark on entrepreneurial activities there are imports of goods from the country of origin to the host country. The connection between the host and the country of origin places the issue of immigrant settlement in a global context where linkages between countries and across borders are observed. The interconnectivity of places and people through and/or despite national borders leads the discussion to the exploration of theories on transnationality.

1.3. Transnational communities/Transnationalism as a theoretical tool

A key focus in cultural geographies of transnationality, as explained by Mitchell (2003: 84), is “the embodied movements and practices of migrants and/or flows of commodities and capital, and [to] analyze these flows with respect to national borders and the cultural construction of nation, citizen and social life”. This definition brings to the surface a wide range of related issues that can offer an insight in the exploration of migrant settlement in urban public space environments.

Literature on transnationality highlights the ambivalent nature of immigrant lives ‘in-between’ their country of origin and the host country. The ‘in-betweenness’ experienced by immigrants refers primarily to their cultural/social existence (Mitchell 2003, 2004, Smith 2005, Conradson and Latham 2005, Kuah-Paarce and Hu-Dehart 2006). They live in a specific country while being linked to the cultures and traditions of their country of origin and, sometimes, these may not even be compatible. Theories on transnationality from cultural studies bring forth aspects of everyday life in an attempt to understand the immigrants’ position in the new country (Mitchell 2003, 2004, Smith 2005, Conradson and Latham 2005). Therefore, a lens is provided to see the details regarding living conditions and interactions through which both the person’s identity and the position that he/she has in the given society emerge. The everyday, practical ways that one negotiates and/or manages to keep the traditions of one’s country of origin in the host country, such as the religious practice of Ramadan in a non-Muslim society, illustrate this in-between condition. The concept of ‘in-betweenness’ but also the focus on everyday life, are of importance in exploring the interrelationships between immigrant groups and their occupation and

inhabitation of urban public space environments.

1.3.1. Exploring the 'in-between-ness' of the immigrants' position

In order to understand the positioning of the immigrant it is important to contextualize their situation in the host country. When moving to another country/nation-state, the person is subject to the formal context, i.e. the laws of this country. Therefore, the characterization and the labelling of a person as an immigrant, but also his/her status, depend on the Constitution and the laws that govern the receiving/host country. An example that will be further explored in later sections, is whether citizenship can be granted based on the principle of territory (*jus soli*) or the blood principle (*jus sanguinis*); especially for second generation immigrants. If citizenship in the host country is granted based on the blood principle, they will always be considered and labelled immigrants. Based on international laws and treaties, citizens belonging in the EU enjoy free movement within its borders. They are not characterized as immigrants within the European Union and in most cases enjoy some level of citizenship privileges in every EU country. Then, whether a person is characterized as an immigrant is a matter of geopolitical coincidence that needs further exploration. This line of thinking brings forth the importance of the concept of the nation-state, the creation of borders, both physical and symbolic ones, and ultimately the importance of the concepts of democracy and human rights.

The importance of the above concepts in exploring migration lies on the premise that they *define and create* the position and the identity of a migrant. The person moving from his/her country to another one 'brings' with him/her elements of the country of origin. These elements, the parts of a person's identity that are formulated by belonging to one ethnicity are also crucial when exploring immigration (Hannerz 1996, Vertovec 1999). The ethnic elements can lead to the

creation of boundaries as a means of identifying who the 'other' is (Faist 1994, Tissot 2008). The concept of ethnicization has been used to denote this "political construction and/or mobilization of boundaries between social groups that draw on ethnic markers" (Faist 1994: 441). Ethnicization has been used in the case of immigrants along with their transnational character and community formation to highlight the importance of the ethnic identity and boundary formation (Mollenkopf and Gerstle 2005, Kuah-Paarce and Hu-Dehart 2006, Yiftachel and Yacobi 2003, Faist 1994). Moreover, of special interest to this research is the way that ethnicization is reflected on urban public space through daily activities. An example comes from the empirical work of Yiftachel and Yacobi in the case of the city of Lod, Israel where ethnicization of areas of the 'mixed city' of Lod are the means of ethnic segregation. In Lod there are patterns of segregation between two ethnic groups – Arabs and Jews - that have given rise to contested spaces that are "linked to the construction of an exclusionary Israeli-Jewish national identity and to the establishment of hierarchical ethnic citizenship" (Yiftachel and Yacobi 2003: 673).

In establishing that the immigrant's connection to his/her country of origin still exists even when moving away, the effects of his/her existence in the new, host country must also be noted. This position is characterized by ambivalence; by an 'in-betweenness' that refers mostly to their cultural/social existence. In exploring the notion of 'transnational connectivity' Bourdieu's habitus has been used as a prime form of social practice (Kelly and Lusia 2006, Waters 2005). The transferability, if any, of cultural capital and its use in the forms of networks and its reflection in space, relate back to the positioning of the immigrant in the host country. In the case of groups that inhabit urban public space, it is interesting to

see how the concept of cultural practices is realized, informed by and reflected in space.

The 'connectivity' to the country of origin is partly what creates the ambivalent, in-between position of the immigrants. Belonging to an ethnic community/network, having that as a safety net but also as a primary means of socialization and support, emotional, economic and practical, while operating at the margins of a structured society creates the need for a balance to be found. The person is 'in-between' everyday practices that might be opposing; he/she must comply with two or more sets of rules and norms and ultimately must be able to function in two, probably completely different, realities. The 'in-betweenness' is not only emotional and psychological but it is also a situation where a person is caught up and must adjust to two parallel lives that need to be experienced as a single, coherent one. The theoretical realm of transnationality by focusing on the everyday practices allows for the exploration of the notion of 'in-betweenness' since it looks "for structures of meaning engendered by and expressed in private and public behaviours, images, institutions, languages.

These structures of meanings are inherent in social and symbolic ties" (Faist 2000: 215). The shared meanings and structures that underlie and bind ethnic communities are expressed by the creation of 'social spaces' that serve the community and have as a result the creation of geographies that overcome borders. Therefore, the exploration of the irregular immigrants' everyday lives is needed since it can provide the lens to see details regarding living conditions and interactions through which both the person's identity and the position that he/she has in the given society emerge as well as their relationship to the public space, how they influence and are influenced by it.

Where transnational communities emerge, their formation being directly related to urban geography and space, the notion of space has two dimensions. The first has a pragmatic sense, the formation of a community is happening in a physical space. The second is a more abstract sense of space becoming transnational through the formation of communities across borders.

The concept of 'social space' in the urban environment as the site of analyzing and investigating the transnational character of immigration takes special importance in this research, since its main focus is on community formation in urban public space. The development of the concept of 'transnational urbanism' as the locus of immigrant community formation draws attention to the function of the city as a connecting node (Mitchell 2004, Blunt 2007). Also, it makes the question of the consequences of transnationalism in the urban environment worth exploring. Transnational interconnectivity is taking place in cities and its existence "captures a sense of distanced yet situated possibilities for constituting and reconstituting social relations" (Smith 2005: 237). So, on the one hand, it is being across space - far from the country of origin - that creates the need for the transnational community to emerge. Also, the notion of belonging to a nation without being in its territory elevates the meaning of space to an abstract level. On the other hand, it is space that allows for the creation and instantiation of transnational communities to be developed in the host country. This space then has a real and concrete meaning.

A concept proposed to illuminate the multiple nature of space in the case of transnational communities is the 'social field' that "connects and positions some actors in more than one country" (Vertovec 1999: 448) and illustrates "a dynamic of migration and of migrants' lives that is multilocal - the idea that social

places could be tightly woven together across borders and across space” (Mitchell 2003: 81, Basch and Szanton-Blanc 1994, Castells 1996, Goldring 1998). This concept of space leads back to the question of borders. Through emphasizing the existence and preservation of ties to the country of origin the conceptualization of the geographical dispersion of a nation outside closed borders comes to light (Mitchell 2003, 2004, Faist 2000). As Mitchell (2004: 642) highlights “transnationalism [...] generally refer[s] to the post-structural concepts of in-betweenness or ambivalence, especially with reference to the nation”. So, when trying to understand the immigrants’ position, a closer look into the concept of space and borders might be of use.

1.3.2. Space and Borders

Transnationalism and migration exist because of the movement of “flows of people, capital, information and power across borders” (Ley 2004: 156). The importance of the concept of borders then becomes clear since it is their very existence that ultimately formulates the notion of transnationalism and migration. Physical borders are one of the most significant elements that define a nation-state (Lawson 2003). Therefore, the concept of transnational migration is tied to the question of how a nation exists outside/across the borders of a nation-state. It also becomes apparent that transnational communities (the fragments of the nation that exist across borders) are simultaneously under the authority of another nation-state. So, what emerges is the debate on the relationship of the –at least- two nation-states (the country of origin and the host country) and the position of the person in between the two. However, this implies two things: firstly, that people (immigrants) are allowed to assume, express and celebrate their national identity; secondly, that the movement of people is at least to some degree free between and across borders. For example, Faist (2000) in examining transnational communities and their creation argues that the prerequisite for their existence is a level of cooperation or at least some relationship between the nation states involved. However, this might not always be the case. Moreover, the concept of the nation-state is challenged by the existence of a nation outside the state (Mitchell 2003). In theories on transnational migration the nation is embodied in the everyday practices and values of the transnational community that might bring forth tensions with both nation-states involved (Mitchell 2003, Faist 2000, Blunt 2007). Generally, the emerging relationships shed light on the possibility of tensions in the realm of the

conceptualization of the nation-state. In short, the concept of the nation-state is challenged by the existence of a nation outside the state.

According to Mitchell (2003: 79), when it comes to transnational migration there is a “multitude of ways in which state immigration laws, citizenship statuses and informal policies come into conflict with national narratives of territorialisation or multiculturalism or timelessness that are also brought to surface”. For example, because of the creation and the existence of transnational migration and communities, a nation is expanded and dispersed geographically across borders. At the same time though, borders are the defining characteristic of a nation-state (Lawson 2003). According to findings in political science used in several academic fields, the conceptualization of the nation has to do with a confined territory enclosed by borders that coincides with the public sovereignty upon this territory, thus leading to the definition of the nation-state. The notion of a nation existing globally outside of its borders comes into conflict with the concept of borders being one of the definite characteristics of a nation-state, thus leading to a more complex situation.

The concept of the nation has been defined as the cluster of elements that are shared among a group, like history, language, and traditions, “the fact of sharing a specific territory” (Gellner 1994) and the value that the people see in these shared attributes. Also, the recognition of mutual “rights and duties to each other in virtue of their shared membership” (Lawson 2003: 70) is the binding element of people belonging to a nation. In this definition of the nation the cultural elements that connect people participating in a given nation are linked to the territorial element that defines the nation-state. Again this is the challenge that transnational migration and communities bring forth.

In more detail, the state is “a structure that has the legal right to make rules that are binding over a given population within a given territory. As such, it has geographic as well as political characteristics. A state is a political institution, but it differs from other political institutions in having sovereignty [...]” (Lawson 2003: 25). Then, the nation-state is defined as “a polity in which sovereignty is coterminous with the sense of nationhood; everyone who lives within that political system feels that he or she belongs with all the others nationally as well as politically. In fact, however, nations and states are not always coterminous, indeed, probably every nation-state in the world has certain pockets of sub nationalism, that is to say, there are groups within that nation-state that feel so strong a loyalty to one another it is as if they were all members of a nation within the larger nation-state” (Lawson 2003: 70). It becomes apparent through the above definitions that the concept of transnational communities is possible in any given nation-state.

1.3.3. Locating the immigrant: The context of the State

An important element in exploring the relationship of migrant communities to urban space is the immigrants' position in the new country. Their multifaceted position as in-between two nation-states and as immigrants in the new society provides the context to understand their position in the host country. Theories on transnational communities and migration focusing on the ambivalent condition of migrant groups open up issues of the relationship between the nation-states and the position of immigrants between them (Faist 1994, 2000, Mitchell 2003). Since immigrants are defined as such under the laws and the regulations of different states, their status and labelling/standing depends on the state that they are in at a given time. So, immigrants might bring with them and belong to a given nation even though they live in another nation-state. However, what becomes a paradox is their condition as members of one nation and of a different state. To pursue this issue further another angle will be used, that of the concept of rights, because of its strong connection to the state and the extent of its sovereignty. More specifically, being a member of a (nation-) state is connected to citizenship and citizenship is directly related to the notion of rights. In the case of theories on transnational migration, this issue has been tackled by the investigation of different combinations of citizenship rights, such as dual citizenship of the person and debates around the concepts of integration and assimilation of immigrants in the new country (Faist 2000). However, these debates are based on the assumption that, especially when considering western democracies, the context of each state allows for these formations.

Therefore, two issues open up:

- The first issue is the conditions of democracy in the nation-state given the relation to human rights. Each state has its own laws and regulations contextualizing the way human rights are expressed and practised. This milieu needs to be explored in order to understand the position of immigrants in a given state.
- The second issue refers to the condition of unregulated migration. Unregulated migration falls out of the legal parameters of a state and that begs the question of what is the position that unregulated immigrants occupy in a state. It is also directly linked to the concept of human rights; more than often, even though the laws and the regulations of a state theoretically abide with universal human rights, this is not the case.

For these issues to be investigated, the starting point is to explore the concept of citizenship and how this is viewed from the lens of transnational migration.

1.3.3.i. Nation-state, Citizenship and Rights

The exploration of the concepts of nation-state, nation and the state in conjunction with transnational migration highlights the common ground among them, that of the existence of other national communities inside a given nation- state. In the realm of nation-state theories this is referred to as ‘pockets of sub nationalism’, which is close to the notion of transnational communities in the realm of transnationality theories (Lawson 2003). For both approaches the possibility of communities of a different ethnic background in a given nation- state is not a contested phenomenon. However, for these communities/pockets to exist, the context of the given state, i.e. the rules in-force, must be such as to allow it. The recognition of the existence of groups of different nation(s) in a given nation-state gives rise to the assumption that the specific nation-state, the host country, allows people to assume and celebrate their (different) national identities. Still, these conceptualizations do not seem to cover the possibility of irregular migration. Irregular migration is a broad concept to “describe a variety of different phenomena involving people who enter or remain in a country of which they are not a citizen in breach of national laws” (GCIM 2005: 32). In the context of the EU, irregular migrants are rising in numbers (EU 2009). So, what is happening in this case? The question refers to the context that allows for the existence of transnational communities even when they comprise irregular immigrants.

To tackle this issue, the focus will be on the concept of citizenship. Concepts of citizenship, including the notion of rights in the framework of liberal democracy (that is the dominant system of governance in most if not all modern nation-states), are those that define the context where one is allowed to ‘exist’ and to be recognized as such.

Citizenship has been seen as “an institutionalized form of solidarity. It constitutes an expression of full and formal membership. Citizenship forms a continuing series of reciprocal transactions between the citizen and the state: whether or not we derive it from a contract between state and citizen (Hobbes 1962) or between citizens who are authors of their constitutions (Rousseau 1973 and Kant 1984)” (Faist 2000: 202-203). Therefore, citizenship as a concept suggests the presence of an interactive relationship consisting of rights and obligations between the citizen and the state (Mouffe 2005). Moreover, the notion of this relationship is based on the shared feeling of ‘belonging’ to a (nation-) state. According to Marshall (1964: 92) “citizenship requires a sense of community membership based on loyalty to a civilization which is a common possession”. Even though this description of citizenship by Marshall sounds convincing, it leaves out the characteristics of citizenship as a structured process that differs from state to state. This description of citizenship is closer to the notion of the nation, which again leads back to the ‘problem’ of breaking up the nation from the state. Moreover, such definitions echo the notion of equal rights to all participating in a state. However, this might not be the case in many states, especially when it comes to migration.

States grant citizenship rights based either on the principle of territory (*jus soli*), which means that citizenship is granted upon being born in a country independently of the citizenship of the parents or the blood principle. The ‘*jus sanguinis*’ principle is when citizenship is granted resulting from the parents’ citizenship or a combination of the two. The way that citizenship is granted is directly linked to the issue of transnational migration. Leaving aside debates on integration and/or assimilation, the issue of citizenship and rights has a great

importance in the exploration of transnational migration. As Faist (2000: 206) notes “it is clear that immigration tends to further the unbundling of rights tied to formal citizenship in liberal democratic welfare states: even non-citizens are entitled not only to civil but also to certain social rights in national welfare states”. It is this relationship, as defined by two-way rights and duties between the person (immigrant or native) and the state, that creates the position of someone in the given state. Consequently, this leads to the issue of democracy, since it is the premise for the whole discussion on human rights in any given nation-state.

1.3.3.ii. Democracy

Robert Dahl points out two distinctive dimensions of democracy that are related to this exploration: “inclusiveness, the extent to which people under a given regime’s jurisdiction have the right to participate at all, and liberalization, the extent to which participants in the regime have rights to contest conditions of rule” (1975: 119). When it comes to (transnational) immigration these two variables acquire more importance. It is inclusiveness and liberalization that lead to the status that one acquires in a given state. Therefore, the position of the immigrant is based on the levels of democracy expressed in the human rights rules and practices that penetrate the state in question. According to David Held (1995: 223) “there is a fundamental question about whether the rights embodied in citizenship rights can any longer be sustained simply within the framework that brought them into being”.

Addressing current forms of immigration flows related to globalization effects on the individual, as well as the EU establishing a space of free movement for its citizens, scholars have identified different forms of citizenship. These range from cosmopolitan citizenship, mobility citizenship, and global citizenship, to the concept of the ‘multilayered citizen’, where “people’s rights and obligations to a specific state are mediated and largely dependent on their membership of a specific ethnic, racial, religious or regional collectivity, although they are rarely completely contained by it” (Yuval-Davis 2000: 171, Held 1995, Urry 2000, Muetzelfeldt and Smith 2002). This discussion on new forms of citizenship as well as the grounds for their existence challenges the ‘traditional’ notion of the nation-state. Again, this brings into focus transnational immigration as a trigger, but also as the result of these developments; the challenges that the modern

nation-state faces are directly linked to issues of globalization. Modernity is based on the nation-state formation and the construction of citizenship rights as “sovereignty is institutionalized” through these formations (McMichael 2005: 590-591). As McMichael (2005: 591) points out “the rise of the modern state is premised on the emergence of civil society, the realm of private property and individual rights. How individual rights are translated into citizenship rights (and vice versa) and what those rights entail depend on the transformation of property relations and state trajectories”. Again, the concept of civil society especially when it is linked to private property and individual rights begs the question of where the immigrants are located in such a situation. Both Marshall and McMichael agree on the fact that citizenship:

“derives from a process of formalizing substantive rights in the state, from political, through economic to social rights. Political rights (as limited as they were to property holders in the state) provided the precondition for economic rights (arising from labour organization), which enabled the institutionalization of social rights in the twentieth century welfare state (cf. Stephens, Rueschemeyer, and Stephens 1992)” (McMichael 2005: 590-591).

All the above definitions of the links between citizenship, rights and the nation-state seem straightforward. However, focusing again on the transnational immigrant and his/her position in between two nation-states, the image gets blurred because in this case there is no linear connection between citizenship, rights and the nation-state.

1.4. Conclusion

The theoretical exploration that provides the contextual framework for understanding the conditions of irregular immigrants' habitation opens up issues regarding power, the State and borders as determining factors and structural elements of their lives. The irregular immigrants 'in-betweenness' and the ways that they have to negotiate their position and their everyday experience are directly linked to the ways that they use urban public space. Focusing on the ways that this 'outcast' group contributes, through its inhabitation, to the shaping of urban public space sets the context of the present work. The multiple negotiations, ranging from everyday survival to concepts related to citizenship and rights, form the irregular immigrants' everyday experience.

This experience through the everyday details that construct the irregular immigrants' lives is explored in the next chapters. Their relation to urban public space is examined and presented through the different aspects of life under irregular and institutionally invisible conditions. Chapter 2 presents and discusses the theoretical tools that have shaped this research, emphasizing the importance of the user in the production of urban public space through the concept of 'relationality'. The examination of the production of space as a multifaceted issue that is constantly changing follows Lefebvre's conceptual scheme of representations of space, representational spaces and spatial practices, as this is empirically applied in the case of Omonia Square. Having set the theoretical framework, Chapter 3 discusses the epistemological notions that directed the research design and the methods used. Originating from interpretive methodology, the mixture of qualitative methods that have been used are presented as the chapter engages with the design and conduct of the research.

In chapter 4 the structural conditions that render irregular immigrants institutionally invisible are discussed in order to shed light on the forces that push them into their invisible, irregular and in-between position in the case of Omonoia. The EU framework on immigration and the Greek legislation are explored, since it is the combination and sometimes the opposing character of the two that shape the immigrants' position and their status in Greece.

Chapter 5 presents the case of Omonoia Square and central Athens to familiarize the reader with, and provide a framework for, the case study. The history, symbolic character and nature of Omonoia are presented along with the main socio-political changes that formulated Athens. In this way, and through detailed description of the area through time, the 'representations of space' are explored: how space is conceived and conceptualized through authorities, in the plans, codes and designs that point to its 'official' use and function, and thus related to dominant spaces (Soja 1996: 66-67), as well as 'representational spaces', the ways that people make sense of space and the imaginations around it. Researching the transnational character of irregular immigrants' everyday lives,

Chapter 6 follows irregular immigrants' network formation. Urban public space acquires significance and meaning since it is the place where networks operate and individuals engage in activities to cope with their situation. The transnational character of their networking and the relationship between the country of origin and the host country are examined in relation to their uses of urban space. In the case of ethnic communities, urban public space becomes the means of connection and therefore, survival. Chapter 7 examines the different ways that individual irregular immigrants use urban public space to secure their basic needs in the context of their invisibility as a 'weapon'. Specifically, the exploration follows the

interviewees in their attempts to cover their basic needs, such as finding shelter and moneymaking. Ranging from providing shelter for the homeless, which is the case for every immigrant newcomer, to connecting with people to secure food, Omonia Square becomes central since it is the connecting node. Chapter 8, still focused on the individuals, moves away from the public sphere and into the private domain, exploring irregular immigrants' understandings of belonging, homemaking and domesticity. In an attempt to comprehend the sentiment of belonging and 'translate' it to practicalities of creating a home, the in-between condition of immigrants becomes the focus of attention, heightened by their invisibility and irregularity. The process of becoming a part of a city reflects the relationship to a given society. Concluding, chapter 9 examines the instances of everyday actions as a product of and a part of the production of urban public space as a reflection of society. The claim to urban public space and the actualization of the right to it sheds light on the appropriation and the production of space.

Chapter 2

Evaluating the relationship between urban public space and users

2.1. Introduction

One of the key objectives of the thesis is to contribute to theoretical debates about the relationships between urban space and its users, by examining the interrelation between irregular immigrants and public space through its everyday use. As outlined in the previous chapter, the specificity of irregular immigrants' habitation and use of places such as Omonoia Square broaches on the theoretical realms of transnationality and public space. As Harvey (2009: 10-11) suggests:

“Spatial forms are [...] seen not as inanimate objects within which the social process unfolds, but as things which “contain” social processes in the same manner that social processes are spatial”.

Attempting to understand the situation in the Athenian historical centre within the framework of theories on transnationality and urban space, the irregular immigrants' habitation and use of urban public space, is the lens to unravel the specifics of the relationship between this particular group of users and urban public space. To understand, and disentangle, the relationship between the user and space, the chapter engages with the theoretical tools that can illuminate the constitutive elements of this relationship. More specifically, aiming at an understanding of the users' actions and habitation, the chapter is divided into three parts. The first explores the social character of the city and the urban environment, understanding the city and the urban environment as, at least

partly, social products. Following early theories on urbanization, the urban environment is seen as a matrix of social relations. The materialization of these relations can be explored through the lens of the constitutive elements that have been presented by Lefebvre in his theorization of the production of space as the interrelation of representations of space, representational spaces and spatial practices.

Thus, the second part of the chapter explores Lefebvre's triad as a theoretical tool to unravel the different aspects/forces that shape urban space through an application of these elements in Omonoia Square. The interplay between the structural elements and the users' actions and conceptions that is highlighted through the Lefebvrian triad brings forth the relationship, much discussed in social theory, between agency and structure that is the third part of the chapter. Going back to the attempts by social theory to bridge and explore the relationship between agency and structure, not as a pure dualism but as a reciprocal interrelation, draws a parallel relationship between space and its user(s). More specifically, Giddens' structuration theory brings to light the active character of the agent that allows for a dynamic and reciprocal relationship between structure and agency that can deepen the understanding between the inhabitant and the urban space since it is precisely the active character of the agent/ user that defines and interacts with space resulting in its shape.

In the rest of the third part, focusing on the user as an active and reflective agent, I explore concepts such as belonging, homemaking and community formation to identify aspects of the user's/agent's knowledgeability as they appear in everyday actions. The act of creating a home and roots, either in terms of the materiality of homemaking and domesticating, or as belonging to networks and actively

claiming a living and the right to be in a city, can be understood as the instantiations of the active and reflective nature of the agent and can provide insights on the actual use of urban public space.

2.2. Urban sociabilities

One way to explore and understand the relationship between urban space and the user is the conceptualization of the city and the urban environment as, at least partly, social products. The relationships that define and create the urban fabric are perceived as social relations given the human interaction that is involved. Sociological approaches of urbanism view the city as a complexity of multiple factors in which social relations play an important role (Wirth 1930, Mumford 1937, Park 1936, Simmel in Wolf 1950, Harvey 2009, Mitchell 2003, Massey 2005). Mumford's (1937: 185) description of the city as "a geographic plexus, an economic organization, an institutional process, a theatre of social action, and an aesthetic symbol of collective unity" emphasizes the city's encompassing and complex nature. Ranging from the political, the economic, e.g. the city's growth depending on its market value and its economic ability, the architecture and physical location of the city, its historical topography, and its role in wider networks, to the socio-cultural elements, the city is based, experienced and lived by its inhabitants (Harvey 1989, 2009, Logan and Molotch 1987, Parsons 2002, Castells 2001).

As such, the city is also a "composition of history of traditions, customs, representations and self-identifications" (Parsons 2002). Exploring the nature of urban space and its interaction with its users presupposes an understanding of the complexity of the relations that constitute the city. One way to understand the city is by viewing it as a text, which implies the complexity of its 'codes', structure, symbols, different 'readings' by its users, and allows for the idea of deciphering (Frisby 2002, 2001). According to Frisby (2002: 15), among the presuppositions of this understanding is that the city "possesses features of

textuality - at the basic level, a potentially decipherable constellation of signs and symbols". The "city as a text presupposes a reader" (Frisby 2002: 15), the inhabitant and user of the urban space, who is able to access the 'text'. However, this 'reader' is bound since "that readership is stratified, partly on the basis of access to the text (mediated by power relations in the city), but certainly according to gender, social class, ethnicity, generation, etc." (Frisby 2002: 15). The conceptualization of the user/inhabitant of the city as its 'reader' within the context of relationality, that is the relational accounts of the city as the sum of different but related elements and forces, shapes the understanding of space with the user at its centre. The idea that the inhabitant is constrained by biographical characteristics within a fabric of forces that are materialized in the urban space, calls for a closer exploration of the user as a node of connections.

Relational accounts of the city illuminate the complexity of the factors and the forces that comprise the urban fabric that the individual user has to decipher, having as his/her 'tools', the biographical details that shape his/her point of view and understanding. There are different accounts of relationality and space in human geography and urban sociology, and a useful summary is provided by Amin (2007: 104):

"[...] the city becomes the sum of its spatial connections, a place where: (a) myriad networks of varying length, speed and duration intersect; (b) many human, technological and biological elements combine; (c) spatial contiguity implies no relational connectivity; and (d) the urban hum is the sum of resonances from the past, the ghostly weight of hidden institutions and symbolic rituals (Pile 2005) and the reverberation of local daily activities and the noise of things from afar circulating in supply chains, transit systems and

virtual networks”.

Amin’s summary is an illustration of all the forces, inanimate and human, that characterize urban space. It takes into account the structural, as in the economic, political and technological, forces that intersect with the everyday activities of the users of space, through and across boundaries, within networks and flows, in the context of globalization and the reciprocal interaction of these with the inhabitants. Urban space in the context of relationality is viewed as a construction of different elements based on interrelations (Massey 1994, 2005, Amin 2007). As such, relational accounts of the city can be viewed as an amplification and detailed exploration of Lefebvrian conceptualizations but also a more tangible understanding of the relationship between agency and structure as reflected in the urban space. The interrelations that comprise the city when translated into everyday life bring together the individual and the structures and forces around him/her, since it is the socio-spatial relations of the actors/inhabitants that are entwined with broader structures (Massey 1994, 2005, Yeung 2005).

Understanding the urban fabric as the relations of multiple factors and their reflection as its textuality that is being ‘read’ and reflected upon by the user(s), it is the role of the individual and the social relations that are formed that I want to focus on. The social relations that comprise the city are the social urban fabric where life is staged. The social element then becomes focal: people’s existence within the city, their use(s) and imagination(s) of the city, create the mosaic that is the city. No factor can be singled out since all combined create the urban environment. Still, all the above-mentioned interactions, flows and even structures (such as political and economic) are derived from and acted by people. The conceptualization, that the physical, the economic and the structural

organization of the city follow its social needs, reveals the interrelation between the integral parts of the city and places emphasis on the social element, the city's inhabitants (Mumford 1937). Theorizations of the city that bring forth both its social nature and its structural complexities and the forces shaping it, leave room for the exploration of new phenomena that are distinct due to the different conditions from city to city. The uniqueness of each city is due to its complex nature and each city must be viewed as distinctive, as is the case in my research. This becomes the broad theoretical framework of this work, following Robinson's (2006: 20) line of thinking that:

“[Cities] in their diverse links to many different places and in their function as assemblages of social and economic relations, cities provide a model for the ways in which different, sometimes new, phenomena and experiences circulate to different places and accumulate a distinctive cultural meaning there”.

The emphasis on cultural meaning in the context of connecting different but interrelated elements that comprise the city takes us back to the social and human aspect of urbanism. The focus on urban sociabilities (Simone 2004) becomes central in the investigation of the phenomenon of irregular immigrants' habitation of urban public space that is the heart of this work (Simone 2004). Using the irregular immigrants' habitation as a lens to examine the ways that inhabitants are related with the urban environment presupposes an examination of their everyday activities, and their social connections in the structural framework of existing environments and networks. The urban space becomes the “social backdrop against which life is played out” (Mitchell 2000: 215). However, it is not *just* the backdrop, since it is social action that formulates the urban space and vice versa,

given that space is constituted through social relations, while simultaneously “the social is spatially constructed” (Massey 1994: 254). Urban space is not just the tableau of social action, as Simmel (Wolff 1950) pointed out, spatial relations are “determining conditions of relationships but are also symbolic of those”.

Placing the individual in the centre of the investigation, my research focuses on the relationships between the city inhabitants and the relationships between the city itself and its inhabitants. Following Simone’s (2004: 137) argument that “cities are places of thickening connections. [...] In other words, if people exist side by side, then somehow they have something to do with each other”, the associational relationships that are taking place simply because of the physical proximity are also to be examined here, especially given the irregular and invisible conditions that the groups under investigation are living in. This associational relationship, between the invisible, irregular immigrants and mainstream society, can have a direct effect on the urban environment. For example, the presence of irregular immigrants in the area around Omonioia has been picked up by the media that have labelled the area a ghetto. On this note, the irregular immigrants’ existence in public space can bring about changes in the public space’s character, either by different uses of the space and/or by the creation of different popular imaginations of the place. These issues are investigated in an attempt to understand better the nature of the urban space in conjunction to its inhabitants. To do so, one of the main tools I have used is Lefebvre’s conceptualization of the production of space, and more specifically his conceptual triad consisting of representations of space, representational spaces and spatial practices. This will be more analytically presented in the next sections.

Lefebvre’s (1991) conceptualization takes into account the users, the perceptions

of space in its everyday use and the institutional forces that shape public space. Through his theorization, the relations between the way that a space is constructed, the need(s)/function(s) that it must address, the way that it is perceived by users and the imaginations on and for it, and the actual uses of the place in everyday life, are connected. Always having in mind the interaction between users and space, the question of who has the right to space arises. The case of irregular immigrants living in public space, balancing between visibility and invisibility, highlights the importance of the democratic nature of public space. Is public space really democratic? Do all the users have the same rights in using and even being in public space? Public space is the arena where the political meets the individual and where democracy, democratic practices and participation have an actual manifestation, since they are reflected in the relationships that arise in urban public space environment(s). The irregularity of immigrants residing in central Athens relates to exclusionary practices as these are manifested in public space (Mitchell 2003, Low 2000, Carr et al 1993, Van Deusen 2002, Allen and Pryke 1994). The power relations that force groups to claim their own geographies on space are related to the theoretical concept of institutional invisibility, since it is the irregular, precarious and invisible conditions of living that drive immigrants to use space differently and to claim their right to public space (Lyman and Scott 1967). As has been presented in the previous chapter, institutional invisibility is forced upon irregular immigrants through the official denial of their existence. However, their actual presence and the necessity of meeting their needs, e.g. finding shelter, money, or food, forces them to occupy and use public space in a multiplicity of ways, as will be presented in later chapters. Using public space either as private, e.g. to sleep, or to create and participate to illegal networks of job seeking/moneymaking, is because of the

invisibility that is forced upon them. Public spaces become a way that institutional invisibility can be reversed and used as a means, as a 'weapon of the weak', to secure alternative ways of sustainment. However, this situation challenges the status quo of a place and emphasizes questions relating to its democratic nature. In exploring these relationships, Lefebvre's triad is used here as one of the main theoretical and analytical tools.

2.3. The Production of Space: Lefebvre's influence

2.3.1. On Lefebvre

Lefebvre's work on the production of space is a grand theoretical scheme attempting to give a definition of 'space' by explaining it in the context of modernity. As he writes in the very first sentences of "The Urban Revolution": "Society has been completely urbanized. This hypothesis implies a definition: An urban society that results from a process of complete urbanization" (2003: 1). One of the most important incidences in the creation and transformation of space is the relationship between space itself and the people using it. Lefebvre's theoretical construction on the production of space highlights the relations of power and power structures. Lefebvre places the understanding of the city in the context of capitalism and modernity and he presents the relations of power according to the dominant mode of production in a given society and their relation to space.

The connection and interrelation of space and people does not occur independently of the historical-political-economic framework of a given society. On the contrary, it is within this framework that the production of space takes place (Lefebvre 1991, 1996, 2003, Harvey 1989, 2009, Soja 1996). One of Lefebvre's first definitions of the city, "as a projection of society on the ground, that is, not only on the actual site, but at a specific level, perceived and conceived by thought, which determines the city and the urban" (1996: 109), shows how his work attempted to focus on the right that actors in the city have, by emphasizing that "the city is an oeuvre- a work in which all its citizens participate" (Mitchell 2003: 17). The question of who has the right to the city has been central

in Lefebvre's work as this "implies the right to the uses of city spaces, the right to inhabit" (Mitchell 2003: 17), and this is one of the main issues that the present work is concerned with (Lefebvre 1996). Another element I draw from Lefebvre's theorization is the focus on everyday activities, the rhythm of analysis of everyday life.

Lefebvre's work has been highly influential and highly criticized. According to Gottdiener (1993) and Soja (1996), Lefebvre's work opens up multiple dimensions of social spatiality providing a unified theory of and for space. The volume and the elusiveness of his arguments on how space is actually produced and transformed and on the exact definition of concepts such as 'rhythmanalysis' have been criticised (Merrifield 1993, May and Thrift 2001). The grand theoretical scheme that Lefebvre created is also one of the main criticisms of his work, since the unified nature of his work makes it hard to distinguish his arguments and to use concepts independently, thus making the empirical application of his theory difficult. However, attempts to apply Lefebvre's theory have also shown the heuristic importance and usefulness of his theorizations, since it is his "ability to link representation and imagination with the physical spaces of the cities and to emphasize the dialectical relationship between identity and urban space" (McCann 1999: 168, Unwin 2000, Allen and Pryke 1994).

Taking into account the criticisms, it is my opinion that Lefebvre's conceptualizations and especially his triad on the production of space, which will be presented in detail in the next section, can still be used as tools or instruments of analysis. Without ignoring the interconnections that Lefebvre created in his theoretical arguments, the concepts of representational spaces, representations of space and spatial practices can be used as magnifying glasses that allow us to

understand the complexities of the urban environment through the relationship between them. The three elements can be viewed as 'moments' in the production of space and as such they allow the exploration of the everyday reality through the connection of imagination, perception and practice.

2.3.2. Spatial Practices- Representations of Space- Representational Spaces

The focus then turns to the triad as a tool for understanding the different factors comprising the relationship that ultimately shapes the urban space. Harvey (2009: 46) defines the city

“as a complex dynamic system in which spatial form and social process are in continuous interaction with each other. If we are to understand the trajectory of the urban system, we must understand the functional relationships which exist within it, and the independent features in the social processes and spatial form which can change the line in the trajectory”.

Highlighting the complexity of the city, this definition supports the analytical utility of the Lefebvrian triad: it allows for examining the different elements that come into play, while also taking account of their interrelation and continuous interaction. The use of the triad as a tool in the case of central Athens will be presented in the following section, as the underlying logic has been a major influence in the present work. The elements of the triad, representational spaces, representations of space and spatial practices, will be discussed, along with a first attempt to apply them empirically in the case of central Athens.

The conceptual framework that Lefebvre created attempts to identify and present the linkages between different but interrelated actions concerning space. One element, representations of space, is the structural, almost imposed creation of space that comes through controlled designs aiming at specific purposes with the means of knowledge and dominant ideology. Another element, representational spaces, is the way that space is understood by people. These two are related

through the everyday lives of users of space. Lefebvre uses this conception to connect the macro and the micro levels of analysis through the actual agency of people. In this way, a better understanding of the actual production of space in relation to society is attempted. "Space is simultaneously a spatial practice (externalized, material environment), a representation of space (a conceptual model used to direct practice) and a space of representation (the lived social relation of users to the environment)" (Gottdiener 1993: 3). The interpretation presented by Gottdiener gives a more 'pragmatic' dimension on the subject of the production of space that allows for an empirical approach.

Spatial Practices or experiences (Harvey 1990: 220) as a concept "embraces production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation. [It] ensures continuity and some degree of cohesion" (Lefebvre, 1991: 33). Spatial practices are directly linked with how a space is perceived in a given society (Soja 1996: 10). They are the everyday activities of life that "continually mediate between [abstract and social] space working within the bounds of the conceived abstract spaces of planners and architects while simultaneously being shaped and shaping individuals' perceptions and uses of space" (McCann 1999: 11). Spatial practices are the everyday activities of people occurring in space. In the case of Omonoia, there is a plethora of different actions that take place within and around the Square, day and night. For example, one of the main functions of the square is the service that it provides as a central node of transportation for the whole city of Athens, with direct linkages between the metro, the underground and a large number of buses. On the one border of the Square, there used to be a number of big chain stores that were busy during the day. Marginal groups, like prostitutes, drug dealers and drug addicts,

use the Square all hours of the day and night to engage in dealing and using drugs. Another everyday night-time activity in the centre of the Square is the abundance of homeless people searching for shelter in the cement blocks that were constructed as a design-effect and occupy the central point of the Square. The diversity of the spatial practices that take place in Omonoia exemplifies the different uses of space by distinctive groups and highlights the need for further exploration of what a public space really is and how it is defined in respect to its users and its official use(s).

Representations of Space “are tied to the relations of production and to the ‘order’ which those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes and to ‘frontal’ relations” (Lefebvre, 1991: 33). As McCann (1999: 11) points out, representation of space is “always abstract since it is conceived rather than directly lived”. Representations of space are linked with how space is conceived and conceptualized through authorities, in the plans, codes and designs that point to its ‘official’ use and function, and thus related to dominant spaces (Soja 1996: 66-67). Exploring the ‘conceived’ role of the triad in Omonoia, including the official plans for the Square, the uses designed and directed by local and state government officials, will be presented in detail in chapter 4. The two main uses and functions of the Square since it was first formulated have been (a) commerce and (b) linkages between major Athenian roads and later on, the linkage between all public transportation means. Even though the image and the design of the Square has been altered many times, the concept behind all the changes in its design has been the same, to celebrate it as a part of the heart of Athens and the central node of the city. Through the years and despite the changes in its design and their reflections on the Square’s character, Omonoia has always been a

square directly linked and commemorating the functions of a modern city, being used as a centre for commerce and public services, with a range of ministries and governmental services located in and around it.

Representational Spaces: are “embodying complex symbolisms, sometimes coded, sometimes not, linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life, as also to art” (Lefebvre 1991: 33). According to Soja (1996: 67):

“an attempt is being made here to retain, if not emphasize, the partial unknowability, the mystery, the secretiveness, the non-verbal subliminality, of spaces of representation. [...] Here then space is directly lived, with all its intractability intact, a space that stretches across the images and symbols that accompany it, the space of ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’.”

Representational spaces then can be seen as the ways that people make sense of place. As has been presented in the case of spatial practices, there are many overlapping imaginations of the space. One is the image of Omonoia Square as the façade of Athens, since it is one of the three points that constitute the historical-economic-touristic centre of the city. Another, more recent, representation of the centre of Athens, promoted through the media, is a ghetto-in-the-making. A third is the conception of Athenians, who view the place as a hot-spot of trendy nightlife. These conceptions of the same space seem to be opposing since they present different images of the same place. Sometimes, even one person or group might present conflicting views for the same place. The prime example comes from those who work at the National Theatre in Omonoia. In their public plea towards the police to keep the area ‘safe’, thus presenting it as dangerous, they seek to maintain the image of the place as a high-end cultural

zone.

2.3.3. Empirical application of the triad in Omonoia Square

In the case of Omonoia, as will be fully discussed in Chapter 5, the group that seems to dominate this space now is the underclass group(s) inhabiting the place. In the Athenian centre, there are multiple layers and spatialities that need to be accounted for and fall into each category of the triad. I will focus first on spatial practices since these represent the actuality of everyday life and can be viewed as the instantiation that imaginations and understandings of the space bring to life. Exploring users' practices in Omonoia Square, one fact becomes apparent: the marginal, underclass and sometimes 'deviant' population is highly visible at all times of the day. The paths of marginal populations intersect with the mainstream. Public places, because of their open character, entail the element of different populations' actions and functions taking place simultaneously, even if opposing. However, the contrasts evident in Omonoia Square are not common: the co-existence of prostitutes, drug dealers and addicts, large numbers of homeless people and irregular immigrants with public authority officials and mainstream populations at all times of the day and night. The continuous and high visibility of large numbers of marginal populations point to the discrepancy between the official uses of the place and the everyday practices. Also, following Lefebvre's conceptualization, the underclass dwelling in the area should remain 'hidden'. As Allen and Pryke (1994: 471) explain, according to Lefebvre, the marginal population is expected to remain hidden by occupying a 'concealed space' where there is "no formal presence or recognition". This diversity between expectation and real life practice calls for a deeper exploration of the actuality and formation of visibility/ invisibility and its relation to notions of power and dominance.

Starting with the issues of power and dominance, we are directed to the notion

of abstract space, specifically to the dominance of abstract space as represented by those in power as a uniform, coherent space. Even though Lefebvre uses the concepts of contradictions of space and dominated spaces that would partly explain the different levels of realities, these concepts still under-represent the tensions in (at least in this) given space. It would be a mistake to leave out the underclass population inhabiting this space since it is their presence that defines the situation as problematic. Lefebvre accounts for some of the tensions that exist in society and space as becomes clear through the concepts of 'appropriated', 'dominant' and 'concealed' spaces. However, in my understanding, these are too rigid to allow for the expression of the tensions in a given society. That raises the question of what is really dominant in a place? How do we define dominance in a given space? Lefebvre's theorization, based on the dominant mode of production and other Marxist conceptualizations, although accounting for tensions in a society/space, does not seem to leave much space for their manifestation.

Related to these questions of power and different realities is the important issue of the visibility/invisibility of groups in specific spaces. In the case of Athens, this becomes an issue since it is the underclass population that inhabits this space and seems to be the dominant one in terms of the appropriation of space, that officially does not exist at all.

These issues concerning spatial practices are inextricably linked to representational spaces, to the way people make sense of the place, since the imaginations and the understandings of a place direct its uses and functions. It is expected that the everyday practices are a result of what users understand and believe a space to be. Related to that, the popular imagination as constructed by the media might have played an important role, labelling Omonoia either as a

ghetto or a trendy entertainment hot spot. There is media coverage presenting the place as dangerous and soon-to-be ghetto, while alternative, free press magazines (probably reflecting the wishful thinking of another socioeconomic group) present Omonoia as being related to images of multicultural areas similar to London's Brick Lane and Berlin's Kreuzberg. This links the notion of spatial practices to the representational spaces in the case of Omonoia. Of course, another approach would be to try and understand how the underclass population inhabiting the space is making sense of it: as far as I can guess, for some of them it is the closest they have to a home.

The third element of the triad is the representation of space that, at least to some extent, reinforces symbolisms and imaginations. The representations of space come mostly from plans and official decisions for the place. Again, in the case of the Athenian centre there is a multiplicity of accounts, since Omonoia is the focus of change every few years. While not going into depth on every pole of the triad, what I am trying to establish here is that, in the case of Omonoia, even though it is difficult to separate the different axes of Lefebvre's theorization, the use of the triad as an analytical tool allows for a deeper exploration of the elements that constitute the case at hand. The concept of representations of space will be the focus of subsequent chapters identifying the structural elements, whereas the main content of the present chapter relates to the concepts of representational spaces and spatial practices focusing on the users of urban space through their everyday activities.

2.4. Structure-Agency: an insight on the relationship between the inhabitant and the city

One of the most important elements in Lefebvre's theorizations, as has been mentioned before, is the emphasis that it gives to the user, the individual agent in the context of interrelated elements that create and modify space. As Mitchell (2003: 17) points out "Lefebvre's normative argument that the city is an *oeuvre*- a work in which all its citizens participate" illustrates the significance of the user/inhabitant. Given that the focus is to understand how urban public space is shaped through the lens of irregular immigrants' habitation, the importance of the individual agent becomes highlighted. Urban space then is viewed, following Lefebvre's theorization, as "an *oeuvre*, as a collective if not singular project [...] and new models of living, new modes of inhabiting, are invented" (Mitchell 2003: 18). The everyday practices, the actions of the users of space in a specific context, influence the shape that this space will take.

In the case of the irregular immigrants, there are multiple dynamics at play due to their ambiguous conditions of living. The precarious condition of their in-betweenness, the invisibility that covers their existence, the fact that they must find alternative means to make ends meet, drive irregular immigrants into the margins. Thus, their everyday lives do not follow the norm and do not coincide with the accepted, mainstream conditions of living. In this context, their uses and appropriation of space can take several different forms. The different uses and appropriation of public space by irregular immigrants depend upon a range of relations that are informed by their invisibility and their ambiguous conditions of living. The relations that are formed amongst them can range significantly, given, for example, their ethnic identity. Additionally, power struggles over space

and means can define their relations to other groups of people occupying and/or using the same space. Reciprocity, co-existence or clashes with other groups reflect on the uses and appropriation of space. Whether the relationships that are formed are of co-existence or of antagonism direct the appropriation of space. Additionally, being denied visibility, the irregular immigrants are not in a direct relation with the State and the benefits and the means that it can provide. The attempt to substitute these drives the different ways that space is used, since the needs that arise can push people further in deviancy and marginalization as will be further discussed in chapter 7. In Harvey's words (2009: 14):

“The problem of the proper conceptualization of space is resolved through human practice with respect to it. In other words, there are no philosophical answers to philosophical questions that arise over the nature of space- the answers lies in human practice. The question “what is space?” is therefore replaced by the question “how is it that different human practices create and make use of distinctive conceptualizations of space?”.

Human practices as reflected in perceptions and the everyday ways of experiencing space are central to the exploration of the interrelationship between irregular immigrants and urban public space. As has been already pointed out in Chapter 1, the conditions that surround the irregular immigrants' lives are quite peculiar in terms of their lack of any kind of status, their marginality and their in-betweenness. These characteristics combined with the fact that they inhabit a public place that is by default visible and symbolic, as the historic heart of Athens, can provide insights on the issues of public place habitation and the right to space. The sheer presence and its visibility bring back the question of the right to space by people who have no right to exist at all. Also, the question of the production of

space can be viewed from another direction given the irregular immigrants' different ways of appropriating public space. Even the symbolic character of Omonoia Square as a part of the historic triangle of Athens and thus its function as the façade of the city is being challenged by the irregular immigrants' habitation and marginality. Therefore, their everyday lives and movements in the city, what Lefebvre and deCerteau would call the rhythm of their everyday life and its practice, will be examined as a way to understand the shaping of public space under the challenge of the irregular immigrants' conditions; their visible existence and its results in conjunction with formally not existing at all. There is a fundamental premise that I borrow from social theory which is important in providing the theoretical framework and tools that this work has been based on. The concept of 'agency' outlined by Giddens (1976, 1984) in his attempt to overcome one of the main dualisms in social theory between agency and structure, can assist an understanding of the importance of the individual actor in the context of a given structural framework, such as urban space.

Giddens' conceptualization draws parallels to Lefebvre's understanding of the production of space in that it interrelates the concepts of agency and structure in the same way that Lefebvre's conceptual triad links the different aspects of perception, conception and experience (Giddens 1976, 1984, Lefebvre 1991). In this sense, the link between the different elements that create space is no different than the relationship between the individual and society. Given that the urban environment is seen as a reflection of society, then the user of space is the agent. Ultimately, the understanding of the relationship between the user and urban space is an insight in the understanding of a given society. A way to gain insight on the relationship between the inhabitant and space, is through the exploration of

the parallel relationship between structure and agency.

2.4.1. Structuration theory: the inhabitant in the city

The concept of agency, acknowledges the agents' characteristics, which are reflexivity, knowledgeability and power to act (Giddens 1984). Viewing the inhabitant, the user of space as the agent that embodies these elements, an exploration drawing common features in the relationship between the user/ space and agent/ structure can unravel the triggers of everyday practices. The understanding of the user of space having these characteristics will be used throughout this work. Summarizing Giddens' arguments, Waters (2000: 11) argues that agency

“lies in the arena of human subjectivity. It concerns what happens in the consciousness when an individual undertakes to an act in the social world. [...] Society is viewed as a human construction which constantly shifts and changes with the subject's perceptions and motivational inputs”.

Similarly, space shifts and changes through the users' perceptions, conceptions and actions. Viewing urban space as a reflection of society, individual actors impacts upon it, and the recursive relationship between them, is a matter for deeper exploration. According to Soja (1996: 1) “[people] are, and have always been, intrinsically spatial beings, active participants in the social constructions of our embracing spatialities”.

Active participation of users in public space is the conceptual connection between urban space and its use in the same way that Giddens' conceptualizations of agency and praxis shed light on the entwining between the individual and society. For this reason, the exploration of individuals' everyday activities taking place in public space will be viewed through Giddens' concept of agency and praxis. In

Giddens' work, the word "action is superior to the word "agency" because it more solidly draws attention to the socially active nature of human beings" (Layder 2006: 4). Structure on the other hand "refers to patterns in social arrangements which underlie the immediacy of experience" (Waters, 2000: 12). The conventional sense of the term 'structure' refers to the social relationships that create the social context in which individuals act. In this definition, "social organizations, institutions and cultural products (like language, knowledge and so on) are the primary referent of the term 'structure' (Layder 2006: 5). The parallels to Lefebvre's conception of the representational spaces and representations of space can then be drawn. The complementary nature of the two theoretical arguments lies in the mediation that they both allow between the given circumstances and the individuals' active character within the given circumstances. In the same way that structure refers to objective features of social life in that they are part of a pre-existing set of social arrangements, representations of space are given and external to the individual user. In the same way that structure has a subjective component insofar as people enact the social routines that such arrangements imply, the mediation of representational spaces and spatial practices provide the same subjective component when it comes to the production of space.

The meaning and the importance of the dualism between structure and agency for sociology is based on the fact that these two concepts link the individual person, the actor/the agent with the social setting in which he/she is living (Mouzelis 1995, Layder 2006). The important element about Giddens' approach is that he sees agency and structure as a 'duality'. That is, they cannot be separated from one another: agency is implicated in structure and structure is

involved in agency (Giddens 1976, 1984). Similarly, in geography, the relations between space and users are of primary importance in understanding how space is produced and altered. Focusing on irregular immigrants, given the invisible and 'unknown' nature of their habitation and existence in urban public space, an exploration of the ways that the characteristics of agency are played out comes to the fore.

According to Giddens, people are active, they are not just dupes of outside forces or victims of nature. An important characteristic of people is their ability to reflect (Giddens 1976, 1984). Their reflexive character gives them some, even limited choice (Giddens 1976, 1984, Mouzelis 1995). Giddens (1984) holds the belief that people have capacities, skills and knowledge. According to Giddens (1984: 2) "the basic domain of the social sciences, according to the theory of structuration, is neither the experience of the individual actor, nor the existence of any form of social totality, but social practices ordered across time and space". Viewing the users and inhabitants of space through this definition can help in better situating them in their actual conditions of living. The concept and the power that it gives to the actor can help understanding how irregular immigrants and other marginal groups that are considered weak transform and use their invisible situation as a weapon, even if only for survival purposes (Scott 1985, Simone 2004).

"The notion of agency connects directly with the concept of *Praxis*, and when speaking of regularized types of act I shall talk of *human practices*, as an ongoing series of "practical activities". It is analytical to the concept of agency: (a) that a person "could have acted otherwise" and (b) that the world as constituted by a stream of events-in-process independent of the

agent does not hold out a predetermined future” (Giddens, 1976: 75).

With the concept of praxis, Giddens offers an understanding of the agent as having choice to act in a number of ways. According to Giddens, all social action involves structure and all structure involves social action. Giddens’ primary interest is in human agency as is reflected in human practices. In the same manner, the ways that irregular immigrants conduct their everyday lives and activities within the urban environment mould its shape. Activities are “not brought into being by social actors but are continually recreated by them via the very means whereby they express themselves as actors. In and through their activities agents produce the conditions that make these activities possible” (Giddens 1984: 2).

Similarly, the notion of relationality in geography suggests that space is constituted through social relations and social relations are spatially constructed (Massey 1994, 2005, Malpas 2012). It has been claimed that in geography, the “relational turn enters the structure-agency debate by ascribing a greater role to agency as opposed to structures [...]” (Boggs and Rantisi 2003: 110). The emphasis on the reciprocal nature of the relationship between the user and space as a two way simultaneous influence addresses an approach to the agent/ structure debate. The complementarity in the nature of these relations can deepen an understanding of both the production of space and society. A close argument to Structuration theory is Yeung’s (2005: 37) explanation of spatial relations: “socio-spatial relations of actors are intertwined with broader structures and processes of economic change at various geographical scales”. The multi-scale approach and the challenge of boundaries stress the importance of interrelations and entwining of different elements that shape both the user and space (Amin

2007, Boggs and Rantisi 2003, Malpas 2012, Massey 1994, 2005, Jessop et al. 2008, Thrift 2006, Yeung 2005). In this way, “while space is no longer viewed as the container in which actions occur, it still plays a role in defining the field of opportunities and constraints” (Boggs and Rantisi 2003: 114). In understanding and acting upon opportunities and constraints, it is the notion of reflexivity and knowledgeability that informs the agent’s actions. The concept of reflexivity makes the individual a being with choices, and the concept of the agent as having skills, capacities and knowledge, allow him/her to shape his/her environment.

A related concept that allows for a deeper understanding of the user/agent is relational autonomy, described as the “free, self governing agent who is also socially constituted and who possibly defines her basic value commitments in terms of interpersonal relations and mutual dependencies” (Christman 2004: 143). Relational autonomy allows more freedom to the agent as well as fluidity in the interrelations between agency and structure. In exploring the production and appropriation of urban space, the understanding of its users having even restrained choices that direct their action can be useful. For Giddens, structure has no existence beyond the situations in which people are acting. According to him, structure refers to the rules and the resources that people have, meaning that people shape their personality and their choices based on these resources. This is why structure is internal to activity. The concept of instantiation makes everything come to life through instances in people’s lives from their actions; the same can be said and applied when exploring space through instantiations of everyday activities. As Low mentions, in the urban environment people are social agents constructing their own realities.

“The relationship between the individual and society is profoundly altered in the city, according to Simmel. But exactly how the city will shape this relation, he concludes, will be determined by a struggle between the dynamics of individual independence (bound up with indifference and anonymity) and the elaboration of individuality, which depends on recognition and social interaction. The city provides the ‘arena for this struggle and reconciliation’ (1997: 185)” (Robinson 2006: 54).

Even though this quote by Simmel used by Robinson (2004) seems quite bleak, given that Simmel was preoccupied with the negative aspects of the Metropolis on the individual, it still shows the room that exists for individual action, but also the strong interrelation between the user and urban space, similar to the relation between agent and structure. The fact that both these relationships are mutually informed and influenced by their elements – agent/structure, user/space - shows the terrain of action within given constraints. Additionally, it emphasizes the complementary nature of the elements in a way that allows for a better understanding of the everyday activities, actions and reactions of individuals.

The highest point of agency reflected in urban space is the right to the city, the right to inhabit and thus shape space. The actions of the users of space are a declaration of their right to it and to the city. When seen through the reflective character of agency and praxis and/or the nature of autonomy, then the importance of these concepts in the understanding of how the city is created becomes clearer. Acting, even if that means just being somewhere where one officially doesn’t belong, is the instantiation of reflectivity, praxis and autonomy. The ways that people use and inhabit space are informed by the characteristics of the agent, knowledgeability, reflexivity, autonomy, that direct their everyday

practices.

“The right to the city manifests itself as a superior form of rights: right to freedom, to individualization in socialization, to habitat and to inhabit. The right to the oeuvre, to participation and appropriation (clearly distinct from the right to property) are implied in the right to the city” (Lefebvre 1996: 174).

Having contextualized, defined and refined the relationship between the user and urban space, as well as the importance of the user mainly through the concept of agency and praxis, the remainder of this chapter examines the ways that users materialize the above conceptualizations in their everyday lives.

2.5. Conclusion: Materializing agency as the user(s) perspective

To explore the relationship between irregular immigrants and urban public space, the focus is on their everyday activities and the micro-geographies of their lives. The way that irregular immigrants understand, experience and use space provides an insight into the ways that urban public space is being shaped from the perspective of the actor/user. Viewing the production and appropriation of urban space as a collection of the different users, the relations between the different groups of users and the authorities, a way to examine these relationships, actions and counter-actions, can be through different aspects of individual activity. The practical circumstances and specificities of the space in question, as these are used and formulated by individual actors can show how the character of urban public space is produced and appropriated. The side of the user(s) is examined as a manifestation(s) of agency and praxis within the context of relationality. 'Decoding' the relationship between the user and public space can be investigated through individuals' actions within urban public space.

To do so, two levels will be examined: the collective and the private. The first, the collective can be examined through the existence of ethnic communities and transnational networks and their relationship to urban public space. The second level is the individual and the more private aspects, focusing on issues of homemaking, home and belonging. The irregular immigrants' actions and everyday practices when it comes to these two aspects/levels can reveal facets of their engagement with public space. The usage of space by collectivities and individuals relates back and can unravel to both spatial practices occurring in space and representations of space as these are reflected in its uses. Network formation and community organization, participation in different kinds of

networks and social activities, as well as the process of home-making and domestication are understood as instances when agency is expressed through everyday, simple actions. Given the characteristics that have been attributed to the actor/ user, aspects of their everyday life will be examined as instances of the embodiment of these characteristics.

Chapter 3

Researching the relationship between irregular immigrants and the urban environment.

3.1. Introduction

The aim of the research is to contribute to sociological and geographical debates about the contemporary shaping of public spaces by groups deemed to be marginal or part of an 'outcast' society by focusing on their daily lives *in* the urban public space environment. The concept of the appropriation of public space through the lens of irregular immigrant communities is used in the research as a tool allowing for the detailed investigation of irregular immigrants' lives in the city of Athens. As such, a mixture of interpretive, qualitative methods has been employed to complement each other in the design and implementation of the empirical research, as has been the case in many studies in geography (Low 2000, Robinson 2006, Simone 2004, Flyvbjerg 2001, Mitchell 2003, Foote Whyte 1993).

Focusing on the relationship between the user and space, the qualitative, in- depth understanding of the users' everyday activities becomes central in the research. Having employed the Lefebvrian triad of representations of space, representational spaces and spatial practices as part of the theoretical framework, the user's understandings and uses of space become integral to the research. Even more so given the irregular immigrants' institutional invisibility this calls for an in- depth, detailed method of investigation. To understand people's everyday lives that take place in urban public space, qualitative methods have been employed,

since these allow for deeper knowledge and unravelling of meaning from the perspective of the actors/ participants through an engagement in fieldwork and observation. Mixed methods have been used to collect data in order to get an understanding of the situation in Omonoia, treating it as a case study. Due to the complex and 'invisible' nature of the irregular immigrant communities in the Athenian urban public space, ethnography has been employed as it focuses mainly on the field and allows for in-depth, detailed investigation of the case at hand.

The chapter is divided into three parts. The first engages with the epistemological framework that directed the research design and the fieldwork. Following the interpretive epistemological framework and the phenomenological tradition that dictates that the meaning should be unravelled by the actors themselves, the first part explores the merits of qualitative, in-depth, empirical methodology and tools. As such, it engages with the theoretical context of the methods that guided and were used in the fieldwork: the concept of a case study is investigated since Omonoia Square has been treated as such. Within this context the qualitative methods of in-depth interviews, ethnographic accounts and participant observation are discussed because this mixture of methods was used in the case study research.

The second section discusses the research design and the methods employed in the context of conducting the fieldwork. Given the absence of official data on the residential and professional uses of Omonoia Square and the adjoining streets but also on the existence of irregular immigrants and their communities, the steps that were taken for the fieldwork to materialize are discussed in this part. More specifically, it engages with the practical aspects of the research design, such as: the mapping of Omonoia Square and the adjoining streets in order for me to

collect information that was not available otherwise on the actual uses and functions of the Square and the adjoining streets, mostly focusing on the professional uses of the buildings and the shops. The creation of these maps also serves as a means for the reader to understand the setting of the qualitative research and provides the specifics of the area. Having set the framework of the fieldwork, the details of the in-depth interviews that took place with irregular immigrants (within the time-frame of one year), members of ethnic communities and people in key authority positions are discussed in detail. Because of the under-researched nature of irregular immigrant groups and due to the lack of official information on their habitation but also on the details of the area of Omonia Square, participant observation is discussed since it was a major part of the research undertaken. Data collection and analysis of the material are also discussed, along with the thematics that shaped both the research and the following chapters of the thesis.

The third part of the chapter focuses on my personal experiences of conducting the fieldwork and reflects on issues of the researcher's positionality and the ethics involved in doing research on a group that is institutionally invisible and engages in deviant and marginal activities whereas being visible in plain sight.

3.2. The framework

3.2.1. Epistemological context

Given the focus of this thesis, the understanding of the interaction between irregular immigrants and public space environments, the study draws mainly from details relating to the everyday lives of the group under investigation. My approach is influenced by Schutz's (1967) phenomenology, in which meaning comes from the daily experiences of individuals as these are lived and interpreted by the actors themselves. In this context, the individual 'negotiates' with society, since society and social life are 'intersubjective' phenomena and the interaction among individuals is based on common knowledge and procedures (Schutz 1967, Layder 2006). The idea of understanding social phenomena through accounts of everyday life, especially through the understanding of the individual, converges with Weber's (2009) and Simmel's (Wolf 1950) accounts of interpretive sociology. At the centre of all this is a concentration on the meanings that people ascribe to their social world and an emphasis on their understanding (Weber 2009, Wolf 1950, Geertz 1992). This line of thinking is related to, and further refines, the usage of the concepts of agency and structure that were presented in the previous chapter. The emphasis is on understanding the meaning from the perspective of the actor, coupled with his/her power as being knowledgeable and reflective (Giddens 1974, 1984). The use of sociological tools in geography follows Harvey's (2009: 22-49) line of thinking of the need to relate sociological traditions to geography in an attempt to better understand city life through its social aspects. Similarly, the broader framework of this research borrows from Geertz's (1992) insights on the importance of the interpretation of the structures of signification

and the in-depth descriptive character of individuals' actions within a cultural context. To do this, the unravelling "of understanding from the perspective of the actor in the situation" (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006: 12) becomes central because:

"the individual is seen as holding membership in a community of meaning, such that his subjective perception and understanding themselves draw on the repertoire of collectively created and sanctioned meanings particular to that community and shared within it by its members"(Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006: 12).

These presuppositions locate my research within interpretive methodology, as influenced by phenomenology and hermeneutics. Sharing the importance of understanding reality from the perspective of the actor, as well as "an orientation to questions of meaning" (Yanow and Swartz-Shea 2006: 17), on problems relating to the how and why of things, I have tried to let the subjective meaning of the actors emerge (Yanow and Swartz-Shea 2006, Hoggart et al. 2002). The fuelling of interpretive methodology "by an ontological understanding of the world as meaningful and therefore text like, in the sense that its meanings must always be interpreted" (Hoggart et al. 2002: 22) has been the driving force of the research design and the consequent fieldwork. The translation of epistemological concerns and influences in a practical manner and thus my research design have been a mixture of qualitative methods within the case study of Omonoia Square in Athens.

The on-going debates on qualitative methods and the different claims on ethnography compel me to make a case for the way that I have used the term

ethnography. This is not as a singular method claimed by different theoretical traditions and paradigms but mostly as an umbrella term covering qualitative methods that are flexible and allow deep understanding and continuous interaction with the participants and the field itself. Phenomenology and hermeneutics are directly linked with qualitative, interpretive methods, given the focus on the understanding of meaning through the actors' perceptions. This is clarified by Yanow and Schwartz-Shea (2006: 19) when they suggest that

“Meanings cannot be observed directly. We infer meaning(s) from their manifestations in or expressions through the more directly observable, more tangible artifacts that embody them. Analysis proceeds through a constant tackling back and forth in ongoing comparison between the nonverbal data of objects and acts observes and “read’ and actors’ explicit pronouncements, whether in formal or informal speech or in writing”.

Having that in mind, the methodological design and the tools used in conducting the research were selected to allow for the exploration of non-verbal and verbal evidence.

3.2.2. Ethnography and Qualitative Methods

To understand people's everyday lives as they unfold in urban public space, a mixture of qualitative methods, here described under the umbrella term ethnography, were employed, following the epistemological framework, to allow for deep investigation and the unravelling of meaning from the perspective of the actors/participants in their 'natural' environment through an engagement in fieldwork and observation (Flick et al. 2004, Flick 2008, Hammersley and Atkinson 1983, 2007, Ragin 1994, Cloke et al 2004, Hobbs and May 1993, Maxwell 1996, Sayer 1992, Silverman 2005, Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006).

The ways that Omonia Square in particular, and public space in general, is being appropriated by irregular immigrants through the details of their everyday activities and conduct is an attempt to grasp what Geertz calls 'thick description' (1992, Becker 1996). As Flick (2008) says, the focus of qualitative methods is the relations that exist in society where there is a 'pluralisation' of worlds. In the case of Omonia, the pluralisation becomes literal through the ethnicization of the place by different immigrant groups. It is to be kept in mind that according to the interpretive focus of hermeneutics and phenomenology, to study the relationship between irregular immigrants and public space through the micro-geographies of their daily experiences is an attempt to unravel this 'pluralisation' of worlds. As Bourdieu explains (1999: 625):

“Sociologists cannot be unaware that the specific characteristic of their point of view is to be a point of view on a point of view”.

This quote by Bourdieu sounds similar to Geertz's (1992) anecdote on the different interpretations and meanings that a blink of an eye can take in his

attempt to explain the importance of understanding through the 'actors point of view'. The essence of both is the engagement with understanding a situation in its social context through the meaning that the actor vests in it. The only possible way to do this is through immersion in the situation and the actor's point of view, without forgetting that everyday conduct is fundamentally based on social relationships (Bourdieu 1999). This immersion, especially when dealing with marginal groups and sensitive topics, can take place through ethnography, encompassing a range of methods (like participant observation) that share commitment to the field, even though there are academics that use it as a distinct, single, method alongside participant observation (Flick et al. 2004, Flick 2008, Hammersley and Atkinson 2007).

Having emphasized that the focus is on the meaning that actors give to their world and the goal of the research is to capture and understand immigrants' points of view, one of the reasons for choosing to use qualitative methods is because these leave room for the researcher's reflexivity. The engagement with the meanings and perceptions from the perspective of the actors/interviewees is always filtered by the researcher's perceptions and understandings because it is a point of view on another point of view (Bourdieu 1999). The position and the personal details of the researcher are influential factors on the relationship between the researcher and the participants as well as the outcome.

As Geertz (1992) coined the term, 'thick description' is the detailed, dense, in depth description of cultural phenomena and social life. That implies that the fuller the description, the better, with no limit suggested. An additional element to the fuller and better description is that it leaves room to understand what is, for the participants, taken-for-granted, as Schutz (1967) conceptualized the

shared meanings of people. Given the fact that irregular immigrants' communities consist of people with different understandings, values and ways of living, the notion of unravelling what is for them taken for granted can be of special importance. Additionally, ethnography allows for incidental information to be picked up as well as for the 'unanticipated' to be revealed. This is especially useful given that the case of irregular immigrants' habitation of urban public space in Omonia Square has not been studied before, as will be highlighted in the following section. Since the aims of this research are to explore: (a) how far do the everyday activities of socially unwanted groups influence public space, which includes the observation and exploration of the uses of public space by irregular immigrants, (b) how they create their communities and their living conditions, and (c) what are the ways that ethnicization of space is brought about, the appropriate way to tackle these is through the use of ethnography.

3.2.3. Case Study/ Single Case

In recent years, there has been evidence, like the change in professional activities in the area of Omonoia, and publications in the media, but also my personal experience, that indicate that Omonoia Square has undergone a transformation. The traditional uses of the Square, as for example being a meeting point or being used extensively by services and businesses, seem to have been altered, given the closing down of most of the services providers of the area and the abandonment of businesses. At the moment of the research, my own experience, as well as the indications coming from the press, point toward the predominant usage of this public space mostly by organized irregular ethnic communities and other marginal groups.

As presented in chapter 1, there is a concentration of large numbers of irregular immigrants in Greece, and specifically in Omonoia as was revealed through the research, living hidden from the authorities and the State. Their habitation shows marks of organization, like the existence of ethnic communities and networks that allow them to sustain a living, although independently of the Greek State and in the margins of mainstream society, and thus through their daily routines they leave their mark on the urban space. Therefore, Omonoia Square is treated as a case study, due to (a) the uniqueness of the socio-political and economic situation in Athens and Greece, (b) the problematic State policy and the absence of institutional structures regarding issues on immigration and urban governance (as will be further explored in chapter 4), and (c) the relationship between these factors: the absence of provision for immigrants by the Greek State, the institutionally invisible condition of their lives in the context of minimal urban policy and regulation at the moment of dire economic and political turbulence.

Coming from an interpretive epistemological framework, where the centre of attention is the “[...] understanding from the perspective of the actor in the situation” (Yanow and Swartz-Shea 2006: 12), acknowledging both structure and agency, the most appropriate method to approach the questions at hand has been through a case study.

Even though case studies have been challenged, mostly from supporters of quantitative, positivist methodology as lacking scientific importance because they do not produce generalizable results and cannot solve “macro sociological phenomena”, this is not necessarily so (Goldthorpe 2000). The main point against their use is that, since the focus is on one case, there can be no generalization and thus no theory: case studies cannot generate explanations that can serve in other cases. It is assumed that due to the multiple factors contributing to one case, the proposed ‘explanation’ for the phenomenon under study might be wrong, since there can be another explanation based on another factor and/or variable that could change the outcome. Related to that, is another criticism that comes mainly from the statistical tradition, that case studies lack internal validity because they deal with more variables than the number of observations of these variables. Flyvbjerg (2011: 302) has summarized the criticisms, which he calls misunderstandings, concerning case studies (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Case Study Misunderstandings

Misunderstanding No.1	General, theoretical knowledge is more valuable than concrete case knowledge
Misunderstanding No.2	One cannot generalize on the basis of an individual case; therefore, the case study cannot contribute to scientific development

Misunderstanding No.3	The case study is most useful for generating hypotheses; that is, in the first stage of a total research process, while other methods are more suitable for hypotheses testing and theory building
Misunderstanding No.4	The case study contains a bias toward verification, that is a tendency to confirm the researcher's preconceived notions
Misunderstanding No.5	It is often difficult to summarize and develop general propositions and theories on the basis of specific case studies

However, these criticisms or misunderstandings seem to be missing the point and the merits of case studies. A case study is the in-depth, comprehensive account of an event, a phenomenon (Rueschemeyer 2003, Flyvbjerg 2001, King et al. 1994). The merits of a case study and its relevance to the proposed research become more evident from exemplary case studies in various fields of social sciences that prove the importance of case studies per se but also counteract the above-mentioned criticisms. A prime example of the importance and the value of case studies is E.P. Thompson's (1963) book "The making of the English working class" regarding the explanation of class formation as subject to unique social construction and cultural circumstances. Thompson's work challenged Marxist accounts of class formation by presenting a historical case illustrating the cultural and social aspects of class formation, and thus led to "new theoretical formulations that focused on variable experiences [...]" (Rueschemeyer 2003: 307). This and other examples have shown that case studies can formulate hypotheses, put them to the test, reformulate them and serve as an explanation of other phenomena. Case studies can test theoretical propositions and offer persuasive causal explanations, providing rich evidence and a close match between the conceptual intent and its evidence.

The merits of case studies do not lie necessarily in the generalization that they can or cannot offer. As Payne and Williams (2005) propose, there is always the concept of 'moderatum generalization': that is not focusing on providing propositions that can hold true through time and across cultures but instead ensure the external validity of a hypothesis, that case studies can provide. The appropriate method for case studies/single cases is the combination of narrative investigation, deductive reasoning and the incorporation of contingent events (Flyvbjerg 2001, Ragin 1987). As Flyvbjerg (2001: 71) points out "first, the case study produces precisely the type of context-dependent knowledge which makes it possible to move from the lower to the higher levels in the learning process; second, in the study of human affairs, there exists only context-dependent knowledge".

The logic behind the case study is that the instance might be important in its own right, so the economic situation in Greece, the concentration of irregular immigrants 'trapped' in central Athens and the ways that they are occupying, appropriating and using space can offer new insights on the production of space and the relationship between the user and urban public space (King et al. 1994). Omonoia Square has been treated as a case study to bring to light the particular elements and the specificities of the situation in order to gain knowledge on the questions of the right to space, its creation and appropriation by groups deemed marginal and institutionally invisible. Due to the in-depth analysis of a phenomenon and the unravelling of a narrative, a unique and fruitful dialogue may emerge between theory and the data at hand (Goldstone 1997).

An additional reason that the relationship between irregular immigrants and the urban public space is treated as a case study is the under-researched nature of

the specific group. There is a small number of studies on irregular immigrants in Europe as well as an absence of studies on the relationship between irregular immigrants and public space (Engbersen et al. 2006, Black 2003, Jordan and Duvell 2002, Leerkes et al. 2007). The existing studies are mostly focused on immigrants who are at least at some level oriented towards legalization procedures or have been through the official system of the host countries.

Therefore, the case of Omonoia Square is treated as a 'deviant case': More specifically, according to Flyvbjerg (2011: 307) a deviant case is:

“particularly well suited for theory development, because it helps researchers understand the limits of existing theories and to develop new concepts, variables, and theories that will be able to account for what were previously considered outliers”.

Therefore, this study aims at the provision of information and detail to enlighten and bring in-depth knowledge of the different ways that public space is used and appropriated by irregular immigrants through their everyday activities (Rueschemeyer 2003, Flyvbjerg 2001, King et al. 1994). Even though there have been studies focusing on Omonoia Square as a place of immigrant concentration, the circumstances in the area have changed radically since the completion of these (Noussia and Lyons 2009, Galanakis 2004). In these studies that were focusing on immigrants residing in and around Omonoia, the area was investigated as a place of co-existence among a small number of different ethnic groups while the place held its character as a political, economic and entertainment centre. However, since the completion of these works, the estimated numbers of immigrants have risen and especially the numbers of irregular ones. Additionally, the ethnic

composition of immigrants entering the country has changed significantly during the past decade and the publication of these pieces of research. Evidence coming mostly from NGOs shows that there is a great difference in the nationalities, but also the socio-economic characteristics of the urban dwellers at the time of my fieldwork, in comparison to those occupying the area 5 to 10 years prior. The existing empirical studies have been useful as these provide an understanding of the situation beginning to emerge (Noussia and Lyons 2009, Galanakis 2004). Through the work of Noussia and Lyons' (2009) and Galanakis' (2004), Omonoia Square is presented as a point of entrance to Greece for immigrants. However, at the moment of the fieldwork the area had transgressed into a place of disharmonic co-existence of marginal groups. Through the case of Omonoia Square, questions focusing on the right to space by groups having no citizenship or other rights in the context of the State, on the contestation of space and the different ways that institutionally invisible people claim their right to space is examined. The issue of the right to public space is usually investigated in relation to the rights that the person has within the context of the State and is thus related to citizenship and democratic practices even when marginal groups are explored (Lefebvre 1991, Harvey 2009, Mitchell 2003). A prime example is Mitchell's work on the homeless' occupation of Berkeley Park (2003) that clearly illustrates the relationship between democratic practices and rights with negotiations over the right and the claim to space. However, as has been explored in detail in chapter 1, in the case of central Athens, this relationship becomes more complex given the irregular immigrants' absence of any right. Therefore, the case of irregular immigrants' inhabitation and appropriation of urban public space through their daily lives can serve as a way to amplify the understanding of the relationship between the users and space. Having set the methodological vein that runs

through the research, a presentation of the specific steps that were taken follows.

3.3. Research Design and Methods

The aim of the research is to contribute to sociological and geographical debates about the contemporary shaping of public spaces by groups deemed to be marginal or part of an 'outcast' society. More specifically, the aim of the thesis is to contribute to theories on the appropriation and shaping of urban public space through the use and empirical application of Lefebvre's conceptualizations in order to explore (1.) the right to space by groups deemed to be marginal and (2.) the specificities of irregular immigration in relation to the urban public space. Additionally, theories on transnationality can be further enhanced with the introduction of the element of irregularity that constitutes the identity of at least some immigrants, even if for a specific time-frame. The goal of this research is to gain in depth knowledge on the current conditions taking place on and around Omonia Square as a way to explore and understand the relationship between irregular immigrants and urban public space. Because of the lack of data and the need for a deeper understanding of the situation that takes into account the multiplicity of factors shaping the situation in Omonia, such as the relationship between the immigrants and the State, the operation of networks, etc., a multiplicity of methods have been employed to complement the in-depth interviews. The methods presented here and their findings have been used as complementary to each other in order to feed into the theoretical exploration reflected in the research objectives, that are

1. To document and evaluate the occupation and inhabitation of public space environments by socially 'unwanted' groups with a focus on irregular immigrants.

2. To explore the social construction of urban public space and more specifically Omonia Square, as the intersection of structure and agency, where structure is reflected in the socio-political, economic, institutional forces that shape the position of the individual.
3. To explore how far the everyday activities of 'unwanted' groups influence public space environments, and whether or not, and in what ways, the 'unwanted' have a right to public space.
4. To describe and evaluate the tensions between the visibility and invisibility of immigrants and the impact of such ambiguity on the form and the content of urban public space through its everyday uses by different groups

The mixture of methods used are presented here in the chronological order that they were implemented, following the logic of a holistic understanding, in-depth knowledge and collection of data:

1. Mapping of Omonia Square and its adjoining streets: the detailed recording of the uses and the functions.
2. Semi-structured, in depth interviews
 - a. Scoping interviews: key actors with official capacities
 - b. Irregular immigrants' households
3. Participant observation: participant as observer.

3.3.1. Mapping of Omonoia Square and its adjoining streets: professional uses, functions and indications of change

For the past few years there has been a debate in Greek mass media about immigrant occupation of Omonoia Square and its adjoining streets. Changes in the area are presented by popular media as akin to the creation of a 'modern day urban ghetto' (tanea.gr, kathimerini.gr, lifo.gr - Figure 3.1).



Figure 3.1: Example of newspaper cover page dedicated to Omonoia Square as a ghetto

Even though the feeling of change and alteration is almost palpable to the long-term inhabitants of the city centre, there are no official data that would validate this claim, nor any kind of data that could contextualize the research. Therefore, as a starting point for the research, and in order to capture the feel of the area and the situation under investigation, I created a detailed recording of the uses

and functions of the place. Using existing maps of the area starting from Omonoia Square and proceeding in a radial fashion two building blocks from each direction (see Figure M.1 in Appendix I) I noted the existing businesses, the closed down ones and the ways that this space is used during day and night-time. So, I transcribed the professional uses of the place (see Figures M.1, M.2, M.3, M.4, M.5, M.6, M.7 in Appendix I), both legal, operation of shops, and illegal ones, like drug trafficking and prostitution (see Figure M.8 in Appendix I). Also, I tried to include the changes that are visible, for example the abandonment of shops that were operating months prior to the beginning of the fieldwork in an attempt to: (i) familiarize myself with the area in detail, (ii) provide the framework, the 'stage' where the research was about to take place, and (iii) gather data and information that I could not get otherwise.

One of the main arguments that is often used in the media, but also by political parties, in order to emphasize the characterization of central Athens as a 'deteriorating dangerous ghetto' has been the overemphasized presence of ethnic stores. However, there are no data to support or contradict this image. The only practical way to find out the actual conditions was by finding out myself, since "[n]othing is experienced by itself, but always in relation to its surroundings, the sequences of events leading up to it [...]" (Lynch 1960: 1). The environment in Omonoia Square and the feeling of the place becomes important in understanding the living conditions and the situation under exploration. The interplay between the built environment, the structure of the city, the functions and the operations taking place in the area set up the context and the framework for the exploration and the understanding of the everyday lives of the inhabitants and users of this place. The balance that I wanted to achieve between the built environment and

the exploration of people's lives is best described in Lynch's (1960: 2) words:

“[The people] are not simply observers of [the city], but [...] a part of it, on the stage with the other participants [...]. Not only is the city an object, which is perceived (and perhaps enjoyed) by millions of people of widely diverse class and character, but it is the product of many builders who are constantly modifying the structure for reasons of their own. While it may be stable in general outlines for some time, it is ever changing in detail”.

The main criterion for the decision on what to record was the commercial and residential activities and uses of buildings. For example, the illegal usage of abandoned buildings as dwellings creates a different environment than the existence of 'normal' commercial activities. Therefore, I created a detailed map of the activities of the area to be used as an image of the environment where the fieldwork took place. In practical terms, I used a map of Omonoia Square and the 4 adjoining squares around it and accounted for all the uses of buildings (see Figures M.1, M.2, M.3 in Appendix I), commercial and residential. In order to capture the changes that have occurred (see Figure M.4 in Appendix I), I compared the commercial and residential uses of the time of the research to older data that come from a variety of sources such as the book 'Omonoia' (Ioannou 1987) but also narrative accounts from professionals and residents of the area. In most of the cases, the change in the professional uses is obvious: for example, the abandoned hotels are exactly as they used to be but with closed doors, the shops that have been closed down still have the signs and some even some of their merchandise (Figures 3.2, 3.3).



Figure 3.2: Closed shop of a bakery/fast food chain on Omonoia Square

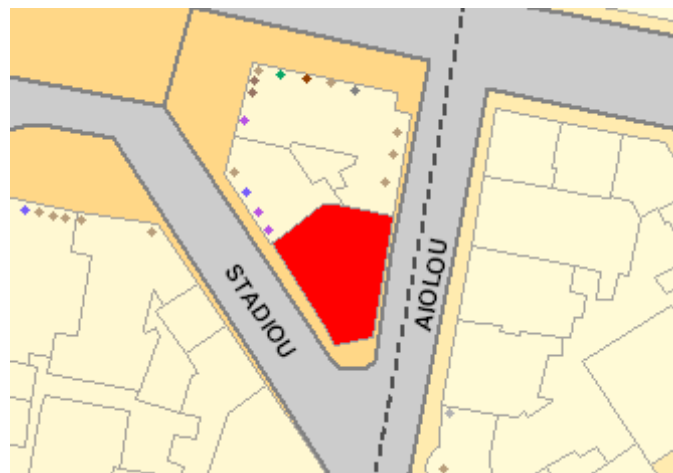


Figure 3.3: Image of a closed boutique and its volume, one block from Omonoia

Square

The same image holds for the public services that have visible signs of what the buildings used to be. Also, more than a few of the businesses operating in the area still have the signs from the previous owners, so the change in their use becomes apparent. To include in the mapping the uses and the functions taking

place in the area, it was important for me to be able to observe during the night-time and to have an image of streets that are considered dangerous because of the excessive drug use and dealing. To have the whole picture of activities in the area I collected data by participating in street-work organized by an NGO fighting drug use², so I was able to build up a detailed account of the different illegal uses of the area.

To be able to provide in depth knowledge for the reader and myself, I wanted to geographically/physically create an image of the Square and the uses that take place in and around it at different times of the day and night. The visual representation of the uses and activities of the place along with the better understanding that the process provided is used as a setting for the qualitative research presented in detail in Chapter 5 on the contextual and historical description of Omonoia Square.

² OKANA (www.okana.gr), is an NGO fighting drug use. More specifically, OKANA, was established under the Ministry of Health to promote, treat and rehabilitate drug addicts. In an effort to prevent infections and deaths from the paraphernalia of drug use, a joint venture of several NGOs along with the Ministry of Health was the organization of street-work in central Athens and especially in and around Omonoia Square, where kits of clean syringes and other paraphernalia/necessities were given for free to drug users and prostitutes. The street-work was conducted during the evening for several days of the week in different areas where prostitution, drug use and dealing were known to take place. I was involved following the permission of the OKANA's responsible person for the organization of the street work and I joined as a researcher and not a volunteer since I had no training to do so.

3.3.2. Semi-structured in-depth interviews

The main method used to explore the situation and the relationship between the urban dwellers, in this case irregular immigrants and the urban public space, was focused, semi-structured, in-depth interviews, since this allows for in-depth study of existing relationships and the unravelling of meaning from the perspective of the actors (Flick et al. 2004, Flick 2008). As Hopf (in Flick et al. 2004: 204) mentions:

“what is central to these interviews is the focusing on a subject or topic of conversation determined in advance – [...] a particular social situation they participated in and which is also known to the interviewers and so on- and attempt to collect reactions and interpretations in an interview with a relatively open form”.

For these types of interviews, Merton and Kendall (1946: 110-117) created a specific set of quality criteria consisting of scope, specificity, depth and personal context that allows for the deeper examination of a specific problem and/or situation, that I have followed.

To gain a comprehensive account of the situation in Omonoia Square I decided to have two different sets of interviewees. The first set consisted of key actors that hold authority positions in issues relating to immigration and/or urban planning in Athens, in order to contextualize and gain access to the structural part of the case at hand. Irregular immigrants constituted the second set of interviewees, and the main part of my research. More specifically, I focused on people living in the area of Omonoia Square. I will explain the steps taken for each group in the next section. For both groups, focused interviews was the method used, since (a)

when dealing with authorities the main interest is on their knowledge on the situation of migrant settlement in Omonoia Square and the adjoining streets, and (b) with the immigrant participants I wanted to be able to gain real depth during the interviews so as to flesh out the details of their everyday lives, their biographies and the meanings that they give to the different aspects of their lives.

During the interviews my goal was to create the atmosphere of a conversation, since interviewing and attempting to gain deep understanding is to create a social relationship, to leave room for the interviewees to open themselves up and leave space for the 'unanticipated' (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, Burgess 1984, Bourdieu 1999: 607-626). Semi-structured interviews provide freedom in the conversation flow, allowing for follow-up questions to clarify ambiguous issues. Although the interview topics were predetermined, the aim was to keep the questions as open as possible to allow for reflexivity and to give to the interviewees the opportunity to speak freely (Flick et al. 2004: 203-213, Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 117).

a. Scoping interviews: key actors with official capacities.

To explore the social construction of space as the intersection of structure and agency, where structure is reflected in the socio-political, economic, and institutional forces that shape the position of the individual, I found it useful to develop an insight into issues of immigration and urban policy. Since the phenomenon of migrants' settlement is related both to policies on immigration and to urban governance and state politics, I wanted to grasp the perspective of those holding key positions in these matters. Understanding their views, gaining

data and getting information on what has been and is to be done concerning urban and immigration policies was a way to gain an insight on the situation of Omonoia Square.

The aim of these semi-structured interviews was to get the different perspectives of the key actors responsible for dealing with issues of migration in Athens and their views on the migrants' settlement in the historic/commercial triangle in central Athens. Given the fact that prior and during the time of the fieldwork there were no official data on the numbers of people residing in central Athens and/or the numbers of immigrants in the country, and since the majority of immigrants' status is vague and ambiguous (and in my view that is directly related to the existence of this unofficial settlement), I wanted to know the authorities' views and plans on the issue.

During the first months of the fieldwork (September to November 2011) interviews were conducted with:

- The Mayor's Counsellor on immigration issues
- The President of Human Rights Watch in Greece
- One of the founders of the first citizens' movement in Athens (Atenistas)
- The president of the Greek Council of Refugees
- The presidents of 5 Ethnic Minorities Organizations in Greece

The themes of the interviews were:

- What happens when the invisible creates visible changes?
- How have specific groups of immigrants become 'invisible'?
- What are the powers that render them invisible?

- What are the rights that they have and how is their positioning problematized within the confines of nation-state/borders?

The questionnaire(s) for the interviews are in Appendix 3. The interviewees were contacted orally two months prior to the beginning of the fieldwork and interviews took place from September to November 2011 in their offices, as was their choice. An official letter was sent prior to the interviews to inform them about the research in a more formal manner and to gain their consent (see Ethical Approval October 2011 in Appendix 2).

b. Semi-structured, in depth interviews: immigrants

The main part of the research focused on the irregular immigrant population dwelling in the area, as they are its residents and primary users. Since the focus of the case study is the relationship between irregular immigrants and public space, i.e. Omonoia Square, I wanted to develop insights on the operation of ethnic communities of irregular immigrants in the area. The aim was to unravel the social characteristics of the population, their relationships and their identity as a means of understanding their uses of space.

Key Informants

To gain access to a specific population that would be difficult to approach otherwise, I used my existing relations to immigrants that I had contact with through the Greek NGO Nostos that I was working for³. After gaining their consent

³ NGO Nostos Organization for Social Integration (www.nostos.org.gr) was established in 1995 to combat social exclusion, racism and unemployment. I had been working as a volunteer from 2000-2002. From 2002-2008 I was employed as administrator and project manager dealing with national and EU projects. A large number of the projects and therefore the beneficiaries that I was working with came from immigrant groups. A significant number of them had been in Greece illegally but some of them have gained official status. From 2008 until today I keep contact with the people working in the NGO and a

and their willingness to help me, they acted as key-informants and gatekeepers to introduce me to their networks and friends. The five people who acted as key-informants are immigrants who have lived in Greece for many years and were able to provide information and connections to people with irregular status that live and/or work in and around Omonoia Square. Moreover, because they belong to different ethnicities they were able to give me access to different ethnic communities operating in the area of Omonoia Square.

The key-informants during the fieldwork were operating as translators for me during the interviews but also accompanied me wherever it was needed to establish the non-threatening character of my work with the people that I was introduced to.

My relationship to them had been established through my 10-year professional experience in the Greek NGO Nostos during the implementation of programmes against racism and social exclusion. I have never lost contact with them. They were more than willing to help me to put me in touch with people from ethnic communities that live and work in the area of Omonoia Square by providing a list of people that they know for me to contact, after they had gained their consent.

From casual discussions that I had with them, they provided me with information on specific cultural characteristics of the ethnic backgrounds of my interviewees that would be useful for me to know during the fieldwork. Also, in the pilot phase of the research, they participated as interviewees.

Participants and Interviewing

Before starting the fieldwork my plan was to conduct semi-structured, in-depth, interviews with 15 members of the population living in the area to find out who they are and to explore the reasons why they chose or were forced to choose to live in the specific place. However, once in the field, this plan changed. In order to start the fieldwork, I conducted initial interviews with 35 people to select those who could be the main focus of my research, given that my plan was to have four rounds of interviews per research subject over the time frame of almost a year. I wanted the research to be long term in order to get a real feeling of the participants' everyday lives and activities in as much detail as possible. I wanted to make sure that I would be able to establish rapport and a close enough relationship to the participants of my study that would allow me to follow them in their everyday activities, enter their homes and find details about their lives that would most probably be related to illegal activities. To create the necessary rapport for that, and to be allowed to shadow and have full access to the participants' lives, would take a long time, especially given their irregular status.

The goal was to witness the participants' lives as a way to understand their reality and gain details and depth of knowledge.

The first criterion of participant selection was the diversity of ethnicities. I wanted to include participants from the largest ethnic communities, from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Somalia and Nigeria, according to indications provided by NGOs operating in the area. This variety would give me access to a multiplicity of viewpoints and different 'stories'. I was able to talk to people from these ethnicities, and others, in the first round of pilot interviews, among the 35 interviewees. For the in depth, long-term interviewing, I was able to get four ethnic groups: Iranians, Kurds, Bangladeshi and Afghan participants.

The second criterion was years spent in Greece. The time and the duration of living in the area are relevant to the organization and conduct of life in each community. The more years living in an area allowed for a better knowledge of the environment but also a higher probability of being involved in the communities operating in the area. This became evident through the pilot interviews where a clear differentiation in knowledge of the area existed between the interviewees who had remained in the area of Omonoia for many years and those that had not. Although the age of the interviewees did not play a role in selection, their length of residence was important.

The third selection criterion was the gender of participants. The goal was to include both male and female interviewees because previous studies indicate that there are different ways that male and female immigrants manage their lives in their new country. Moreover, in any situation there is a gendered perspective that I wanted to capture, even though the majority of the immigrant population residing in Athens consists of men (Triantafyllidou and Maroukis 2010).

Through the 35 initial interviews it became clear that it would be much better to focus on households rather than people, if I wanted all three criteria to be met. Early on, I realized that women were not easily available to talk to me and it was only the male friends and/or acquaintances of my key informants that were eager to talk. So, from focusing on individuals I asked my key informants to introduce me to individuals comprising a 'household'. The term was loosely defined, meaning that my aim was to have as participants people living under the same roof. Again, the focus was still on individuals but the difference was that through the concept of 'household' I was able to get in touch with (a) people more stable in their residency, (b) even though the primary focus was one of the

members of the 'household' I was able to be introduced to, and talk with and observe, the rest of the members as well, and (c) to gain a first point of entrance to the domesticated lives of irregular immigrants. The same results might have happened anyway by interviewing individuals, but apparently the pool of participants that was presented to me by my key informants did differ after the introduction of the 'household' concept. I did not focus solely on families since I already knew that because of their financial situation many immigrants share flats (a practice that is uncommon for Greeks). So, I ended up focusing on 8 households⁴ of different compositions, as depicted in Table 3.2 below, for my in depth research:

Table 3.2: Interviewee Households

Name	Ethnic Group	Age	Language of Interviews	Additional Members of Household	Years of Presence in Greece	Area of Residence
Ahad	Afghan	35	Greek	2 male friends	10	2 blocks away from Omonoia Square.
Ali	Bangla	58	English		5	Homeless in Omonoia/ Occasional resident of a shelter 2 blocks away from the Square
Ferhat	Kurd	25	Greek	2: Mother and male cousin	10	Flat in Omonoia Sq.
Hasan	Kurd	30	Greek/ English		10	3 blocks from Omonoia Sq. / Business owner (barber shop) in Omonoia Sq.

⁴ The names of the participants are altered given the sensitive nature of the information collected, according to their wishes.

Nuria	Afghan	28	English/ Farsi	2 children and her husband	2	Used to live in Omonoia Sq./ At the time of the interview moved to Victoria Sq. (10 mins walk from Omonoia)
Susan	Afghan	26	Farsi	3 children	3	A block from Omonoia Sq.
Asef	Iran	28	Greek/ English	2 male friends	8	Works in Omonoia Sq./ Lives in Exarcheia
Ismaili	Iran	30	English/ Greek		5	Lives in a shelter in Omonoia

Through interviews and participation (further explored in the following section) in their everyday lives, I wanted to ‘capture’ the daily rhythms of the area and the daily routines of the participants in order to understand the use(s) and the ethnicization of space. Introductory meetings with the 8 participants took place in the pilot phase of the research, and they were among the 35 individuals that I initially interviewed. The first interview with each of the 35 people was semi-structured, and in-depth, lasting more than 2 hours each. These took place in the offices of the NGO Nostos which I was allowed to use as a non-threatening, quiet and private environment that half the interviewees had already visited in the past at least once.

The goal of the first interview was to collect as much background information as I could: their life history, their journey to Greece and some scoping questions concerning Omonoia Square (e.g. their participation with organizations operating in the area, initial entry point to Athens, etc.) that would allow me to select participants for the long-term research. I also aimed at creating rapport, so as to facilitate subsequent meetings that were of a more open nature. Even though the

main participants of the research were the eight people and the members of their households, the information collected from all 35 initial interviews was complementary. For example, the fact that almost all of the 35 interviewees spent at least their first days and even weeks in Athens living on the streets and that all 35 had knowledge as newcomers to the country of Omonoia as the place to begin their lives and networking in Greece, were used in the analysis in the empirical chapters of the thesis. Also, some of the 27 people that were not included in the main research were contacted again for additional information. The main reason for those not participating further was their imminent plans to leave the country and therefore there could be no long term commitment on their part. However, a few of them contacted me again to introduce me to members of their own networks and to explain to me details on issues that we had touched upon during the initial interview. For example, one of the 27, two weeks after the initial interview called me to show me where and how the network that lures newcomers into goods trafficking was operating because it was very close to Omonoia Square.

With the 8 participants and the members of their households, 4 rounds of interviews were held over the time frame of a year, September 2011 to September 2012. These interviews had a loose structure, developed as a gradual process coinciding with my deeper involvement in their lives and the building of the relationship between us. My original plan was for the interviews to take place every couple of months. However, once I started the fieldwork, this changed. After the initial interviews, given developments in Greece, with attacks on immigrants by the extreme right wing party, the Golden Dawn, it was difficult for a period of two months for immigrants to go out in public. So, I realized that it would be more

convenient not to set a strict time frame for the interviews. Also, that allowed me better access and participation in their everyday activities. With some of the interviewees, I repeated meetings on subsequent days and with others I had a schedule of meeting them once per month. Regulating contact was not easy, mostly because of my involvement in their daily lives. For example, their involvement in social functions and my presence in these, was mostly spontaneous, since the interviewees' attendance was sometimes a last minute decision. Also, after the first meetings the interviewees realized that it was of interest to me to be with them in a casual manner and so they would just call me to let me know that something was happening and ask whether I wanted to join. The subsequent interview meetings developed around four main themes (see Appendices 4, 5, and 6) and these are reflected in the following chapters:

- Every day life and life stories
- Homemaking and domesticating in Greece
- Ties to Greece: Relations with the State and society
- Ethnic community formation and participation.

These themes serve the purpose of identifying and understanding the various aspects of the participants' everyday realities. In addition to the interviewees' answers, I gained information on each of these themes through my participation and shadowing of the participants. More often than not, during my presence in their daily routines I was asking questions and we had many open discussions concerning these themes and others. My participation and the interviews were complementary and I was able to return to questions that I had asked if I wanted clarification or more details in more casual manner. As becomes obvious the environments where the interviews were held were varied. The second set of

meetings with the participants, was held in cafes that I selected so that we could have privacy and quiet. After the second set, I interviewed them in their work environments and their houses. Because of the nature of the research and the time that I spent with the participants, I was able to meet them in various places and be part of their activities and routines, and that also helped to facilitate the conversations that were taking place.

3.3.3. Participant Observation

Participating in the interviewees' lives, from late September 2011 to September 2012, in a number of environments and in a regular fashion and being introduced to their daily lives, permitted my presence in their activities in the area, like their socialization and their search for jobs and for commodities. The range of time that I was present varied widely depending on the situation of each of the participants. With some, like Hasan and Ferhat, I had a close relationship that allowed me to meet with them regularly up to 3 times per week, enabling a good flow of conversation and information, and they were involving me in activities taking place outside their homes. With other participants, the meetings were approximately twice per month but I made myself available to follow their schedules. The interviews and the conversations with them took place in various environments, their houses, their meeting places, jobs, shelters, NGOs and services. Due to the participants' residency around Omonoia Square, it was possible to witness and participate in the activities taking place in the area, such as the market that takes place each Sunday that is exclusive to the immigrants residing in Athens (in Greece all shops are closed on Sundays). The aim was to observe people's actions in an everyday context and study in detail how life is conducted in situ.

Observation of the actual environment and the people occupying it and the detailed scrutiny of what takes place can provide a deeper and better understanding of the situation and the relationships that are created (Flick et al. 2004, Flick 2008, Hobbs and May 1994, Hoggart et al. 2002). In order to document and evaluate the occupation and inhabitation of public space, the 'unstructured' nature of the environment under study allowed for observation of its various

dimensions, from the uses of space to the existence of small signs on buildings that give a feel of the environment. For example, the existence of signs in languages other than Greek is a symbol of the ethnicization of a place that could not be captured with any other method. Thus, collecting a range of data from different sources became possible: my presence on-the-spot provided access to visual details that bear significance, and recording data through pictures and videos as well as written observation notes. A prime example was the existence of small papers that were hanging in trees that advertised in non- Greek languages rooms to let in apartments. Also, through participant observation I was able to identify different activities taking place in public spaces, for example the recruitment of newcomers into several illegal networks that I was then able to ask my interviewees about. There is a possibility that they would not have told me about these activities without my noticing them and asking. For some of my interviewees such activities, mostly illegal ones, from sub-lending to more dangerous ones, like promotion of drugs, were irrelevant to their everyday lives even though they knew about them. Most of my interviewees and especially the men felt that they had to 'protect' me from knowing about the illegal activities taking place in the area -and one would expect that they would want to protect themselves- so they would not mention some of these issues if I had not observed and asked about these.

Utilizing the role of 'participant as observer' had the benefit of allowing me to be more involved in the field and employ a multiplicity of methods when they were needed (Burgess 1984). According to Burgess (1984), the advantage of this type of observation is that the researcher's role is known, which allows for freedom of action and questioning when needed. One of the disadvantages that comes with

this method is that it has a strong observer effect, as Flick et al. (2004) points out, on the people who are studied, which I am aware of, since they know that they are being subjected to scrutiny. Another disadvantage is the improbability of being exposed to illegal actions, even though these might be of significance to the population under study. I did end up with knowledge of these activities because of the long-term nature of the study, the relationships that were established between the participants and myself, and overall osmosis in the field, without being included in any of these actions or being in any danger at any given time.

Data Collection and Analysis

The collection of data and information came through various means during the year of fieldwork. I used my own journal to write down everything taking place related to the area. During the days of the initial interviews and the interviews with the key stakeholders, I was visiting Omonoia regularly to collect details that were not necessarily connected to the interviewees but could help me familiarize myself with the situation. For example, it was useful to observe the different groups just hanging out in Omonoia during the night-time and the day-time because it was suggestive of different activities but also indicative of the patterns of networks relating to ethnicity and/or function. For example, different ethnic groups and networks connected to different 'deviant' activities. The territory of each drug-dealing or prostitution network was useful in understanding details that the participants shared during the interviews. Another example of the usefulness of observation and the use of a diary was related to the restriction of immigrants' movements during the days that members of the Golden Dawn were roaming the streets of Athens. Through observation, the links between the networks and the places became more obvious. My personal feelings, thoughts

and notes of things that I wanted to ask the interviewees and/or my key informants were kept in the journal. Also, the material and the information that I collected during the street-work with OKANA are a part of the journal since it was impossible for me to record what I was witnessing in any other way, mostly due to the mobile nature of the activity. Details and more information about the illegal activities taking place in the area and the human trafficking networks that are part of irregular immigrants' everyday lives were also collected through interviews with reporters, journalists and members of NGOs that are active in the area. Some of this information has not been published and was given to me to be used with discretion as a way of enhancing my personal understanding of the situation. Also, I used data from newspapers, mostly as a way to understand the presentation of the area and of irregular immigrants in the media.

The first interviews for the research were conducted with the key stakeholders. The structured nature of the questionnaire and the fact that they all agreed to my recording the interviews helped in the analysis of the material. The data collected from these interviews have fed into all the chapters of the thesis and especially chapter 4 on the Greek legal framework for immigration.

The interviews with members of the boards of immigrant communities and organizations framed the themes that were presented in the previous section, and in the analysis of chapter 7 on ethnic community formation. All were recorded with the exception of one interviewee "because [he] was feeling uncomfortable talking on the microphone". The members of the immigrant communities' boards were also helpful in identifying the links that exist between the organized, established ethnic communities and the 'unofficial' ones. By 'unofficial' here, I mean the networks based on ethnicity that exist throughout central Athens that

facilitate the needs of irregular immigrants, as will be further explained in chapters 7 and 8.

I recorded the 35 initial interviews with immigrants with their permission, while simultaneously keeping notes. In the subsequent interviews with the 8 participants and the members of their households, I recorded most of the conversations that took place either in their houses and/or in cafes with the exception sometimes when they asked me to turn the recorder off. During the conversations that were more open and during the times that I was just walking and talking with them, I did not use the recorder but only notes in my journal, for practical reasons, but also because recording made almost all of my participants feel more reserved. Having a casual stroll and a conversation did not match well with them being recorded all the time. Especially, given the participants' irregular status and their involvement in illegal activities, recording was not appropriate in some instances. Even though I was not asked not to record them, I felt that it was best not to do so. Understanding and feeling that the participants were telling me things that I should not know and taking a risk by talking to me, made me want to make them feel as secure as possible. Even though I was allowed to record them and to take pictures, given the sensitive nature of the topic and their precarious conditions, it feels as betraying their trust to actually use some of the material. This became clear to me when meeting up with Ismaili on the fourth occasion, when he revealed his involvement in illegal activities and networks, and asked me not to show his picture to anyone and not to use his real name or publish his address. All participants agreed to my recording our conversations and taking pictures in the initial stages of the fieldwork, but as time passed and they opened up to me, it was rational that they would not want me to use visual

material. I find that the ethically right thing to do is to respect their trust and not to use their real names and the pictures that I took that can be related to the real identity of the participants. However, in terms of understanding the uses and functions of space as well as the everyday lives of participants, the images have been used in the analysis as a frame of reference and understanding.

The analysis of the material followed the themes that were under investigation. After transcribing the interviews, I divided them by theme and by question. Finding the similarities and highlighting the differences helped me to structure the themes of the chapters and identify the issues for analysis. Because I did the transcriptions at the time of the fieldwork, it was convenient to find missing data or information that needed clarification and go back and ask for these. During the fieldwork and the analysis of the material, I was asking key informants for further details and explanations for things that had come up that I did not understand or know. Also, some cross referencing with people working in different NGOs dealing daily with irregular immigrants, and the participants specifically, added to the analysis and a better understanding of issues that were not clear, like the process of legalization and the denial of immigrants' applications for legalization in Greece. Overall, for the analysis and the understanding of the material, my personal involvement in my previous work (NGO Nostos) was helpful, because knowledgeable people on matters of irregular immigration, and with close contact to immigrants, surrounded me and acted as a point of reference, but also helped me to reflect on my experiences, since there were more than a few dangerous and sad instances that I came across.

The research aims of the thesis had shaped the themes and the questions that I used for the interviews. The four main themes that shape the following chapters

are: the everyday lives of irregular immigrants in central Athens, the homemaking and domestication processes, their relations to the Greek State and society, and ethnic community formation and participation.

More specifically, the interviews with the stake holders in key positions were complemented and used along with material from the irregular immigrants' interviews on their relations to the State and their first days in Greece. The complexity of the legal matters involved and the absence of regulation and infrastructure by the Greek State to facilitate the newcomers shaped Chapter 4. The notion of the right to space as the 'barometer of social justice' in the city and the reflection of the democratic rights that a person has on his/her right to public space constituted the main axis of the analysis of the material (Van Deusen 2002).

A number of questions formulated chapter 6 on ethnic community formation and participation. These included: how did formal and informal communities come to be? What are their roles, functions and standing given the precarious character of immigration in Athens? How is their organization significant for their members and how do they negotiate their multiple in-betweenness, being transnational by default and invisible due to the institutional forces operating in Greece. Chapter 6 was moulded by material coming both from the ethnic communities board members and the interviews with irregular immigrants about their participation in communities and networks. Distinctions between formal, organized communities having a legal form and entity and informal ones, networks operating based on ethnic identity with a loose organization, had to be made as they arose from fieldwork material. Both were visibly present in the lives of immigrants and in public space, and as such, their roles and functions, along with their

relationships to their members, are explored in chapter 6.

The analysis of questions on the everyday lives of irregular immigrants, the participation and observation in their daily lives shaped chapter 7 on the ways that invisibility is used as a means of survival. Observations about the role of public space being central to irregular immigrants' lives, by providing them with the connections needed to sustain a living, such as finding shelter and a daily income, feed into this chapter. The institutionally invisible condition of their lives is explored through the practical ways that irregular immigrants negotiate their living conditions. The theme of conducting everyday life is analyzed under the prism of invisibility, since it is this condition that guides and directs the irregular immigrants' actions.

Continuing focusing on the individual, the next main theme that was analyzed was the process of domestication, homemaking and the notion of belonging. The prolonged osmosis with the participants and the long-term nature of the research allowed more delicate and private issues to be explored. Private space was examined in relation to immigrants' diverse notions of creating a life and a home in the host country. The creation of a home is considered to be the basis of rooting in a new place, and as such it was a separate theme to be explored. Following the empirical material, notions of belonging and homemaking were used as a way to understand (a) the embeddedness of irregular immigrants' lives in Athens, (b) the significance that they ascribe to creating a life in this city, and (c) the ways that they understand, appropriate and use space. These were analyzed and presented in chapter 8. Overall, the material collected throughout all phases of the fieldwork and all the different sources of collecting data were used to analyze the themes shaped by the research aims and goals.

3.4. Reflections on the fieldwork

Given the interpretive epistemological framework of this study based on hermeneutics and phenomenology, the production of knowledge involves a degree of interpretation and judgment that is, de facto, influenced by the researcher and his/her personal context (Bourdieu 1999, Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006). In every qualitative study, the personal characteristics of the researcher influence the process of data collection and analysis (Merriam et al. 2001, Herod 1999, Milner 2007, Rose 1997, Chacko 2004). In the realm of studies influenced by hermeneutics and phenomenology “the impossibility of physical-cognitive detachment” is acknowledged along with the ‘filtering’ that takes place when the researcher-observer ‘sees’ and writes about what he/she sees (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea 2006, Bourdieu 1999). Therefore, both the data collection process and its analysis is a construct of experiences and assumptions brought into the interview by the interviewer and interviewee. In this light, knowledge provided or emerging through interpretive research is admittedly a construction, a ‘shaping of reality’. Following Bourdieu’s (1999: 607-625) remark on the relationship between the researcher and the participant being primarily a social one, and given the close nature of the relationships that developed between the interviewees and myself, self-examination and reflexivity become imperative to the knowledge produced. It becomes imperative to acknowledge “the fact that the social researcher, and the research act itself, are part and parcel of the social world under investigation” (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983: 235).

This section considers my presence in the research in terms of how it might have conditioned and influenced the situation and the interviewees, taking into account that in qualitative research, the researcher becomes the instrument of the

research. Additionally, it serves as a reflection of the positionality of the researcher given that “positionality is a critical factor in framing social and professional relationships in the field; it sets the tone of the research, affecting its course and its outcomes” (Chacko 2004: 52). In the field, there is a constant negotiation between the roles of the researcher/participant in terms of identities and insider/outsider understandings. The filters of one’s own identity influence and contextualize the understanding at any given time. Aspects of my own identity, such as gender, race and professional standing will be explored in relation to the fieldwork as well as some concerns about the insider/outsider status of the researcher when dealing with populations with different characteristics.

One of the most intriguing aspects of my research has been the simple fact that irregular and illegal immigrants are a difficult population to study. Usually, researchers have difficulty in gaining access to ‘sensitive’ populations whose life is based on their invisible condition. For me, gaining access was the easiest part. Being involved for all my adult life in a NGO dealing with the problems of this population provided me with prior knowledge of the situation and with the networks of people that could help me out. My key informants have been people whom I have known for quite some time and we have established a relationship of trust. The fact that there was already a relationship and that these people knew that I would not pose a threat, since I was related to a non-governmental organization that stands for the rights of immigrants no matter their status, made the introductions to the participants easy.

However, that also meant that I was already characterized in a specific way to my interviewees before our initial meeting. The pre-existing knowledge of my

involvement in this field allowed them to open up easily concerning their engagement in illegal activities and they had no fear of talking to me, talking in front of me, being seen with me and including me in their lives. But I can never know if this knowledge influenced at least some of their answers to me. An interesting interplay was that because they knew the difficult conditions that NGOs are facing for some years in Greece and the lack of money that is the normal condition when one is working in a Greek NGO, sometimes they talked to me in a condescending way. At other times, people who had been informed by my gatekeepers of my position in the NGO saw me as having authority. The same reactions were manifest regarding my academic status. The majority of my interviewees, especially men, emphasized the 'naïve' character of my study since according to them I "can't change anything relating to [their] conditions of life". That has been surprising to me, since my only argument for them to participate was my attempt through this study to give them voice.

Also, being a female and doctoral researcher was translated as "being soft and of no future money" by my male interviewees who felt that they had to treat me, again in Hasan's words, "as their little sister". In many cases my interviewees felt that they had to protect me. Characteristic examples have been instances that I have witnessed of police misconduct, such as drug related and/or bullying prostitutes. In those instances the first reactions of my interviewees and my key informants was their concern for the police not to see me, since I pose a threat being a Greek witnessing instances like that. Additionally, when coming close to major drug distribution networks, it was my key informants and my interviewees who created the distance needed since I was unaware of what was actually happening. Only later did they explain situations like these to me, their reasons for

explaining were in Ferhat's words: "[my] fascination with what is going on in Omonoia". If they could choose, they would have never explained specific situations to me.

Interestingly enough, the fact that I am female and Greek, and mostly relate to a different religion, studying in the UK, and doing fieldwork in a predominately Muslim, male dominated environment, did not seem to bother any of the interviewees. When it came to matters of religion I was asked by all my interviewees about my own religious beliefs and it is my opinion that being openly an atheist, instead of posing a problem to them, was comforting enough for them to open up, assuming that even though I do not belong to any religion that would make me more open to their own. The aspect of religion and religious belief has been somewhat of a puzzle for me in understanding and explaining my interviewees' behaviour towards me. It is known that culturally, Muslims have more respect towards religious people even from different religions than towards atheists. One possible explanation is that they were trying to be more likable to me and act in accordance with Western standards; being more acceptable of non religious people. Interestingly enough, after conducting the fieldwork, talking to a common friend with one of the interviewees, I found out that he, the interviewee, had lied to me about his religious beliefs and practices. Accidentally, the common friend told me that the interviewee had cancelled an appointment in order to go to the mosque (mosques exist only unofficially in Athens). That came as a surprise to me because during the interviews he had told me that he was not practising religion and it was only for social reasons that once every six months he went to the mosque, to satisfy his family's wishes. The observer effect becomes obvious in this case since it is my belief that he wanted me to think that he is more similar to

me than not. Of course, this incident brings to the surface the realization that during the interviews and the fieldwork in general the interviewees chose what to tell me and what not. Obviously, the inner filters that they were using in choosing what to tell me are and will remain unclear to me.

As time passed, I realized that my academic status and the details that they came to know about me, made them open up to me. Even though, as I have already mentioned, being an academic for the majority of the participants was related to being soft, with time, my academic standing made them ask me questions that were far from the focus of this study. Their concerns about their children's education and the financial and political future of Greece became a recurring theme in our conversations, and as they told me, they "could discuss these things with me, because [I] have knowledge since [I'm] doing a PhD" (Asef). To me, comments like that and the fact that all of my interviewees felt comfortable enough to ask me questions and wanted my opinion shows the real depth of the relationships that were created and ultimately the value of this research. Instances like this one show that the participants were not merely the subjects of this research but actors in a reciprocal social relationship.

3.5. Conclusion

Although methods and research design are tools that provide safety when doing research, the messiness that comes with the involvement in peoples' real lives, feelings and practicalities cannot be foreseen to its full extent and calls for reflexivity and flexibility from the researcher. It becomes important to be able to re-adjust the design in order to meet the research aims and goals. In my case, it was only after the piloting phase that I realized that I needed to change the category of interviewees from people to households. Also, an understanding that sometimes the researcher cannot control the research conditions became especially clear to me given the socio-political and financial circumstances in Greece at the time of the fieldwork. From the simple fact that the interviewees were afraid to go out in public because of the rise of attacks towards immigrants from members of extreme right wing groups, and that related to the financial crisis there was widespread violence and a rise in the attempts of immigrants to flee the country, it became evident that I could not follow the structured, time-specific nature that I had wanted for the interviews.. The judgment calls that are needed on the spot cannot be foreseen and the researcher must be flexible enough to modify aspects of the research design to fit the situation and ultimately serve the purposes of the research.

Given that the aim was to understand what was happening in terms of the relationship between irregular immigrants and urban public space, one of the most important things for me was to explore and unravel the conditions of living and the details of lives of the invisible population under study. That was also the only thing that I could offer to the interviewees as a motive to participate in the research. Whether this was accomplished, I would need to have feedback from

the people who participated in the research. Although some of the interviewees have seen parts of this thesis as was the original understanding of their participation, many of them are not to be found anymore. Having been part of their lives and able to conduct this research because they allowed me to do so, it saddens me that I am not able to contact them anymore and show them the final result. But this is also one of the issues that the research must negotiate and reflect upon when the fieldwork finished.

Chapter 4

Rendering irregular immigrants invisible: The relationship between immigrants and the State

4.1. Introduction

In understanding the city as a text to be read and interpreted by the user, but also shaped by his/her daily activities within the context of multiple relations and structural forces, the user of space, the actor, becomes the centre of exploration. The user is in a continuous reciprocal relationship to his/her surroundings and is influenced by the elements that comprise the urban fabric and ultimately society. To explore the relationship between irregular immigrants and urban public space in the case of Omonoia Square, it is essential to understand the characteristics of this specific group. The irregular status of immigrants is the element defining their position in the host country. As such, the implications that stem from this characterization, like their institutional invisibility, will be explored, since these, at least partly, direct and define their options and their everyday activities. Having in mind that the legal framework of the State defines and shapes the position that one has in a given society, mostly through citizenship and other rights, the position of irregular immigrants in the Greek State will be examined. The structural framework that defines the immigrants' position in the case of Omonoia is the combination of the Greek and the EU legal framework on immigration.

Following the theoretical framework that was set out in chapter 1, this chapter engages in an exploration of the definition of irregular immigrants' position in

the Greek State. The first part investigates the concept of irregularity and how it is entwined with immigrants' invisibility. I outline irregular immigrants' social and legal status within the legal framework of the EU context, building on the notion of institutional invisibility as defined by Puggioni (2005). The existing European framework and the conventions that dictate matters on immigration are the shaping conditions for the irregularity that immigrants are subjected to. Therefore, the presentation serves to contextualize and better understand the forces that shape immigrants' status and thus their relationship to the State. The institutional aspect of immigrants' invisibility is in direct relation to the State, since the rights that one has – or has not - directly derive from the State that he/she resides in. The second part of the chapter explores the relationship between immigrants and the Greek State, investigating the issues of citizenship and rights. The legal framework on immigration and its problematic aspects, such as the delayed action by legislative bodies concerning the waves of immigrants entering the country are discussed, since it is these circumstances that define the irregular immigrants' reality in Greece.

The chapter uses data and information from a variety of sources to present the contextual framework of the qualitative research undertaken in Omonoia. More specifically, the basis of both parts comes from the interviews that were conducted with people in authority positions concerning matters of immigration. Through the interviews, the need for a detailed contextualization of the Greek legal framework arose, since one of the main arguments that were presented by the interviewees when asked about immigration in Greece, was the delayed action by the State and the problematic implementation of the law.

4.2. Irregular Immigration in the European Context

4.2.1. The relationship between irregularity and the construction of institutional invisibility

One of the structural frameworks shaping migration is the State. The state's directives, laws and legal procedures influence dimensions of migration, including who is categorized as a migrant and on what terms. Within the context of the European Union there are two legal frameworks and sets of legislation that define migration. The first is the legislation of the EU that is binding for its member states and the second set is the legislation of each member state. The conjuncture of the two legal frameworks defines who is categorized as a migrant, and the different classifications of migrants. Conferring legal or illegal status shapes the immigrant's state of being.

In the EU context, migration takes two different forms. There is internal migration across member-states and migration flows between the EU and non-EU nationals. Academic research acknowledges the notion of 'outcast' attributed to immigrant groups, especially non-EU nationals, the presence of whom is increasingly evident in the EU (Boehnke 2004, Burchardt et al 2002). This constitutes the context of the present research, since during the last decade the inflow of immigrants to the EU has attracted attention by media and politicians and has fuelled a rise in right wing politics (EU 2009, 2010, MIPEX 2011, OECD 2010). The importance of the transnational and global character of migration becomes apparent when focusing on immigration in the EU context, through the large number of immigrants both internal (EU citizens) and external (non EU/coming from third countries). According to published data (EU 2010: 60) the total number of immigrants within

the EU27 in 2008 was 31.9 million. Of these, 11.5 million were internal, i.e. EU citizens moving to other member states, and 19.5 million people were external, non-EU nationals (6.9% of the total EU27 population).

Although migration is not confined to the EU, it is the concept of human rights as one of the basic tenets of the Union that makes the phenomenon particularly interesting. The presence of (irregular) immigrants within the EU raises questions and challenges the actuality of the character of human rights and the free movement that the European Union as a unified continent symbolizes. Even though the universality of rights has been a strong motivation for the EU there are different standards that define and categorize immigration between EU nationals and people coming from third countries.

Additionally to internal and external immigrants, there is a third category of immigrants in the EU, irregular immigrants who lack any official status. The term 'irregular immigrant' is commonly used to describe undocumented immigrants, also known as 'sans papiers', people that have no official papers. Particularly, according to the project Clandestino (EU 2009: 1), an EU initiative following the observation of a large number of undocumented immigrants, these are people:

“without any legal resident status [...] and those whose presence in the territory, if detected, may be subjected to termination through an order to leave and/ or expulsion order because of their status”.

The term 'irregular' is often used interchangeably with the term illegal and/or undocumented. However, the term 'irregular,' coined by the EU in the pilot project Clandestino (EU 2009), is firstly, less value-laden than the term illegal and secondly, and more importantly, it is a more accurate description of the position

that many immigrants find themselves in, since it includes and implies the possibility of being in transit or outside of legalization procedures. Therefore, it is this term that will be used in the present work when referring to undocumented immigrants. A prime example of an irregular migrant population is the case of asylum seekers; it is estimated that large proportions of asylum seekers, if unsuccessful in gaining refugee status, do not leave the country but remain undocumented and illegal/irregular (GCIM 2005, EU 2009). The case of this specific fragment of the immigrant population is strongly connected to the socially 'unwanted' or 'outcast' characteristic of urban dwellers, because they still inhabit the city, although it is questionable whether they officially have the right to do so.

4.2.2. The EU legal framework on immigration

The interesting and problematic element within the EU that promotes the marginal status of irregular immigrants is how their rights are differentiated when compared to EU nationals. EU nationals have the freedom and the opportunity to move across borders within the EU, thus rendering their various national identities/citizenships irrelevant under their common European membership. Through these practices the notion of borders seems to be alleviated, even though this is not necessarily the case. Although there are differences and discrepancies of status that citizens of member states hold, overall their legal rights are the same throughout the European Union, upheld by the highly respected institutional position of the European Ombudsman, a single commissioner for all European citizens who investigates complaints and mediates between the citizen(s) and the EU authorities. In the case of non-EU immigrants, things become more complex, since there is a multiplicity of laws, national and international, sometimes opposing and conflicting, as will be presented at the end of this section. However, the premise of the EU is the fundamentality of human rights. The legal framework of the EU on international immigration is such that it conveys the importance and respect of human rights irrespectively of the person's origin. This fundamentality is highlighted in the Finland Treaty (1999) where the common EU policy agreed upon is the inclusion of the provision of social protection, security, health care, services, goods and education for *all immigrants* residing in the EU. Even though this agreement referred mostly to long-term residents, it affirms the respect of human rights and wellbeing for all, and is directly stated in the agreement (Tampere, Finland Treaty 1999). However, this has proved difficult to fulfil, especially when considering illegal immigrants but also asylum seekers

when entering a country (Boehnke 2004, Burchardt et al 2002). The conflicting ethos within the EU is shown by the development of plans for a common border control system, simultaneously to the Finland Treaty. In October 2004, the EU constitutional treaty agreed upon a unified external border control management system and in 2005 the External Borders Agency was created (Frontex 2010). Its mission was to provide strict control of the EU external borders in order to regulate immigration. The need for stricter control of external borders came with the rising numbers of irregular migrants entering the EU through countries like Greece and Italy. Irregular migration is seen as a challenge to state sovereignty and human security, and the EU recognizes international migration as an “emotive issue because it raises complex questions about the identity and values of individuals, households and communities, as well as societies as a whole. International migration is a controversial matter because it highlights important questions about national identity, global equity, social justice and the universality of human rights” (GCIM 2005: 19). Through these and the existence of controversial and/or opposing laws/treaties that bound member-countries under European law, it becomes clear that although the EU respects and promotes human rights, it tries hard to stop waves of migrants from entering. This complex situation becomes all the more important when exploring the conditions that regulate migrant status within EU member states.

Although the emphasis here has on the universality and fundamentality of human rights as a tenet of the EU, the point that I am trying to make is on the controversy created by an opposing ethos within the legal framework of the EU that directs the regulation of immigration in countries like Greece but also shapes the status that immigrants hold. An example is the directives that do not allow for

more than a certain percentage of asylum applications to be granted and directs asylum seekers and/or irregular immigrants back to specific countries like Greece and Italy (Dublin II Regulation 2003 that dictates that asylum application is to be submitted in the first country of entry in the EU and the relocation of the immigrant to the country of entry, no matter where she/he is arrested).

The need for better border control and regulation of immigration has become pressing due to the rising numbers of illegal/irregular immigrants entering the EU, especially from countries that are EU sea borders, like Greece and Italy. According to official EU and global data there is a rise in the number of international migrants and irregular migrants. The OECD estimates that between 10% and 15% of the EU's 56 million migrants have irregular status, and that each year around half a million undocumented migrants arrive in the EU (OECD International Migration Outlook 2010). The data presented in the OECD International Migration Outlook point to the lack of legal migration opportunities that push people to irregular ways of entering and augment the operation of human trafficking networks. Transnational communities and networks through countries make it easier for illegal/irregular operations to take place. It is clear that "irregular migration challenges the exercise of state sovereignty, corruption and organized crime, xenophobic feelings" for every member-state and the EU in general (OECD International Migration Outlook 2010: 115). The issue of asylum seekers gains importance because it is directly related to that of irregular migrants. There are indications that these are the people less willing to leave a country even after they have been denied any kind of status. Due to the financial difficulties in many countries of the EU in the past few years, permanent legal migration shows a decline whereas illegal migration becomes more pressing,

especially in Italy, Spain and Greece. According to the GCIM one of the major problems in the EU at the moment is “the arrival of asylum seekers from other parts of the world, the majority of whom do not qualify for refugee status” (GCIM 2005: 5). The rising numbers of asylum seekers in Europe are illustrated by the rise that took place in 2008; there has been an increase of 14% in one year (OECD Migration Outlook 2010). The reasons that this poses such an important problem are: (1.) While coming to the EU these people are invisible, at least until they apply for asylum (2.) If they are denied refugee status, since the criteria for granting refugee status change rapidly according to the evaluation of the situation in other countries, they do not leave the country because their problems are not solved, and (3.) Especially in the case of Greece, after the Dublin Regulation, which required that a request must be processed in the first country of entry, if these people are found in other parts of the EU they are returned to Greece and get trapped there. The entrapment comes from the clash between different conventions. On the one hand, because of the Dublin II Regulation, large numbers of irregular immigrants are returned to Greece from all over Europe, as the first country of entry, and where they must apply for asylum. But on the other hand, because of the Schengen Agreement (1999) there is only a limited number of immigrants allowed permanently into the country. Therefore, if asylum is applied for, given the number of irregular immigrants, it is highly probable that the number of permits will exceed the limit directed by the other convention. Examples like this highlight the role of the State and the importance of legal frameworks that must be negotiated and balanced.

4.3. The phenomenon of immigration in Greece

4.3.1. The Greek Legal Framework on Immigration

Having provided the basic EU legal context on immigration, the discussion now moves on to the Greek legal framework, since the combination – and at times the juxtaposition of the two - define the status of immigrants and thus shape their position in relation to the Greek State.

The geopolitical position of Greece at the Eastern border of the EU and surrounded by sea, is one of the key characteristics of the country in relation to matters of immigration. Greece is one of the important entry points for immigrants into the EU. According to interviews conducted with people in key positions and journalists during the fieldwork, Greece is the main node for the three main human trafficking networks that operate to bring immigrants into the EU from Egypt and Turkey (personal interviews 2012). This, in connection to the Dublin Regulation, explains the statement by the OECD that “asylum seeking in the EU has increased the most since 2000 in countries on the periphery, such as Greece, Italy, Poland and Turkey” (2010: 40).

Trying to create a timeline for the phenomenon of immigration in Greece, one must go back to 1991 when the first legal framework for immigration was established (Triantafyllidou 2010, Paulou and Skoulariki 2009). In the 1990's Greece transformed into an immigrant-receiving country and the first laws on immigration were developed. The timeline of the laws since then is crucial, not only in understanding the phenomenon of immigration in Greece, but also in exploring the position of immigrants in the host country .

The Greek legal framework on immigration followed the waves of immigrant flows. More specifically, the laws directing and directed to the phenomenon of immigration developed along with the needs that became obvious and pressing *after* the continuous inflow of immigrants. More specifically, laws on immigration were developed and passed in 1991, 2001, 2005 and 2007. Legalization procedures were created for the first time in 1998 and updated in 2001 and 2005. However, it becomes evident that the legal directives were ineffective in managing the growing numbers of immigrants coming in the country. A major problem has been and still is the short-term perspective of the measures that have been taken by the Greek State and the ambivalent position of immigrants in Greek society (Triantafyllidou 2010). Triantafyllidou (2010) proposes a breakdown of three periods in Greek policy towards migration. The first is the premature phase dating from 1991 to 2001, when immigrants kept coming in without the Greek State responding to the phenomenon. The second period is from 2001 to 2005, when the first comprehensive law on migration was passed. This is also the point that migration becomes acknowledged as a long-term phenomenon. The final period is from 2005 to 2010/early 2011. The conditions of 2011 and the first months of 2012 is at the limit of the present work because the changes that occurred after the summer of 2012 are: (a.) beyond the scope of this thesis, and (b.) not crystallized yet in order to be examined. It seems that 2011 was the time that the Greek State faced the fact that Greece is a country of EU entry and needs to have policies to tackle and manage the issue of legal and illegal/irregular migration, as well as the challenge of integration/assimilation of immigrants in the Greek society, following the EU directives on such issues.

During the first period, Greece had no legal framework for the control of

immigrant inflows. The law passed in 1991 focused mostly on the minimization of immigrant inflows and tried to make it almost impossible for the entrance, residence and legal work of immigrants in Greece (Triantafyllidou and Maroukis 2010, Anagnostou 2005). However, in subsequent years many immigrants came to Greece crossing the borders illegally. It has been estimated that between 1990 and 1999, at least 400,000 people were living in Greece with no papers to legalize their stay or work (Fakiolas 1997, Greek Helsinki Monitor 1995, Katsoridas 1994, Triantafyllidou and Mikrakis 1995). Even though the problem of uncontrolled waves of immigration was recognized by the government, there was no official action taken during the 1990s by the Greek State (Triantafyllidou 2010). It was at the end of 1997 that two presidential decrees were published introducing the first programme for the legalization of immigrants in Greece. These two presidential decrees (358/1997 and 359/1997) were implemented during the spring of 1998. Overall, 371,641 immigrants applied for a 'white card', i.e. fixed time residence in order to move to the second phase of the legalization procedure. However, only 212,860 were successful in their application for a 'green card': one, two or five years residence.

One of the major flaws that these procedures had, according to the literature, was that in order to be able to apply, the person had to be able to prove his/her residence in Greece for a specific time frame (Triantafyllidou and Maroukis 2010). Immigrants not able to demonstrate this residential time frame were not allowed to apply for legalization.

The next important measure to control immigration was law 2910/2001 (in 2001), titled "Entrance and Stay of Immigrants in Greece". The rationale of this law was to prevent illegal/irregular immigration and to support immigrants'

integration into the Greek economy, since their legalization would probably also support the State through their being subject to taxation. The aspiration was that it would regulate the problem of rising numbers of undocumented immigrants by also covering the needs of the Greek market (Triantafyllidou and Maroukis 2010). In Greece, internal migration to the city centres and especially Athens, left the countryside empty. That had a direct impact on agricultural production. Moreover, the ageing of the Greek population had created deficits in the national health care system that could be covered by the taxation of legal work and residence by the legalization of immigrants. However, there were problems in implementing the law, mainly because of the lack of necessary infrastructure and qualified services to deal with the complex procedures required.

In 2002, the law was amended after pressure from the Greek Ombudsman that recommended that the deadline for applications should be extended since the paperwork that was asked from immigrants and public authorities was so vast that it became unattainable. Applicants were also able to get only papers to legalize their stay for one year only. For the next year they had to re-apply by going through the same complex procedures all over again. Only in January of 2004, with the passing of law 3203/2004, were immigrants allowed to get a two-years residence. Again the papers that an immigrant had to have in order to apply were complex and difficult to attain, plus he/she had to pay a fee of 145 euro on applying. Additionally, the procedures were taking so much time to be completed that in most cases by the time that the card was ready it had already expired (Triantafyllidou and Maroukis 2010, Mavrodi 2005). This situation led to large numbers of immigrants being undocumented; they were 'trapped' in illegally residing in Greece through circumstances that can be considered to be beyond

their will or power.

The third phase, starting in 2005, introduced a new law (3386/2005) that was subject to many alterations until its final form in February 2007 (3536/2007). In all its forms the law included a new programme of legalization of immigrants residing in Greece. More specifically, law 3386/2005 incorporated a programme of legalization of illegal immigrants who could prove that they had been in Greece before December 2004. The Law of 2005 attempted to regulate issues of entry and residence in the country. However, it excluded refugees and asylum seekers. Another element worth mentioning is that the fee was raised to 300 euro for the two-year residence application and 450 euro for three-years. As mentioned before, for the legalization law of 2001, the time needed for renewal of papers had been too tight, having as a minimum a period of three months. Law 3536/2007 introduced a legalization programme for those who had missed the chance of renewing their papers in time in 2005. In order to understand the scale of the problem better, it is important to present data on immigration in Greece.

4.3.2. Greek Data on Immigration

Unfortunately, the data on immigration in Greece are either lacking or insufficient. There had been no systematic attempt by any authority to record immigrants entering and/or residing in Greece, up until the Census of 2011. However, the Census results and data are not yet available to be used in the present work. Therefore, the data presented in the next paragraphs are basic and collected from selected and various sources. The lack of data on the immigrant population in Greece poses a serious problem for authorities since without a clear image of the phenomenon, solutions can only be vague and not as effective. All published estimations and various types of data that have been presented seem to agree on a clear rise in the numbers of immigrants over the past 15 to 20 years and, according to interviews with official authorities and key actors on the issue, this rise has been the motive behind the legal reforms that have taken place, as well as the justification for identifying Greece as a country of immigration. In the words of Kouveli (elected official in the Mayor's office and responsible for the creation of Immigrants Board for the City of Athens, personal interview, 2012):

“unfortunately, we have not been able to have an accurate number of the immigrants residing in Athens and/or Greece. Attempts have been made to collect data from several authorities but there is no single number. When I got this position, I found out –and that was the official answer [by the Ministry of Interior and the Police Authority for Immigration]- that no one knows how many are the immigrants in this city and the country. We don't even know the number of legal residents, let alone the number of irregular ones”.

Going back to the beginning of immigration inflow in Greece, in the 1990s, data collected by several research groups and NGOs estimated that in 1991, legal immigrants numbered approximately 170,000. The latest available census data is from 2001, when legal immigrants numbered 750,000, reaching 7% of the total population. In the period 2000 to 2006, various approaches converged towards an estimation that the total number of immigrants in Greece ranged around 900,000 people (IMEPO-UEHR 2004: 5), i.e. approximately 8.5% of the total population of the country (Hellenic Migration Policy Institute-Urban Environment and Human Resources IMEPO-UEHR 2004). For the same period, mostly academic sources and non-governmental ones, estimate the number of immigrants to be at least 1,000,000 people. Paradoxically, from 1991 to 1997 the number of permits from the ministry of Public Order has been declining, even though there has been a massive increase in the numbers of immigrants entering Greece. Although the laws of 1999 and 2001 had some temporary results in the legalization of immigrants the majority remained with illegal status. Some data are available from the Labour Force Survey of 2008 indicating that 680,564 foreigners were living in Greece. This shows an increase of 17% in 2007.

More recent publications estimate that “despite the crisis, the population and workforce kept growing with more immigrants and asylum seekers, as Greece becomes one of Europe’s major countries of transit and destination, partly due to EU policies (e.g. Dublin II)” (MIPEX 2011). However, probably because of the bureaucratic legalization procedures, the numbers of immigrants, both legal and illegal, remain unknown. It is indicative that local government in Athens (Mayor’s of Athens office) admits that a count of the people who applied for some kind of status could have existed if there were a systematic account of applications. But

due to the insufficient bureaucratic structures, this has never been done and therefore no official records exist (personal contact and interview).

It is indicative that in public services that deal with immigrants, ranging from the police to several ministries, there are constant bureaucratic problems with immigrants' papers and applications. For example, a large number of immigrants appear to have the exact same birthdate (1st of January of a random year). Another example is the omission of the middle names of immigrants as well as the wrong spelling of their names. It has been my personal experience when accompanying interviewees to public services, that there is a continuous confusion with their papers because of lack of concentration and/or public servants' indifference. When I accompanied Ahad to re-apply for a work permit, the person responsible for receiving his application wrote Ahad's last name as his first name and Ahad's father's first name as his last name. It becomes obvious that mistakes such as these can have a severe impact on the processes and a disproportionate effect on a person's life.

Moreover, there is no clear estimation of the number of undocumented foreigners in Greece. An indicative figure for 2008 is 200,000. According to the Ministry of Interior, Greece detained more than 146,000 illegal immigrants in 2008. This number shows a rise of 30% from 2007, and 54% rise from 2006. It is claimed by the Ministry of Interior (2008) that this is primarily due to an increase in attempted crossings on the Greek-Turkish border (OECD 2010). According to the same sources, in the first trimester of 2009 there was no decline in the numbers. Also, the number of asylum seekers that, as has already been mentioned, is the primary group that 'generates' illegal/irregular immigrants, continued to grow in 2008, to 33,000 (Ministry of Interior 2008).

4.3.3. Immigraniada⁵ The conditions in early 2012

It has become apparent that even though there is no recording of undocumented/irregular immigrants, their existence is mentioned and cannot be ignored, and that their numbers are rising and continue to do so (GCIM 2005, MIPEX 2010, OECD 2010, Triantafyllidou and Maroukis 2010). For example, according to Frontex in October 2010, approximately 245 people per day were illegally crossing the border between Greece and Turkey (Frontex 2010).

Given the indicators that the numbers of newcomers continues to rise, the estimation that the number of illegal/irregular immigrants is also rising seems safe enough. This is because there is no way for a newcomer to get a legal permit. Asylum seekers are the first to fall into the status of illegal/irregular immigrant, as only 1% of them receive refugee status (OECD 2010). However, since 2008 there have been some changes in the Greek legal system attempting to facilitate the 'problem' of large number of immigrants, thus also acknowledging their existence. In 2008, a reform was passed in order to grant long-term residence to children of immigrants. The prerequisites to gain this status were strict and the extraordinary fee of 900 euro led to only 3 applicants "out of more than 80,000 potential beneficiaries" (OECD 2010: 208). Later in 2009 another reform of the citizenship law was proposed and was amended to grant citizenship to Greek-born children of foreigners if both parents had been legal residents in Greece for at least 5 years. However, few of the immigrants living in Greece at least 5 years before 2009 met the legal conditions to apply for some kind of legal status. Since immigrant parents were unable to become legal, there was no way for their children to gain Greek citizenship, so they all fall into the status of irregular/illegal

⁵ "Immigraniada (We 're coming rougher)" From Gogol Bordello's album Trans-Continental Hustle in 2010

immigrants.

The problem of immigration and particularly irregular immigration has attracted attention in the media and has given rise to extreme right-wing and xenophobic voices, with the most prominent example of this the entry of the fascist party Golden Dawn into parliament. One reason has been the conditions in downtown Athens, mostly in the area considered to be the historic triangle, as shown in the previous chapter. For the past few years, the area has been the centre of immigrant communities and abandoned by Greeks. Additionally, the media have presented an image of the area as extremely dangerous because of immigrants residing there. Due to the lack of available data on the actual number of immigrants residing in the area, the media have made speculated on the criminalization of immigration and have labelled the area as a ghetto. As will be further illustrated in chapter 5, research has shown that “far from reflecting reality the media structures reality which ultimately helps to shape public opinion in varying degrees” (Tsoukala 2001). In Greece, this reality, shaped by the media, has promoted a representation of immigrants associated with crime and urban violence. As Tsoukala (2001:116) concludes in her study, these media representations have led to a blurring of the “distinction between illegal, legal and second generation immigrants as well as between foreigners and nationals of minority ethnic or religious origin”. This blurring of the different categories of immigrants becomes more prominent due to the lack of official data. Also, the widespread notion of danger connected to immigrants motivated the previous government towards resolving the problematic aspects of the issue of immigration in Greece. However, these attempts fell apart after the economic crisis and the entrance of Greece to the IMF. Until 2011, the rising number of

immigrants along with the financial crisis led to an attempt to deal with the 'problem' of undocumented/irregular immigrants who had become the target of the media. However, in 2012 these attempts were abandoned since the socio-political upheaval gave rise to the extreme phenomena of racist violence and xenophobia, along with the widespread notion that violence is tolerated.

In 2010 Greece made progress in attempting to tackle the issues of immigration that had been ignored for years. The progress was reflected in three new legal regulations that were passed by government at the time, under law 3838/2010 (MIPEX 2010: 92). One of the reasons that this legal reform took place was the government's recognition of several problems obstructing the legalization process of immigrants: for example, up to 2010, immigrants in Greece had to

“show 2 years' revenue statements and pass ineffective integration requirements where the annual quotas and long waiting lists [... denied] access to eligible non-EU residents” (MIPEX 2010).

Because of similar problematic aspects, law 3838/2010 was presented as of “pressing national interest for security and social cohesion”. It emerged from NGO campaigns, recommendations from the Ombudsman and National Commission for Human Rights, and public consultation involving comparisons with other countries.

One of the main problems for immigrants in Greece is that they are fixed into the status of illegality, and cannot gain citizenship no matter how many years they have been in the country. An example of the situation is second-generation immigrant children that have been born in Greece, have been through Greek school and university but cannot practice their profession because they are not

granted citizenship, as is the case of the profession of lawyers. The terms of gaining citizenship rights, especially for long-term residents are considered to be some of the most restrictive in Europe (MIPEX 2010: 93). This situation leads back to the issue of citizenship in Greece being granted through the principle of blood and highlights its problematic aspects when it comes to the case of immigrants.

However, the new law (3838/2010) introduced in 2010, enabled long-term residents and 10-year permit holders to vote in local elections. Additionally, they can stand for some positions (excluding mayor or vice-mayor) once they gain sufficient Greek knowledge for the tasks involved. Voting rights are acknowledged in this law to be the most effective form of integration, a means against social exclusion and of promoting local governance. Another measure that was introduced and, at the time of the research, was on its way to being implemented was the 'local integration councils' aimed at dealing with problems that migrant permanent residents face, in an attempt to strengthen social cohesion, as clearly defined by the new Law on Municipalities Structure. According to MIPEX (2010: 95) research: "non-EU residents now enjoy limited active and passive voting rights, similar to recently reforming countries. [...] New integration councils, if implemented, may have weaker powers than similar new bodies. Still they could inspire more democratic structures at national level, should government rethink the representation of immigrants themselves in the National Commission for Migrants' Integration".

However, a weakness of these new measures is that there is no funding dedicated for an immigrant civil society that would facilitate the process of immigrants' civic participation. Law 3838/2010 was passed only after Christmas 2011, so its

measures have neither been implemented nor tested. Therefore, its success cannot be gauged, whether it will be successfully implemented and if it will actually smoothen the process of assimilation/integration of immigrants.. Moreover, the degree to which it will affect (if at all) the condition of illegal immigrants cannot be assessed.

Another important measure that was introduced by law 3838/2010 concerns the issue of long-term residents. Because of the high cost of application (900 Euro) and the very strict prerequisites of the previous law, hardly any applications for residence were made in 2008. The previous government with law 3731/2008 tried to facilitate a solution for children of long-term residents in Greece. Greek-born migrant children could become long-term residents as adults, once they completed their primary and secondary education in Greek schools. However, the implementation of this, as has been mentioned above, was unsuccessful. The subsequent law 3838/2010, introducing birthright citizenship for second and third generation migrants, attempted to solve the problem.

Theoretically, successful candidates will “enjoy average security and equal rights as provided under EU law, but get this far with difficulty because conditions restrict literally the number of applicants who can succeed” (MIPEX 2010). Law 3838/2010 reduced the 900 Euro fees to 600 Euro, which is still very high and higher than nearly all European Union countries. In the rest of Europe, most countries require just a basic income and language knowledge. Greece is among seven European countries that ask for high income and integration training. The integration courses have not yet started to operate, at the time of writing this thesis, since these are to be provided by the state and no private or non-governmental initiative can be taken.

4.3.4. Evaluating the given legal framework and conditions in Greece

Given the lack of data and the existing legal framework there are several points to be made concerning immigration in Greece. Up to the present day, there has been no successful attempt to quantify systematically migrant flows in Greece. Officially, it has been claimed that this is due to three crucial problems: (1.) the extent of illegal immigration is difficult to quantify because it is illegal (2.) the problematic nature of the programmes of legalization and “the lack of evidence for these and the existence of several unconnected data from different ministries that have no contact with each other” (IMEPO 2004: 3-4), and (3.) the return of people with Greek citizenship from host countries as a result of movements of population due to historical conditions (IMEPO 2004).

Another problematic aspect in quantifying immigration in Greece has been the lack of distinct categories of immigrants residing in Greece: There are three categories of immigrants that are generally acknowledged (excluding completely illegal immigrants): immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers. However, in Greece, there is no distinction made between the different categories. The discrepancy between these different groups is not reflected in legal documents or in the different services provided. They are all labelled immigrants and there is no clear picture of how many people in each category residing in Greece. Regarding the current situation, there are only rough estimations coming mainly from the media, which cannot be considered trustworthy. Illegal immigrants are excluded because of the imprecise nature of this category. At the moment, in Greece the term ‘illegal immigrant’ is an all-inclusive category because of the spread of populist beliefs and media coverage. The illegal and therefore invisible nature of this group allows for random estimations and speculation that cannot be proven.

The lack of any kind of data on irregular immigrants makes the question of the position of immigrants in Greece even more complex but also more interesting in examining this group's everyday living conditions. Viewing this group in the context of transnational communities' formation, their ambiguous standing adds in their de facto 'in-betweenness' and further obscures their situation. Not only do they have to deal with the given complication of immigrant life in balancing between – at least - two worlds (culture and identity of the country of origin and host country), irregular immigrants in Greece also face the impossible situation of being invisible with additional burdens to overcome in their attempt to create a regular life.

It has been highlighted that in the Greek and the EU context one of the major issues in exploring migration is the 'problem' of irregular immigrants. As has already been mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, one reason for the large numbers of irregular/illegal immigrants residing in the EU is their failure to attain asylum and that leads them to reside illegally in a country. In the case of Greece this problem takes different proportions because of the legal framework that existed until recently. The legal framework on immigration has a number of problematic aspects that affect immigrants' position.

The discussion in this chapter leads back to the issues of democracy presented in the first chapter. The fact that the citizenship is still effectively granted through the principle of blood has consequences that cannot be ignored. Since citizenship is almost impossible to attain by immigrants of any generation (until now) there is no way for a large proportion of the population to be included/integrated/assimilated into Greek society. This aspect of the legal framework in Greece, when viewed through the lens of theories on

transnationality and political theories, prompts the need to investigate the situation of people belonging to one nation but residing in a different state and having no official standing in it.

The discussion above has shown that the concepts of nation and state, both origin and host, are fundamental in exploring the issue of migration, because they both *define and create* the position and the identity of a migrant. The person moving from his/her country to another one 'brings' with him/her elements of the country of origin. This element, the part of a person's identity that is formulated by belonging to one's ethnicity, is also a crucial aspect when exploring immigration. Also, because of the lack of policy framework in Greece, the position of immigrants becomes all the more ambiguous. From the perspective of transnational theories, when exploring their everyday lives and individual practices, what emerges is a situation where immigrants might create communities and may bring with them their national characteristics, but they do not do so in a context that could allow them to assume the identity they may want because the legal or formal 'acceptance' of their existence is lacking. The concept of 'social spaces' that arises from theories on transnationality, allowing for ties between the country of origin and the host country to exist, in the case of Athens creates another type of tension, since the relevant population is not recognised. If employing theories on transnationality, the awkward position of a person belonging to one nation but under the authority of a different state without these two having a meeting point, comes into focus. As has highlighted in chapter 1, transnationality theories suggest that what defines immigrants' position is the culture they bring in the context of the state that they live in. However, how is the position of immigrants defined when they bring with them their culture but the context is lacking? This is a

question that will be followed through in subsequent chapters of the thesis.

4.4. Conclusion

The focus of this chapter has been on the invisible status of irregular immigrants and the visible effects of their presence. Their categorization as 'irregular' is the main characteristic of their ambiguous living situation. Irregularity as a concept has come to fill the legal void between the regularization of an immigrant and the status of complete illegality. Through the concept of irregularity, the relationship between the Greek State and the immigrant(s) has been explored in order to provide the structural framework in which immigrants are placed. This exploration builds on the concept of institutional invisibility and connecting it to the notion of 'non-action' as a form of power employed by the State in order to avoid acting on a problem (Puggioni 2005, Lukes 1974). The instance of power exercised by a State over someone and/or something by not offering a solution can shed light on the marginalization of groups like irregular immigrants through their non-recognition (Lukes 1974). In the case of the Greek State the notion of 'non-action' has been the principal method of dealing with immigration. The absence of functioning laws and structures to account for, and accommodate, the waves of immigration has created this ambiguous situation where immigrants exist but only in the margins of society. From the empirical research, it has been shown that different organizations of the State ignore the presence of immigrants. Therefore, pushed into the position of 'strangers' and/or 'pariahs' the outcast urban dwellers are subjected to a form of power that renders them invisible to the extent that they are seen as a single group.

Taking Bourdieu's (1989) definition of symbolic power, the power to consecrate or reveal, a step further, it can also be seen as the power to conceal or render a group invisible: by naming it a group, while probably it is more than one by any

definition, its members acquire a new identity, that of no identity. Due to the above-mentioned invisibility that results in lack of knowledge of the group's members, coupled with the popular imaginations created by the media, it is probable that the invisibility of outcast groups like irregular immigrants becomes enhanced. Their social positioning in the margins and even further allows for an interpretation of power exercised over them by mainstream society.

Chapter 5

Omonoia Square as a Case Study: the Contextual Framework

5.1. Introduction

As outlined in chapter 3, Omonoia Square in central Athens is the focus of my research. This chapter outlines and evaluates the significance of the area in relation to the increased presence and visibility of irregular immigration. Having explored the Greek legal framework on immigration in chapter 4, this chapter discusses the conditions forming urban space that, coupled with the weaknesses of the Greek legal framework, result in shaping irregular immigration's public presence in places such as Omonoia Square. It focuses on the contextualization of the Square, and its significance and symbolic value for the city of Athens. It was the first square to be formally established in Athens in 1846, after the creation of the modern Greek State, and it became a primary point of entry into the city. In the chapter, I will highlight the socio-political and historical circumstances that shaped Omonoia Square, and evaluate its contemporary status, as a place of occupation, and refuge, for different immigrant groups.

According to Lefebvre (1991), as presented in Chapter 2, the production of space reflects the relationships among the everyday practices of the users, the overlapping imaginations and understandings of the place and the 'conceived', conceptualized form and structure of the place by authorities that include the official plans and the uses designed and directed by local and state government. Given the theoretical framework of the research, that refers to the understanding of the production and appropriation of urban space as a result of multiple forces, including political and economic structures, the chapter is divided into three parts.

First, I examine, briefly, the main socio-political events related to the creation and development of the city of Athens. Setting the historical context of the modern Greek State, and the socio-political circumstances shaping the development of the city, enables an understanding of the Greek contextual framework of the research, and acquaints the reader with the forces that led to the creation of the public space under investigation. More specifically, historical circumstances that formed the Greek institutions are highlighted, since it is the specificities of the institutional framework and the role of the State and governance that shaped the city of Athens and Omonoia Square.

Second, I outline the development of Omonoia Square, and highlight the significance and the symbolic value of the square for Athens, as well as the continuity in its uses and functions, like transportation and commerce. In this section the history of the Square is described through the presentation of its consecutive designs and alterations as these reflect the different dominant ideologies of the regional and central authorities involved in the decisions on the functions of the Square and its image. In the last part of this section, I engage in a brief presentation of the square's depiction in the media since its characterization as a 'ghetto' is an attempt to illustrate the popular imaginations and the representations of the place under investigation.

In the third part of the chapter, I utilize the mapping exercise and information from the participant observation in a detailed description of the ways that the area is used daily. Setting the context of the place where my research took place, I provide the reader with the sense and feeling of the place as this can help in its understanding. Given that there are no official data on the demographics, the commercial and other functions of the Square and its adjoining streets, a re-

construction of the image of the area during the fieldwork is attempted. Through this, I illustrate the changing functions, and uses of, Omonoia Square as these reflect the perceptions of the users, according to my own understanding. The material for the chapter was derived from a variety of sources, including: the mapping exercise as an attempt to jot down the commercial and other functions of the Square along with the visible changes as these occurred within the past few years, preliminary interviews with long-term residents and professionals working in the area, interviews with key authorities and the participant observation during fieldwork.

5.2. The social, economic and political forces that have shaped Athens

Following Lefebvre's (1991, 1996, 2003) and Harvey's (1989, 2009) conceptualizations, the connection and interrelation of space and people do not occur independently of the historical, political, and economic framework of a given society. It is the political, economic, and historical frameworks that shape how different modes of governance are implicated in the design of spaces, such as Omonoia Square, and, in particular, give rise to officially designated, often legally defined, uses. Here, the historical framework of Athens will be explored and presented, to give to the reader the wider context before moving to the more specific historical context of Omonoia Square. In an attempt to familiarize the reader with the political and economic conditions of Greece, from the creation of the modern State in 1829 until the present, after the establishment of the Third Hellenic Republic in 1974, Table 5.1 highlights the turbulent formation of the Greek State that has shaped the present form of Athens.

Table 5.1: Historical timeframe⁶

Incident	Time Frame	Comments
First Hellenic Republic	1832	
Kingdom of Greece	1833- 1924	
King Otto	1832-1862	

⁶ I created the historical timeframe table, drawing from a variety of historical sources on Greece, in order to present in a condensed manner the most important dates concerning the history of Greece after the establishment of the modern Greek State, for the reader to be able to contextualize the periods that mark the creation of Athens

King George I	1863- 1913	1890 The Greek State declares bankruptcy and is submitted to International Auditing
First Balkan War	1912- 1913	
Second Balkan War	June- August 1913	
World War I	1917- 1918	
Greco- Turkish War	1918- 1922	“Asia Minor Disaster”: Destruction of the Greek army and subsequent evacuation of the Greek population in Turkey/ Large number of refugees coming to Athens
Second Hellenic Republic	1924- 1935	Within 1924-1928 10 different prime ministers, 3 national elections were held and 11 military movements, 1 military coup overthrown by another military movement
Restoration of the Kingdom of Greece	1935- 1967	
4 th August Military Coup		
World War II	1940-1944	
Restoration of the Greek Government	1944- 1945	
Civil War	1946- 1949	
Post-War Greece	1950- 1967	
Military Dictatorship	1967- 1974	
Third Hellenic Republic	1974- present day	

Prior to 1829, and from 1453, Greece was part of the Ottoman Empire.

Countries that were under the rule of the Ottoman Empire had difficulties in creating a stable state, post liberation (Palairret 2003, Beret 2006, Koliopoulos and Veremis 2003, Kostis 2013). The Ottoman past of the country had important implications in the shaping of the Greek State and the legacy that followed, infiltrating all aspects of civic life. This legacy has to do with the institutional weaknesses bequeathed to former Ottoman countries, a situation prevalent in Greece (Tsoukalas 1981, Diamandouros 1994, Featherstone 2005, Pagoulatos 2003). Post liberation, the governing authorities of the newly formed Greek State were not elected, but appointed by the foreign allies that had supported the Greek revolution against the Ottoman Empire. After the creation of the modern Greek State, the institutions that were gradually formulated were imported, mimicking the Western European paradigm of governance of the time. As such they can be considered to be imposed, rather than generated, indigenously, within Greek society (Diamandouros 1994). Because of the Ottoman past and the newly formatted State there was no infrastructure to support and facilitate them (Diamandouros 1994). As such and unlike the classic sociological understanding of institutions, that is, as stable and long lasting, political, social and economic institutions in Greece failed to be integrated, and have always been fragile (Weber 2009, Durkheim 1933, Diamandouros 1994). This was partly due to the different mind-sets and orientations that existed between the actual Greek society post-liberation and the appointed governing authorities attempting to create a modern State.

More specifically, according to theorists like Diamandouros (1994) and Tsoukalas (1974, 1981, 1999), the formation of Greek institutions created

two separate and opposing political trends, still prevalent in Greek society. The most accurate description of the long-term results of this divide for Greek society and the political arena, is by Diamandouros (1994). Historians and sociologists trace Greece's uniqueness in its deep-rooted 'dualism', stemming from the opposing tensions between what is considered 'West' and 'East'. This 'Greek paradox' as Herzfeld (1987) calls it, is reflected in every societal aspect and the dominant culture(s). Diamandouros (1994) has shown that in today's Greek society two political cultures co-exist, the 'modernized', reflecting mainly concepts of modernity and the 'underdog' which is rather tradition-oriented. They both share common characteristics such as the demand for social justice (but not necessarily its definition), while they differ regarding the modernization process. For the traditional culture, the West represents a threat while for the 'modernized' culture it is a goal to be achieved. Their co-existence results in:

“the relative weakness of civil society [that is a] salient characteristic of late industrializers; the incapacity of social actors in it to play a major role in the fashioning of state institutions capable of articulating positively with their own needs and demands; and the resulting antagonistic and tense relationship between the state and society”
(Diamandouros 1994:4).

The significance of this situation lies in the recurrent implications that these two cultures and the weakness of institutions have on the structural framework of the Greek State. An example that is central when exploring the production of space in Greece is the discrepancy amongst: (a) planning, (b) legal frameworks, and (c) actual practice (Serraos et al. 2005, Papageorgiou-Venetas 2007,

Galanakis 2004, Tsoukalas 1974, Mantouvalou 1998)⁷. This discrepancy has been explained as a deeper division between the State and society affecting all aspects of civic life and regulatory practices as will be further illustrated, as for example when presenting the designs of Omonoia Square and their refutations (Tsoukalas 1974, Mantouvalou 1998, Serraios et al. 2005).

This condition of the Greek State is indigenous to the institutions and affects civic life as well as regulatory policies and practices. As such it has influenced the historical shaping of Athens and Omonoia in particular. Also, it explains and contextualizes the problematic characteristics of the Greek State, like the legal framework on immigration as well as the absence of effective planning regulations.

When contextualizing the shaping of the city of Athens and the formation of the urban space, there are three distinct periods of the 20th century to be highlighted (Tsoukalas 1974, Karides 2008, Leontidou 2001). The criterion for the division between these periods is the combination of social, economic and political forces in each of them resulting in fundamental changes that separate them:

Between the wars 1923- 1940

⁷ According to Serraios et al. (2005: 21), in their research on the Greek spatial and urban planning, the “key policy deficiencies in the regional policy arena [...]” were identified:

	Policy Misfit	Adaptational Result	Mediating factors
Greece	Centralized policymaking	Slow change	Central structure/Clientalism
	Poor administrative tradition	Slow change Resistance	Centralized institutions
	Institutional building	Slow change	Static system
	Lack of consensus		Weak civil society

Even though this table refers to the regional policy planning inadequacies in Greece, it exemplifies the major deficiencies and the problematic elements of the Greek State

From the creation of the First Hellenic Republic in 1829, a series of wars (Balkan Wars, World War One) and continuous political upheaval marked a period of almost 100 years. Since its establishment, the Greek State has suffered political and economic instability. Financially, the bankruptcy of 1890, see Table 5.1, was followed by a boom of industrial activity including the creation of railways that had an impact on the structure of Athens (Tsoukalas 1974). From the early 1900s until 1922, see Table 5.1, the Balkan Wars brought a series of changes to the borders of Greece with the acquisition of new territories and the consequent expansion of its territory. This resulted in demographic changes but also marked the first attempts in implementing city planning known as 'Town Plans' (Serraos et al. 2005). Greece's defeat in the Greek-Turkish war of 1918-1923 resulted in the 'Asia Minor Disaster'⁸ (1922-1923) and this had grave political and financial impacts on the country (Pentzopoulos 2002, see also Table 5.1): The impacts were compounded because of the sudden wave of refugees that numbered thousands of people coming to Athens from Asia Minor, along with the financial destruction of Greece. This period marks the expansion of the city driven by the need for housing and the creation of settlements for refugees. Another result of Greece's defeat in the Greco-Turkish war was the obligatory exchange of populations⁹ between Greece and Turkey that changed the social and class structure in Athens, and also influenced the class structure and the cultural mixture in Greece, since the groups of people that left and the new ones that arrived had different forms of social capital and cultures. For example, refugees from Asia Minor previously were of financial means and substance and came

⁸ The defeat of Greece in the Greco-Turkish war (1918-1922) resulted in the forceful and violent destruction of the Greek communities established in Turkey since the Ottoman period

⁹ Because of Greece's past in the Ottoman Empire, communities of Greeks and Turks were established in both countries. As part of the post-war agreement, these communities were obliged to move out of the country that they were living and move in to the country of national origin

from a cosmopolitan environment. Most were, until their migration, financially well off, and had experience in trade and education, whereas the native Greek population were, primarily, farmers living in poor conditions (Tsoukalas 1974). Karides (2008: 249) claims that, after the Asia Minor Disaster, it was the first time in Greek history that a distinction between upper/bourgeois and lower/working classes emerged. This was reflected in the formation of clear spatial boundaries or demarcations, especially in Athens, where refugees from Asia Minor created their settlements.

Karides' usage of this class typology does not reflect the definition of social classes known in Western Europe because, as illustrated in the example above, refugees from Asia Minor had high social capital but very low economic capital, and, in terms of cultural and social capital, they were defined as bourgeois but they had fallen to working class status because of their changed financial situation (Bourdieu 1986). Another group having distinct social, cultural and economic capital were the Greeks of the diaspora¹⁰ who were very active in the construction of the Greek State, through financial aiding but also through their involvement in the decision making of the design of Athens. This group followed the typical western classification as upper class/ bourgeois.

The classification of the different groups involved in the shaping of Athens is useful because it denotes the complexity and the evolving situation in the formation of Athens through the emergence of urban developments. Even though there is not a clear distinction between social classes, these groups are involved in the creation of urban space: the Greeks of the diaspora acted as stakeholders

¹⁰ Greek diaspora refers to the Greek communities that were established during the Ottoman Empire, outside of its geographical borders, especially in Russia and Western Europe, consisting mainly of merchants. Being involved and promoting trade, they were active in linking the Balkans and the Near East with markets of central and western Europe (Tsoukalas 1974: 269-371)

providing the capital for the creation of the city of Athens and influencing its design and form. The refugees from Asia Minor were active in establishing settlements in order to cover their basic needs and the natives were small-scale landowners in the city of Athens. These three groups, serving different interests influenced the urban developments of the time (Tsoukalas 1974, Mantouvalou 1998). The importance of these developments for the structure of the city is twofold; firstly, the formation of the refugees' settlements was haphazard because of the urgency of the situation. There was no plan followed for their construction, and the criterion used was the availability of empty space (Karides 2008). Additionally, this took place in a city that was in the process of being formulated and under dire financial conditions after the defeat in the war and the bankruptcy of the State (see Table 5.1). The second element of importance is connected to the lack of a clearly defined class system, at least as it is known in Western Europe, also reflected in the city by the absence of clearly socially defined boundaries.

1950-1980

This period is politically stable, compared to previous decades. The importance of this time frame lies in the fact that there was a significant boost to the economy, particularly the growth of construction. After the civil war (see Table 5.1), the existing divide between the two political cultures, the modernized and the tradition-oriented, in Greek society deepened (Diamandouros 1994). That was a force for the future political formation of the State but also for the construction of society with results that are evident today. During this period, there were large waves of migration from Greece to Germany, Australia and the USA but also internal migration from the countryside to Athens (Leontidou 1990). The social

dynamics that resulted from this period had a significant impact on the form of the urban environment and the process of urbanization: Athens expanded to the greater metropolitan region but without consistent control over proposed planning and without imposing building regulations (Kontogianopoulou-Polydorides 1974, Mantouvalou 1998, Serrao et al. 2005).

Even though Athens had been an urban centre since the 1830s, urban development, in terms of designing city life, did not materialise until the early 1950s (Tsoukalas 1981, Gizeli 1987, Mouzelis 1975, Serrao et al. 2005, Karides 2008). The political and financial instability of the late 19th and early 20th century did not allow for the city's structure to follow a specific, consistent plan. Building regulations kept being modified based on short-term needs and plans were re-defined due to budgetary miscalculations (Bastea 2000, Serrao et al. 2005, Papageorgiou-Venetas 2007). In Western Europe, urbanization was a phenomenon related to industrialization. However, industrialization in Greece did not follow the same pattern as the Western European model and was never a major force in the shaping of social conditions and/or urbanization (Tsoukalas 1975, Gizeli 1987). Both urbanization in the 1950s, and suburbanization in the late 1980s, were based on short-term needs followed by a series of modifications in regulations, sometimes even contradictory laws and decrees (Serrao et al. 2005). For instance, Serrao et al. (2005) in their article, "The Greek spatial and urban planning system in the European context", analytically present and explain the contradictions and the refutations that characterize urban planning and building regulations in Greece, highlighting the absence of control and the problematic institutions involved in the planning system. On the same note Mantouvalou (1998) highlights the discrepancy between urban planning and its

systematic refutation: this points to the opposing facets of the State, that on the one hand wants to embrace modern, pioneering, practices and, on the other hand, succumbs to deeply rooted clientalism. According to Mantouvalou, this is a clear reflection of the existing discrepancy and division between the State and society (Mantouvalou 1988: 6). According to Leontidou (2001) and Karides (2008: 247):

“[...] the ‘typical’ production of space in post war Athens and other Greek urban centers, like granting¹¹ and unregulated construction [...] have nothing in common with the procedures for the production and construction of housing in modern industrial countries. In other words, in the 20th century, there is an absence of a systematic and conclusive intervention of the Greek State [and/] or the private capital in the organization and control of the build environment [...]”

During this period, the shaping of the urban environment is concluded and the formulation of the city takes its present form. The next period focuses mostly on social and demographic changes taking place in the already existing built environment.

The Third Hellenic Republic: Modern Greece

Parliamentary democracy was restored in 1974 and Greece joined the European Union as a full member state, creating a context for political stability. The

¹¹ Granting refers to a law (3471/129) passed after the civil war that allowed for the exchange of property for the creation of building blocks. The property owner exchanged his/her property (land and/or neoclassical houses that were the majority of the buildings at the time) and in return he/she got ownership of a significant percentage of the flats that were constructed. The rest of the flats were the property of the constructor. This method of development was a result of the extreme housing problem that the State was facing after the destruction of thousands of villages during the civil war and a wave of internal immigration to Athens. However, there was no structural framework for the creation of building blocks nor an urban plan/design to be followed

economic focus from the mid-1970s turned from construction to the enhancement of the service sector. This period is marked by the increase in the informal economy that, unlike other Western examples, resulted in the prevention of social inequalities (Maloutas 1992). Since the late 1970s, with the expansion of the public sector, the majority of the population belonged to the middle classes and there was a significant number of small and medium (family) businesses (Karides 2008, Maloutas 1992). This combination has not allowed for major distinctions among different social groups. A significant change was the wave of immigration to Greece as opposed to migration from Greece and the internal migration of the previous decades. In relation to the urban environment the introduction of different cultures and ethnic identities marks the beginning of an era based on multiculturalism. Karides (2008: 251) notes that a social/cultural trait of this period, unlike the previous ones, is:

“the entry of ‘economic migrants’ from different countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Ukraine, Afghanistan, Kurdistan) that [colours] a new (for the Greek standards) multiculturalism, which is clearly depicted in the urban space”.

There are two elements defining the urbanization process in Greece, which are apparent in Athens. The first is the lack of clearly defined social classes in Greek society and the second is the inefficiency of planning regulations. More specifically, social classes were not evident in Greece because of a multiplicity of historical, political and economic factors. These include extended family networks that were a substitute for the welfare system, property ownership, mostly small-scale, and the lack of a Western European type of industrialization (Tsoukalas 1974, 1999). The emphasis on the service sector, but also the parallel economy,

have prevented gaps between social classes emerging and have always allowed for extensive upward mobility. This is reflected in Athens, where no territorial 'boundaries' between the areas exist in terms of class (Polyzos 2010¹² Maloutas 2007, Leontidou 1990). Of course there are areas considered upper and lower class; however, the categorization has not stopped the movement of population from the one to the other. As Polyzos (Kathimerini 28/8/2010) notes, the movement of people in the city is 'free' and unconstrained. There is nothing preventing anyone from renting, buying or being in any area. As Maloutas (2007: 738) points out: "it is very clear that a very important part of the city's residential areas are mixed or relatively mixed in terms of social class".

The second element that has defined the shape of the city and Greece in general is the lack of effective planning regulations, which is not a recent phenomenon in Greece (Mantouvalou 1988, Serraos et al. 2005). According to Tung (2001: 249):

"[t]he story of the evolution of modern Athens, like that of Cairo, [is] a tragic tale of uncontrolled urban growth and an absence of effective municipal governance eventually coming to attack the spiritual heart of the city".

Even though plans and regulations do exist on paper, they are neither effective nor followed (Mantouvalou 1988, Serraos et al, 2005). Omonoia Square, as well as the whole of Athens, is a characteristic example of the discrepancy between planning and practices: there have been more than three designs for the square but none was ever constructed. The reasons vary, ranging from the economic cost that was not calculated prior to the design, to political decisions that

¹² J. Polyzos is the president of the Organization of Regulatory Plan of Athens (Οργανισμός Ρυθμιστικού Σχεδίου της Αθήνας- ΟΡΣΑ) who in 2010 gave a series of interviews in newspapers about the conditions in the city of Athens.

disagreed with the previous designs. The multiple designs for the city and its public spaces illustrate Lefebvre's concept of representations of space as the dominant, ideologically and scientifically driven plans of space, since all designs and plans have been politically driven to present the appropriate image of the city according to each government. This echoes Harvey's (1989) conception of the way that the urban order under capitalism becomes an economic unit, and that the study of urbanization should be concerned with "processes of capital circulation; the shifting flows of labour power, commodities and capital [...]" (Harvey 1989: 6-7).

However, in the case of Athens, the interests that are served are inextricably linked with the micro-politics of each government. The ineffectiveness of planning regulations depicts the problematic structures of the Greek State (Kontogianopoulou-Polydorides 1974, Tsoukalas 1974, Mantouvalou 1998, Serraos et al. 2005). The continuous changes in planning and the ineffectiveness of regulations also illustrate the lack of clear and thought-through planning in terms of the needs of the city. The constantly amended regulations and procedures following each government show the different ideological frameworks between governments and enhance the existing discrepancy between representations of space and spatial practices. Also, the constantly amended regulations and legalization procedures have created a unique impact in the city to such an extent that a term has been coined to define the situation as 'para-urbanism'. According to Philippides (2002: 155) para-urbanism is a branch of urban planning: "Para-urbanism mediates between the state and the citizens; with it, citizens negotiate the grey zone between legality and illegality attributed to the fluidity of regulations and laws and the ambiguous official decisions" (Galanakis 2004: 8).

Modern Athens: 2012

Athens is the main borough of the larger metropolitan Attica region. The significance of the region and the central role of Athens is reflected in the centralized administration that is directed by the borough. The activities taking place in Athens relate to the whole of Attica region and in many cases to the whole country (Region of Attica <http://www.patt.gov.gr/main/index.php?lang=en>). Since 2011 when the 'Kallikratis' (3852/2010) regulation was implemented, Attica has become a 'super-region' and the country's centre of administrative decisions. The central character of Athens and the Attica region has been solidified by the fact that it is the main node for transportation in Greece, the main import/export centre and services provider both at national and international levels in addition to its geopolitical position. The significance of the region is highlighted in that it is the only Greek region that is considered in Eurostat statistics and other executive bodies of the EU. The 'Kallikratis' regulation signifies one more change concerning urban governance in relation to previous years: it is the first time that the prefects of the regions are elected instead of appointed by the government.

At the time of the fieldwork, the economic crisis, recession and Greece's subjection to the IMF had created a fluid and turbulent situation that is evident in the urban environment. The desertification and abandonment of public spaces, the large number of empty shops, especially in the city centre, and the increased presence of homeless new-poor are indicative of the situation. The census of 2011 may give some reliable statistics but has not yet been published. According to the National Statistical Services of Greece data were to be published at the end of 2012, yet by mid-2014, this has not occurred. The headline data that were available during

the writing process of the thesis, as released to the press, show a decline in the Athenian population: in 2011 the population of Athens was 655,780 whereas in 2001 the population was 789,000. The estimated population in the greater metropolitan area is close to 4 million inhabitants. According to the data published by the Municipality of Athens, the majority of the Athenian population is of working age (71%) and most of them with a 'satisfactory educational level' (2011: 375), with half having secondary and post-secondary educational background.

According to the analysis published by the municipality of Athens (City of Athens, ESPA) it is estimated that the main economic activity in the city is the service sector, so much so that Athens has been characterised as a third sector economy (Operational Program of the City of Athens, 2008: 152). According to the same research, Athens as a unit has a low productivity rate (Operational Program of the City of Athens, 2008: 155-156) and major difficulties in replacing job positions that are lost or in creating new ones. The combination of all the given facts, especially the recession, the rise of the numbers of shops closing down, as will be illustrated in section 5.3, and the fall in entrepreneurial activity, portrays a bleak image of the city. This situation is directly linked to the scope of the research since it influences the urban environment. As will be shown in the following section on Omonoia, historically one of the primary functions of the Square and the area around it has been its commercial activity.

The rise in unemployment that has been reported since 2008 is also directly linked to the image of the urban environment. According to The Employment Agency Force (OAED) 35.2% of the unemployed are concentrated in the municipality of Athens, which is the highest percentage of the country

(Operational Program of the City of Athens, 2008: 375). More specifically, there is a rise in the unemployment rate for the young and for women, and there is higher long term unemployment for specific groups, which explains some new forms of poverty in the city. One of the most recent results has been the rise in homeless people living on the streets of the city centre. This phenomenon has been picked up by the media and resulted in a deeper exploration that concluded that the new homeless population consists mainly of the 'new-poor' Greeks.

The impact of such phenomena on the urban environment is the decline in commercial activity, and the visibility of marginal populations, such as the homeless. The combination of a city with an unregulated built environment, mixed uses of buildings and a high population density, together with the economic and social circumstances at the time of the fieldwork, are significant in shaping the character of places such as Omonoia Square. However, to understand the context and the importance of Omonoia Square as a public space, a brief description now follows.

5.3. Omonoia Square and its significance

“The square itself has a long and glorious history with many ups and downs; it is established as the most famous Square in all the country” (Galanakis 2004: 13).

For Athens, and the modern Greek State in general, there are two important dates; the first is the 22nd January/ 3rd February 1830 and the second is the 29th June/ 3rd July 1833¹³. The first marks the liberation of Greece from the Ottoman Empire and the consequent formation of the modern Greek State. The second marks the decree that directed the reconstruction of Athens and its marking as the Capital of Greece. In 1831, Kapodistrias, the first governor of Greece, commissioned the architects Kleanthes and Schaubert to build some of the new city’s buildings. Kapodistrias was appointed governor of Greece under the Protecting Powers of England, France and Russia and wanted to create infrastructure for the state, including a new educational system, modernised modes of government and military, and to change the urban form and structure.

At the time, Athens was more like a village with no infrastructure and a population of 12,000. During the turbulent interval between Kapodistrias’ assassination in 1831 and King Otto’s coming of age in 1834, Kleanthes and Schaubert were commissioned to design the plan for the whole of the new city of Athens. This plan projected a population of 40,000 and one of the major designs (e.g. the creation of the Stock market and the Cultural Centre) was for an Administrative Centre along with the King’s Palace to be built where Omonoia Square is today. The plan covered an area of 2,890 acres and its basis was the creation of an equilateral triangle with Omonoia Square at its apex.

¹³ Gregorian calendar was officially adopted by the Greek State in 1924. Dates of historical importance previous to that are mentioned in Greek literature in a dual way, presenting the date in both calendars

According to architectural and planning studies on Omonoia Square (Karides 2008, Bastea 2000), planners sought to keep the vital points of the city where they used to be, following the existing functions from the Ottoman era. For example, the commercial zone to be created in the area of Omonoia Square, included the place where the Ottoman Bazaar used to be. In this way, planners wanted to incorporate the 'experienced', lived spaces as reflected in the everyday activities of people. The main goal for the city, as the capital of the newly constituted country, was to become modernized, Europeanized and to abandon its Ottoman past (Bastea 2000). The goal of the construction of the new capital revolved around the country's international public image and the perception of Athens abroad as well as creating the basis and the structures for the newly formed city and state (Bastea 2000, Gill 2011). However, Kleanthes' and Schaubert's plan "remained a theoretical exercise" since it was abandoned due to financial costs and later modified by Leo von Klenze, commissioned by King Otto's father, Ludwig of Bavaria (Papageorgiou- Venetas 2007).

To understand the development of Omonoia Square as part of the development of Athens and the forces shaping it, the political decisions that underlie the consequent plans for the area of Omonoia need to be examined in more detail. According to Bastea (2000), the government, the German King and the Greek diaspora, who were financially aiding the construction of Athens, wanted an attractive image of the city that would reflect the country's "[e]uropeanization, connection with the ancient past and cleansing of the immediate Ottoman past". However, there was strong political opposition among conservative politicians who wanted to keep tradition and the dream of Constantinople as the true capital of Greece alive.

Because of the financial cost and the changes of the plans by von Klenze, the plan for the King's palace to be built where Omonoia Square is today was abandoned. The consequent plan for the area was to be the site for the construction of the 'Church of Saviour', as a symbol for the liberation of the country from the Ottoman Empire, since the newfound Greek State was intertwined with the Orthodox Church (Manitakis 2000). This plan was also abandoned due to lack of money, because the Orthodox Church relied solely on donations for the planned construction.

Finally, Omonoia was designed as a Square in 1846 and was the northern border of the city and the outskirts of the Athenian countryside at the time. It is one of the oldest public spaces in the city and its oldest Square. It is now considered the heart of the city because from Omonoia, there are six main roads into and out of the city in a radial pattern (see Figure 5.1): Stadiou Str., Athinas Str., Panepistimiou Str., 3rd September Str., Piraios Str. and Ag. Konstantinou, with an additional two streets (Kotopouli and Dorou) that today have become pedestrian streets. The symbolic character of the Square for Athens is also reflected in its name. From 1846 it was dedicated to King Otto, but in 1862 it was renamed to reflect the political changes in the State as Concorde Square, 'Omonoia' in Greek, when members of the existing political parties pledged allegiance to the Greek State.

During the reign of King George I, from 1832 until 1862, Omonoia Square was transformed by the political authorities of the time reflecting the desired image of the New Athens as a modern European city, with the addition of trees and the creation of a marble platform where every Sunday an Army Band performed to entertain the Athenian elites. The Square was defined by "a 'dual' character, as a central node of the axis from north to south of the city's social divisions and a

node/starting point towards the northern expansion of the City” (Karides 2008: 61).

By the end of the 19th century, and the beginning of the 20th, as part of the process of modernization and Europeanization, two major railway stations were constructed to facilitate commuting between Athens and the provinces, Larissis Station and Peloponnisou Station. These were created away from the centre, on the western site of Athens, but their location had an impact on the city centre, strengthening its character as the entry point to the city. This was significant for Omonoia Square because it was on the direct line of entry, Deligianni Street and Agiou Konstantinou, and as such the role of the Square as a public space was enhanced. According to Karides (2008: 61), Omonoia stopped being just a point of convergence of main roads but:

“[...] started to function as a place where the osmosis of different social groups was taking place[. Their] ‘differentiation’ was because they were coming from different places. Omonoia-space of the first years, gave its place to Omonoia-topos.”

Karides uses the word ‘topos’ to denote the significance and the appropriation of the place by specific social groups. The transformation of Omonoia from being a Square to becoming the entrance point of the City was enhanced by the establishment of two major hotels on the square in the late 1890s.

By the end of the 19th century major public buildings were established around Omonoia Square, such as the National Theatre, the City Hall and the Ag. Konstantinos Church that have remained in the same locations until the present day. According to Karides (2008), the character of Omonoia as the public space

par excellence in the City of Athens was established along with its character as the central node of transportation. Given that public space is considered to be the physical place where the manifestation of the political meets individual habitation, Omonoia's character was highlighted by its heavy use by both Athenians and visiting country people. The political attempt of Athens to become a Europeanized capital was reflected in the role of Omonoia as the hub of commercial activity and the locus of entertainment for the local elites. Figure 5.2 depicts the first photographic image of Omonoia in 1910, illustrating the open access to all and its aesthetic make up as a place used by pedestrians.



Figure 5.2: Omonoia Square circa 1910

This form of the Square was kept until the 1930s when major construction work took place for the creation of the underground line and station, as part of the

modernization of Athens. The new form of Omonoia, as depicted in Figure 5.3, reflected Western European images relating to design and aesthetics. The creation of train lines, besides being an obvious sign of the Europeanization and modernization of Greece, also met the needs of the augmented population, including waves of refugees following the 'Asia Minor Disaster'.



Figure 5.3: Omonoia Square in the 1930s

In 1954 (Figure 5.4) the arrangement of the underground space of the Square began as an additional square with the establishment of banks, post-office, shops and the first electric escalators. The construction and design of the Square concluded in 1960 with the configuration of its surface with a creation of an artificial lake and fountains.



Figure 5.4: Omonoia Square in 1955

From the 1960s (Figures 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, and 5.8) Omonoia is fully established as the central node of Athens and its role as the 'entry point' to the city is enhanced along with the gradual movement of internal migrants to Athens. Because of the growing traffic load, due to increases in ownership of private vehicles, the design of Omonoia was more or less constantly changed to facilitate traffic, although there were no major alterations to its circular form until the Olympics of 2004.



Figure 5.5: Omonoia Square in the 1960s



Figure 5.6: Omonoia Square in the 1960s



Figure 5.7: Omonoia Square in the 1960s



Figure 5.8: Omonoia Square in the 1960s

One of the most iconic changes in the Square's design was the establishment of the

masterpiece of the glass sculpture 'Dromeas ('Runner' - Figure 5.9) by the acclaimed artist Varotsos in 1988. However, it was moved in 1994 when Omonoia was designated for urban renovation in preparation of the Metro Station and its pedestrianization for the Olympics of 2004.



Figure 5.9: 'The Runner'

In these decades, Omonoia reflects the social, political and economic situation of Greece. From the 1960s, and a period of political stability and growth, the socio-political elements presented in the previous section become evident through the growth of enterprises in and around Omonoia, the concentration of public services in the area and its use as a point of convergence for entertainment. In the early 1990s, there was a boost in business activity related to leisure and entertainment, mainly because of a decree that allowed the unrestricted operation of businesses and thus the area lost its partly residential character almost completely (Beinart Kathimerini 12/06/2011).

During the same period there is evidence of a lack of civic control and effective regulation in many aspects of social life, extending from unregulated construction, to waves of illegal immigrants entering the city, and activities such as prostitution and drug use in the streets. The area around Omonoia Square, declined as

evidenced by the extensive use of public space by marginal groups. With no effective policing of the area, the surrounding streets became a site for unlicensed brothels, homeless people and drug addicts. The inefficiency of the Greek State to preserve and control public space is similar to the problematic legal and institutional context of immigration. Both reflect the lack of funding unfunded institutions and the challenging aspects of governance and resulted in the deterioration of the urban environment in the city centre.

5.3.1. Omonoia in the 21st century

In 1998 the Unification of Archaeological Sites of Athens Project held a competition for the reshaping of Omonoia to welcome the Olympics of 2004. The group DKT, consisting of young architects who had concluded a previous project, a pedestrian bridge, won the competition. The competition was under the umbrella of a more general attempt to address the problematic situation in the city centre, in the historical triangle, by 'regenerating' it. In order to denote the attempt to deal with urban decline, politicians and the media used the term 'regeneration'. Although theoretically this term means taking action to solve urban problems through lasting improvement and economic growth, this project was merely an architectural exercise (Roberts 2000, Couch et al. 2003). The plan for the 'regeneration' of the city centre was abandoned, but the change in Omonoia's design was implemented as part of a series of construction mega- projects that were pushed forward for the city to host the Olympics. The prevalent idea was that Greece needed to make a good impression on the rest of the world as the birth place of the Olympics.

The outline for Omonoia was criticized as altering the image of the city¹⁴ (Doxiades 10/10/2010 Kathimerini). One of the major alterations of the shape and the design of Omonoia was that it lost its iconic circle. The roundabout shape of the Square was retained during the previous decades, especially in the late 1950s and 1960s, to serve the growing number of cars and to allow for the

¹⁴ Characteristic is the article that the acclaimed Greek architect Doxiades published in the newspaper Kathimerini 10/10/2010. The article commented on the latest alteration of Omonoia Square: "The current design of Omonoia Square is considered a failure. Why? Maybe because the traffic design ignores the history and the construction dynamic of Athens, blocking the axis [the straight line] Acropolis-Athinas Str.- Patission Str., the main axis of neoclassical Athens by Kleanthes– Schaubert? [...] Maybe because there was no involvement of society in what are society's needs of public places? [...] Public places are the most important element of a city, and Omonoia is one of the most important public places of Athens".

movement of vehicles around Omonoia. Although it created major traffic jams and was not practical for pedestrians, it was one of the most iconic images of modern Greece and the city of Athens. With the latest alteration for the Olympics, a platform or pavement structure was created in the shape of a building block that unifies the opposite pavements that used to form the roundabout, thus creating a wider open space. However, as became evident during the fieldwork, this space is mostly used by marginal groups, homeless people and drug addicts (Figures 5.10, 5.11).



Figure 5.10: The latest alteration of Omonoia Square for the Olympics 2004



Figure 5.11: The latest alteration of Omonoia Square for the Olympics 2004

This latest design was criticised by the media for lacking aesthetic value, and for the excessive use of cement creating almost a void in the heart of the city, with no social functions and leading to an unfriendly and uninviting environment (Doxiades, 2010, Gill 2011).

Everyday observations of the Square show that pedestrians do not use it. They use the paths that are part of the underground metro and train station, and which allow easier access from the one side of the Square to the other. Also, the original plan of the DTK group was for the Square to have patches of green, and trees to create a friendlier environment. However, this idea was abandoned. The reason was that the square would not be able to hold the weight of trees because of the train and the metro station, both underground. Because of existing legislation that does not allow for the commercial use of public spaces, such as squares, no cafes or similar ventures can be established on them, unlike in other

European cities. The emptiness of the Square (Figures 5.12, 5.13) and the prevalence of grey concrete, with no use and no shade from the sun does not allow social functions to take place.



Figure 5.11: Omonoia Square at the time of the fieldwork (2011)



Figure 5.12: Omonoia Square at the time of the fieldwork (2011)

The result of the design is the replacement of a public place with a void that is mainly occupied by people usually labelled as marginal or not part of mainstream society. My own observations, interlinked with media reports, and comments from the municipality of Athens, indicate that homeless people, immigrants, prostitutes, and drug dealers have been in the ascendency in occupying and using the square for the past few years. There is a reluctance of other people to use the square, and their relative absence reinforces the presence of those groups deemed to be marginal, with Omonoia consigned to the category of a place to be avoided by the majority of the Athenian population.

5.3.2. Omonoia Square: The site of qualitative research and fieldwork

5.3.2.i The presentation of Omonoia Square in the media

Conditions in the area around Omonoia Square have attracted the attention of the media who have projected to the public the image of abandonment and danger. According to journalistic accounts, one main problem of the area is the concentration of drug use and dealing in and around Omonoia Square, as well as homeless people, but also irregular immigrants (K. Onisenko, Kathimerini 3 March 2012, D. Rigopoulos, Kathimerini 12 August 2012). Characteristic of the portrayal of Omonoia Square and the area around it is a newspaper presenting the city centre as a 'ghetto' using a map provided by the police pointing to the concentration of illegal uses of the place. The term 'ghetto in the making' was first used to describe Omonoia and the surrounding area in 2007 (LiFO, www.lifo.gr/team/readerdisgest).

From 2007 onwards there has been a multiplicity of articles and titles referring to this phenomenon, linking the desertification of the area to illegal uses and the presence of immigrants. A small sample of the media coverage of the place can help in understanding the shaping of the public's imagination about the area and the reinforcement of these by the media. Even though there has been variety in the ways that Omonoia has been described and depicted in the media, the general feeling conveyed has been of the 'dangerous', abandoned place. In some cases, descriptions of the area have been used as a means to sensitize and to draw attention to phenomena that seemed to be ignored by the authorities. An example is the editorial (S. Tsagkarousianos 17 March 2010) of the weekly edition of the popular free press LiFO, that has a strong presence in activities taking place in

Athens, and had a crucial role in promoting the current Mayor of Athens, G. Kaminis (who, as an independent candidate, was not supported by a single political party). The title reads 'Athens Hates Me: Why have I let [the city] be governed by the mediocre.' The editorial is a short description of the centre of Athens including descriptions such as:

"[...] Walking towards Syntagma, the image is like Islamabad. They [irregular immigrants] drink, they sit on steps, they look at you with hatred if you want to photograph them. Trash, sheets on the pavement, uncontrolled. I like them as people, I hate the network supporting them. [...]"

The description refers to itinerant sellers of illegal goods on the streets, a common 'job' among irregular immigrants, and supported by the human trafficking networks, for example, as an easy way to make money when unable to find regular employment (as will be further illustrated in Chapter 7).

Other examples focus on the relation between the failing commercial and entertainment functions of the area because of the strong presence of irregular immigrants, deviant groups and the feeling of imminent danger: 'Ghetto in the city centre' is the title of an article in the newspaper *Eleftherotypia* (14 October 2010). According to this article, more than half of the businesses operating in the area (30 businesses closed down, 16 still running) of Psyrri (an old neighbourhood, two blocks away from Omonoia) have been closed down because of the dangers in the area. Again, the prevalent element is the notion of the ghettoisation of the area leading to its commercial decline. The newspaper *Ta Nea* on 30 March 2010 included an article titled 'Regulations to Stop Ghettoization'.

The article described the situation in central Athens and presented the complexity of jurisdictions among different authorities as the main problem leading to the unregulated conditions in the city, summarizing the sentiment for the area as:

“During day-time is very good to live in the centre of Athens. It is vibrant and all the services are close by. It is very bad as soon as the sun goes down. Then, you feel the fear and the insecurity even inside your home.”

The measures proposed in this article were promoting the return of residents to the city centre using taxation measures, and the movement of the University and other services into buildings in areas like Omonoia. Instead of more services moving to the centre, the opposite happened just a year after the article. After two months, on 26 May 2010, the same newspaper published an article with the title ‘The Greeks of the Centre are living with terror: Free but besieged in Omonoia’ and the first sentence of the article, a quote from a resident of the area, is: “This interview must be finished by 18:00. After 18:00 we don’t leave our houses even if there is an earthquake. After 18:00 we don’t exist”. The journalist notes: “For those who live further away from the city centre - around Omonoia - these words might seem extreme, [the description by] Jina, one of the last few Greek residents of the ghetto that exists in the city centre”.

In a similar manner, in October 2010 (25 October 2010) another article appeared in this newspaper with the title ‘This is not Greece. Here is Omonoia’. On 5 September 2010, another mainstream newspaper, Kathimerini, published an interview with J. Polyzos, the president of the Organization of Regulatory Planning, with the title ‘Dangerous Signs of Ghettoization in Athens’. Again, the article focuses on conditions in the city centre and suggests measures to stop the

ghettoization, and notes the importance of public spaces. Similar articles appear regularly in every newspaper. Another example from 2011 (16 May 2011) comes from the newspaper *To Vima* in an article about the city centre, that includes: "Athenians say 'No More': Criminality and illegal immigrants push away the residents from the city centre - half of the residents agree with taking the law into one's own hands - they ask for control of immigration and better policing, cleanliness and lighting of the area".

This selection from mainstream newspapers reinforces the image of the area as dangerous with criminal activities, the concentration of immigrants, and a decline in the main economic activities of the area. The first time that the term 'ghetto' appeared in the media, the decline of the Omonoia area appeared more prominent. The focus on criminal activity and its conflation with 'illegal' irregular immigrants coincided with the rise of xenophobic beliefs that were underlying for years, but were openly expressed through the election of Golden Dawn to parliament in 2012.

5.4. The sense and the feeling of the place: the first steps of fieldwork

Given the absence of hard evidence and data on the functions and uses of Omonoia Square, for instance the number of existing enterprises in the area and whether they were immigrant or Greek operated, the first step of the fieldwork was to map that the uses of the area. As emphasized in earlier chapters, one of the main challenges of doing research in Greece is the absence of regulations and statistical data. The changing image of the area of Omonoia and the city centre in general is noticeable through observation, but the data do not exist. The absence of data on commercial activity and population of the area goes hand in hand with the absence of any official estimation of irregular immigrant and illegal populations residing in Athens or Greece.

The only way to convey the changing image and feel of Omonoia (other than the journalistic accounts), is my own account in the field. The need to have a pragmatic understanding of the functions of Omonoia led to the extensive mapping of the area. I also kept a diary prior to, and during, the fieldwork, noting the uses of the place, and this serves as an attempt to put into words the feeling of the place while assembling evidence on the uses of the area. Because of the functional and symbolic importance that Omonoia Square has for the city, this also provides a snapshot of the socio-political and economic situation in Athens, and indicates the changes evident since 2009-2010.

The mapping of the area focused on the commercial, social and other functions of the area at 1st March 2012. The aim of this exercise was not only to give quantitative results but also to provide an initial understanding of the place where the main elements of the qualitative research took place between

September 2011 and September 2012.

On Omonioa Square

The concentration of economic activities in Omonioa is depicted in Figure M.1 (Appendix I). In total, 73 stores were operating in March 2012, and 52 had closed down since 2009 (Figures M.2, M.3 in Appendix I on the spatial distribution of operations running/closed ones). Three hotels that had existed on the corners of Omonioa Square were closed. Seven kiosks, known as 'periptero' selling tobacco, newspapers and gums/sweets still operated on the square, out of a previous thirteen. However, three out of seven did not follow the typical image and function of a kiosk, but operated as small stores selling sunglasses, belts and other small objects in a similar fashion to street sellers. As for the six kiosks not operating anymore, they were still present but empty. Another main function of the kiosks has been to sell transportation tickets and cards for controlled parking in the city centre, but according to the kiosk-owners of the square, there are no parking tickets, since "the municipality does not provide them anymore because it has been an unsuccessful measure". Even though this might seem a minor detail, it is a sign of the desertification of the area even by the authority running it.

The stores that have closed down were those occupying the biggest sites in the area, making their absence and/or abandonment more visible.

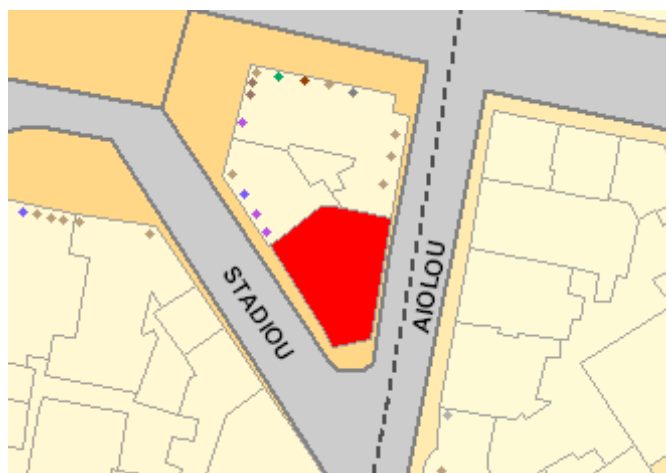


Figure 5.13: Image of a closed boutique and its volume, one block from Omonoia Square (Stadiou & Aioulou)

An example is the corner of Aioulou and Stadiou Streets, Figure 5.13, where one shop covered half the building block and since it closed in 2010 has become a symbol of the area's desertification. Additionally, the fact that the hotels and most of the closed down shops have been left as they were, gives a strong feeling of abandonment. The image of the closed, abandoned, shops creates the awkward feeling of not knowing what to do in the area. The function of the place has been obscured and the role that a person has in this place is unclear. One cannot be a consumer, since there are hardly any shops, and the abandonment of the previously existing ones creates a sense of danger. One cannot relax or spend time in the square, since there are no places to sit down. One cannot be a passer-by and/or a 'flaneur', since the square itself is an obstacle in its design. The absence of social functions on the Square, and the adjoining streets, has created more space for 'deviant' uses, as is depicted in Figure M.8 (Appendix I) on these activities and the policing of the area. Even though the existence of immigrants (legalized, irregular and illegal ones) in Omonoia has been mentioned, there is no obvious evidence of their existence on the Square other than their use of it as a shelter for sleep. This activity, connected to the concreting of the Square and to its design

together with the pedestrianization of two sides, is evident only at night-time through observation. The evidence of immigrants' dwelling in the area during the day-time comes only from examining the shops that operate (see Figures M.4 and M.5 in Appendix I on the spatial distribution of entrepreneurial activities of foreigners and of foreign vs. Greek enterprises). Additionally, as I found out through interviews, a proportion of the outlets run by immigrants are illegally sublet from Greeks, so in the contracts the tenant might be Greek but the person who operates the enterprise might be an irregular immigrant. The presence of immigrants dwelling in the area becomes more pronounced in the Square's adjoining streets.

The area around Omonoia Square: Its adjoining streets

Moving away from Omonoia Square towards the adjoining blocks, the image of abandonment and change becomes more obvious. A striking example is Piraios Street, where public services and two ministries used to occupy most of the building blocks. Since they moved out, in 2010-2011, the buildings have been abandoned and occupied by drug addicts and homeless people. More specifically, the entrance of the building that was the central office of the National Health Care Organization (IKA) is the main point to buy crack heroin in this area.

Piraios Street

Piraios Street has existed since antiquity and is one of the main streets of Athens. It links the centre to the port of Piraeus, and its upper side, next to Omonoia Square, used to be filled with shops and stores. Now, on that side of the Square, there are four out of seven businesses left. An important element is that the three businesses that are now running have changed function. These used to be shops selling goods like

clothes and jewellery; now two are pawnshops and the third is a money transfer facility. This is indicative of the changes that have taken place in the area. The new uses reflect the new needs of the people residing and/or using the area of Omonoia. Whereas it used to be a general shopping area, now it is targeted to specific needs that are connected to money exchange and transfer. In that pavement, there used to be two kiosks and now only one is running. For a native Athenian, the image and the feeling of the street is different than it used to be and signifies a decline in the area. The four businesses still running, with the exception of one jewellery shop, present a different image of the area since now they do not specialise but sell a mixture of inexpensive goods from cheap clothes to sunglasses, which is unusual. The typical store/shop used to be either of a specific brand that would sell its own products or a specialised goods shop such as a women's clothing boutique. Until recently, the only exceptions to this were shopping malls that have a collection of different goods and brands. On the opposite pavement, there used to be a big bakery and a hotel (Hotel Akropol) that occupied most of the block. Both have been closed down for the past few months. Out of the other ten shops that existed along this pavement, eight are still open.

Diary Excerpt: Detailed description of the one side of Piraios Str.

The situation and the imagery are similar in other blocks around the Square, like Satovriandou Street, where all ten stores have been closed down. The same situation exists in the pedestrian part of this Dorou Street, where a line of more than seven stores have been abandoned. The businesses operating in this street are two small hostels that cover the needs of drug addicts and irregular immigrants.

The hotels of the area were the flagships of major Greek hotel chains, and their closure shows the downward mobility in the locale, and the withdrawal of large scale commercial activity. A journalist reportage, published in the newspaper *Kathimerini* (November 13th, 2011), noted that the hotels in the centre of Athens were faced with a problem of survival. According to the journalist S. Kousouni, “at least one out of ten of the hotel businesses running in the centre of Athens” has closed down.

At the time of the fieldwork, a story about the unhealthy conditions of the city centre featured in the news. The response from the Region of Attica (protocol number 22133) to a question from the MP Pipili that followed the story, was published. The Department of Health and Sanitary Control of the Region conducted an investigation in the central Athens and found 2,042 ‘unhealthy hubs’ “most of which exist in the area around Omonoia Square”. More specifically, 27 streets around Omonoia are mentioned as such. Investigation in various newspapers (e.g. *Kathimerini*) mention the abandoned buildings of the area, the hotels that do not operate anymore, as ‘hubs of contamination’ due to the concentration of irregular immigrants, drug addicts and homeless people living there. According to these publications, the release by the Region of Attica highlights the poor conditions in central Athens, comparing them to the Third World in terms of lack of sanitation.

Another phenomenon visible in the streets of central Athens is the increasing presence of immigrants who, for a living, collect garbage in supermarket trolleys called ‘cantoneros’. These can be cheaply sold, like glasses and metals of any kind. For many, this is the only income that they have, as confirmed by the interviews that I conducted, and further explored in Chapter 7. However, the image of the city centre with rubbish on the streets and people pushing trolleys

with garbage is disarming. This has been noted by journalists and photo-reporters like K. Rigos (see, for example, 'Athens Voice', 1-7 March 2012).

Several ethnic groups started their route into Greece from Omonoia (Galanakis 2004, King et al. 1998). Their presence is evident in the multiplicity of ethnic stores established in the recent years. Academic research shows that the majority of immigrants dwelling in the area in the mid 2000's were Albanian and Pakistani (Galanakis 2004, Noussia and Lyons 2009). At the time of the research the composition had changed and consisted of many groups from various countries, particularly those from the Middle East and East Asia. They seem to be of lower socio-economic status than the first two ethnic groups and the majority are men. Journalistic reporting and empirical observation indicate that they live on the streets or in abandoned buildings. The presence of immigrant communities around and in deserted buildings, not regulated or taken care of by the central state, but also ignored by the local authorities of Athens, at least until the time of the fieldwork, augmented the widespread impression of the ghettoization of the area. The striking image of people just being on the streets and sitting on the pavements for long hours is uncommon in Greece where there are no cafes or anything of that kind to justify the presence of people there (Figures 5.14, 5.15, 5.16, 5.17). In 2012, more plans were announced as a measure against the 'ghettoization' of the area, but no action has yet been taken.



Figure 5.14: People hanging out in Omonia Square and indications of illegal goods distribution



Figure 5.15: People hanging out in Omonia Square, in front of the Metro Station



Figure 5.16: Image of a block away from Omonia Square



Figure 5.17: On Omonoia Square (street selling of illegal goods)

The feel of the place: Still Life

The lack of pedestrians and passers-by is visible, on and around the square. The only exceptions are drug addicts, drug dealers, police officers and NGO workers who offer some kind of help, ranging from medical examination, HIV testing to provision of food. In the neighbourhoods around Omonoia Square, the situation is worse because one sees a great number of homeless people, addicts using drugs openly, drug dealing taking place in day-time as well as prostitution. A

prime example is Agisilaou Street, where until 2011, the predominant function of was connected to public administration and service provision with different ministerial departments located there. Around these departments there used to be a multitude of stores to provide for the employees. Now that the ministerial departments have moved, everything has closed down. In this street, one sees only abandoned stores, parking lots and buildings left as they were, as well as homeless people and some migrants because of the close proximity to ethnic shops (see Figure 5.18).



Figure 5.18: Pakistani patisserie in Agisilaou Str. (a block from Omonoia Square)

The abandoned stores and businesses are both a consequence and also the reason why there is limited pedestrian activity, since there is no reason for people to go to this area and, at the same time, the feeling of abandonment discourages people from using the place (Figure 5.19).



Figure 5.19: Night-time on Omonoia Square

The situation in most squares and public places of central Athens is similar, just like Victoria Square, ten minutes walk from Omonoia Square, where only ten out of the twenty original businesses were operating at the time of the fieldwork. Victoria Square used to be a meeting place and was full of restaurants and coffee shops.

The focus has been mostly on the shops and stores that exist in the area as well as on my observations while walking around Omonoia Square and its adjoining streets. The details of the existence of (mostly irregular) immigrants, is not discussed in this chapter since: (i) their presence remains hidden and the focus is on the what is visible and can be observed; (ii) the aim of this chapter has been to provide context on the city of Athens and the history of Omonoia Square, in terms of urban design and form. Ethnic communities do exist and operate in the area as evidenced by the presence of ethnic shops, witnessed through empirical observation. In terms of change, observed through the mapping the area, the general decline of the area becomes manifest through the closing down of other ethnic businesses. A prime example is that five Chinese shops which used to exist in Socratous Street covering almost the whole building block are now closed. The presence of irregular immigrants is evident in the area for the observer: they use

the ethnic shops and the bazaar that takes place on Sunday and a large number, especially men, occupy the pavements on and around Omonia Square.

5.5. Conclusion

The presentation of the history of central Athens and the area of Omonoia square in this chapter serves two purposes. The first is to familiarize the reader with the locality of the case study. The second is to provide insights on the three axes of Lefebvre's theorization on the production of space. The officially designed uses of the place acquire substance since the area of Omonoia has traditionally been central to much of Athens' transportation and commerce. Even though Omonoia has changed significantly, both in its image and substance, through the years, these two activities have always remained as the 'legitimate' uses of the place. The representations of space, the imaginations and the understandings of the place's character and nature by its users, have undergone alterations. In particular, the media coverage of the area has been significant in shifting perceptions of how Omonoia is characterized and viewed.

The perceptions of the place, as these are imprinted in media coverage, seem to hold true for the majority of mainstream society given the movement of services from Omonoia, and the rapid changes in its resident population. According to Savage et al. (1993: 71) the "usage of the urban fabric is partially constrained by the original purposes for which it was designed" and interestingly enough this seems also to hold true. The area's character is still linked to commerce and networking, and it is still a central node of transportation. However, what is different is the users of these functions. The mainstream population has been substituted by a marginal population and this is evident in the types of shops still in operation. The ethnic markers that create symbolic barriers in this urban public space along with the deviant activities have led to its primary use by irregular immigrants and marginal populations.

The case study of Omonoia Square builds on studies that have focused on urban public spaces, illustrating the alteration of its use, and by becoming abandoned and 'marginal' through its use by unregulated, invisible, groups that have come to occupy it. The presence of unregulated, ethnic, communities in Omonoia, along with deviant/illegal behaviours is significant in changing the area's public spaces (Checkimoglou 2010 personal contact). This creates an invisible, 'parallel' reality, since the immigrants who are the primary users of space are not legalized nor integrated. Because of the irregular status of most of the immigrants and the lack of infrastructure that would allow them to become part of the host country, the immigrant communities have been living in the shadows on the borderlines of everyday life of the city.

These issues point to the concept of contested space. When different groups claim space with their actions, and when there is no structure and/or framework to facilitate the different and arising needs, as has happened in central Athens, the situation becomes all the more complicated. In the case of Athens, the co-existence of different groups led to the abandonment of the area by the Greek population with the prime example the moving out of the area of public services. The escalation of the contest between different groups for urban public space became even more obvious by the policing of the area by neo-Nazi groups and the assassinations of immigrants in the centre of Omonoia as evidenced in the summer of 2012. The claim of different users to space has been transformed to a matter of ethnic background and I argue that this is due, primarily, to the absence of regulation by the Greek State. The inactivity of the Greek State to take measures on different issues, ranging from immigration to the urban environment, has led different groups to contest for the right to space through violent means. The

absence of a functional legal framework for immigration, coupled with the lack of services to facilitate immigrants and especially newcomers, in addition to the deficiency of the governing authorities to pay attention to the urban environment, and the portrayal of immigrants in a negative manner create a turbulent condition reflected in the urban environment.

The fact that the uses and the functions of this public space by now are unclear for a large proportion of city dwellers raises more questions to be investigated. In the theoretical realm, these issues go back to the question of who has the right to public space. This touches upon the character of urban public space as being free, open, public and, more importantly, democratic. In the case of Omonia Square, the turbulent situation shows that these characteristics of public space are being challenged.

Chapter 6

Transnational community formation: formal and informal communities in urban public space

6.1.Introduction

Chapters 4 and 5 provided the contextual framework of irregular immigrants' habitation in Omonoia Square based on data and information derived through the fieldwork. Having set the legal context that defines immigrants' lives in Greece, the ways that irregular immigrants are conditioned to be in-between and invisible have been explored. In the previous chapter, the history, the significance and the situation in Omonoia Square at the time of the fieldwork were presented. The following chapters, starting with this one, engage with the immigrants' everyday lives based on the empirical research, as a way to explore the rights of irregular immigrants to urban public space is through the cultural manifestations and ethnic characteristics that migrant settlements attach to urban space, suggested by theories on transnationality (Mitchell 2003, 2004, Faist 2000, Hannerz 1996, Kelly and Lusia 2006, Kuah-Paarce and Hu-Dehart 2006).

The main focus then lies on the everyday practices and the micro geographies of irregular immigrants as these are shaped by their culture, their ties and connections to the country of origin and their identity, as a means to understand the ethnic character reflected in space. Starting the exploration of the immigrants' reality in Athens, this chapter focuses on community formation drawing from the interviews with authorities and individuals with official capacities within the formal ethnic communities that exist in Athens. The aim of this chapter is to

understand ethnic communal life especially under the conditions of irregularity and institutional invisibility that the majority of the immigrant population live under. The details of irregular immigrants' communities and community formation can provide an insight into the way that public space is becoming transnational and ethnicized and on the formation of symbolic boundaries (Faist 1994, Tissot 2008, Yiftachel and Yacobi 2003, Mollenkopf and Gerstle 2005). Even though the existence of ethnic communities is not surprising in cities with large immigrant populations, the ambivalent and invisible nature of immigrants' lives in Athens calls for a closer examination of the existence and formation of ethnic communities.

Two forms of ethnic communities are explored here, as their existence and differences emerged from the fieldwork. The first is the organization of formal ethnic communities that have a legal entity and articles of association. The second category, closely related to Athenian public spaces, consists of networks based on ethnicity that supplement in an informal way the roles and functions of the formal ethnic communities. These networks are defined by their presence in urban public spaces such as squares, have a more flexible and unofficial character and are strongly connected with the invisible condition of irregular immigrants (as will be presented in the second section of the chapter). The distinction between the two kinds of communities and their function is significant in understanding immigrants' lives under the condition of irregularity and the marginality that it brings with it.

The organization of the chapter follows the information collected in the field on the existence of both formal, organized communities and informal ones, exploring issues such as the goals and aims of the communities, their role in immigrants'

lives, the relationship between the two and the significance of their localities. The chapter is divided into three parts; the first explores the existence of organized ethnic communities in central Athens, their role and functions. The second part examines the existence of informal communities and networks as these are closely related to urban public space. The third part examines the complementary nature of the two kinds of communities through the participation of irregular immigrants.

6.2. Community Formation

From early on, theories on immigration focused on the role of ethnic communities in the lives of immigrants in relation to both the economy and the urban environment. Starting with the model of invasion/succession originating from the Chicago School and Park (1952), emphasizing competition for accommodation, the relationship between ethnic groups and urban environment was explored. Park viewed this as the natural course of action when there is 'invasion' of new ethnic group(s) in an area. In this case there are two possible outcomes; either the invasion will be opposed and halted by the original inhabitants, or the original population will withdraw resulting in succession by the new group(s). Although this theory has been much criticized mostly because it presents a deterministic, organic, almost ecological model to explain urban phenomena, it emphasizes the competition for space among ethnic groups in a way that can offer a first insight into the situation of Omonoia and the area around it, especially considering the inactivity of the Greek State towards the phenomenon of immigration and the urban environment (Gottdiener and Hutchison 2000, Alihan 1938).

The implementation of the model of invasion/succession has shown that change in a neighbourhood's ethnic composition that faces transition modifies the "commercial structure of a neighbourhood" (Schmidt and Lee 1978, Schwirian 1983, Rose 1970). Research has shown that ethnic turnover affects directly the economic functions of a neighbourhood both in terms of market disequilibrium and falling housing prices, and both are evident in central Athens (Leven 1976: 98). The struggle for space described in the invasion/succession model is treated in most case studies and in the literature as a given outcome of the influx of

immigrants in a neighbourhood. The competition over space is related to the segregation of immigrants in an area, as in the case in Omonoia Square highlighted by the predominance of ethnic shops and the dramatic decrease of Greek residents in the area.

In the literature this has been explained by and related to ethnic enclaves, a model originally created by Portes and Manning (1986). This theory claims that not all minorities are disadvantaged and explores the fact that, when moving to another country, minorities create associations with ethnicity as their defining characteristic, based on geographic proximity. In other words specific group(s) live in specific area(s). The associations are designed to cover the economic and social needs of ethnic group(s). This leads to a situation where the minority does not need the majority to cover its own needs because immigrant entrepreneurial activities emerge covering primarily the needs of their own ethnic group. Often this creates ethnic segregation in the area, which is viewed as negative when related to social exclusion. However, as Peach (1996) proposes, there is also 'good segregation' since it helps newcomers to establish themselves in the new country and creates a safety net for them.

Another angle to explain the immigrant's position is the dual labour market theory originally developed by Piore (1979). According to this there are two parallel labour markets operating in a society; the primary one consists mostly of the desirable jobs occupied by the natives, and the secondary of undesirable, temporary jobs that require less (certified) skills. Usually immigrants lack the human capital and the chance to select jobs, therefore they are trapped in the secondary market (Grint, 1993, Katsas 1993-94, Light and Gold 2000, Waldinger and Bozorgmehr 1996). These concepts can help in understanding the situation

in central Athens, along with more up to date theories on transnationality that emphasize the cultural element and identity, as well as the connectivity between the country of origin and the host country, as negotiated through the immigrants' everyday activities and practices.

According to Basch et al. (1994: 22) “[t]ransnationalism is a process by which migrants, through their daily life activities [...] create social fields that cross national boundaries”. One of the means to create social fields is through networks and communities. Ethnic networks and community formation provide a safety net serving multiple needs ranging from the sentiment of belonging and sociability to practical chances of job opportunities, as suggested by the ethnic enclaves theory. To understand community formation the typology of three different forms of community offered by Bell and Newby (1976) as summarized by Urry (2000:133) can be useful:

“[The] first refers to a particular kind of settlement based upon geographical propinquity and where there is no implication of the quality of the social relationships found in such settlements of co-presence. Second, there is the sense of community as a local social system in which there is a localized, relatively bounded set of interrelationships of social groups and local institutions. And third, there is communion, a human association characterized by close personal ties, belongingness and warmth between members”.

This typology, that appears almost scalar in the relationship between the geographical proximity and feelings of intimacy, offers a set of characteristics, e.g. locality, geography, that will be employed in examining existing communities

in central Athens in an attempt to understand their character and nature.

6.2.1. Formal ethnic communities and their role

Formal ethnic communities have a legal form, statute, official recognition and character. They are organized and self-described around specific goals and actions as these are presented in their articles of association. In Athens there are 89 unions and communities related to 49 ethnicities (Ministry of Interior 2012, Municipality of Athens 2012, Immigrants' Forum 2012). As becomes obvious by the numbers, some ethnic groups have formed more than one organization. The distinctions vary among ethnicities, in some cases, the different organizations serve a different purpose, for example, there is the Ethiopian Community and the Union of Ethiopian Workers. In other cases, as in the example of Albanian communities, there is a multiplicity proportionate to the large number of people from this ethnicity in Greece. The majority of organized ethnic communities consist of European ethnic groups, such as Albanians (11 organizations) and Armenians (13 organizations). There are 17 Asian communities/organizations, including: Afghani, Indian, Iraqi, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Palestinian, Syrian and Filipino. The ethnic communities that I focused during the fieldwork are:

(a). The Afghan community

(b). The Bangladeshi community, that has expanded to four affiliated organizations: (i) Greek Community of Bangladesh; (ii) Bangladeshi Community; (iii) Cultural Organization of Bangladesh, and (iv) Cultural Organization of Bangladesh Shetu Bhandan.

(c). The Sudanese community

(d). The Kurdish community

(e). The Polish community

When examining the formal ethnic communities that exist in Athens, the lack of evidence and the problematic relationship between authorities and immigrants is highlighted by the discrepancies that exist in the data presented by different authorities. For example, according to the Ministry of Interior, only 7 out of the 17 Asian organizations exist. As Kouveli, the person responsible for immigration in the City of Athens, said when interviewed:

“We don’t know exactly how many organizations operate officially. As we don’t know exactly how many immigrants reside in the city. The board of migrants that we have created draws from the legal organizations as these are declared in the Ministry of Interior. We are aware of the fact that there are many other unofficial organizations and networks because we do know that the number of irregular and illegal immigrants in the city is much higher than the estimated one. It is my belief, because of the personal contact that I have with the members of the board, that the voice of the ones in the margins will get to us through the networks that operate between the official and the unofficial communities”.

According to Kouveli and the rest of the interviewees with official capacities on the boards of these communities, the communities’ role is to facilitate the lives of their co-ethnics in Greece.

6.2.2. Aims and goals: Organization as a form of power

One main theme that was explored in the interviews with board members of the ethnic communities was the reasons behind their formation. Of specific interest were the aims and goals of the communities as well as their realization within the problematic Greek legal framework on immigration. In the interviews with people in key positions in matters concerning immigration, the role of ethnic communities was described as facilitators of the needs of their co-ethnics. The definition of 'needs' and its transformation into specific goals was investigated and is presented here.

The vice president of the Bangladeshi community said that:

“the community was organized 10 years ago because of the size of the Bangladeshi population in Greece. The first members that created the community had just been legalized with many difficulties and troubles and we wanted, mainly, to help out our co-ethnics and secondly, to help preserve our ethnic identity. A main reason for us to get organized was that it was tremendously difficult for Bangladeshi people and immigrants in general to have access to services in Greece. We understood that we had to help our ethnic community. Also, I must note here that at that time a great number of Bangladeshi people were coming to Greece, wanting to move to Europe but most of us ended up staying here. The fact that we had difficulties with papers –as people still have today and maybe even more so than in the past- in addition to the large numbers of people who were coming here from Bangladesh made us realize the need to help them out”.

Similarly, a member of the board of the Afghan community informed me that the reasons that the community was organized were:

“(…) to help people coming from Afghanistan. A major issue in the immigrant communities and for sure in the Afghan community is that the people who come to Greece don’t know their rights. So, aiming for integration in the Greek society, we want Afghan immigrants and refugees to be informed of their rights and their obligations toward the Greek State. Also, because the financial situation of immigrants is dire and they end up sleeping in the streets and are taken advantage of, we attempt to help them financially. We know that many children from Afghanistan are sent by their parents unattended and we want to help them”.

In these two quotes, the main goals of creating a community are emphasized. The reason that led to the formal organization is the need to help out their co-ethnics through structural means. Given the problematic Greek legal framework on immigration that was presented in chapter 4, the pressing need of the majority of immigrants has been and still is, to be introduced to the structures of the Greek State and to accommodate their needs. The setting of a specific common goal as such, can be understood as a form of power according to Arendt’s (1958) definition, when viewed as something that holds people together in their pursuit of their common, agreed ends. Especially within the ambiguous conditions that immigrants face in Greece, the communal attempt to help out through a well-structured organization is one of the few almost political means that immigrants have.

Concerns with the new needs that arise in the current economic and political

climate seem to be a point of convergence for the organized communities. Being created from the grassroots, the organizations' involvement and their first hand knowledge of the needs and the problems that immigrants face, as becomes evident through the interviews, make them flexible in adapting to new challenges. Highlighting the problems that immigrants face and being organized around these, enhances the operation of communities as safety nets especially for the newcomers. The organization of communities around a specific common goal, that is the provision of help as a substitute for the inefficiency of the Greek State, becomes even more pronounced due to the current difficulties:

“Moreover, we want to help create opportunities for our co-ethnics to be able to financially support themselves through educational programs as well as facilitating opportunities for them to have access to education, culture, housing and finding a job. We also try to help in the enhancement of their educational level as a way to be able to protect themselves from marginalization and from social risks, such as drug use and abuse. Additionally, we are trying to create strong relations to other ethnic communities and organizations that deal with immigration in Greece and abroad to exchange views and experiences.” (Afghani board member).

Given the absence of provision for newcomers upon entry to Greece and the institutional irregularity and invisibility that immigrants are subjected to, ethnic communities displaying a strong sense of belonging have the protection of their co-ethnics as their main goal.

The reasons for the creation of formal organizations are similar in all cases of ethnic communities, even those that have existed for many years in Athens, such

as the Polish one. Even though Polish immigrants do not face the problem of irregularity since they are now EU citizens, the aims for the organization of a formal community remain the same, as a board member of the Polish community clarified:

“When the Polish first came to Athens, back in the early 1990s before being an EU member state and even though Greece was supposed to be a transit country for our population to get to the USA, it became imperative to provide a safety net for the people that moved here. Most of the people didn’t know the language and we wanted to keep our identity and keep our Polish background alive”.

The grounds for the formation of organized ethnic communities revolve around the issues of maintenance of ethnic identity and of helping immigrants in their new beginning in the host country. The reasons offered by the organizers of the formal communities coincide with the theoretical discussions on ethnic enclaves and transnationality. The concept of ethnic enclaves as presented by Portes and Manning (1986) highlights the ways that immigrants create associations when moving to another country based on ethnicity and geographic proximity. According to Portes and Manning’s analysis on ethnic enclaves and as becomes obvious in the interviews, the goal is to cover the economic and social needs of the ethnic group(s). An important result of this kind of organization is that the minority group does not need the majority group to address its needs, as exemplified by the actions of the Afghan community that specifically implements projects to enhance the entrepreneurial ability of their co-ethnics in Greece (from an interview with the member of the board of the Afghan Community, and from their Newsletter).

The notion of organized communities as a form of collective action in immigrants' attempts to overcome difficulties in the host country is an element discussed in relation to theories on transnationality: As Faist (2000: 216) mentions "[...] community formation is the product of transferred capital, differential treatment and subsequent organization on the part of the newcomers to overcome perceived disadvantages and discrimination or to exploit new opportunities".

This section explores the ways that these goals are realized, starting with how they are related to the everyday operation of the organized communities. According to the member of the board of the Afghan community (2012) the ways they act in order to realize their goals are multiple:

"Given that our organization was started by Afghan immigrants that came to Greece, it has been easier to identify the needs of co-ethnic refugees and immigrants because we ourselves have been through the same processes".

Similarly, all formal organizations have started from immigrants who entered Greece and made it through the legalization processes. According to the interviewees, their functions are meant to help *all* their co-ethnics and not just their active members, recognizing the problem of greater flows of immigrants coming into the country and their subsequent irregularity:

"One of our main interests is to help members of our ethnic communities to know their rights and to help them have access in services and legalization procedures since there is a great difficulty at least at the moment" (member of the Afghan community).

The vice president of the Bangladeshi community said that:

“When I first came to Greece, things were much easier. There were problems and difficulties in the procedures but it was easier. Today, many more immigrants are entering Greece from many different countries. There is a massive increase in the illegal immigrant population since everyone is illegal when entering. Additionally, there are no legalization processes at the moment, so this population is under very difficult conditions. It is our will to help out with these issues as well as to make the Bangladeshi population feel that they have some support.”

Similarly, the board member of the Sudanese community stated the main reason for the creation of the organization as:

“(…) the help that we offer to other Sudanese to move forward with their legalization procedures and legalization papers”.

The Afghan community provides an example of how these goals are translated into everyday practices:

“We have tried to make our ethnic community aware of our existence. Our offices are in a central location and this makes it easier for people to find us. Also, we are active in providing legal services to help Afghan people with their legalization procedures. Trying to help as many people as it is possible, we publish leaflets and we are running seminars that can inform and help immigrants and refugees to know their rights and how to proceed.” (member of the board of the Afghan community).

Most of the immigrant organizations are members of the Greek Forum of Migrants

(GFM), an umbrella group for all ethnic communities. The GFM combines all the above-mentioned goals with cultural activities, but also lobbying for policy-making, mostly through its affiliation with several NGOs. Through these organizations the political element and an emerging form of power against the difficulties that immigrants face when coming to Greece becomes evident. The organized communities along with the umbrella organizations that have been created allow the immigrants access to resources such as “more economic, human and social capital” (Faist 2000: 193).

The other element that is prominent is the organization of communities around ethnic identity. All of the communities have a strong ethnic character; their focus is helping their ‘own’ people in dealing with the new reality. Even though the communities do not exclude irregular immigrants, on the contrary, they assume that all newcomers are irregular, they are focused exclusively on their own ethnic background.

6.2.3. Ethnic Identity, Culture and Belonging

The concentration of communities around common ethnicity and the preservation of culture and identity is especially emphasized in the realm of transnationality and can help in understanding the everyday realities of immigrants. Exploring the in-betweenness that immigrants experience between the country of origin and the host country, the negotiation of different life worlds, the protection of one's identity as linked with culture is of special significance. The implications are multiple: for one thing, there is the enforcement of symbolic and practical ties between the country of origin and the host country (Faist 2000, Ley 2004, Ehrkamp 2005, Vertovec 1999, Conradson and Latham 2005). Through these ties, immigrants' sense of belonging and cultural ethnic identity is protected and enhanced. Another implication that is closely related to the presence of community and the notion of belonging is the importance and the transformation of space due to the existence of these networks. This relationship, connected to culture and belonging, will be further explored in the next section.

At the heart of ethnic communities and networks lies the ethnic character and identity that the members share in common. The shared ideas, beliefs and symbols create a strong sense of solidarity that Durkheim (1933) called "collective representations". This form of solidarity becomes prominent within transnational ethnic communities and networks because it connects the members of these groups (Faist 2000: 192-193). The importance of 'collective representations' and symbolic ties became prominent in the interviews with members of the formal ethnic communities, since it was one of the main reasons for their formation. As the vice president of the Bangladeshi community stated, a reason for the community to be organized was "to help preserve our ethnic identity". Similarly, a

board member of the Afghan community emphasized:

“By now, we are in a position to also help maintain our cultural identity and we want to strengthen the ties between Greece and Afghanistan for the benefit of the Afghanis who reside in Greece. So, we organize cultural events the same way that we would back in Afghanistan”.

On a similar note, a member of the board of the Polish community that I interviewed in 2011 explained:

“We didn’t want to be separated from our country even though we were living in a new one. We wanted to keep our ties with our country, our identity and amongst us. It was relatively easy for us because the Greek State provided the places to live and a church so that Catholic traditions would be practised and a school for our kids. So, we stayed in the area and we organized our lives in this area based around the Church and the school. [...] Our community was very specific in terms of needs but also space. The main interest was for us to be able to keep the way of living that we had, to be able to sustain our culture [...]. Also, it was important to help each other create a life here but at the same time being able to feel that we belong in our own community where we can talk in our language and practice our religion. [...] Of course, the Church became a place of gathering and then expanded to all kinds of things, for example Polish people would come here to ask if anyone knew about a job or even if someone could help illiterate Polish people to write a letter to send back home”.

One element connected to culture and national identity is religion and religious

practices. The example of the Polish community exemplifies the importance of the church, not only as a site of religious practices but also as the locus of community formation. In stark contrast to this example, other ethnic communities are not allowed to openly practice their religious beliefs within the context of the Greek State because of the entwinement between the Greek State and the Orthodox Christian Church. This is an issue worth mentioning since it is a symbolic and a practical barrier to the assimilation of immigrants in Greece, but also a reflection of the inactivity of the Greek State on issues of migration. As the vice president of the Bangladeshi community explained:

“The Greek State doesn’t allow us to create a Mosque. [...] There are places of worship because people want to practice their religion but we are pushed underground. These places, most of the times, are apartments located around Omonoia Square where most of the Muslim population resides. [...]”.

According to Greek legislation a place of religious worship cannot operate without a permit. Petitions and formal requests have been denied many times in the past, even though the existence of Muslim groups of Greek citizenship that have moved from Northern Greece to Athens is generally acknowledged. Through the years the answer to these requests is constantly postponed, while also confronted by serious opposition from nationalistic political groups and representatives of the Greek Orthodox Church. The denial of the Greek State for Muslims to have their own places of worship, and to create their own Mosques in the Attica region, is a reflection of the relationship between the Greek State and immigrants and highlights many issues. The denial for legalized immigrants to practice their religion shows the resistance of the Greek State to their inclusion/integration and

lack of respect for human rights. The historic coincidence worsens the situation because of the financial and socio-political crisis that has given rise to neo-Nazi groups that have been engaging in acts of violence against immigrants as reported by NGOs and the press. The State through its denial to protect and support the inclusion of these populations – legal and irregular ones – legitimizes the spread of violence against them. Thus immigrants are pushed to marginalization since they have to find and implement secret and irregular ways for everyday activities such as practising their religion. In this way, organized ethnic communities are in direct contact with unofficial ethnic networks that operate in Athens.

One of the few ways that ethnic groups in Athens visibly celebrate their national identity and culture is the Annual Festival Against Racism. The participation of ethnic communities in the Festival, according to the interviewees, is important, firstly, because it facilitates immigrant populations to be informed of the existence of the communities and gain access to them and secondly, to celebrate their cultural identities. Of course, the Annual Festival Against Racism is also a way for ethnic communities and the immigrant population residing in Athens to network amongst themselves and with other organizations. The Festival has been organized for the past 11 years by the GFM and, in 2011, 120 Greek NGOs and 40 organized ethnic communities participated, and the number of visitors was over 25,000. The importance that the Festival holds, as a cultural exposure of the ethnic communities, is highlighted through the Sudanese Community that ‘advertises’ it as one of its main activities:

“We publish a newsletter in Arabic for the members of our community in order for them to be informed about the latest legal news on immigration

but also about the news of our community. In cooperation with the Steki Metanaston¹⁵ every first Sunday of each month we offer meals for Sudanese families to get together. Also, we are one of the organizing members of the Annual Festival Against Racism. We help in the organization of the festival, prepare food and communicate with musicians who could be part of the Festival activities. The Sudanese Women's community is actively involved in the preparation and organization of the Festival. [...] Our involvement and presence in the Festival is really important because it is a good opportunity for the Sudanese community to get together but also to network with other organizations. It is a very good way for people to get to know us and I'm not referring only to immigrants but the Greek population as well. Also, members of Greek organizations and NGOs are participating either by just attending or by being involved in the organization of the Festival and that is a chance for us all to know each other and promote collectively the importance of social inclusion in Greece" (member of the Sudanese Community).

Another organization that has brought ethnic communities together and acts as an umbrella organization is the Sunday School for Immigrants. It focuses on the maintenance of cultural expression and identity, and offers a social space for everyday activities and a site for the organization of ethnic communities. It is similar to the GFM but theoretically not as political in form. Many of the everyday activities of the organized ethnic communities take place in the School. The premises are used for courses in Arabic, Farsi and Greek, for children and for adults, as well as for entertainment activities like excursions and games.

¹⁵ The literal translation of this organization/venue is Immigrants Hangout: it is a venue in the heart of Athens that serves as a meeting point for immigrants that has turned into a loose organization serving multiple functions for immigrants like cultural activities etc.

Volunteers teach Greek and members of ethnic communities, particularly the Sudanese and the Afghan, organize courses in their mother tongue for children born in Greece and/or attending Greek schools. The premises of the Sunday School just like the Steki are meeting places for immigrants, legal and illegal, but also hubs for more political activity, as evidenced by announcements and press releases, as well as by meetings and public events hosted there. I use the term political because these activities focus on immigrant workers rights, as well as on civil rights and attempts to lobby for favourable legislation changes. The example of the Sunday School, as a social space for immigrants' everyday activities, opens up the issue of space as physical location but also as a site of community formation and its implications.

6.3. The geography of ethnic communities

Important in the ethnic communities' everyday activities is their location. The examples of the Sunday School and the Steki have shown that immigrants use venues to meet with others, to get organized and advice, but also to find out where to go if they want something more specific. This situation echoes the notion of transnational social spaces, often used interchangeably with transnational communities, that, as a concept, according to Faist (2000: 191) "covers diverse phenomena such as transnational small groups, transnational circuits and transnational communities. Each of these is characterized by a primary mechanism of integration: reciprocity in small groups, exchange in circuits and solidarity for communities". The information gathered from the interviews brings to the fore the interplay in the relationship between communities and location.

According to the interviews with immigrants and board members', the communities are the first places to go in many instances highlighting their solidarity as a main characteristic. Some organizations do not rent premises and communication with those could take place only by phone and/or post. Most of the organizations that have established offices are located in central Athens, near Omonoia Square. Of course, there are others, like the Polish community, whose offices are located near the Catholic Church which serves as the centre for the Polish community close to the centre of Athens. Other communities like the Syrian follow the example of the Polish community and their offices are located in the area with the largest number of their co-ethnic population. Even though the identification of place with community ignores the fact that networks and communities operate irrespectively of location and across geographies, for these formal ethnic communities there is a strong identification between the

communities and their locations (Massey 1994: 152-154, Faist 2000). Like the Polish, these communities are organized around a specific location and their existence is signified by and identified with a place (e.g. the Polish Catholic Church).

For others, their location follows the concentration of people from the same ethnic background but is also related to the number of years that each community has been in Greece. The different length of time seems to be related to the official status that an ethnic community holds and consequently to its visibility. A prime example is the Polish community: the Polish people came to Athens in the early 1990s under a special condition and a devised plan of the Greek State. The original agreement between Poland, Greece and the US was for Greece to be a transit country for a specific number of years until the Polish people moved to the US, as the member of the board of the Polish Community and the Priest of the Catholic Church (who serves as an unofficial leader of the community) told me. Apparently, the move from Greece to the US never took place. However, the Polish community was already established in an area in central Athens and was given premises for the operation of a school and a church. Along with this, the legalization of the Polish community was much easier, especially taking into account that this happened in the early 1990s when immigration was just starting in Greece.

Another example is the Philippine Community in Greece. The immigration of Philippine people, especially women who mainly work as in-house caretakers, was smaller in numbers, more controlled and much earlier than the waves of immigration that took place during the late 1990s and are still happening today. So, the Philippine community has an organized formal ethnic community, a school

and organized religious activity with their own priesthood, all organized in another central area of Athens. Similarly, the Sudanese community has a long history in Athens. The first Sudanese that came to Greece during the 1960s were students, seamen and diplomats working in the Arabic embassies. In the late 1980s and early 1990s some more Sudanese came to Greece and at the moment the number of the Sudanese population in Greece is up to 300 people, according to their publicized data (interview with Sudanese Community member). The offices of the Sudanese community are in an area in central Athens but according to the Sudanese community member that I talked to:

“there was no need for us to be in a specific area because the Sudanese population is spread in Athens and generally Greece. So, our location was chosen to be central just for people to be able to use transportation to get to us and because of the price of the rent”.

Through these examples, the relationship between the structured way that these groups migrated and thus the specific legalization procedures that took place and their choice of location becomes evident. These ethnic communities on their arrival acted within a specific context in relation to the Greek State and had a specific and known population. Therefore, the creation of formal communities followed different patterns. One of the differences lies in the fact that these groups were ‘accepted’ by the Greek State and within that context their population was not invisible. Because of that context and their legalization followed by their visibility they were able to establish educational and religious practices in an institutionalized way. In these cases the relationship between the country of origin and the host country acquires a sense of locality but also emphasizes the transnational character of these. Following Mitchell (2003: 84), these

communities exemplify the cultural geographies of transnationality by emphasizing “the embodied movements and practices of migrants and/or the flows of commodities and capital [...] with respect to national borders and the cultural constructions of nation, citizen and social life”.

Organized ethnic communities have seen their population increasing within the last years, like the Afghan and the Bangladeshi community, and have picked the location of their offices with different criteria. One of the main reasons in deciding where to establish offices is to be closer to the areas where the immigrant population resides. As the vice president of the Bangladeshi community told me:

“It is important for us to be centrally located. It is a well-known fact that most immigrants once in Athens, the first place that they will go to is Omonoia Square and the area around it just to network with co-ethnics. The presence of shops facilitates this process. As a community we don’t have any official connection and/or affiliation to the shops that exist. However, as Bangladeshi people we are well aware of their existence and of their exclusive products. Of course, that fact by itself points out to the growing numbers of Bangladeshi community. The existence and the sustainability of these exclusive entrepreneurial activities show that there is audience just for them. [...] Of course we know that many of our co-ethnics are [in Athens] under illegal and/or irregular conditions and we do know that they hang out close to the shops, since the shops are places where one can meet co-ethnics and speak his/her own language and find ways to network. Also, we are well aware of the fact that religious practices are taking place in apartments because the Muslim population in Greece is not recognized and we can’t have our places to practice our

religion”.

This quote highlights the relations between formal and informal ethnic communities. For one thing, a large number of immigrants are irregulars and formal ethnic communities are well aware of the fact. The main aim that drives the formal organization has been the provision of help for their co-ethnic newcomers, so it is natural that they are involved with irregular immigrants and this is a primary reason for selecting their location. Additionally, the hostility of the Greek State, highlighted by the constant refusals for an official place for religious practices, entwines the two forms of communities even more. Ethnic shops in specified locations, besides their entrepreneurial activity, serve as links to the country of origin and the host country, but also as connecting nodes in ethnic networks and communities, including the connection between formal and informal ethnic communities.

6.3.1. Cultural Consumption: The role of the shops

For Mitchell (2003: 84), at the heart of the geographies of transnationality is “the embodied movements and practices of migrants and/or flows of commodities and capital [and the analysis of] these flows with respect to national borders and the cultural constructions of nation, citizen and social life”. The ethnic shops in central Athens and mainly Omonoia operate as loci of transnational activity in multiple ways, ranging from their entrepreneurial activity to sources of information and networking. The importance of ethnic shops for the communities was illustrated in the interviews. As the vice president of the Bangladeshi community said:

“Of course I go to Bangladeshi shops that exist around Omonoia Square! I do shop from my local supermarket but I regularly shop in ethnic shops because they import goods from Bangladesh. I do prefer those because [Greek shops] don’t have some of the ingredients that we use. It is a way for me and my family to keep our links to our culture and our tradition. Also, it is a way to cook foods that we prefer! When I first came to Athens, there weren’t many shops like that. Now they are and sometimes it is

In a similar spirit Asef told me:

“The ethnic shops that operate in the centre of Athens are multifunctional for us [immigrants]. For example, in the shops that sell electronics and antennas, one can go and watch TV programmes of his/her own country. Many people, even when they have been somewhat comfortable in some room or house, can’t afford to buy a laptop or a TV and the antenna that would allow them to watch channels from their country of origin. But

entertainment in your own language is really important! [...] Sometimes just hanging out around the shops makes you feel better because you can see your co-ethnics even though you might not talk to them.”

Hasan, who has a barber shop right next to Omonoia Square, has on display a big plasma TV that is on most hours of the day:

“Most of the men you see in here [in the barber shop] come in regularly. Not because they need a haircut but to watch TV and talk to each other. Especially when there is a football match the place is packed! [...] I know most of the men and some of them I will get to know but I understand that people want to hang out and most of them don't own a TV and the antenna to watch programmes from back home. [...] It is not about the actual TV, it is about the sense of not being alone. It is also because I have only Arabic channels playing. So, you know, people understand the language and they get to see each other. [...] When I first came to Athens, I didn't need any of these because I had a family here and a job but nowadays most immigrants don't. They are not even legal in this country. In all of the shops around, mine included, people feel free to ask things and they are not afraid because of their illegal status. They are among their co-ethnics and you know, we are all immigrants and we have been through similar situations, so it is ok”.

The quotes from the interviews reflect the concept of ethnic enclaves as associations that cover the economic and the social needs of the ethnic groups. They also illustrate notions of belonging, as ‘the sense of not being alone’ as well as the importance and the connecting power of language that highlights the

cultural element that binds communities. The multiple functions of ethnic shops, ranging from meeting places, places of cultural consumption, e.g. TV programmes from the country of origin via satellite, and trade of ethnic products, but also places where native language is used, transform them into places of transnational ties. These ties and practices “enable immigrants to transform their current places [...] by ‘placing’ their identities” into their own (Ehrkamp 2005: 346). Linking the sentiment of belonging to locality, local belonging as the “significance of territoriality for social relationships” surfaces and results in the emergence of transnational social spaces (Savage et al. 2005: 7, Ehrkamp 2005, Massey 1994).

6.3.2. Informal ethnic communities and their relation to urban public space

According to Portes (1986) immigrant entrepreneurial activities emerge to cover, primarily, the needs of ethnic groups. At the same time, extended social networks are created as supportive mechanisms. According to this conceptualization, the minority groups do not need the majority group to address their needs. In the case of irregular immigrants it is imperative for them to look elsewhere than the State and its services to make ends meet. Ethnic shops but also public places like Omonoia Square are the places where immigrant networks operate and provide people of an irregular status with the means to make a living. As Ismaili told me:

“When I first started to collect metal and glass objects from the streets in order to make some money I followed another immigrant to a shop. In that shop that was run by Arabic speaking people I asked and they told me that I should go to Patision Street to find other buyers for my stuff. They gave me directions and the other guy also told me where I could find a better deal, shops and people who would pay more for what I had”.

Public spaces like Omonoia Square and other Squares in central Athens serve as meeting points for ethnic communities. Through the fieldwork it became apparent that the Squares are defined by the largest ethnic community that resides in the area but also by their function. For the Afghan population Attiki Square is a place to find co-ethnics and from there find out how and where to rent a house and/or a room:

“When we came to Piraeus we already knew [from co-ethnics that had met in prison] that we should go to Attiki Square because there we

would find other Afghans that could direct us where to go to find a house but also to find the next trafficker because we didn't want to stay in Greece but we wanted to go to Germany. And so we did. We found people there and we were able to rent a house from some other Afghan family that was originally living there because we had money. [...] We were directed to the next trafficker who was supposed to get us to Germany from Athens through a network of Afghan people and Internet cafes run by our co-ethnics. [...] Many Internet cafes have as main business to secure the deposit and/ or the whole amount of money that the trafficker wants. The good thing about these is that most of the time the person is speaking the same language and that you can find one close to a Square where others live or close to your house. [...] The bad thing is that you can never prove what happened. When we found the internet café where we had given all our money closed down but the guy who was running the place was right there in front of us, we understood that there was little we could do." (Susan).

Similarly, Nuria was informed while travelling to Athens that she could find a place to stay if she went to Attikis Square: The man that she heard speaking Farsi told her that:

"I should go to Attiki Square to find more Afghan families and that from there someone would be able to tell me where to go. Indeed, when I got to Attiki Square I found many other Afghans just hanging out so I started asking them for a place to stay. After a few days that we were staying in the Square an Afghan family took us in for 50 euro per night. [...] The other Afghan ladies in the Square told me that I could find food and other

stuff if I went to Omonia Square. I followed the one Afghan lady who was going there and in Omonia I found that they [an organization affiliated to the Church] were giving clothes and toys for the kids. [...] After some days, another Afghan lady told me that I could go to the street market and sell these things to get some money and that's how I found out how to make some money. Only then I was able to find another bigger room for me and my children. [...] That is still the main thing that I do to earn money. If you go around in the Squares and the regular hangouts of immigrants it's easy to find where they give things that you can sell. Many organizations especially in winter give clothes and even food so I sell these in the streets. [...] The police has stopped me from doing that three times until now, they took away my things and they followed me home but they didn't hurt me or arrested me [she had no papers at the time of the interview] maybe because I am a woman and I had my youngest daughter with me".

Ethnic shops and public places acquire vital importance in the lives of irregular immigrants because it is in these places that the existence of ethnic communities becomes visible. They therefore function as a link to the existing communities and simultaneously serve as places where irregular immigrants' needs can be facilitated. The prevalent ethnic character, cultural practices and instantiated identities specify the spatial fixity of practices and thus cultivate the construction of symbolic boundaries. According to Appadurai (1996) and as Savage et al. (2005: 7) summarize "localities are not 'given' primordially but are socially produced through processes of boundary definition". These boundaries mark the transnational character of the place and its transformation. Within the framework

of theories of transnationality, transnational spaces encompass the “material and imaginative connections between people and a ‘territorial identity’ [through t]he lived experiences and spatial imaginaries of people [...]” (Blunt 2007: 689).

The territoriality of social relations with transnational character is because “flows allow neighbourhoods to be reproduced as people’s imagination is used to differentiate their neighbourhood from the outside” (Savage et al. 2005: 7). In the case of immigrants the differentiation is because of the ethnic character and the cultural identity that they bring with them in negotiating their in-betweenness. The transformation of the area into transnational space is because places are not static but “a constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus” (Massey 1994: 154) or as Savage et al. (2005: 207) state: “places are defined not as historical residues of local or simply as sites where one happens to live, but as sites chosen by particular groups wishing to announce their identities”.

6.4. Participation: the irregular immigrants' perspective

In the previous and the present chapter the functions of city life and the networks that exist have been presented. This section explores the ways that immigrants perceive these functions, how they feel about them, how they view their participation and their role as part of these networks in their everyday lives. As has already been presented, immigrants and especially newcomers use ethnic networks to cover their immediate needs, to find a place to stay and a job to do. Their own perspective of how these connections work seems to change with the time they spend in Greece as will be highlighted through the quotes from the interviews. It appears that there is knowledge, either from their country of origin or through the trafficking networks of the ethnic communities that exist in Athens, that they can rely on, even in a fleeting manner. All of the individuals that I interviewed, with the exception of the Kurdish family and Hasan, the Kurdish barber, started their lives in Greece and then in Athens just by finding someone speaking their own language. As Ismaili said, he was directed by people he met in prison in Thessaloniki:

“to an area where many Iranians reside so it would be easy to find someone speaking the language that could direct me and navigate me in Athens. It took me some days that I had to live in the streets around Larissa Station to find someone but I really did. Just by being there and noticing people, I heard someone that I felt at ease to ask what I can do, where to find a place to stay and how I can make some money”.

In a similar way, Nazari, who up to this day (2014) cannot speak Greek at all even though she has been in Greece for some years now, found her way when

she

“heard someone speaking Farsi on the phone [in the bus while travelling from Northern Greece to Athens after her deportation]. So, [she] turned and asked him if he could tell her any kind of information on the place that [they were heading]”.

The man guided her to Attiki Square by arranging for a cab driver to take her there once in Athens, in order to find co-ethnics that would help her find a place to stay. Nazari and her children have managed to stay in Athens for some years now and changed places and secured a living by illegally selling things through the network of Afghan women that she found at Attiki Square and later in Omonoia Square. Up to this day, she cannot say anything in Greek except ‘thank you’ and ‘hello’ so her life depends on the networks she is connected to. However, when asked, she told me that she has no deeper emotional connection but instead an operational, functional relation to the people that she has met and who have helped her at times:

“I have no friends here. I don’t socialize really. I will talk to some people but not for long. I am not interested in creating relationships here. If we were back home, we would never talk to each other anyway, so why do that here? I have one friend that she speaks Farsi but she is not from the same place that I am. I see her once or twice a month when I go to Omonoia to get things for the children. I like to talk to her but I am fine as things are” (Nazari).

Ismaili, even though he used the information given to him by his co-ethnics once he came to Athens, is actively avoiding socialization with them:

“I left Iran because I am homosexual and the police was after me when a professor at my university called them to inform them about me having a relationship with another boy. We both left the country and I never saw him again. When I left I wanted to go to a European country where homosexuality is not punished by death. Greece is fine but there are too many Iranians here who hold the same beliefs about homosexuality being a terrible offence, so I actively avoid them. [...] Of course, I will ask and talk to people if I need to, if I need to buy something or if I need to find something. But you don’t have to *know* them or get to know them. You don’t have to be friends. Things work that way here. You can just ask in a shop or when you see men who speak the same language as you do. You can even go to a place that is a regular hangout as is Omonoia for people who want to find a job or Victoria Square if you want to find a fake passport and just ask random people. It goes without saying that you will find out you need to know but you don’t have to create a relationship with these people”.

A main characteristic of the interviewees is that they did not expect to stay in Greece. They came to Athens as a transit place to get to Europe. The change in the relationships and the perspectives that people have when it comes to networks is related to prolonged residence in the country. A good example is Susan:

“We [her husband, children and herself] found out where to go from people that we met during our time in prison. We were told that we should go to central Athens once in Piraeus. Other immigrants that were captured told us that we can find other Afghan people around Attiki

Square and something to do if we wanted a job around Omonoia Square and for papers and [fake] passports we could go to Victoria Square. During our time there, I met some other Afghanis that I liked and I would befriend for the time that I was there. When we found out that they were letting us go, we left with two other Afghan families so we could have company while travelling to Athens. When we came in Athens, we stuck together because it's always better to be in a group. When we found a place to stay we completely lost track of the others. I'm assuming that they were easily settled. I don't like most of the Afghanis and the other immigrants here. I didn't care to create a relationship because my plan was to leave Greece soon. The point for us was to find the next trafficker to get to Europe. Of course now we can't because they stole our money. Since it became clear that we have to stay here I went to the Afghan Community downtown and now I'm involved in what they do because it's obvious that we have to live here for at least some more years. [...] It is given that we will help each other, that we will support one another while travelling and when first in a new place but I don't really like most of the people because most of them are involved in illegal activities that are dangerous. I don't want that kind of people around my kids. Now that I have to stay here, I have met people through the Community who are also active in keeping our culture and I do socialize with them. We also try to help out the Afghan population in Greece in any possible way. But the people involved in the Community are people that I would befriend anyway. And since we have to stay it is important to maintain our heritage, our culture, our language. Not just for us but for our children”.

The Kurdish people that I interviewed, who had come to Athens more than 10 years ago, had a completely different experience with their ethnic network. According to all of them, Athens was their destination since they all had at least one family member already living in Athens prior to their arrival. For example, Hasan came to Athens having a job secured in his uncle's barber shop – five blocks away from where his own is now - and a room waiting for him in his uncle's house:

“I was in contact with my uncle and we had known that things are good for Kurdish people in Athens. My uncle had a flourishing business with his barber shop, so once he established himself, he invited me to come too because I already knew the job and I wanted to leave the country. He told me that I could come and work and live with him until I would be able to have a place of my own. [...] Since I came to Athens, things have been ok for me. I am here for many years and I consider this place to be my own. I opened my barbershop 5 years ago because of the growing immigrant population. My friends are Kurdish and I have some Greek friends as well that we go out every week. My uncle's family is here as well and I have people here from my hometown to socialize with. Kurdish people are not coming anymore but we have a strong network here. Most of the times we know who is going to come because we are in regular contact with our extended families back home. Contrary to what many others do, Kurdish people come here with a plan and a place to stay already secured. The next step is to search for a job but that's also relatively easy. There is a community that will immediately activate the people to find something for the newcomer. Anyway, most of the people coming here have family

or very close friends”.

The answers of other Kurdish interviewees, who had come to Athens at the same time, were identical. The mother of the family had contacted distant relatives who were already living and working in Athens and had found a place for her children and herself to stay. When they came to Athens, she had enough money with her to open her own business, a restaurant in Omonoia Square. Soon after, her cousin came to live with them and to run the restaurant with her. According to her:

“The main people that I am socializing with are my clients! Of course, the restaurant is also a meeting place for Kurds in Athens. Or to be more specific, it used to be because nowadays Omonoia is not that much of a safe place for anyone. Drug dealing and prostitution are everyday reality here. And it is not just that, guns and gangs have made their appearance along with all the drugs in the area. The result is that we don’t feel safe and even my family is not walking around after dark easily. People still come in and we will watch TV and drink tea together but it is not safe. Most of the Kurdish people don’t live around here anymore because of these reasons. Our children are well integrated in Greek society but their friends are mainly Kurds. And we all socialize with people from our country because it is easier. We have Greek friends and friends from other ethnicities but it is easy and nice to speak your own language and to see family.”

The case of the Kurds in Athens is different from other ethnic communities for two main reasons; the first is that they were welcomed in Greece and were never

perceived as a threat or as outlaws. The general feeling among Greeks was a sense of solidarity towards the Kurdish population. In the early 1990s the Kurds were being persecuted in Turkey for wanting an independent state and started migrating to Greece. The mainstream attitude towards them was a wave of solidarity linked to historical reasons, such as the expulsion of the Greek community from Turkey in the early 1920s. The second reason is that the waves of Kurdish immigrants preceded the latest waves of irregular immigrants. The most recent waves consist of economic immigrants who are searching for a better life and opportunities to work. Until the early 1990s the immigrants who were coming to Greece were mainly political refugees and the majority were people of higher education and social capital, as my research from Greek NGOs data shows.

The data of NGOs show that recent immigrants who have come to Greece in an attempt to reach Europe are low skilled and many of them illiterate. The majority of my interviewees, with the exception of Nazari, have been through official education. On the contrary, the people that I interviewed in the pilot phase of my research (over 20 immigrants) were illiterate. The educational background and the social capital of the immigrants become important when exploring the ethnic networks because it is reflected in the difference between the official and the unofficial networks. All the members of the boards of formal ethnic communities are people who are interested in politics and who have the social and cultural capital to recognize the need for forming an organization to protect and help their own people and lobby on matters of immigration. On the other hand, the everyday aspects of life of immigrants take place in random instances in public places and with the only common denominator the language.

6.5. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to explore ethnic communities in Athens as a part of immigrants' lives and their relationship to urban public space. In concluding this discussion a set of different but related points illustrated through observation during the fieldwork are highlighted. First is the issue of the formation and existence of formal and informal transnational communities and their role in the immigrants' reality, and second, related to the first, is the importance but also the subsequent transformation of public space.

Formal ethnic communities represent a specific, well-defined set of goals and actions and primarily consist of legalized immigrants, whereas informal ethnic networks are related mostly with irregular immigrants and are organized around functionality and have a utilitarian, fleeting, character. Due to the non- action of the Greek State in matters of immigration, formal and informal ethnic communities and networks overlap in several aspects ranging from practising religion to entrepreneurial activities. Therefore, the ways that immigrants act to cover their needs acquire unregulated, unofficial and ultimately marginal character. This condition of marginality takes on a physical manifestation in public space, since urban public space becomes the locus of several activities, ranging from networking to covering basic needs like housing.

The irregularity that in some aspects is closely connected to illegality, i.e. the fake papers and the trafficking networks that are located in urban public spaces like the Athenian Squares, has created a rupture with the stereotypical Greek image of the places. This is because of the physical and visible manifestations of the operation of ethnic communities and networks in the public space

environment. Prime examples are the exclusivity of non-Greek languages in the signs on the shops around Omonoia Square and the presence of immigrant populations in and around the Squares in central Athens. Another visible example, as opposed to the stereotypical Greek image of a square, is the presence of pieces of papers in trees that advertise in non-Greek languages rooms to rent. Examples like that can be perceived as ethnic markers and images of the ethnicization and colonization of space.

At the time of the fieldwork, the ethnic element was present in the signs and the symbolisms in the area of Omonoia through the operation of ethnic shops that were exclusively for non-Greek speaking populations, thus creating a clear boundary between the streets to be used and/or avoided by Greeks and non-Greeks. Many central Squares mentioned in this chapter were, at the time of the fieldwork, avoided by Greeks because of two reasons. The first is the illegal activity that takes place in public, like the distribution of drugs, fake documents and prostitution that transform the Squares into dangerous zones. The second reason is the visibility of large groups of immigrants hanging out in the Squares perceived as strangers, as the 'others'. The presence of large groups of immigrants is a matter of networking for them, but a reason for Greeks to avoid the Square, perceiving their networking as 'dangerous'.

This dynamic reflects the claim to the right to public space by different groups and their antagonism over space. The colonization of space by ethnic networks, even if only temporary or strictly functional, opens up the question of the transnational character that urban public space may acquire under these conditions and widens the understanding of the claim over and the right to public urban space.

Chapter 7

Invisibility: A means of survival

7.1. Introduction

The socio-cultural and economic identity and status of immigrants in any particular country can be understood, in part, through the concept of visibility. Visibility as a condition stems from the structural recognition that immigrants receive, and are permitted to have, a recognizable status and to participate in all aspects of society. Additionally, visibility implies the right of representation (Mitchell 2003). The right of representation requires visibility, because it is connected with the “right of groups and individuals to make their desires and needs known, to represent themselves to others and to the state” (Mitchell 2003: 33). In the case of irregular immigrants the right of representation becomes challenged through their institutional invisibility. Visibility presupposes “a place in which groups and individuals can make themselves visible” (Mitchell 2003: 33). It is for this reason that in the next pages the relationship between irregular immigrants and space is explored, on the premise that one of the ways that visibility is expressed is through and in space. This relationship also provides a way to understand the social production of public space environments. In relation to ethnic communities, people who might be considered ‘invisible’ might also bring about changes in the space they occupy and/or use.

In chapter 4, I discussed how the lives of immigrants, particularly their irregular and invisible status is shaped by both national and supra national state structures and relations. In this chapter, I turn attention to how a status of irregularity and invisibility is both perceived and used by immigrant groups in shaping their

everyday lives. In the previous chapter, the exploration of the organization of ethnic communities and their relationship to invisibility highlighted the role and the functions of public spaces as nodes of connection. The transnational character that is brought about in space through the spatially fixed practices of immigrants signifies the visible results of the uses of space by populations that can be institutionally invisible as is the case for irregular immigrants. This chapter builds on the previous one. Moving to the micro-level, it examines individual actions and the everyday practices of irregular immigrants. The focus is on the ways that irregularity and thus invisibility is perceived and used by irregular immigrants. The empirical nature of this chapter is derived from field observations and the interviews that I have conducted with irregular immigrants. The aim is to shed light on the immigrants' everyday conduct under the veil of invisibility and to provide insights on the production of space through the everyday life activities in Omonoia Square.

The chapter is divided into two parts: The first outlines the general theoretical framework and focuses on the relationship between public space and invisibility as a means to understand the production of space through everyday activities. In further describing the conditions of irregular immigrants in the Greek context the notion of institutional invisibility is elaborated. Through the concept of institutional invisibility the relation between invisibility and power is also explored. The second part explores the creation of the ambiguous situation of the visibility of the invisible, irregular immigrants through the lens of empirical data, and elaborates on the way that the situation is reversed through everyday practices by the use of invisibility as a form of power and a means of survival. Deriving all data from the fieldwork, different uses and everyday activities are

presented and examined, ranging from housing to earning an income, while being invisible and irregular.

7.2. Invisibility in Public Space

One of the main, alleged, characteristics of public space is its visibility and access by all (Carr et al. 1992, Low 2000, Mitchell 2003). Public space is also the terrain where the right of representation is situated since it is the realm of the public sphere (Mitchell 2003: 33-336). In practice though, the democratic notion of public space as visible and open to all is challenged. The case of 'outcast' groups using public space is an example of this challenge. It is even more so, when the outcast group existing under the veil of invisibility makes its presence quite visible. As has been illustrated in chapter 6, on the existence of ethnic communities and their relation to public space, the inhabitation of public space by outcast groups brings about visible effects that might take different forms, ranging from the creation of symbolic boundaries, the transformation of place into ethnic or multi-ethnic locus, the use and/or avoidance of use of the place by the general public, to the change in the way that the image of a public place is perceived, as was shown in chapter 5 on the media coverage of Omonia Square.

The focus of the research is on the presence of people considered invisible by State and society and the visible effects that their physical existence brings in space. The paradoxical nature of being visible and at the same time considered invisible builds on the concept of 'institutional invisibility' when addressing groups of immigrants. This concept refers to the situation where immigrants receive no official recognition of their presence and are 'ignored' by the State (Puggioni 2005). As has been shown in chapter 1, institutional invisibility can provide an insight into power relations that create one's position in a society, given that the latter is linked with notions of domination and power over the group under question (Puggioni 2005, Brighenti 2007). At the same time,

'institutional invisibility' can be used in exploring the right that people under this condition have on space, the possible tensions that might be created and ultimately the change in the public environment that might be brought about.

Examples like those presented in previous chapters, but also the ones that will be explored here, highlight the visibility of the invisible, and, in particular, the immigrant population in the area in and around Omonoia Square. The result is that this area has been symbolically marked as having acquired a transnational character. The marking of space in conjuncture with the fact that the Greek population has moved out of the area, as presented in chapter 5, can be seen as an example of the contestation for space. To me, this became obvious in the persistence of all my interviewees to accompany me to my car (that was always in a private parking area) as a means of 'precaution' because as a "young woman who looks so 'free' and obviously not an immigrant" I shouldn't be walking alone, no matter the hour of the day (see also Figure M.8 in Appendix 1).

In exploring the relationship between visibility and invisibility in public space, following Lefebvre's theorizations, institutionally invisible groups, like immigrants, dwelling in the area, should remain hidden. As Allen and Pryke (1994: 471) explain, it would be expected that a marginal group, like irregular immigrants, would occupy a 'concealed space' "without formal presence or recognition". But in the case of Omonoia, the institutionally invisible population is visible in everyday reality¹⁶.

Through the fieldwork, different ways that irregularity and invisibility are used by irregular immigrants emerged. The context and the ways that irregularity and

¹⁶ An indication of the presence of immigrant population is the existence of ethnic shops operating in the area, accounted for in Figures M.4, M.5, and M.6. During the fieldwork it was noted that irregular immigrants use these shops in various ways making their presence visible at all times of day

invisibility are employed in covering one's needs vary greatly and are related to the individual cases and circumstances. The spectrum of the uses ranges from renting a room in a house, finding shelter that covers a basic need, to participation in networks of human trafficking, drugs and arms dealing. The extreme range of different activities that are employed highlights again the State's absence in the case of irregular immigration.

7.2. Institutional Invisibility as perceived by irregular immigrants

The notion of invisibility used here refers to the notion of institutional invisibility as presented by Puggioni (2005) in her study of Kurdish refugees in Italy. Kurdish refugees in her case, as well as irregular immigrants in central Athens, receive no official recognition of their presence. For example, in the case of central Athens the number of people, their origins and their everyday activities remain unknown to the Greek state (Kathimerini September 5th, 2010, Kaminis 2010, interview with M. Kouveli 2011 in Chapter 4). Therefore, as explained in detail in chapter 4, the relationship between the Greek State and immigrants is defined by them as being ignored and thus pushed to the margins of society. Immigrant networks know this situation and as a consequence, many immigrants chose the status of complete illegality in an attempt not to be trapped in Greece under irregular conditions. Characteristically Nuria stated:

“We didn’t want to stay in Greece. It was not our plan to apply for asylum here [in Athens] because we wanted to go to Germany. We already knew that it takes too many years for the applications to be processed here and that is not what we wanted, especially for our children. Our first trafficker told us how things work in Greece, so we knew that immigrants couldn’t be legalized here. At least not easily and not fast enough. Greece was never an option for us. Our goal was to hide out [in Greece] for some time in order to look for a trustworthy trafficker to get us to Germany. We knew that it was easy to come to the country and we knew that we had good chances of staying under the radar here. The only reason that we ended up applying is because we had no choice after our money got stolen”.

In a similar manner Ali explained that:

“I only wanted to go back to Germany and after many months of travelling I found out that the easiest route is through Greece. So, I figured, that it would be best for me to enter Greece illegally and find my way afterwards. I was told that [in Greece] there is no systematic border control so it is an easy entrance and also that I should avoid being arrested and register in the system because then, if I moved to Europe and get caught again, I would be sent back to Greece. [...] I never considered Greece to be an option because my main goal was to go back to Germany where my house is and I know, I was told, that no one gets asylum from Greece”.

This in-between, irregular and invisible situation leads immigrants to an awkward position in terms of assimilating in the host country. For example, since there is no official recognition of their presence they receive no benefits from the welfare system. An immediate result after the entry of newcomers to Greece is that there are no official structures to help them. Therefore, their conditions of living are pushed to underground means of surviving. The use of the term ‘underground’ here describes the unofficial, marginal and in many cases illegal ways that people employ to satisfy their immediate needs such as housing and provision of food. These ways will be further explored and presented in the next sections of this chapter, since the everyday lives of irregular immigrants are a main part of the empirical research in relation to the appropriation of public space. To do so, irregularity and invisibility are seen through the eyes of the people who experience these, the irregular immigrants themselves.

On the perception of irregularity and institutional invisibility, an almost ironic

comment came up in all of my interviews: central to the immigrants understanding of their situation is the lack of control by the Greek State. The best description of the way that the immigrants perceive their situation is through the words of Nuria :

“The situation in this country [Greece] is deeply disturbing. I don’t understand how it is possible for a country that belongs to the EU to have so lax borders. Can’t you [the Greeks] see that this is very dangerous? All kinds of illegal activities are allowed this way. We know of very dangerous people that are crossing the borders and come to live in Greece. They sell drugs and guns and are connected to the mafia. It is here that I feel it is unsafe especially for my kids. The State doesn’t exist and the end result is a very dangerous situation and environment”.

The irony of her words stems from the fact that it is only because of this situation her own family chose Greece as a ‘hiding’ place to avoid being found by Al Qaeda. The absence of control that allows people to hide from the eyes of the State gave this family the opportunity to lay low for years. However, simultaneously, their perception of a State that lacks control over its borders as dangerous and according to the same interviewee, it is one of the reasons that they want to leave Greece and move on to another country. The paradox in this situation is that irregularity provides safety since it allows people to hide while it is an insecure and dangerous situation in terms of their everyday life. Similarly, the issue of danger that results from the lack of State control was a common element in all interviews. When I pointed out this discrepancy, my interviewees claimed that even though they use their irregular and invisible condition to secure everyday living and even though they are able to live in Athens because of it, they

still consider it to be a flaw of the Greek State, and they would not want to be part of a State/country like that. In Ferhat's words:

"The lack of control over the borders is a bad thing. It attracts all kinds of people and all kinds of illegal activities. It is not only the human trafficking networks that operate because of the lack of control but more importantly, drugs and guns and other illegal goods are smuggled in. [...] Of course this situation allowed my family and some of my friends to come into the country but we are good people and we just needed a chance to make our lives better. The problem is that bad people are also coming in that way and I believe that they more than the good ones".

Nazari expressed a similar opinion:

"I didn't even know what country it was when I came here. Now that I had to apply for papers [because of her son being arrested] and I am living here with my daughters, I am afraid of other immigrants. Prostitutes and drugs are everywhere. Greece should be doing something about it. I don't like that my children are growing up in that kind of environment. [...] I just had to protect and provide a better future for my family, I do no harm but there are many other people who are coming to Greece to do bad things".

So, even though the absence of control and surveillance is a comfortable situation, the same people who are taking advantage of it, perceive it negatively, almost as if forgetting that their lives depend upon it. Still, invisibility, irregularity and marginality are becoming the norm in the irregular immigrants' everyday lives. At the same time, these conditions are used daily as a means to find ways to cover

their needs. Employing invisibility can be used to successfully sustain one's life and secure basic needs.

7.3. Invisibility and power

In the context of researching the relationship between irregular immigrants and public space, the concept of power emerges in more aspects than just the power exercised over the immigrants and the power of the immigrants themselves. One of these aspects is the connection to notions of domination and oppression in the case of immigrants rendered invisible (Brighenti 2007). This understanding of power is an instrumental one, as power held over someone (Allen 2003: 5). This creates an asymmetrical relationship whose “impacts depend on the power relations and interests connecting those who see and those who are to be seen (or not)” (Polzer and Hammond 2008: 417). On the other side of things, the immigrant groups reverse this power in order to face their situation in addressing their needs. Power, as Weber (1978) defined it, is the “ability of an actor to realize his/her own will in a social action even against the will of other actors”, which seems to best describe the situation from the perspective of the irregular immigrants.

To understand better the ways that irregularity and invisibility are employed and used by immigrants as a means to improve their living conditions, the following parts of this chapter explore aspects of the everyday lives of irregular immigrants through the interviews and participant observation that took place in 2011 to 2012. The subsequent sections follow the timeline of immigrants’ routes: firstly, aspects of the immigrants’ journey to Greece are explored and specifically, the collection of information, since it is related both to irregularity and to Omonoia Square being a primary location. Secondly, the matter of deportation and its relationship to irregularity is presented. Finally, moving on to the everyday life of immigrants, after they are established in Athens, the

coverage of basic needs like housing and making money under the condition of invisibility, and how this is employed as a weapon, is discussed.

7.3.1. Invisibility in the Making

After exploring the institutional and legal framework on immigrants' irregularity in Greece in Chapter 4, it was shown that their official 'invisibility' is reflected in public space where it acquires physical manifestation, since urban public space becomes the locus of several activities, as illustrated in detail in Chapter 6. A question that arises then is how the area of Omonoia became central to the lives of irregular immigrants. I will begin this exploration by presenting how Athens and especially Omonoia become a focal point in the lives of irregular immigrants and then I will move on to their everyday activities. It must be noted that the irregular condition of immigrants commences by their entry into Greece and the parallel reality that they experience starts as soon as they set foot in the country.

7.3.1.i. The journey

One of the common elements pointed out by all interviewees is that the collection of information concerning Greece does not necessarily start before they leave their country. On the contrary, they know before they start their journey that the best, most valuable and recent information about where to go and how to navigate in the new country will be collected along the way. According to Asef: “After collecting the money and deciding to leave my hometown, I found the trafficker that was most successful in bringing other people that I know to Europe. Friends who have made it told me that it’s best to ask about things once I am close to the borders. The trafficker actually informed us about many of the details about life in Athens. As for entering Greece, all we needed to know was how to get to Athens from the point that we entered Greece. The trafficker, as my friends had already told me, advised all of us [the people travelling together] to ask for more information when in the country. [...] It is generally known that to get the most useful and more recent information on many things it’s best to already be in the country. For example, because the conditions for asylum granting change so rapidly, there is no way to have the latest news while walking the mountains”.

On the same matter Ehsan said:

“I knew that the first thing that I had to do was to find out how to get to Athens. But because this kind of travelling is precarious and the route is changing depending on the day, I would find that out once in Greece and not earlier. [...] The trafficker that accompanied us on the boat, gave to each one of us a piece of paper containing only some information about where we are coming from in order to ask for asylum in case we got

arrested while in the sea. He also told us that the thing to ask once in Greece was to find the way to Athens and Omonoia Square because he knew that many of our co-ethnics live there.”

Ali had a similar experience:

“There is no point in collecting information beforehand. Things change all the time. We were not even sure how long it would take until we get to Greece [...]. We had to wait for several days and on several occasions for many things. For one thing, after walking for 5 days, we had to change trafficker and wait for the bus to arrive. The people that I met in that stop informed me about stuff that I needed to know about Greece, like the distance from Thessaloniki to Athens and the ways that I could get there. Then we had to wait for weeks for the bus to cross the border and get to Greece. You can understand that during that time, many things change. Even the location of where I could find my co-ethnics. During the journey I was collecting all sorts of information and the most important and valid ones were while coming closer to the border”.

Immigrants especially those coming from poor and deprived areas with minimum educational background, lack any knowledge on what is ahead of them. Sometimes, they do not even know which country they are in. They just know that this [Greece] is Europe. By listening to the stories from some of my interviewees, especially the less educated ones, the impression was that they had considered Europe to be something like a wonderland the size of a village. A striking example is the case of Nazari, who came to Greece with her 4 children. She was not able to tell me their exact route from Afghanistan because she could

not name the countries that they passed through. She was not aware of being in Greece until they got to Athens.

“I didn’t know where we were going. I was just following the trafficker and looking out for my kids. I only wanted to leave Afghanistan and go to Europe.[...] I’m not sure what is the place that they left us. [...] We were in a boat for some time but I don’t think it was for long. [...] It was a forest is all I know”

From her description I can only assume that they spent many days just wandering in the forests of Northern Greece until the police arrested them. After being released (with deportation papers in their hands that they were not able to read and understand) they were pointed by the police to the train station to go to Athens. Of course, Nazari, had no idea of where or what Athens was exactly until she went on the train. There she

“heard someone speaking Farsi on the phone. So, I asked him if he could tell me any information about the place that we were heading. The man told me where to go when in Athens. That’s how I found out that the place was called Athens. He told me where to go and what to do to find a place to stay for the night”.

Another example, on how information is collected is the case of Ismaili. He told me that because he did not know what to do once in Greece, he was arrested on three occasions in Thessaloniki as an illegal immigrant without any identification:

“I didn’t know what to do and I didn’t know where I was exactly. The first time that they [the police] let me go, I realized that I had no way to find a

place to stay or food to eat, so I decided to go back. I just used a different name. That was my only way of finding shelter for the night and on the plus side they have to give me food to eat”.

And this is exactly what happened twice more with him declaring a different name each time. By the third time he did the same thing in order to get shelter and food, a co-ethnic of his that was in jail, told him to go to Athens and specifically near Larissis Station where he would be able to find other Iranians to help him navigate, and this is what he did:

“The third time I was arrested under a false name, the police officers recognized me and so they just gave me food and sent me away. One [police officer] gave me some money as I was leaving the police station. As the guy who I met in jail told me, I took the train to Athens and when I got there, I didn’t find anyone. However, I thought that the train station is a good place to stay overnight, so yes, you could say that I was homeless for a few days. Then one day I heard two men speaking Farsi and so I asked them a few things about Athens. They directed me to Omonoia Square where a church was giving food and clothes to homeless people. [...]. There, I met more people coming from Iran and they told me to go to GCR [Greek Council for Refugees] if I wanted to apply for asylum. These people offered me to stay with them in a place that they were renting in Omonoia”.

This example highlights several issues related to the way that immigrants, and especially newcomers, are using irregularity and therefore invisibility in their everyday life as a means of survival. Firstly, the way to acquire information on

how to proceed and start a life in Greece is through unofficial networks that sometimes, as in the case of Nazari, are based on ethnicity and, other times, as in the case of Ismaili, are based on circumstances, such as other imprisoned immigrants. All the interviewees presented similar stories to those above. Another example is the case of Nuria. In her storytelling, the coincidental and the co-ethnic elements are combined:

“Our guide left us some yards from the shore of a Greek island, where we [herself, her husband and their children] were arrested. We spent more than 15 days in something like a camp and then they gave us a paper that, later on, we found out was a directive for us to leave Greece within 30 days. While we were there, we collected information from other immigrants on where to go when we got to Athens, that the police would give us boat tickets to get to Piraeus [the main port of Attica, in Athens and the central port of Greece] in order to leave Greece from there but also they told us where to go and find a house to rent without having any papers and how to make a living by selling stuff.”

This family had enough money on them to sustain themselves for quite some time or in their words: “until finding a way to get out of Greece and pay for our ‘tickets’”. According to their descriptions, the way to gather specific and current information was through the networks of people who were kept with them, no matter the ethnicity. Interestingly, before leaving their country they were informed by the human trafficker that in Greece they might face imprisonment if arrested but that this, the prison, would be a place to collect the most recent and valuable information on how to move in the country. Of course, there are more extreme examples that highlight the irregularity and the invisibility of the

immigrant populations, since there are plenty of people who come to Greece and Athens illegally and want to stay like that. In the above examples, there is one issue that is connected to the irregular situation of the immigrants, but also points to why there is a vast concentration of irregular immigrants in the city of Athens and that is the issue of deportation and the role of the authorities.

7.3.1.ii. Deportation, the role of authorities and Athens

The turning point for the newcomers is the moment that they are released by the police with papers of deportation in their hands. The subject of deportation is a very complicated one. What is important to emphasize here is that there is no structure to facilitate newcomers who want to apply for legalization, but there is also no way to ensure that immigrants arrested are deported back to their countries. What usually happens is that immigrants are released by the authorities with papers that direct them to leave the country within 30 days. However, since the papers are in Greek, most of the immigrants have no way of understanding them, since they do not speak Greek and there are no official translators in police departments. In most cases, the process takes place in Greek and only in a small number of camps and/or police departments are the immigrants able to get assistance. And if that they do understand, they can choose to ignore it.

According to the interviewees, what they do understand is that they are directed to the city of Athens. As Nazari stated:

“I didn’t understand what was happening. They [the police] took us to a bus stop and paid for our tickets to go to Athens.[...] I found out what these papers were when I had to deal with my son being arrested. I needed help then and the people working at GCR told me that these were deportation papers.[...] That was at least 3 months after settling in Athens”.

In a similar but frustrated tone, Susan said:

“I do not understand what Greece is expecting from us. I don’t understand

why my family and myself are considered illegal! For all I know, we were welcome in this country!”

Asking her what she meant by being welcome, she explained:

“From the camp, when they let us go, the police gave us tickets to come to Athens. The police put us in a boat to reach Piraeus. If that is not a welcome, then what is?”

Talking to her, it became clear that they had never read the deportation papers and according to her, it was because: (a) the deportation was in Greek, and (b) getting tickets for free to go to Athens was in their mind an automatic acceptance of them in the country. Immigrants arrested on islands or close to the northern borders of Greece are given by the authorities tickets to go to Athens, either by boat or by bus. The reason is that Athens is the central node of Greece to move within the country and/or to other countries. For example, the main airport to/from Greece, the one with the greater number of international connections and flights, is ‘E. Venizelos’ in Athens. It is also the only airport in Athens. The provision of tickets for immigrants to go to Athens is standard policy by the Greek State. However, since no authorities accompany or receive the immigrants when in Athens, there is no way to ensure that they will leave the country. Also, the practice of being sent to Athens unaccompanied is equated by them as being free. This is also because the majority of immigrants that enter Greece illegally have no identification on them so it is impossible for them to travel legally, although most of them do not want to, nor have the money to do so. In most cases, if they were able to travel internationally, they would never have come through Greece in order to reach other EU countries. So, it is obvious, to the

authorities as well, that most of these people will not leave Greece to return to their countries once they have moved to Athens.

Because all these are known to the authorities, many police officers, recognizing the need of these people to sustain themselves somehow, advise them to go to Omonoia Square once in Athens. This is due to the known character of Omonoia as the entry point and the central node of the city for migrants. Also, there is the widespread knowledge that in Omonoia there is a concentration of immigrant networks, and in the absence of official provision of services, they send the immigrants to the place where they can find a solution to their immediate needs.

The case of Asef is characteristic:

“The police officer who took me to the bus station gave me a small paper where he had written in Greek Omonoia. As I was getting to the bus, he said that once in Athens, I should show the paper to people so they could direct me to Omonoia and that from there I could find my way”.

This statement surprised me and originally I thought that it was out of the goodness of the policeman’s heart, since no one of the police officers that I had talked to mentioned anything similar. However, 15 out of the 35 people that I interviewed claimed the same thing. I can only assume that because there is no official system to take care of newcomers either in terms of providing them services or to move them out of Greece, police officers fill the gap by giving directions to immigrants. These directions point to Athens and specifically Omonoia Square. At this point immigrants enter into their invisible condition, since there is no account of their whereabouts and the conduct of their lives by the authorities. It is at that point that they can choose to apply for legalization

papers or not. And it is at this point that their reality in Athens is conditioned by their invisible and irregular status.

7.3.2. Invisibility Reversed and Used: the Everyday Practice

Although institutional invisibility, given its restraining and oppressive nature, is generally thought of as a negative condition, it can be used as a means of survival by socially unwanted groups (Simone 2004, Scott 1985). The 'outcasts' are using their invisibility to hide from the system in order not to leave Greece but also to make ends meet. To do so, socially unwanted groups are operating in underground, illegal networks and activities that could provide them a living. Scott (1985) names this reversed use of invisibility 'weapons of the weak' because the anonymity and the lack of identity, secure these groups, the weak ones, from the 'eyes' of the state. Having as a point of departure Weber's conceptualization of power, there is always the possibility of emerging power struggles between the involved actors/groups. Therefore, to understand the position of outcast groups/irregular immigrants in the urban reality, it is important to explore their ways of using power. Given their marginal position in Greek society and the lack of services and/or facilities for their needs, it is reasonable to expect that the outcast groups/irregular immigrants will try to react. Reaction does not necessarily mean violent acts. It could also mean attempting to control the situation for their own benefit, as Scott (1985) has shown referring to people in disadvantaged positions. Reversing the condition for one's own benefit can be understood as an instantiation of agency, since it shows the ability of a reflective person to act upon the given structural environment. Forced, institutional invisibility can be manipulated since being hidden from the State's eyes provides a kind of freedom to act on the margins. Even though aspects of underground economic activity might be deviant, they are still a means for people to make a living (Simone 2004).

Turning the focus specifically to immigrants, the issue of community formation as an empowering mechanism arises. Even though ethnic networks were the focus of the previous chapter, a reminder of the arguments is useful here, since it is through ethnic networks that irregular immigrants can sustain themselves in the Greek reality. As Ferhat said:

“Networking with co-ethnics is important for many things. For example, a friend of mine was brought to the Greek border by his trafficker with the plan for him to get arrested. As soon as this happened and a lawyer was provided (by the trafficker) for him to get released after applying for asylum, my friend had to pay the trafficker and the lawyer. The only possible way to do that was through another acquaintance of ours, who has a bank account so the money could be legitimately transferred to the Greek lawyer.[...] No, that person was not a friend. He was the friend of a friend that we had met here [in Athens].”

A less extreme example was given by Hasan:

“I had some family, some cousins and an uncle in Athens before coming. I hadn’t seen them for many years but that wasn’t a problem. I knew that they would accept me and help me to find a job and give me a place to stay. [...] That’s how I got my first job as a barber. It was my uncle who let me work with him.”

The concept of ethnic enclaves is useful to shed light on the closed, ethnic based networks that are usually created when there is a mass presence of immigrants in an area. It emphasizes how immigrants are located in a society and given the factor of geographical proximity, leads to a better understanding of the relation

between 'outcast' groups and urban space. The theory of ethnic enclaves captures the way that immigrants when moving to another country create associations based on ethnic origin and geographic proximity (Portes 1986). As Hasan said:

"I met a lot of people just by going around the neighbourhood [Omonia Square]. There are many places here, especially shops that you can just go in and hang out. [...] Shops that have a TV playing programmes from back home attract many people. That way you get to meet them. Also, that way you find out many useful things. [...] Now that I have my own barbershop, the TV is on every day. [...] It is helpful that in the area live many immigrants but that was also the reason why I opened my shops here".

According to Portes (1986), the goal is to cover the economic and social needs of the ethnic group(s). This results in the emergence of entrepreneurial activities (of multiple kinds) covering the needs of the ethnic group while providing a supporting mechanism as extended social networks. An important result of this type of organization is that the minority group(s) does not need the majority group to address its needs, as is the case in Omonia Square at the moment. The formation of ethnic communities is seen in the literature as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it is estimated that it creates ethnic segregation in the area where activities take place, relating to notions of social exclusion (Portes 1986, Yiftachel and Yacobi 2003). On the other hand, it is a coping mechanism that has been suggested to help minorities in their most disadvantaged circumstances (Peach 1996). Specifically, Peach (1996) has proposed that ethnic enclaves create what he calls "good segregation" because they facilitate the newcomers to the new country. There were plenty of examples of this attitude in the interviews and some have already been mentioned. As Ali stated:

“It has been really good to stay in Omonoia, even if homeless. The access to other immigrants is easy and, even though there is hostility sometimes, because some people are dangerous, there is the belief that we should help out each other. In my case, after some time that I was in Athens, I started having terrible toothaches. It reached the point that my teeth were falling, As the pain progressed, I started not seeing clearly. And then I started losing my mind. I was in extreme pain and I was thinking that I am going to die. I couldn't move and I couldn't do anything. Actually, I wanted to die. One day, another homeless immigrant that I had seen before, brought me water and food - of course I couldn't eat. I told him about the pains in Farsi and he started coming everyday telling me that I should do something but I couldn't. One day he brought a doctor with him. The doctor was from the Doctors without Frontiers and I was taken to their clinic and diagnosed with diabetes. If it wasn't for that person, I would be dead by now”.

Aside from the points of disagreement, the reason to examine theories on ethnic enclaves and community formation is their focus on the creation of networks based on ethnicity. As discussed in the previous chapter, the formation of ethnic communities can be seen as a form of power when viewing the situation through Arendt's (1958) definition that power is “something that holds people together in their pursuit of their common, agreed ends”. Although a specific common goal other than survival and the preservation of ethnic identity through networks might not be clear, when exploring irregular immigrants and their communities, survival as a goal is more than enough to keep the group together.

One interesting element in the case of irregular immigrants is that the ethnic

element seems to have a functional use, especially at the beginning of their stay in Greece and in Athens. As illustrated in the examples used in the previous parts and highlighted in the next two sections, the functionality of a common language is what brings immigrants of the same ethnicity together. Six out of the eight households that were the main subjects of my research did not know anyone in Athens and/or in Greece when they first entered the country. As Asef stated:

“The only thing I knew when coming to Athens was that around Omonoia and Victoria Square were many other immigrants. If I have to be honest, I have to admit that I had no plan. My plan was to rely on random people. That was the information that I had and that was what I did. Going to an area and asking around. [...] Of course, speaking the same language was the prerequisite. Most of the people that I met during my first days in Athens, I never saw again. I didn’t even ask for their names. I was just asking about what I needed and that was it.”

All of them accidentally met someone who was speaking their own language and were directed on how to find a house and secure their basic needs for their first days in Athens. They were informed at some point in the journey that in the area of Omonoia they could find people of their own ethnicity. One could argue that this is the power of the ethnic network, that co-ethnics do not have to know each other in order to be connected. However, in the case of most of the interviewees, they did not socialize with their co-ethnics after their first days in Athens and according to their words it was a purely functional relationship with the people that they had met. Still, through these situational networks and through the advice of random co-ethnics, the irregular immigrants that I have talked to managed to survive in Athens.

To explore the ways that the immigrant populations use irregularity and invisibility in everyday life, two main aspects were examined, finding shelter and/or a house and earning an income. These have been selected because they are the most basic needs that one cannot survive without and serve as the foundations to create a life in a new country. Also, since there is no provision and no services offered by the Greek State to newcomer immigrants, whatever their official/legal status, it is only rational that they will use other means to secure their survival. Under the circumstances, it also becomes clear that the means used are on the borders of illegality.

7.3.2.i. Finding shelter

One of the ways that immigrants and mostly newcomers in the city of Athens secure shelter is by choosing a place to sleep on the streets. As Ali told me:

“The most important thing is to be safe. Safe from the weather conditions but also safe from others. Sometimes it is much safer to sleep outside being very visible because that will discourage people who would like to harm you. Safety and security are a different story when you are on the streets. Truth be told, if you have done it for many years in different countries, like I have, you learn to adapt very quickly in new conditions. In Athens, soon it became obvious to me that the safest bet for me was to find a spot to sleep in Omonoia. The reasons are simple: firstly, there are too many illegal immigrants here and many marginal people, like drug addicts and sellers. Those people won't bother you if you don't bother them. Secondly, you might see a strong presence of the police but they stay only on specific spots. They don't move around. So, you can easily avoid them. Thirdly, during the night, in the smaller streets, there is no traffic, there are no people and that's good. Also, in Omonoia, there are many abandoned buildings, so it's easy to find a safe spot.”

Ali claimed that he was informed about the situation in Omonoia on his first days in Greece. The human trafficker that was his guide when entering Greece told him that in Omonoia there is a strong presence of irregular immigrants. Interestingly enough, the choice of the area and/or the spot is connected to the existence of irregular populations in an area. Similarly, in the case of Ismaili, he was told by one of his co-prisoners that the best place to go when in Athens, even

as a homeless person, is Omonoia because of the presence of other co-ethnics (Iranians). And so after spending some nights as homeless in the area of Larissis station, waiting to find out what to do next, Ismaili moved to Omonoia, after listening to someone speaking his language and consequently meeting him.

The examples highlight that the lives of irregular immigrants in Athens are on the margins of mainstream society. Almost all of my interviewees spent at least some days living on the streets as newcomers. Nazari said:

“Living on a bench with small children is not easy. For the first days in Athens the only option that we had was to live outside, on the street. There was a bench so my kids could sleep there. Not all of them but the youngest ones. It was horrifying. The only thing that I could give them to eat for three days was a pack of 5 biscuits. I had nothing else. For three days and three nights the bench was all we had. And I couldn’t leave them alone to go around to search for something better”.

Similarly, Ehsan said:

“In the beginning there are no options. The only option is the streets. Either with someone that you have travelled with, if you are lucky, or alone. The only somewhat comforting thing is that you see other people doing the same and that, in a weird way, makes you feel safer. I did spend time living on the streets. My first week [in Athens].”

The only exception is the Kurdish family who had relatives living in Athens and stayed with them for their first days in the country. As the mother of the family said:

“They were really kind to us. Our relatives let us stay with them for some weeks. And I know that it wasn’t easy for them. We were three occupying half of their house. But they let us. Now that I have a big house I let people coming from Kurdistan to stay with us. As you can see my nephew is living here. [...] This is what you do. How could I let him stay on the streets? It’s dangerous and sad”.

The other way that irregular immigrants secure shelter is through a combination of the ‘right’ area and ethnic networks. The ‘right’ area depends on the specific ethnicity: ‘right’ is defined as the one that has the highest concentration of immigrants from a specific country. Omonoia Square is central to all ethnic communities. However, for specific needs, other squares play an important role. For example, for Afghan people, finding a fake passport, especially for children, Victoria Square used to be the place to go, as the research showed. For housing, other squares are more important depending on one’s ethnicity. For example, for Nazari, the place to go to find shelter was Attiki Square and not Omonoia, because of the presence of other Afghan people:

“That man on the bus told me that I should go to Attiki Square. He said that around there are many Afghan people and that in the evenings they hang out on the square to kill time.”

For Ismaili, being an Iranian, the place to go was Larissis Station and Omonoia Square. At Larissis Station:

“[...]it] would be easier for me to find someone speaking my language. That guy in prison said so and he was right.”

Ethnic networks are related to each square in Athens and serve different needs. In this situation, irregularity and invisibility play an important role, because it is through these that immigrants can meet their needs.

A prime example is the way that immigrants find and rent rooms and/or houses. Since there is no legal way for them to rent a house, they use intermediaries that have the legal documentation to rent a house and then they either sublet or share rooms. This process was confirmed by most of the interviewees, 30 out of 35 interviewees had utilized these methods at least once while living in Athens. As Ehsan said:

“After spending some time on the streets, I started looking around for a job to do. When I was offered a job in a shop that an older Greek man had and after I collected some money, I started asking around people speaking the same language with me, if they knew any place that I could rent. I found a room in a flat in Omonoia that two other guys were staying [...] I still don’t know exactly who had rent it. I can tell you that none of us living there were able to rent anything. We didn’t have any papers but one of my roommates was collecting the rent and was giving it to some person that I never met.”

Residing in empty, abandoned buildings is another way to make ends meet. An Athenian characteristic is the existence of neoclassical buildings that are completely abandoned. The reasons are complicated and date back to the mid 1970s. Up until the 1970s, the majority of houses in Athens were neoclassical buildings whose maintenance was expensive and difficult for the owners. In the mid 1970s a law was passed that allowed the tearing down of these, replacing

them with building blocks, 'polykatoikies', as discussed in chapter 5. The few neoclassical buildings that still exist have been abandoned by their owners and left to blight because by now, it is illegal to tear them down but too costly to renovate.

In many areas, abandoned neoclassical buildings that are in better condition are illegally occupied by irregular immigrants who have done some reconstructive works to them. In these, space is being 'let' to irregular immigrants. This is the easiest way for irregular immigrants to find shelter, since no contracts are required or used and most of the times it is only through ethnic networks that one can find a spot. Of course, the occupation of these houses is illegal but that does not stop people from occupying and renting them. This is another example of the way that invisible immigrants and their appropriation of space become visible. I have witnessed the change of an abandoned neoclassical building that was falling apart into an unofficial vibrant community house that was taken care of, with its roof reconstructed and repainted by irregular immigrants. One of the interviewees from the pilot phase explained to me that:

"I stayed in one of these houses for some time. You get the spot by someone who knows someone from your ethnic group. People who share these houses come from the same ethnic background. As for the obligation that one has, in some of these houses, you do have to pay something for every night you spend there and in some others you have to contribute to the daily costs, like going to the supermarket and share the everyday responsibilities, like cooking for everyone."

Another way to secure shelter is by renting a room in a flat. To sublet is illegal in

Greece, although it is common practice among immigrants. Because irregular immigrants do not have the legal documentation to rent a flat, the person who rents the house is either Greek or an immigrant with legal documentation. The Greek legal system allows individuals to sign contracts without intermediaries like agencies. Renting a flat and/or a house is a face-to-face agreement that has to be documented and submitted to the tax office by the owner and the tenant to prevent tax evasion. However, it is up to the individuals themselves to do so and to abide by the rules or not. The procedure of renting a house goes through the owner, he or she decides to whom the house will be let and with what conditions, like the amount of the rent and how many people are allowed to live there. For the owner of a flat and/or house it is enough to sign a contract with only one tenant and it is up to the tenant to keep the agreement or not. Cases where the tenant has moved out and others not on the contract are living there have been publicised, as well as where the owner knowingly allowed the tenant to sublet to many more people than is permitted.

So, there are cases where the owners allow these marginal and deviant agreements, in order to earn more money, and other cases when they ignore the situation. In these conditions, networks of intermediaries operate without declaring the change of residents. All of the interviewees told me that at least their first housing option was as described above. Also, during the fieldwork it was pointed out to me that in several squares of central Athens, including Omonoia Square, on trees and/or benches there are pieces of paper, mostly in Farsi, that advertise rooms to let in flats in central Athens. Once my translator showed these papers to me, I realized that these exist in several places. During the interviews, I asked the participants and all of them had knowledge of these

advertisements and half of them had used these to find shelter at least once. As Nazari claimed:

“That’s how I found the place that we are living now. I saw the advertisement on a bench on Attiki Square. I called the number that was on the paper and I talked to a man. I met him, I saw the flat and here we are now. [...] I give the rent to him. He comes every last week of the month to take the money”.

Similarly, one of the interviewees from the pilot phase said:

“I had to leave the flat that I was staying because there were too many people living in it. We were more than ten men living in a two room flat. It was unhygienic and I didn’t like it. I was making some money at the time, so when I saw one of these advertisements on a tree, I called the number. There were two more men occupying the flat that had a separate room, so I moved there instantly”.

In Athens and Greece in general, there were no shelters for socially vulnerable people until late 2011. The options that a newcomer to Athens had were either to live on the streets as homeless, or to pay in some kind of illegal housing. After 2011, shelters for asylum seekers (in the process of getting the status of refugee) became available in the context of EU programmes without changing radically the first stages that a newcomer has to go through. Unfortunately, the requirement for someone to get a place in these shelters is to be registered with a NGO, apply for asylum, and then there is a matching process between the NGOs and the ministry for the places to be assigned. For the duration of this process, there are no services offered. Also, the number of shelters is much lower than the

actual number of immigrants, considering that it is estimated that hundreds were coming in the country every day (Frontex 2010) at the time of the research.

According to my interviewees the most common way of finding a temporary room and/or house is through co-ethnic networks without prior relationships and/or connections, since networking is based on ethnicity due to practical reasons, mainly common language. These are based on accidental encounters or through knowledge collected during travel to Greece on the location of ethnic communities. As Nazari described, highlighting a number of the above observations:

“We took the train from Thessaloniki to Athens. Inside the train I heard someone talking Farsi and therefore I asked him where I could go once we got to Athens. He told me that there is a square, Attiki square, where I can find more Afghanis and that they would help me out to find a room for the night, so as my children not to have to spend the night in the streets. [...] Once I got out of the station, the same person directed a cab driver to take me to Attiki square and there I found people hanging out and so I asked whether there is a room to rent for the night. For the first three nights there was no offer. [...] After some days, coinciding with the Golden Dawn hits on immigrant communities, several people offered to rent me a room in their house and so I chose the one with the lowest price. I paid 50 euro for a room per night for me and my three kids”.

Through these examples, the ways that invisibility and irregularity are used but also reinforced becomes apparent. The other aspect of the everyday lives of irregular immigrants to be discussed here is the way they make a living under

these circumstances.

7.3.2.ii. Making a living

Illegal immigrants use their invisibility to hide from the system. Given the fact that they are not recognized and lack any official status, the only means of survival available to them is to operate in underground networks and activities that can provide them a living (Simone 2004). Therefore, they take advantage of their disadvantaged situation to sustain themselves in the area and in the country. The ways that irregular immigrants make a living are various. They range from illegality related to human and drug trafficking to borderline legal, handyman jobs. The extent of illegal activities depends on one's own ethics but also on the level of need. Ethnic networks can be of help mostly in advising co-ethnics and sharing information.

One of the most widespread trends in the communities of irregular immigrants in Athens at the time of my fieldwork was the collection of metallic and glass items from the trash in order to sell them in unofficial yards. As Ismaili told me, his co-ethnics when in prison and the Iranians that he met in Athens informed him of that:

“And to find the money, they told me that I could collect whatever contains metals and/or glass from the garbage and sell it. For that other Iranians directed me as to where to find the best deals. I was living like that for quite some months before going to GCR to apply for asylum. In the beginning, the very first day I started, I followed another guy that I saw collecting metallic objects and glasses and he led me to a Pakistani shop in Acharnon Street [central Athens, close to Omonoia Square] where I sold the glasses for 10 cents per unit. After that I started noticing that others that were doing the

same 'job' were just going in shops and were asking if they wanted the glasses. So, randomly I started going in shops myself asking if they want to buy any of these things. Then I found out that I could sell them to yards on the outskirts of Athens for better prices as long as I could provide bigger quantities. Through that system I was making 40 euro per week and considering the fact that I was provided food by a church near Omonoia, I could actually find a place to stay and then buy my own stuff!"

Most of the men I talked to have done this for at least some days during their stay in Athens. Women also sell things they find in the trash but there is another system, in the words of Nazari:

"While I was walking around in the areas around Omonoia and Attiki Square I realized that in the outskirts of markets people were selling random stuff, like clothes, children's toys etc. In the beginning I was searching for similar things in the trash and then I was selling them for some cents each. After a couple of days, when I got informed by the family that I was renting my room from, that there are churches and organizations that give clothes, I started going in these and I was selling the things that I was getting."

In all my interviews, examples like these have been used regularly to find some money to get through the day. Of course, there are more elaborate ways used to make money out of selling things without a license. The above-mentioned examples are single cases of people who sell some things randomly. One of the major issues in Athens for the past few years has been the illegal promotion of goods like CDs, handbags (fake handbags that imitate designer ones) and

sunglasses in the streets. None of my interviewees had actively been part of a network like that, but one had friends that I met and described the situation to me. Some ethnic communities, for example the Nigerians, import large quantities of fake products to be sold in Greece. There are illegal networks that import goods and sometimes people, operating mostly in Athens. Then, through their community they recruit newcomers to sell these goods on the pavements in front of shops in order to attract the customers that cannot afford to buy the original products. Using buildings illegally as warehouses to store the goods takes place in areas like Omonoia, where there are plenty of abandoned buildings that have no security. The drug related and human trafficking networks operate in similar ways and in many cases they are the same. It is interesting that the similarity in the functions of drug related, human trafficking and goods smuggling networks partly lies in the absence of control by the Greek State which 'tolerates' their operation. As Nuria told me:

“There is a system of recruiting that is area-based. For example, an immigrant is sleeping on a bench on the Square. The drug lord will spot the immigrant. And he will be checking to see for how many days this person will be based in the Square. If it is for more than three consecutive days, it is obvious that he is not meeting his basic needs. It is obvious that he will want food, shelter and a place to clean up. So, the first day, the drug lord will send someone to give him food. If the person accepts it, and he will because he will be in need, the next day the some guy as the previous day will bring him food and clothes. By now, the person is in debt to the unknown guy who is giving him food and clothing. The third day, the food will be accompanied by the chance to use a bathroom and to take a shower.

As soon as the person accepts that too, it will be asked of him to push drugs. Because he knows by now that he is in debt, he will do so. After the first shift he will also be given money. Then he will be informed that from that moment on he is forever in debt to the drug lord. He will also be informed that he, himself doesn't know who the drug lord is, that he doesn't know the drug lord's face but that the drug lord knows him. And then it never ends. You get a comfortable life because you do make money. But you can't get out of it".

Situations like that are common among the irregular immigrants' communities. The 'goods' and the 'speciality' vary depending on the ethnicity. At least four of the interviewees, and I must note here that it was only the male ones, shared similar stories that were connected either with drugs or human trafficking.

Another trend that was commonly used among irregular immigrants during the time of the fieldwork was to sell and buy fake passports. The most common use was to buy a fake passport for one of the children in the family and with the illegal document to send the child away to another EU country. When the child has located to another EU country, he/she would apply for asylum with his/her real identity, losing the fake papers, because firstly, it is easier and faster for a minor to be granted asylum and secondly, because then the family can apply for reunification with the child, which is one of the easiest possible ways to become legal. Then the rest of the family would apply for asylum in Greece and next for reunification with the child that has been granted asylum in the other EU country. Two of the families that I interviewed used this practice to get out of Greece and during my fieldwork they were awaiting the results. This tactic to use Greece as a transit country is widely used by immigrants because the absence of control is

well known in human trafficking networks (as has been mentioned to me by various sources in interviews: by a journalist that was working closely with the border authorities on a report on trafficking, by authorities that I have talked to and by an interviewee that participated in human trafficking for some of his time in Greece).

Even the Kurdish family with half of its members granted asylum, and running a Kurdish restaurant a block away from Omonoia Square, had been involved in human trafficking accidentally and only realized it much later:

“A very distant relative called me one day, he is in Kurdistan, and asked me if I had any Greek friend that was a lawyer and/or had a bank account in a Greek bank that he could use to send money to the lawyer in order to help his brother who had been arrested in the borders of Greece and Bulgaria. I helped him by giving him my bank details. Much later I found out that the human traffickers had left his brother in the borders to be arrested, had then used a Greek lawyer to get him out of jail having applied for asylum under fake personal details. The person was kept hostage in a room in Omonoia Square for days while the traffickers were waiting to receive the money from the bank account through the lawyer. Eventually, he was released but he had to pay more than 1,500 euro to get his real passport back and he had to pay for every meal that he had in dollars. [...] Since then I have been approached again to do the intermediate but after I found out what exactly was happening I declined”.

It becomes clear from these examples that there is a cycle between irregularity and the ways it is used: the condition of irregularity does not allow immigrant

populations to get legal jobs, pushing them to the margins and being susceptible to involvement in illegal activities of any kind. The illegality of the activities reinforces their irregularity since it becomes more and more difficult to get out of situations like these.

7.4. Conclusion

The question of the appropriation of urban public space environments by irregular immigrants brings forth the need to understand a web of interrelated phenomena. These include migration and the role of the state that, in the case of Athens, is best understood through the term institutional invisibility, the invisibility and irregularity as a form of power used by immigrant groups to survive and the relationship of these to urban public space. Omonoia Square is the 'stage' where the actions of irregular immigrants take place. Simultaneously, the 'stage' is affected and changed by these actions. In the case of Omonoia Square, it is the irregularity and invisibility of the immigrant groups that prevails in changing the urban environment.

This chapter unravels the everyday activities of immigrants in central Athens under conditions of irregularity and invisibility. Through their everyday lives and the ways that irregular immigrants understand and make use of their institutionally invisible position as a form of power in attempting to survive, the appropriation of urban public space has been explored. Through the fieldwork, examples of the ways that lives are shaped and sustained in a parallel, underground Athenian reality, helps in understanding the appropriation of urban public space. When viewing the situation in Omonoia Square, the reflection of society in urban space acquires a specific meaning. Irregularity and marginality as constituent elements of the invisible position of immigrant groups become the main forces in shaping the Square and the area around it. It is the existence and the visibility of the institutionally invisible that bring to light the contestation and the appropriation of urban public space. The visibility of the irregular immigrants' actions and the impact that they have on Omonoia Square is inextricably linked

to both the immigrants' lives and the appropriation of urban public space. It is through immigrants' everyday lives that irregularity and invisibility take form as a shaping mechanism of the environment, and a visible example of that is the ethnicization of the area of Omonoia Square. Researching and understanding the means that irregular immigrants use to create their lives, by substituting the dysfunctional elements of Greek infrastructure, provides an insight into the actual use of urban public space.

Chapter 8

Belonging and domesticity

8.1. Introduction:

Focusing on the relationship between the urban environment and irregular immigrants, the previous chapters have presented detailed accounts of their everyday reality following the theoretical realms of transnationality and cultural geography. To understand better the relationship between irregular immigrants and the city, an exploration of their embeddedness is attempted here, given the relational nature of space where “one can think of homes, cities and regions as socially (re)produced in relation to the advent of different rounds of modernity and capitalism” (Yeung 2005: 42). Theorizing the city through the prism of relational geography, allows its understanding as “a spatial formation and a social entity” (Amin 2007: 102) where a multiplicity of elements and forces intersect and interact. In that context, cities according to Amin (2004: 34) can be conceptualized as:

“nodes that gather flow and juxtapose diversity, as places of overlapping – but not necessarily connected relational networks, as perforated entities with connections that stretch far back in time and space, and resulting from all of this, as spatial formation of continuously changing composition, character and reach.”

Within this framework the inhabitant has a central role as part of the network between human and non-human elements and as “an agent whose discursive consciousness and reflexivity can arguably shape the structures that both enable

and constrain their activities” (Amin 2004: 44, Latour 2005). It is then the actor’s everyday activities that come to the front in understanding space. One of the parameters of everyday activities is the home as a locale for the actor’s negotiation of daily life (Giddens 1984).

Keeping the focus on the individual the aim of this chapter is to consider notions of belonging and homemaking as a way to understand: (a) the embeddedness of irregular immigrants’ lives in Athens, (b) the significance that they ascribe to creating a life in this city, and (c) the ways that they understand, appropriate and use space. In the previous chapter it was shown that the use of public space provides the means for sustaining immigrants and stages their connections to networks that can help them out. In this chapter private space is examined in relation to immigrants’ diverse notions of creating a life and a home in the host country, using interviews and participant observation, mainly with immigrants living around Omonoia Square. The creation of a home is the basis of rooting in a new place and, as such, is a focus here.

The chapter is comprised of two parts. The first is irregular immigrants’ perception of belonging, the ways they understand their lives in relation to the host country and the meaning that they attribute to the notion of belonging in practical terms. The second section focuses on the concept of domesticity and the conceptualization of *spiti* (house/home) as the physical barrier between the public and the private, but also the locus of emotional and metaphorical security and belonging. Domesticity, and its dual elements of house and home, is explored as meaning and through the physical manifestations of materiality in the immigrants’ attempts to create a home in the city of Athens. Following the research finding that irregular immigrants were reluctant to domesticate and to

invest physically and emotionally in creating a home, their conceptualization of 'home' is explored, its relationship to space and its reflection on the urban web and environment.

8.2 The concept of belonging

When exploring the relationship between irregular immigrants and urban public space, one of the elements for further investigation is their notion of belonging, since it is considered a precondition of establishing a life, creating associations and ultimately being part of a city and therefore an integral part of a society. In migration studies and the theoretical framework of transnationality theories, the negotiation of immigrant identity relates to their lives intersecting with the existing society (Portes 1986, Yiftachel and Yacobi 2003, Peach 1996, Mitchell 2003, Smith 2005, Conradson and Latham 2005, Kuah-Paarce and Hu-Dehart 2006, Hannerz 1996, Vertovec 1999, Faist 1994, Tissot 2008). The notion of belonging, even though familiar, is slippery and difficult to pin down, since it is connected to emotion. Still, it is significant as far as it is the basis and the contextualization of everyday life. As Savage et al. (2005: 12) explain

“Belonging should be seen neither in existential terms (as primordial attachment to some kind of face-to-face community), nor as discursively constructed but as socially constructed, embedded process in which people reflexively judge the suitability of a given site as appropriate given their social trajectory and their position in other fields.”

For Savage et al. (2005), belonging is related to residential place and local belonging, since these elements make people feel at ease. As such, the concept of belonging becomes of interest in the investigation of the relationship between irregular immigrants' habitation of the urban environment and the city itself.

The use of space is related to the way it feels to be an integral part of it or not, given that users mould space through their perceptions and actions, revealed in

their everyday activities. In seeking to theorize belonging, I follow bell hooks' (2009) line of thought as presented in the book 'Belonging: a culture of place' where she constructs the notion of belonging comprised of place, the physical space, association, emotional ties and culture. Hooks' articulation of the elements that comprise belonging and its all-encompassing nature comes close to theories on transnationality where the similar elements, such as the relation between one's cultural identity and place(s) as well as the role of associations and ties, emotional and material, are investigated as composing the in-between position of immigrants. In the context of transnationality, the sum of these components as simultaneously existing in at least two different places creates the strain that immigrants experience in their everyday life in the host country. At the same time, the dislocation across physical borders and the manifestation of the immigrants' everyday physical presence in another geographical location vested in different cultural values, create the phenomenon of transnationality and the tensions in immigrant identity. In theories of transnationality, the immigrants' establishment in the host country is taken for granted as the trigger of their in-betweenness and strain.

Exploring hooks' theorization, in terms of transnationality, each of the elements that comprise belonging creates a tension since their existence takes more than one shape. More precisely, immigrant populations have to view their existence in at least two geographically disperse places, the country of origin and the host country. They have to comply to a new physical space whereas their sense of belonging might be linking them to a different one, i.e. the tension between identifying the emotion of belonging with the concept of feeling *at home*. They have to create new associations that are spatially fixed in their new environment

and to maintain emotional ties that are geographically dispersed. When it comes to feelings of belonging boundaries may become irrelevant, as Blunt and Dowling (2006: 29) mention: “feelings of belonging and relations with others could be connected to a neighbourhood, a nation stretched across transnational space, or located on a park bench”. Savage et al. (2005: 206) attempt to mediate this tension by breaking down the notion of belonging:

“Elective belonging involves a clear differentiation between personal and situational networks. This is in keeping with the twin localizing and abstracting processes of elective belonging. Sociability is structured along an axis, which distinguishes abstract from daily, situational contact. ‘Best friendship’ can be seen as an abstract social relationship that takes people out of the lived routines of daily life, and which links them to spatially dispersed others.”

So, on the one hand there is elective belonging that is related to the local, to the spatial fixity of one’s daily conducts where situational networks come into play and on the other hand, without being mutually exclusive, there is the notion of emotional bonds and personal networks (if we replace ‘best friendship’ with more general feelings). In the case of immigrants and their in-betweenness as highlighted in theories of transnationality, the multiplicity of levels is even more prominent.

To understand the irregular immigrants’ position within the city and further explore their influence in the urban environment and their experienced in-betweenness, the focus here is on their conceptualization of belonging and its physical manifestations. To do so, the notions of domesticity and homemaking

are explored, as the main pillars and foundations of belonging, since belonging is equivalent with 'feeling at home' (Savage et al. 2005: 12).

Home has a dual character since it "is both a place/physical location and a set of feelings [...] a material dwelling and it is also an affective space, shaped by emotions and feelings of belonging" (Blunt and Dowling 2006: 22). Home then is strongly connected to a place presupposing a geographical location since it is almost always associated with a house (Staeheli and Nagel 2006, Gilmartin 2008, Gilmartin and White 2008, hooks 2009). However, a house is not always a home and these concepts are not necessarily entwined as is further explored in the next section. Given that belonging and 'home' are concepts equated most of all with feelings and emotions, the imperative here is to give the stage to the interviewees in order to express themselves. The line of questioning was two-staged, the first was to find out their feelings concerning their current situation in Athens, in terms of both their invisibility and their experienced in-betweenness, and the second to gauge their own views and perceptions on the meaning of belonging.

8.2.1 Where do you belong?

When asked about their current situation, and being institutionally invisible irregular immigrants experiencing the in-betweenness attributed to migrant identity and its relevance to the concept of belonging, the interviewees commented on several issues. In the case of immigrants, the concept of belonging has, at least, two points of reference in terms of location; the first is the country of origin, their homeland, and the second is the host country, the place of current residence. Belonging for immigrants is a significant concept of their everyday lives, of belonging in the host country and being part of society, and belonging as a link to their home country, for example in terms of cultural heritage. As has been highlighted through theories on transnationality, these different levels create a strain in the immigrant identity that is best described as the condition of in-betweenness. The negotiation of being between at least two places and two cultures becomes more pronounced and strained when exploring irregular migration given the subliminal nature of the immigrants' existence. For example, not to be allowed to practice one's religion, as is the case in Greece, automatically promotes an exclusionary character of everyday life.

So, I wanted to find out firstly whether they feel that they belong in the host country, whether they believe that there is space in the Athenian reality for them to be part of, and the negotiations, internal and external, that this process involves. Secondly, I wanted to explore their feelings of belonging to their country of origin, their national identity and cultural heritage. As discussed in the next section, the third point was the exploration of the actual meaning of belonging, the interviewees definition of what belonging means as a way to understand better the previous two points, belonging in the host country and

belonging in relation to the country of origin. As one of my respondents, Asef, said:

“You can’t really talk about *belonging* here [Greece] I wouldn’t and couldn’t see myself as part of anything. I do have friends and social relations here but I can’t say that I *belong*. Most of the people that I have a relation to are from my work and even though I have some people that I consider to be closer to me, it’s not the same thing as it was back home [...] I am not sure whether I can belong anywhere in the same sense that I used to. In Greece, I have made friends, some are Greeks (from work mostly) and I do have some co-ethnic friends but I feel more transit and distant. I am in-between places and in-between the people that I am around even though my plan is to make my life in Athens. [...] When I was back home, with my family the concept of belonging had a very different sense to me. It used to be a sentiment more than anything else. I haven’t felt that way in a long time.” (Asef)

In Asef’s words there is clear distinction between what Savage et al. (2005) call associational and personal networks. In Asef’s life there are associational networks and sociability but without vested emotion. Similarly to Asef, most of the interviewees had difficulty in defining what belonging means to them and if and how it is relevant to their lives in Greece.

“To belong...No, I don’t think I can answer to you. I don’t belong. Not that I don’t belong *here*. I don’t belong anywhere anymore. The closest I came to belonging somewhere after leaving my home country was when I was in Germany and I had a stable job and a house to return to. [...] Again, the

feeling of belonging was not as natural as when I was back home with my family and friends. [...] Even the fluency of the language makes a difference. I do speak German fluently and I wouldn't say that I belonged there, but here, I can't even speak Greek. I'm not a part of anything here. I'm here until I'm not anymore". (Ali).

Ali's words reveal frustration and epitomize the concept of in-betweenness. His situation is pushed to another level, of not caring to belong anymore. The feelings of despair are coupled with the stripping of a major human element that is the need to be part of something bigger.

According to Ismaili, whose situation is unique because, as he said, he avoids most of his co-ethnics due to his sexuality that in his country of origin (Iran) is a crime punishable by death and in the mind of the majority of his co-ethnics it is attached to a severe stigma, the concept of belonging is abstract:

"I don't belong here and I don't really want to. To be more exact, in some sense, I do belong here more than I did in my country because here being gay is not a crime. Even though I have Greek friends and lovers, I don't have steady relationships with anyone, so I don't think I belong here. However, I don't belong in my home country as well. My family thinks of me as a dead man since they found out that I'm gay but as a sentiment and feeling, up until the day I left, my home is where I felt I belong. [...] I believe that I will find a place to belong away from all the Muslim people that see homosexuality as a crime. Here I am around fanatics as well so I don't want to be around my co-ethnics. I will leave Greece as soon as I can and I will find a place where I will have a life that I can say that I belong. I will have a

home and I will be around people that I will choose and not feel afraid”.

Through Ismaili's words the element of security and safety is also an element that constitutes belonging. Not being able to be free from constraints that are related to his personal, private life, is for him a reason not to feel at ease and therefore, to feel at home. His words echo the notion of home as private and a place where one is secure and able to express one's identity (Massey 1994: 157-174).

For interviewees who were in Athens with their immediate family, things were slightly different:

“I can't say that I belong somewhere. If I think more about it, I felt like I belong when I was back home with my whole family, my job and my home/house. After we left, I can't say that I have felt the same way and I don't expect to feel completely like that ever again. However, I am with my children and my husband and that gives me a sense of belonging. Not in the same way that it was in the past, back home, but having them is the closest that I can get to belonging somewhere. I would say that I belong with them, no matter where anymore” (Susan).

Susan's words have similarities to hooks' definition on belonging; for Susan, the constitutive element of belonging is being with her family. At the same time, she places the 'complete' sense of belonging in her home country, allowing for the spatial element to come to light. In a similar fashion, Nuria said to me that:

“No, I don't belong somewhere. But I have managed to get my children away from my husband and our home country and that is something. My

children are alive and with me, so my place is with them and that is the best we can have right now.”

Nuria, in a similar manner to Susan, highlights the importance of her family and, contrary to Susan and more alike Ismaili, connects the sentiment of belonging with safety. The difference between Ali and Ismaili to Nuria and Susan stems from the deep emotional bond that the female interviewees share with their children and, probably, the obligation that they share as parents to create a more stable environment for their children. Notions of belonging are connected both to personal relations, as is the case for Nuria and Susan, that relate the concept of home to the personal associations within it (Blunt and Dowling 2006, Massey 1994, Cieraad 1999). Interestingly enough though, both female interviewees began answering the question by saying that they do not belong, and only after that initial comment they turned the focus to their families.

The duration of stay in Greece may also affect the perception of belonging, as the following quotations show. Characteristic is the case of the Kurdish interviewees, who are at least partly established in the country and had better conditions upon their arrival. In Hasan's words:

“I have a good life here. I have my barber shop, members of my family, I have been in this country for many many years now and I have friends, mostly Kurdish men, but some Greeks as well. I do feel that I belong here. There are difficulties but I have a life here. I go out and I do see my friends and I do everything that a man my age does in Greece. [...] The only difference is that it's easy for me to leave. I don't want to right now but given the financial situation and the racism that is taking over the Greek

society, I might have to. If I do, it won't be as hard as when I left home. [...]
It is a different kind of belonging [in Greece as opposed to his home town]. It is as if there is a scale, I felt that I belonged there more than I do here but I do feel that I belong here too. Does that make sense to you?"

Ferhat, who has been in Athens since his teenage years said:

"Of course I feel like I belong in Greece. My mother is here and my cousins and we have our home/house here. It is easy for me to travel to Manchester to see my sister and don't forget that I studied here. [...] I have all kinds of friends, Greeks and immigrants. People that I met here and we were learning Greek together, my girlfriend is Greek. [...] I wouldn't say that I feel Greece to be my home but something really close to it. It is the place where I spend my teenage years and it is like a second home to me. [...] It's not easy to describe it really. I think my place is here at the moment as it has been for years now".

Even though Hasan expressed the feeling of belonging both to the host country and the country of origin, that exemplifies his in-betweenness, both Hasan and Ferhat gave positive answers in terms of belonging to Greece. This is not so strange given the specific conditions that apply for the Kurdish community; firstly, their introduction to Greece was a smooth one, thanks to the positive feelings that Greeks had for Kurdish immigrants (an imaginary solidarity against Turkish people is rooted in the collective consciousness that stems originally from the history of the country as presented and taught in schools) and the easier procedures that allowed a proportion of the Kurdish immigrants to get asylum.

Secondly, the tight Kurdish community, combined with the greater number of

years that they have been in Greece, provided a strong support mechanism and helped their 'assimilation'. Again, Hasan and Ferhat, in their answers expressed the notion of belonging in terms of social relations and networks. However, Ferhat' mother, had a different view:

"I'm not sure that I can talk about belonging somewhere. For sure, I'm good here. My children are fine and I have the restaurant and some family. I felt that I belong back home but that was a long time ago. For the circumstances it is ok. But I can't say that I belong in a country that is not giving me papers of permanent residency".

The difference in the feelings expressed by Ferhat's mother is complex. For one thing, she is much older than both Hasan and Ferhat. Her circumstances when coming to Greece were more difficult than Hasan's, she was a mother with a young child and upon arrival she had fewer connections than Hasan. Also, she had lived the majority of her life in her country of origin, whereas her son was practically raised in Athens. Additionally, she left her home country having made two difficult decisions; the first was to separate from her husband and the second to migrate. Another important difference is that she has not been granted asylum and resides in the country as irregular (for approximately 15 years).

For all interviewees the concept of belonging was difficult to pin down. It was more of a feeling that could not easily be put into words. Most of them made a distinction between the conceptualization of the feeling and the actual emotions, given that they had not given much thought to the matter before leaving their home country, which is where they felt they actually belonged. It was only after posing the question that the majority of the interviewees realized that their

home country – with their family, where they had grown up - was where they felt they belonged. The rationalization of the concept made those who have family conclude that they belong with their families. So, their definition of belonging became more personalised, focused primarily on their children, on the people around them, and less on their own feelings of security and ease.

Another element that became apparent through the interviews was the difference between those who speak the Greek language and those who do not. The interviewees who do speak Greek were more inclined to say that they feel that they belong in Athens since they can follow more easily the Greek norms and they can socialize. Interestingly enough, only a minority of the interviewees talked about their friends. To all of them the concept of belonging had to do with their living conditions and particular situations, such as having a job and a place to stay securing their families, rather than having a social circle. Most of the interviewees did not see themselves as belonging to their co-ethnic groups in Athens, nor presented an affiliation to the Athenian reality . The notion of in-betweenness in theories of transnationality becomes apparent, but it takes on a more complex dimension by the interviewees' reluctance to place themselves either in Greek society or in their ethnic enclave. A detached approach towards the place that they live in at the moment and a lack of creating bonds become evident in their words.

8.2.2. The essence of belonging

The second theme relating to belonging explores the meaning of the concept for irregular immigrants. Whereas the first theme (reflected in a different set of questions) sought to find out whether they feel they belong in Greece and the practicalities of everyday life, the second set of questions explored the meaning of belonging at a more abstract level. The line of questioning followed the differences between personal and situational networks. In the previous section, the goal was to explore whether irregular immigrants place themselves within situational networks that are linked and intrinsically connected to everyday life in a specific locale. The understanding of local belonging in the form of social networks and engagement within a community (spatially defined, for example, as the neighbourhood especially given the ethnic and transnational character of the area) was a focus of the previous section (Massey 1994, Savage et. al. 2005). In this section, I attempt was to unravel the meaning of belonging for the interviewees in a more general sense and less place-specific.

In attempting to get a sense of the way that irregular immigrants view themselves and their families in the third round of interviews, the discussion opened on the issues of what belonging is in more abstract terms, how it is defined for them, what is the value that they give to it, and how it can be pinned down through their own explanations in order to understand the complicated and slippery nature of the concept. However, in most of the discussions we had, the focus returned to the interviewees' current situation and their struggle to negotiate their 'in-betweenness' and to reflect on their own situation. For example, in every discussion we had, Susan returned to the 'injustice' of the Greek State in letting them (her family and immigrants in general) believe that they could

belong in Greece, even though, as she mentioned many times, that was not their original plan:

“To be honest I haven’t thought of that [belonging] before coming here. It has been a while that I have stopped thinking in these terms. [...] Yes, there is the [Afghan] community and I am involved in it, so I have a social circle and my kids go to school here but still I feel in transit. I know that we will move again at some point. Maybe not right now, not for a few years but we will move because this is not a place to stay and raise children. Nothing is working properly, there is the financial crisis, racism and too many dangerous illegal immigrants that I don’t want to associate with. [...] Now, I realize that back home I felt that I belong completely, my whole life was there, my family, my husband’s family, our homes, our business, everything”.

Even though different questions were posed and different issues were touched upon, she returned to conditions in Greece. Her frustration and anger were more than obvious and the only other issue that she focused on, besides the problematic elements of immigration and the Greek State, was the notion of fear and the absence of security. An apparent paradox in this specific case is that the reasons this family left their country were neither financial difficulties nor fear of persecution, but the fear of retribution from Al Qaeda (for reasons that were never explained to me). This seems paradoxical because their lives back in Afghanistan were in danger since they were apparently a specific target, whereas the danger they are in Greece is similar to everyone else living in an environment of illegality. In that phase of interviewing, Also, Susan included the ethnic networks and associations that she is part of in Greece (both her and her

husband are active members of the Afghan community) in her conceptualization of belonging whereas I was expecting that to be part of the first set of questions.

Hasan appears to be more comfortable in the Athenian life:

“Belonging is a matter of how you feel. I have a stable life here, with my shop, some family and friends, Greeks and Kurds, I have a house and all the commodities, and so I could say that I belong in Athens. [...] I’m not sure whether I belong more to the Kurdish community here or the Greek one. Maybe both because I participate in many things that are community related and I do whatever a Greek guy my age would do with my friends. Even though on the outside my life is much better here, emotionally I felt at home in my country. I can’t say that I feel at home here. And even though I don’t want to, it is much easier for me to move and I will do that without hesitation to another country”

Hasan’s words up to this point illustrate the in-between nature of immigrants’ identity. He brings forth the emotional aspect and the rationalization that social relations and associations are a part of his life and as such are included in the meaning that belonging has for him. As is the case in many immigrants’ biographical notions, repatriation is something they consider (Blunt and Dowling 2006: 196-252).

“The reason why I say that I feel that I kind of belong in Athens is because of the circumstances; I have my own barber shop and I don’t know if I could have that back home, I speak the language so I go out to clubs with other guys during the weekends and I have enough money to get by. My life is relatively easy here for the past few years. So, I think I kind of

belong here. Emotionally, I'm not sure if I can say the same thing. I miss my hometown and my immediate family and I can't see my sisters or my parents. I know that I have a baby nephew that I have never seen, you understand that given these circumstances, I can't really say that I belong somewhere".

Continuing the conversation with Hasan, two issues surfaced; the first is the importance of material circumstances, the second is emotional situation. Rationalizing the conditions of his life as having improved, Hasan sees himself as embedded in Greece. But moving from the material and practical to the purely emotional, the sense of nostalgia becomes prevalent. Nostalgia, coming from the Greek word 'nostos' that means longing to return, has been used to describe the emotional situation that many immigrants find themselves in (Rubenstein 2001, Blunt 2005). The concept has been used more in exploring the meaning of home as "spaces [that] are located in the past rather than the present, in imaginative rather than material terms" (Blunt and Dowling 2006: 213). Transferring and applying this conceptualization to the meaning of belonging, an interplay between the material and the emotional is apparent. The two aspects, in Hasan's case, succeed each other to give the sum of his feeling but also to show the tension that prevails in immigrants' emotions.

As with the other interviewees, Asef's conception of belonging was focused more on comparative circumstances and physical conditions:

"Thinking of it, belonging is more of a feeling, a sentiment than anything else. Being forced to think about it, I would say that I belonged back home. But given my conditions of living at the moment, the fact that I have a job,

a house, some friends, that I go to school, then I think I must say that no matter how I feel, I do belong in Athens. I am a part of certain things and groups that usually constitute the feeling of belonging. [...] I would be ungrateful saying that I don't belong here. Comparing my situation to many other immigrants, I have to say that I belong in Athens but if you are asking how I feel, I have to say that I don't belong anywhere”.

Similarly, Ehsan said

“Speaking of belonging... I don't know what to say really. A part of me would say that I do belong here since I have a place to stay and my job and I am making some money so I can help my family back home but on the other hand, my whole family and my wife is back home and I haven't seen them for years now. If I answer in a practical way, then yes, I belong here. If I answer based on what I believed belonging to be before leaving my home country, then I must say that I don't belong anywhere”.

In all of the answers, there are two elements emphasized. The first is the distinction between the rationalized thought of what belonging means as an afterthought translated through the materiality of living circumstances (having a house, a job and maybe some social circle), and the second is the emotional aspect of belonging, where one feels at ease and at home. The notion of home as a fundamental element of where one belongs deserves a deeper exploration and as such is the focus of the next part of this chapter. The de-emotionalized characterization of belonging was highlighted in terms of practicalities like having a job, the material and yet, in terms of surviving, important aspects of having money and housing. The elements of association and emotional ties that give the

sense of belonging were absent in their present conditions and associated mostly with their country of origin. The ambiguity and transitional character of living in one country or city and feeling that they belong in another place takes the concept of in-betweenness a step further. It is not just that they are living in-between countries and cultures, irregular immigrants have fragmented their existence between the physicality of the present and the emotional associations that exist elsewhere. Their definition of belonging having this dual character creates a rupture in time, in terms of their memories being the prevalent emotional force, while their actual day to day life becomes objectified, material and functional.

Following this notion, the next step is to investigate the physical and material manifestations of their everyday lives through exploring their domestic conditions and the meaning that they attribute to these. Even though belonging and the notion of home are linked, the process of domesticating and home-making in the context of irregularity can shed light on the everyday details of immigrants and their micro-geographies. For example, as shown in chapter 7, one of the themes related to invisibility and irregularity is securing shelter. The process of a shelter becoming a home, if this is the case, provides further insight into the relationship between the inhabitant and space. Even though the notion of belonging is linked to space, it cannot be pinned down since it is partly emotional. Understanding the home as “both a place/physical location and a set of feelings” (Blunt and Dowling 2006: 22), the concepts of home and belonging are mutually informed, yet the details of homemaking and the differentiation in its spatial fixity are matters worth exploring (hooks 2009, Massey 1994, Savage et al. 2005). Especially within the context of transnationality, the home as a site where one expresses freely and securely one’s identity becomes important in understanding the everyday lives of

irregular immigrants.

8.3. House vs. Home: the process of home-making and domesticity

The concept of domesticity is mostly related to the distinction between the public and the private spheres (Weintraub and Kumar 1997, Matthews 1987, McKeon 2005, Kelley 1984, Kaplan 1998). In sociological theories and gender studies, domesticity is identified with the private sphere as a term to denote the gendered different realms between the inside, the home and the outside, the public. The gendered dimension of the two spheres follows the stereotyping of the private as feminine as opposed to the public being masculine. The relation between the two spheres is that the one presupposes the other: “there is a necessary sense of the foreign to erect boundaries that enclose the home” (Kaplan 1998: 582). For the present work, the gendered notion of the two spheres, although not to be ignored, will be put aside, since the main aim is to understand the details of the private lives of irregular immigrants, irrespective of gender. Focusing on the ways that irregular immigrants create a home and on whether this is or is not related to building a sense of belonging, the process of domesticating and homemaking is explored.

In contrast to the more emotional aspect of belonging, this section aims to understand the materiality of the home. The material geographies of home and homemaking are explored because: (a.) “our social worlds are constituted through materiality” (Miller 1998: 3, Cieraad 1999), and (b.) one of the most secure places for the expression of cultural identity and its reproduction is the home (Savage et al. 2005, Massey 1994).

Home and homemaking are explored as parts of everyday practices under the conditions of transnationality and irregularity coupled with institutional

invisibility. The dual nature of home as a “material dwelling and [...] an affective space” (Blunt and Dowling 2006: 22), and the relation between “material and imaginative realms and processes” (Blunt and Dowling 2006: 22) are the focus of this section (Conradson and Latham 2005, Ehrkamp 2005).

Spiti in Greek translates as both house and home. The use of the word acquired multiple meanings and understanding during the interviews. In the interviews the Greek word was used simultaneously with its explanation each time, whether we mean the material, physical or the imaginary, emotional site. It has been an interesting experience given that half of the interviewees speak English, so at times they were using the English words of home and house to denote the difference, even though for those who speak Greek fluently, the word was used in Greek with its dual definition. The assistance of the translators was also helpful and revealing. The interesting element of the use of the word is related to the fact that the construction of meaning and understanding is related to the words available in each language. The multiple languages used during the fieldwork highlight the differences in the way meaning was ascribed by each person. For example, Ali, with whom the interviews were exclusively in English, having basic knowledge of the use of the single word in Greek for house/home, commented on the similarity of the Greek and German languages in having only one word to denote two meanings.

8.3.1. House: the material aspect

The multiple readings and understandings of the word with its dual aspects of the built environment, the house, and the emotional connotations, the home, may make the interviews and their translation here seem confusing. This reflects both the complexity of the concept, and the character and the meaning that each person gives to it. In the interviews, the interviewees who speak English sometimes used the English words to make the distinction between the two aspects. Those who did not speak English were more specific in describing what they meant when using the word. The essence of the word *spiti* is best described by the following quotation by Staeheli and Nagel (2006: 159):

“‘Home’ is a bundle of contradictions. It conjures feelings of safety, belonging and connection. [...] It is firmly rooted in place. It is an abstraction that extends beyond the walls of a house, linking people and relationships within the house with the external world. It is fixed and bounded. It is mobile and open.”

When present in my interviewees’ houses, the absence of decoration and personal objects like mementos and/or photographs was striking. Academic research attributes to the ‘home’, the character of a ‘rich site’ for the exploration of material cultures, since the objects that exist within it make the home “appear as both appropriation of the larger world and often as the representation of that world within our private domain” (Miller 2001: 1, Blunt and Dowling 2006, Tolia-Kelly 2004). Exploring transnational immigrants’ domestic material cultures can reveal the ties to cultural identity and the country of origin. For example, Tolia-Kelly (2004) in her research has illuminated the importance of material cultures that

represent 'memories' of other places. For me, having a constructed image of the house as a home where one celebrates one's identity through mementoes and objects relevant to one's life, the absence of decoration was for me striking. With the exception of Hasan, the rest of the houses I visited were almost empty. I believe that the main reason for the absence of any decoration and/or personal elements is that the people involved understand their lives as in transit.

Hasan's house was decorated celebrating his Muslim heritage, providing an example of the practices and materiality of transnational identity. On the walls in his house and his barber shop large embroideries with quotes from the Quran were prevalent, as well as the latest hi-tech equipment like an oversized plasma TV, laptops and games consoles. He was really proud in showing his acquisitions, mainly because as he said, "it becomes clear that I have done something with myself! I can afford to buy all the things that a modern man needs!". When asked about the distinction between the traditional aspects of the embroideries on the walls and the modern high tech equipment, Hasan was clear that there is no difference.

"I am part of both worlds. I do keep my culture's traditions and I am a devoted Muslim but I like to have the best that I can buy. There is no difference between the two. I get the best of the different cultures and I still like very much to have the Quran as a decoration in my home".

The traditional artefacts and the technological equipment used by Hasan were to highlight the upward conditions of living. This display of the 'best' from both cultures illustrates the characteristic in-betweenness of immigrants. Other interviewees and also my key informants shared with me that the ownership and

display of these traditional artefacts is strongly associated with having money and important social standing. Still, because the main theme of the conversation was about homemaking in Greece, where being a Muslim is negatively viewed by mainstream society, I asked Hasan how his Greek acquaintances find the exemplification of his Muslim tradition. In Greece the majority of the population is Christian Orthodox and being Muslim is considered to be alien and negative. Having one's values and cultural traditions respected is a precondition of having a place in society and I was interested to see how this was manifested.

“My Greek friends don't come often to my house. I prefer to socialize with them outside. Not because there is a problem but it has to do with the things we do together, mainly going out nightclubbing. The rest of my friends are Muslims as well as the family that I have here so they share my beliefs. [...] My Greek friends are not so many, I mean there are two guys approximately my age that we met when I first came here but we don't talk about things like these, we don't talk about religion or tradition, to be honest. They know that I am Muslim but that is all they need to know, they have been in my barber shop sometimes so they have seen my decoration but that's about it. Anyway, we don't go out *that* often and we are not *that* close. [...] My house is mainly for myself and sometimes my uncle and other male relatives come over to watch football or the news from back home.”

In Hasan's words the relative meaning of friendship and belonging is uncovered through the discussion about home. The notion of the house that for him is related mostly to interacting with male co-ethnic friends and relatives, brings to light the reservations my interviewee had in mixing with Greeks and shows a

clear boundary when it comes to private space. It also illustrates the difference between emotional and situational networks, something that I was expecting him to reveal in the discussions about belonging or even his involvement on ethnic communities and networks.

From the interviews and participant observation in the interviewees' houses, the different conceptions of what is private were revealed. For some of the interviewees, *spiti* was 'translated' as home, as a private, affective space that provides comfort and the sense of being at ease. For others, the word was automatically defined as a building to provide shelter and security from outside conditions of danger and homelessness.

Home is generally considered to be the most private space in the life of a person, but in the case of irregular immigrants this is not necessarily so. Additionally, in their case, a house does not have the same meaning as home, even though in Greek the word is the same. For all the interviewees, the concept of a house differed greatly from the concept of home in the context of their presence in Athens. The difference between the two was described in Susan's words:

"You can give the meaning of home to four walls that you are using just to provide shelter to your children. Consider that our main goal is to just get by here and move away. As a mother, I have to find shelter for my children, I have to give them security and protection but this is all there is. I can't make a home in an unwelcome environment that I want to leave behind. I can't make Athens my home so we are just using a house, even worse, we are using a room as a house just to cover our basic needs."

In her words Susan brings forth several elements that constitute 'home' while

deconstructing the Greek word between the material, functional aspect and the affective space. The notions of security and privacy that are related to the notion of home and not necessarily the house are prevalent, along with the distinction between the public and the private (Blunt and Dowling 2006). Simultaneously, the emotive characteristics that turn a house into a home are absent, in a way that challenges the Greek understanding of the single word.

Similarly, Nuria described her journey from living on the streets to having a place of her own with her children:

“Home is something very different. As I have told you, when we [she and her children] first came here, we were living on the streets. I had spotted a bench in Attiki Square that was somewhat sheltered between a kiosk and some trees and that’s where we were living for the first few days. After the attacks on immigrants a family agreed to rent us a room in their house. I knew it was temporary and from then on we kept moving in and out of rooms. For the past year I have been renting a house where we live by ourselves. But this is not *spiti* [home] as you mean it, it is some walls that we can live in”.

Nuria goes a step further in detaching the emotional element from the built environment and the locus of private activity. Interestingly enough, academic research proposes the notion of home to be almost universal. For example, research on immigrants and transnationality, shows the importance of the private domain as a site of one’s expression of identity and culture through materiality (Ehrkamp 2005, Blunt and Dowling 2006). Also, residence is an element of local belonging that through associational networks ties the person to the place of

location (Savage et al. 2005). However, these conceptions are missing from the expressions that my interviewees used. Whereas the process of homemaking assumes transnational networks and identities by becoming a locus where the immigrants' cultural in-betweenness is expressed, only Hasan's words exemplify similar conceptions.

When asked about the decoration and the familial objects in the house and its everyday functions Nuria described the place:

“No, I don't have anything from back home in there. I didn't bring anything with me. No photos, no mementos, nothing. I didn't even bring clothes. I have nothing personal and I don't really care of having. There are a couple of dolls that organizations have given to me for the kids but most of the stuff they gave us, I have sold to make some money. [...] There is some furniture, some were there from the owner and some were given to me, so there are enough beds for all of us to sleep and kitchen appliances that I have found. There is no decoration or anything similar but these are luxuries that we can't afford. And honestly, I don't even know if we will be staying here or not. The point is to get by.”

The notion of just getting by and the functional character of having a house instead of creating a home was best highlighted by Ehsan, when he said that “There is no need to create a home. It is just one more day here”, even though he has been in Athens for the past 8 years, he has a job and his plan is to bring his wife to Greece. During the time of my fieldwork, Ehsan moved from a house that he was sharing with three friends in Omonoia Square to a room given to him in the Shelter for Asylum Seekers that he works for as a translator. Both the places

that he lived in during my research were empty of personal items. There was nothing showing the personality and/or the traits of the person occupying this private space. Other than the books he has been using to perfect his Greek, no other personal items were on display. When asked about this, he said that there is no need for him to make a home because he considers his situation to be transient.

“You make a home with the people you love and you associate. This is not my situation at the moment. With the friends I was living with, we were just sharing the space because no one could afford to live by himself and send money back home. Now, it is much better because I have my private space. I don’t need decoration or anything like that because I’m here temporarily. When my wife comes, then we will make a home.”

The words of Ehsan exemplify the situation that most of the irregular immigrants find themselves in. Two issues come up, the first is their own unwillingness to make a home in Athens because of the temporary and transitional nature of their everyday lives, and the second is the emotional detachment from the place that they live in. Athens and their housing become purely functional, a means of survival and nothing more. Similarly, in their everyday lives they do not embed themselves in the urban fabric, and they also do not give meaning to the space. This is illustrated by the lack of knowledge of the areas that they live in. Characteristic is the example of Nuria, who does not even know the name of the street that she and her family live in. Interestingly enough, when I asked my interviewees to make a mental map of the city and to take me and/or describe the places that they go every day, most of them could not name the streets. The majority could describe the route and the functions of this route, but not name the

places. This fact is directly related to the absence of domesticity since it is one more sign of detachment from the city.

The absence of homemaking and domesticating, especially since some of the interviewees are not alone in Athens but with their families – and small children – is characteristic of their in-betweenness not only between two places but mostly in-between two different situations of living. There is a division between home and house both in time and space, since home becomes a question of time, either in the past or the hopeful future, and therefore space is detached from its meaning. The discrepancy between home and house is better highlighted through the words of interviewees that have lived much longer in Athens.

As has been mentioned in previous chapters, Ferhat's family has been in Greece for more than 8 years. They run a successful business, a restaurant, and have lived in the same house, above the restaurant, for the past 3 years. Contrary to other families that were in a more transitional and volatile situation, I was expecting this family to have created roots and a sense of belonging that would be reflected in their house. Knowing that Ferhat has acquired citizenship and has been educated in Greece, I was expecting their house to be more of a home, to have a sense of a lived, used environment. However, the decor of the house was similar to the others: the rooms were empty, having only the necessary furniture. There was no decoration except around Ferhat's bed, which had the Kurdish flag above it. No photographs of the rest of the family were on display and no personal artefacts. It was impossible to say which room Ferhat's mother used and which his cousin used. The bedrooms were bare, consisting of nothing more than the beds and the bed covers. The living room had the same image, with the exception of a rug that was covering most of the floor. Having a rug in the summer is atypical for a

Greek house, whereas in the cultural context of this family, as I was informed, it is a familiar image, similar to having a couch. Ferhat's mother explained to me that

“We don't need anything else here. I don't mind living here but I can't feel like home. We do have a life here, especially since Ferhat has the citizenship now and I run the restaurant but in my mind it is not a permanent situation. [...] Yes, we have been here for many years but I don't *feel* there is anything more than that. I wasn't expecting this feeling when we first came here. The goal was for us to stay here as we are but it's very difficult to put it in words, my daughter lives in England, with my husband we don't have the best relationship and he is back home, here with the crisis, the racism, the inaction of the authorities – everyday we see drug dealing, drug use, prostitution, gangs and guns right in the middle of the streets - you can't feel secure and safe. I can't create a home in such a place. I don't even have legal papers here. How can I stick to a place like that?”

In her words, multiple issues come to light. There is a clear articulation of the expectations that she had when moving to Athens of creating a new life and having a home. However, the problems that immigrants face in Greece due to the insufficient policies and structures prevented her from achieving these expectations. As explored in chapter 5, it is the problematic authority structures that push immigrants into irregularity and in Ferhat's mother's case this becomes evident. This is the reason that she is not able to assume a 'normal' life in the city she lives in. Also, the matter of safety and danger in the area is highlighted. This family's house and restaurant is a block away from Omonoia Square. In this block, the ethnic element is the most prevalent. Interestingly enough, on most of the

balconies of the building block facing their restaurant and house, one sees Greek flags hanging. When I asked them about it, Ferhat and his cousin told me that it is a 'trick' that immigrants use to avoid being attacked by members of the Golden Dawn, since all of the flats are occupied by immigrants. Ferhat's mother commented on the area and the feeling that she has about it:

"Athens for a while was home for us because we were in need. When we came the difficulties were many but we were able to survive. Since then, it has been getting worse and I'm talking about the everyday conditions that we have been living in. With all the illegal immigrants and the human trafficking I feel like going away again. I just don't know where to go. I ended up experiencing everything as daily survival. I don't feel like having roots here or wanting to. For a very short while in the beginning I thought I would. But again, mostly because we were in dire need and there was a supportive network of people here, people that we knew from back home and very distant relatives. But it was such a short while. By the time we had created somewhat of a life, everything changed. Most of the people we knew went away because they couldn't be legalized here, so they didn't want to start a life that would be in jeopardy".

A surprising element that came up in other interviews as well, but Ferhat's mother articulated clearly, was the perception of illegal/irregular immigrants as being dangerous. As in the case of Susan when talking about Greece's borders, there is an element of irony, since Ferhat's mother is an irregular immigrant herself. In her words, the feeling of danger in the neighbourhood is clearly identified as an obstacle in rooting, in the feeling of elective belonging. The notions of security and safety are important in domesticating and creating a home,

as emerges from her description which emphasises their absence. The feeling of insecurity due to the changes that have occurred in the area, along with the turbulent situation in the country because of the financial crisis, enhance, according to her, the transient nature of their existence in Greece.

Ferhat's cousin, who lives with them and works in the restaurant, expressed similar feelings and views:

"I don't have any personal belongings in my room because it is like four walls to live in for now. I have been in Greece for many years and I consider myself one of the lucky ones because I have some family to live with and a job with them. It is important to have people around you that you can trust, your family. But, I feel always on the run. In my head, this is not home. This is not where I belong. I belong here temporarily. I know that it's a matter of time to go away again, to move to another country, most probably to Germany because I have friends there. It will be difficult because I will have to learn one more language all over again and to establish a life again. But I have done it once and I can do it again. When I find a place to root, where I will feel secure and safe, when all the conditions will be secured, then I will have a home".

Even this family, although having the best living conditions within the ambiguous state of being irregular immigrants, do not identify their house and domestic conditions as a home and place of belonging. The majority of the interviewees highlight the difference between the concept of housing and 'being at home'.

8.3.2. Home: Fragments of time¹⁷

In the realm of transnational theories, the notion of home is identified with space as the locus of homemaking and belonging (Gilmartin 2008, Staeheli and Nagel 2006, Sheller and Urry 2006). More specifically, home:

“implies the ability to identify a site – a building or a locality - that is in some way bounded or delimited. Within that bounded space, a set of domestic relationships are enacted and deepen over time” (Staeheli and Nagel 2006).

The material culture of home and homemaking in direct relation to a physical site, a place, becomes the prerequisite foundation for belonging (Kaplan 2003, Staeheli and Nagel 2006, Tolia-Kelly 2004, Gilmartin 2008). When talking about domesticity and homemaking, the defining element is that of privacy. Domestic is associated with the private, “it is a necessary sense of the foreign to erect boundaries that enclose the home” (Kaplan 1998: 582). There is a strong association of place, the site where home is, with the material and metaphorical attributes related to the feeling of being ‘at home’. In the context of transnationality and immigration, the difficulty and complexity is usually attributed to the immigrants’ creation of a new home when away from their old one. However, as has been shown in the previous part of this chapter, in the case of irregular immigrants the house does not become the home, even though they have to use the same word when speaking in Greek. One more element that deepens the divide between the two is that most irregular immigrants, at least for some part of their lives in Athens, have been, and some still are, living on the

¹⁷ “Fragments of Time” by Daft Punk from the album “Random Access Memories” released in 2013

streets. This is directly linked to the privatization of public space, since the functions that one would expect to be private within the boundaries of the domestic, take place in public.

For those whose house is the street, the meaning of home was identified with that of a house but 'home' had become only a sentiment placed in the past.

"I don't have a home and I don't have a house. House is not a home. A house is where I would like to be during winter, to have shelter, water, to cover my needs. My home that used to be house, was in Germany where I had my life, my job and my friends. The streets can become your house but not your home. You are never really protected or peaceful in the streets. There are many ways to get by without having a house to live in. There are many places where you can find water to wash your face and use a toilet. And you can sleep in the streets if you know how and where. [...] Home for me is what I had before my deportation from Germany. Home, was me going to my job and then going to my place, to my home, and being able to cook and relax and sleep at night. At the moment, my house is this corner. You will always find me here" (Ali).

Ismaili, being in an intermediate situation, using the facilities of a shelter but using the streets as well, said:

"Home for me was before my parents found out that I am gay. It was when I was carefree. I was going out, in the university, I had my friends and my family. [...] Our home [house] was nice and comfortable. My family has money and our lives were good. I had the freedom and the money to do whatever I wanted to, so I had fun with my friends and my parents are

really great people and my sister too. I remember how it was and how I felt there. Comfortable, happy and safe. Nothing was the same since the police informed them that I am gay and I was being prosecuted. But this is when I left. I took some money that we had in the house and I left. I have no contact with my family because my father told me on the phone that I am dead for them. But that was home for me. The sense of being in my right place. I hadn't given much thought to it before. Now, a house is not a home. A house is just four walls. To be honest, being in the streets is pretty similar to the communal room in the shelter. You don't have privacy and you are not safe. So, except for the water and the safety of your clothes there is not much difference in sleeping in this room or in the streets".

In both these quotations the meaning of home is combined with emotions and feelings, emotions of safety, security, comfortable living and freedom to act within a norm and a routine. The emotional associations of home were highlighted by most of the participants during the interviews:

"Home was when we were in our town. We were happy and not thinking much about it. We had our own family, the kids were going to school, had their friends in the neighbourhood, I was about to go to the university, my husband was running the business with his father. We were all together and at ease. Nothing was really bothering us. I can say that now, comparing our present situation to our lives back home. We didn't have *problems*, since we left we do. We had a lovely home back then. Our house was beautiful because it was ours and our children were born there and we were living very close to our parents. It was happy times. I can

remember the smell of the place” (Nuria).

Interestingly enough, the emotive and emotional aspect, similar to hooks’ (2009) descriptions of what home and belonging means is also related to time. The prevalent image of home in Nuria’s words is related to a specific time. Similarly, according to Asef:

“Home was when I was growing up with my parents and after school I was getting back to find my mother and food on the table. It was when I was playing with my friends outside. It was having our relatives around and seeing them often. That was home”.

Ferhat’s mother defined home as:

“when times were good. When we didn’t have to move away in a hurry and sell our property. When we were all together living peacefully, when I had all my children under the same roof”.

For Ehsan,

“home was when everything was fine and our problems were the everyday little things. Way back in time, our lives were normal. With a job and our families, speaking our language. That was home for me. I might have a home again when I get together with my wife”.

In the descriptions and the words of Ferhat’s mother, Asef and Ehsan, this notion of home as a past situation is even more prominent. For the interviewees who left their home country as children the definition of home had an almost dream-like image:

“When I say the word *spiti* I think of our previous apartment in Athens and of our apartment now, so I actually mean the building. *Spiti* in the sense you are asking was really when I was very young. We were all together with my sister, my mother, the rest of our extended family and they were talking loud and we were laughing and playing outside and it was warm and sunny. Now, the times that I have been back to our old house, I get a feeling, nostalgia, that’s it. I don’t remember that much in detail but I get a warm feeling and I think that’s what home is” (Ferhat).

Susan’s oldest daughter said:

“I don’t remember. But we were safe and I wasn’t thinking so much about everything. Things were just normal, everyday stuff, playing with my brothers and sisters, having mom and dad and our house. It felt nice and safe. We didn’t have to sleep on the streets and we were not afraid all the time”.

In the children’s answers memory is the main element that they use to describe what home is for them. However, memories are connected again with feelings and maybe an idealized notion of security and tranquillity as the opposite of their current situation. For Susan herself, interestingly enough, home was defined as her own childhood before her marriage and the birth of her children:

“To me, home was when I was young, almost a child. Don’t get me wrong, my children are everything to me but my husband was a bad man and that’s why I had to take them and leave. Home, in the sense of comfort and security was when I was living with my parents in my hometown. I had no worries and my family around me and everything was easy and happy”.

It is clear in the interview abstracts above that the notion of home for my interviewees is linked to past situations rather than anything else, material or metaphorical. There is a clear separation between space and time. The private space of home transcends from the physical built environment to an abstraction in time, since it is related to memories of better times. The most significant elements in the interviewees' definitions of home were the presence of family, security and being carefree. Their homes are related to space as a specific place in time where their family home used to be but most of all are related to feelings. These feelings are in the forms of memories of times without the survival problems that they face in their everyday reality. Their unwillingness to domesticate and to create a home for themselves and/or their children is easily explained by their definition of home. If 'being at home' means being surrounded by family and being carefree and safe, they are fully aware that they cannot replicate these conditions in their present situation.

8.3.3. Spiti: An instantiation of time in space

“When you are a kid, place is everything. And when you leave, you’re so absolutely aware of departure”. (Ron McLarty, The Memory of Running, 2006, p. 110)

Belonging and ‘being at home’ as discussed at the beginning of this chapter are connected to place. As hooks’ (2009) book title suggests, belonging is a culture of place. The concept of home is inextricably linked to a geographical location, and most of the time, when talking about immigration, it is related to the country of origin. The materiality of home is rooted in its topography. Interestingly enough, place did not seem to matter in my interviewees’ definitions of home. Of course, the memories and the feelings were linked to a specific place, to the physical location where their families were. However, no one defined ‘home’ as his/ her country of origin. The prevalent element was the people and their feelings. Those ‘homes’ were not placed in a country as much as in a period of time. A striking example is Ali, who defined ‘home’ as his period of life in Germany and not Bangladesh where he comes from, where he was born and raised and has his family. Similarly, none of my interviewees even included the name of his/her hometown in their descriptions of home.

In this exploration of irregular immigrants’ feelings of belonging, domesticity and homemaking, two different geographical locations were involved. The first is their relationship to Athens, the city that they currently inhabit, and the second is the relationship to their country of origin. Unexpectedly, neither of the two was the focus of my interviewees’ conceptualizations of the notion of ‘home’. On the one hand, Athens was completely excluded from their descriptions and

definitions, a fact that heightens their in-betweenness and detaches them from the social cohesion in the city. On the other hand, their definition of 'feeling at home', even though related to their country of origin, lacked a geographical element. The absence of topographical detail and the emphasis on memory and the emotional character of it challenge again the concept of domesticity in relation to space. At the same time it presents a break in space and time. This break in space and time and the detachment from creating a home, and therefore of attempting to belong, signify how deeply embedded their lives are in a transitional situation. Possibly, this is exactly what separates them from regulated, legal immigrants since it makes their in-betweenness even more pronounced at multiple levels. It is not only that they live in-between two countries but also they live in an in-between state between space and time. By resisting making a home they also deprive themselves of any connection to the city they inhabit and its social web. Most probably, this attitude is linked to their condition of transit and always being on the move, because of their irregular status. Thus, by not participating and by not giving meaning to their relation to the urban environment, they almost strip down their everyday life of meaningful patterns that could lead to the formulation of some or any sense of belonging.

8.4. Conclusion

Belonging to a place and a society is comprised of many elements, such as the associations formed, the material and the metaphorical aspects that create a person's life, one of them being the existence of a home. Domesticity and homemaking, both related to feelings of security and shelter, are central to the feeling of belonging. From the interviews with irregular immigrants an unexpected theme appeared; irregular immigrants do not share that belief. The notion of domesticity for all the interviewees was absent from their lives in Athens, posing a challenge to the concept itself. Of course, there is a methodological element to be emphasized here, since belonging is a feeling. The descriptions and definitions that the interviewees expressed are subject to a double lens; 'seeing things from the actor's point of view' while filtering the information based on the actuality of material circumstances. It was possible for me to find out only what they wanted to tell me. Homemaking and creating links and roots was not evident in their words and ways of living as far as I can tell. Instead, the functionality of the material circumstances was prevalent when talking about their everyday lives. The absence of domesticity, as was evident throughout the empirical research, could reveal the absence of wanting to have a life in Athens. Also, it could signify the deeply rooted feeling of being in transit. The places and their uses are purely functional and therefore impersonal, bearing no other meaning. The reason to examine the private space of irregular immigrants was that the home is considered the locale where the individual negotiates his/her daily life. Even more so, if we consider that for transnational immigrants, the home is assumed to be the place where they can celebrate and negotiate their ethnic identity while in the host country. For the participants, this

did not hold true. Their houses were not their homes.

Almost all of the participants, at the time of the research, were renting houses in the blocks around Omonoia Square and the two interviewees who were not living there, had just moved from this area. Given the fact that Greeks do not reside in the area anymore, but it is mostly inhabited by immigrants and served by the multiplicity of ethnic stores, it might be reasonable to expect that the interviewees would feel embedded to the neighbourhood. They were all using the shops in and around Omonoia, and their everyday activities were concentrated in the area. However, this feeling was missing too. Although Omonoia Square plays a central role in their daily lives and was for all the entry point to the city, it bears no significance emotionally. I was expecting that, since Omonoia has been, for all interviewees, a major part in their lives in Athens and the locus of ethnic networking, that they would feel some kind of belonging and that the area 'belongs' to them. However, again, this did not seem to be the case. This situation partly negates the meaning of the city. Instead of being a place where one has a life in, the city becomes an empty canvas. When the urban social web is broken, that transforms and alters the city's character into a transit area or blank space that has no other value and/or meaning for the people who occupy it. When the urban space is used only in transit, it becomes stripped of its essence as the relating web of people and actions, the reflection of society, especially when this transit situation lasts for years. The main issue then becomes the functionality of the place, losing its social aspect that keeps society together.

The notion of belonging is based on a two-way relationship; to belong to a place (and therefore to a society) presupposes the feeling that the place belongs to the user. In the case of irregular immigrants in Athens this relationship is broken. In

answer to the question of where do they think of as their home, the interviewees stated that their home is in the past. This is an interesting break of the time-space continuum because by 'past' they mean an image of previous times and not their home in their country of origin. This break is reflected in the moulding of private and public since this distinction is no longer relevant under the circumstances. The concept of home as an image and memory of the past creates a rupture in the space and time continuum, since it makes the present irrelevant. The physical space and the material conditions of the present are detached and deprived of any meaning too. The in-betweenness expressed in the group of irregular immigrants becomes vertical and horizontal, their existence is linked to two places, but both are deprived of their meaning.

Chapter 9

Urban Public Space as the topos where rights are claimed

9.1. Introduction

The broad aim of the research has been to contribute to urban sociological and geographical debates about the contemporary shaping of public spaces by groups deemed to be marginal or part of an 'outcast' society such as immigrants and more specifically, 'irregular' immigrants. Irregular immigrants' unique conditions of 'institutional invisibility', coupled with their in-between position as part of immigration's transnational character, has been the substantive focus of the thesis. Through this I have sought to investigate, and illustrate, the social production and appropriation of urban public space, and the reciprocal relationships between space and its inhabitants focusing on the area of Omonoia Square in Athens.

Two elements have been used in this research as a lens to explore the appropriation of urban public space. The first has been the understanding of urban public space in Athens as an example of the transformation and appropriation of public space in the absence of urban policy and regulatory practices. The second has been the phenomenon of irregular immigrants whose condition is defined by institutional invisibility and in-betweenness as a characteristic of transnational immigration. Even though none of these elements are to be found only in Athens, the case of Omonoia serves as a case study to research because of the extended character of the phenomenon of irregular immigrants' inhabitation in urban public space in the absence of effective regulatory policies for both immigration and public space. The specificities of Athens are viewed as an occasion and a starting point to further understand the nature of irregular immigration as one of the

ingredients that constitute the appropriation of public space. Therefore, in this concluding chapter it is not my intent to simply summarize the points made in the previous ones but to make a range of theoretical, methodological, and substantive comments about the relationship between urban public space and its user, in this case irregular immigrants.

9.2. Athens at the present time: February 2014

While the thesis was being written, in early February 2014, two issues broke in the news concerning Greece: The first was the reporting of the death of 12 immigrants who were trying to cross the Aegean Sea to enter Greece illegally. More specifically, according to the BBC “The UN has called for an inquiry after a boat carrying migrants capsized while being towed by a Greek coastguard vessel, leaving up to 12 dead” (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-25843559>). Even though at first glance this tragedy might seem irrelevant to the aims and the topic of this thesis, it is not so. First of all, this unfortunate incident stirred debates and conversations regarding the phenomenon of illegal entry of migrants into Greece as a problem. Because of the international publicity of the incident, the Greek State was forced to confront what for the majority of the immigrant population, for the people working in services related to immigration and the inhabitants of areas of entry such as the islands, has been an everyday reality. Indications of the numbers of immigrants who attempt to enter Greece had been publicized by UNHR (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E8LX08TF1Nw>) and Frontex (2010) along with several reports on the deaths of people in their unsuccessful attempt to cross the borders. However, the Greek State had chosen to largely ignore the issue as has been highlighted by the delayed legislative action explored in chapter 4.

The second incident was the announcement of the candidacy for Local Elections of 2014 for the municipality of Athens of one of the Golden Dawn’s leaders, Elias Kasidiaris. Kasidiaris along with a number of the high command members of the Golden Dawn, including its president, had been arrested in 2013 charged with organizing a criminal association, i.e. the Golden Dawn political party. In his statement accompanying his candidacy, Kasidiaris claimed that in “May [2014]

there is one chance for Athens to become again a Greek capital” (<http://zoomnews.gr/politics/item/58265-dilosi-ilia-kasidiari-gia-tin-ypopsifiotita-tou-ston-dimo-athinaion-vinteo>). Again, this candidacy might seem irrelevant to the present thesis but it is not. First of all, the Mayor of Athens and municipality is involved in and responsible for the governance of the city, including public space and aspects of immigration. Secondly, it is the first time during the last decades that a candidacy of an extreme right wing party involved in violence and violent attacks against immigrants carries sufficient weight and enough support by the citizens to be a strong presence in the Municipality Council of Greece’s capital. According to the latest polls, Kasidiaris gained approximately 12% whereas the candidate with the highest percentage received 20% of the votes. The importance of such a prospect becomes even more evident considering the anti-immigration platform that this candidate promotes along with the widespread violence that his party is linked to. One of the main issues of his campaign was the presence of ‘illegal’ immigrants in central Athens: his central slogan was that the Golden Dawn will ‘clean up’ public places and return them to Greeks.

Both incidents reveal the problematic character that the phenomenon of irregular immigration in Athens has acquired. It is no coincidence that the extreme right wing has gained support promoting a populist anti-immigration platform especially in Athens. Persistently ignoring the matter of immigration, the Greek State and consecutive governments since the early 1990s allowed for (1) the actual number of irregular immigrants to rise, (2) misconceptions on matters of immigration to become established in the general population, and (3) the formation of a situation of highly visible habitation practices of ‘institutionally invisible’ groups in most of the major public spaces in Athens.

These two events/issues are closely connected to the thesis because they highlight and exemplify the long-lasting nature of the situation under investigation. Both illustrate the problematic nature of immigration in Greece and its implications. The first incident is one more example among the many of Greece being an entrance point to the EU, but also of the ways that immigrants and the human trafficking networks use the inefficiency of the Greek State. The unwillingness and inactivity of the State in facing the problem of massive waves of immigrants is emphasized through that incident because it was only after this story gained international attention that the government began discussing the issue of immigrants entering the country.

Additionally, this event shows that the numbers of immigrants that enter the country illegally is unknown to the authorities. The second incident, the candidacy of E. Kasidiaris, is also connected to the problematic phenomenon of immigration in Greece. The xenophobic platform that the Golden Dawn promotes is sustainable and successful only because of the presence of irregular immigrants in the streets of Athens. Extreme right beliefs have become legitimized because of the unstructured presence of immigrants, the absence of control both on immigration matters and of urban policy, along with the media coverage of the situation. Even though the Golden Dawn's success is not related only to the issue of immigration, the image of irregular immigrants occupying public spaces in central Athens has become one of key issues that they are exploiting.

Both these events show the magnitude of the phenomenon of irregular immigration in Greece and are evidence of the situation under research. Both point towards the problematic structures of the State and to the importance of democratic rights that immigrants lack. Also, these events illuminate the reasons

that this thesis focused on the phenomenon of irregular immigrants inhabitation of Omonioia Square.

9.2.1. On the nature of space

The strong correlation between urban public space and irregular immigrants' everyday practices has been the major preoccupation throughout the research and the analysis presented in this thesis. In the case of Athens, it becomes almost impossible to understand urban public space without considering its uses by irregular immigrants, but also exploring irregular immigrants' lives cannot take place without focusing on urban public space. Even though it is common sense to explore and understand public space through its users, there is a paradox in this relationship because of the irregular nature of this group of immigrants. They are institutionally invisible and yet their bodily existence, their actions and the results of these, are visible and partly defining of urban public space. Understanding space and therefore this paradoxical relationship in this thesis is best summarized in Harvey's words (2009: 14):

“[...] space is neither absolute, relative or relational itself, but it can become one or all simultaneously depending on the circumstances. The problem of the proper conceptualization of space is resolved through human practice with respect to it. [...] The question of “what is space?” is therefore replaced by the question “how is it that different human practices create and make use of distinctive conceptualizations of space?”

The phenomenon of irregular immigrants' inhabitation and everyday uses of public space addresses this last question. It is the use of urban public space as a resource to overcome practical obstacles that creates new conceptualizations of public space as the primary source of the means of survival and exemplifies the element of human practice. The practices of irregular immigrants in public space and its

function as a 'weapon of the weak', a place where they can manage the conditions in order to survive, express the underlying power of praxis as Giddens has defined it and the importance of relational autonomy (Giddens 1984, Scott 1985, Christman 2004). In both these theorizations on the characteristics of the agent that direct practice even though socially constituted, there is a common thread illuminating the free, knowledgeable and self-governing nature of agency and thus human practice.

9.2.2. Private vs Public

The use and understanding of urban public space as a shelter, given its private character, reverses the notion of public. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 presented examples of practices related to the inside and the private that take place in public space. The research showed that when focusing on irregular immigrants, the 'private', mainly the house, has lost some of the qualities that make it a home, blurring the boundaries and the differences between what is public and what private. Given the observation of the interviewees' everyday lives and their conceptualizations of what constitutes their private space, the practical differences between public and private do not differ as much as one would expect.

Somewhat surprisingly, the interviewees have not invested in the creation of a 'home' in their host country. The research has shown that the notion of belonging and of home is located only in the dimension of time, in their past, creating a rupture in time and space. Feelings of safety and belonging, usually associated with domesticating and creating a home exist in the interviewees' memories as a past condition and are not so relevant in their present situation in the host country, no matter how many years they have lived in Greece. Home and belonging are notions that are associated, according to Massey (1994: 226) "to belong we typically locate the realization of this desire in an identity, in a self or a place or a time past that we would have again in the future". However, having a home in the future are distant aspirations in the majority of irregular immigrants' narratives that I collected.

The functional character of the house stripped of its 'homely' characteristics is partly reflected and explained by the use of public space functioning as private, at least for some time, for the majority of the interviewees and it is safe to assume, for

the majority of irregular immigrants. The use of public space for private functions, and the absence of domestication when it comes to private space, highlight the similarities in the practices of this group in both terrains, public and private, that are theoretically considered mutually exclusive.

9.2.3. Transnationality and elements of ethnicization in public space

Because of the use of public space as the primary location in irregular immigrants' attempts to meet their basic needs, markers and symbols related to ethnic identities become visible and prominent. Public space(s) become key places that irregular immigrants inhabit and cover most of their basic needs. The use of public space by irregular immigrants as a node of networking activities that range from collecting information, being used to provide shelter and housing, being an unofficial market place, or a place to advertise jobs and the centre of social activities related to ethnic networks, transmits the ethnic identity of its users to public spaces. The functionality of public space(s) as the locus of a wide range of resources attracts large numbers of immigrants regardless of their status. According to the collected data, apart from irregular immigrants, those with permanent residency also use public spaces to socialize with co-ethnics. The mixture of immigrants of all categories is also the reason for and the result of the ethnic stores that operate around Squares in Athens. The material objects and the symbols related to the use and appropriation of public spaces by irregular immigrants enhance the notion of these as spaces of representation due to their ethnic character and the visibility of this (McCann 1999: 166-167). In addition, unexpected and minor elements such as the small pieces of advertisements in trees for rooms to rent pronounce the nature of public space as the place of unanticipated uses (Simone 2004: 214).

Urban public space, given the multiplicity of different functions that are strongly related to ethnic networks and identities, acquires ethnic character. This ethnicization of Athenian public places is more pronounced by the distinctive use of each square by different ethnicities for different functions. For example, the

symbolic boundaries between different ethnic networks become more clear in the definition of 'turfs' between drugs related networks that operate solely based on ethnicities. Another more common example is the 'expertization' of each Square based on ethnicity in the search and provision of shelter, e.g. Attiki Square is primarily a place of concentration for the Afghan population.

The ethnic character that public space(s) acquire because immigrants are the primary users brings to mind the concept of transnational social spaces that according to Faist (2000: 191)

“[...] are combinations of ties, positions in networks and organizations, and networks of organizations that reach across borders of multiple states. These spaces denote dynamic social processes, not static notions of ties and positions.”

As expected, some of these characteristics such as the combination of ties, networks, and positions that reach across borders of multiple states, do exist and operate in Omonoia and in other Athenian public spaces, as evidenced by the multiplicity of ethnic networks operating and the existence of a variety of ethnic stores and organized communities. Even though there are dynamic social processes at play, these vary significantly in depth, value and importance for irregular immigrants.

The connection across borders of geographically dispersed localities comes to mind as one of the main characteristics of transnationalism (Faist 2000, Smith 2005, Ley 2004, Ehrkamp 2005, Vertovec 1999, Conradson and Latham 2005). The transference and maintenance of ethnic identity, culture and connections are prime features in transnational immigration. Because of mechanisms that allow people to

maintain contact and to trade, upholding their traditions and cultural mores as well as sustaining emotional ties, transnational communities are able to exist and retain their ethnic character. As Smith (2005: 237) explains, transnational interconnectivity captures:

“a sense of distanced yet situated possibilities for constituting and reconstituting social relations. The study of transnational urbanism thus underlines the socio-spatial processes by which social actors and their networks forge the translocal connections and create the translocalities that increasingly sustain new modes of being-in-the-world.”

The result of this connectivity is the creation of transnational communities and the ‘transnationalisation of spaces’, since because of the existence of these communities, space acquires their ethnic character (Ehrkamp 2005). However, in the case of irregular immigrants it seems that there are some differences that challenge the characterization of Omonoia as a transnational space. These differences stem from the irregular and invisible conditions that define the group of immigrants under investigation.

A primary element in the creation of transnational communities and thus transnational spaces is the residential permanence of an ethnic community in a defined area (Ehrkamp 2005, Smith 2005). The existence of permanent settlement nurtures the multiplicity of actions, practices and traditions in the everyday lives of immigrants and their involvement in entrepreneurial activities. In the chapters exploring community formation in central Athens the presence of ethnic stores and organized ethnic communities was highlighted and interpreted as a sign of the ethnicization of the area. However, there is reason to separate them from informal

ethnic networks and communities operated and related to legal immigrants even though used by irregular ones. Permanent settlement implies and enforces, at least partly, a sense of local belonging in the form of social networks and engagement within a community that in the case of irregular immigrants is largely absent due to their precarious and 'in transit' condition (Massey 1994, Ehrkamp 2005, Savage et al. 2005). Although irregular immigrants participate in transnational communities and share their characteristics, the absence of emotional ties with their co-ethnic communities in Athens differentiates them. Whereas transnational communities, like ethnic enclaves, share emotional ties and a sense of support and solidarity in the host country, irregular immigrants are mobile within networks yet in a functional, emotionally distant and fleeting manner (Faist 2000, Smith 2001, Ehrkamp 2005). Additionally, when viewing transnational communities and spaces, there is a sense that these are created in the context of a stable environment of inclusion. It is not within the scope of this thesis to discuss whether inclusion, assimilation and multiculturalism exist and to what extent in EU societies. However, there is a clear differentiation when one examines the Greek State in terms of immigrants, irrespective of their status, in terms of their rights. It is in the context of discussing rights that irregular immigrants' habitation of urban public space becomes important, since their presence is one, if not the only, right that they exercise in Athens.

9.3. The right to space: Irregular Immigrants' Inhabitation of Public Space

Public space, according to Mitchell (2003: 35) is

“a space in which the cry and demand for the right to the city can be seen and heard [... The essence of ‘publicness’ comes to life] when to fulfill a pressing need, some group or another takes space and through its actions makes it public”.

This definition of what makes space public is witnessed in its pure form in the case of Omonoia. The instantiation of irregular immigrants bodily existence is a demand and a claim to the right to the city. The visibility of human agency and practice through everyday usage of a group largely ignored and deemed invisible by the State emphasizes the importance and the meaning of representation. “The very act of representing one’s group [...] to a larger public creates a space for representation” (Mitchell 2003: 35) and this is the case in Omonoia Square. There has been much written on the right to space by marginal groups, such as the homeless (Mitchell 2003, McCann 1999, Low 2000, Simone 2004). However, this is always embedded in a structural framework of existing rights of the group members, whereas this is not the case for irregular immigrants.

The question posed by Lefebvre (1991) on who has the right to the city becomes all the more relevant and complicated when exploring the inhabitation of urban public space by irregular immigrants. Constrained by and defined through the absence of institutional rights, irregular immigrants’ existence, presence and inhabitation in Omonoia Square and generally in Athenian public spaces question the structures of the Greek State, as well as defining public space. In this respect, the Lefebvrian scheme describing the production of space as the interconnection between

representational space, representations of space and spatial practices becomes useful since it allows for the exploration of the different but entwined elements that constitute space. Directly connected to the question of who has the right to space and to the city is the importance placed on the body in understanding the different elements of the triad (representations of space, representational spaces and spatial practices) (Lefebvre 1991, Merrifield 1993, McCann 1999). In the case of irregular immigrants' habitation of public space, it is only their body that reflects human agency and practice and its results that affect and alter Omonia, since they are literally deprived of any other right.

In this situation when public space is inhabited and appropriated by the invisible irregular immigrants, there are two levels to be noted: the first is the abstract, theoretical level of the right to the city and to society by a group forced into oblivion, and the second is the empirical, tangible, physical one that is connected to the actual changes in the character and nature of space.

Beginning with the latter, there is a clear opposition between the irregular immigrants' everyday uses and practices at odds with the official, 'legitimate' governmental discourses and designed functions of Omonia Square. Public space becomes the immigrants' primary means of survival, being used as a shelter and a place to network. This highlights the use of invisibility and irregularity as a means to conceal the marginal ways of making a living from the eyes of the State in order to secure basic needs. This opposition highlights Zukin's (1995: 7) argument on the building of cities directing the decision of what is to be visible and what is not. These uses bring to the surface the opposition and the contestation of space, not only between the irregular immigrants and the 'mainstream' users, but also the contestation of space between different ethnicities engaging in different activities

in the same place. There is then a multiplicity of realities instantiated in the diverse social arrangements and temporalities that occur within space. The vicious circle of the three elements in the Lefebvrian triad becomes even more complex because of the multiplicity of users and their impact directing representational spaces, especially mediated through the media and spatial practices. The crucial element in the case of irregular immigrants that complicates and blurs the situation even further is again the absence of rights within a society. Institutional, structural, State provided rights within a given society comprise an abstract concept with pragmatic and practical consequences for the people involved.

Exploring the more abstract level of the existence of people within a society and societal relations as these unravel in space, there is again the paradox of people being *there* while their existence is denied. Having no legitimate category to fall into as a way of being defined by the State in the host country, irregular immigrants are forced to be marginalized, ignored and to comprise a group without any identity other than their irregularity. This peculiar condition shows a clear weakness of the Greek State that is reflected in the exclusion of every human right and dignity from these groups. On the question of who has the right to claim space and to be represented, the straightforward answer from the research would be the actual user. The irregular immigrants, deprived of rights, claim space, and through it, their democratic right to exist and participate in Greek society through their obvious bodily existence, since it is their only right to representation.

9.4. Lefebvre Revisited

The rights to representation and the rights to the city are concepts that have been major preoccupations in this thesis, and part of the theoretical framework shaping my arguments have been influenced by the writings of Henri Lefebvre (1991, 1996, 2003). As emphasized in chapter 2, the Lefebvrian conception of the production of space through the triad, that is, the representations of space, representational spaces and spatial practices, has been used in the thesis as a heuristic tool in the attempt to untangle the complex relationships between irregular immigrants and urban public space.

While there is difficulty in grounding empirically Lefebvre's conceptualizations, due to the abstractions of his theoretical constructions and elusiveness of arguments, the triad provides an entry point to understanding urban space. As Zhang (2006: 222) explains, when talking about Elden's (2004) book on Lefebvre, the exploration of space through the three elements is akin to shifting perspectives with a camera and the researcher needs to "hop constantly from one camera to another". This offers a multi-dimensional perspective "but with further attention into subjective experience - the lived life" (Zhang 2006:222). Therefore, the usefulness of Lefebvre's conceptions comes from (1.) the focus on the everyday life, the experienced space and (2.) the simultaneous exploration of different points of view on the same phenomenon by directing researchers towards grounding their work in the subjectivities of urban inhabitants.

Such subjectivities are framed by the representations of space, that is, the structural, conceived and controlled designs of places, which shape, to some extent, how people come to understand and interact with (in) space. Spatial practices are

related to the designed functions of the place, but also to the imaginations and understandings that users have of it. At the same time, the everyday uses of places inform the understandings and the imaginations of space. It is the reciprocal relationship among the three elements, that is, the representations of space, representational spaces and spatial practices, that can enable the relationalities of places to emerge particularly as these relate to users and the underlying socio-political tensions that arise in and through the contestation of inhabitation and place making.

The usefulness of Lefebvre's conceptions, in the case of Omonoia, is that while one might expect the dominance of "abstract" space, the functions represented by those in power to form a coherent, uniformed space with specific uses and a structured nature, this was far from so in my research. Rather, the use of the square for extensive drug-dealing during day-time was evident, and was part of place making anathema to the dominant modes of representational spaces emanating from official plans, policies, and discourses. In other words, what one ought to have expected as functions to be 'concealed and hidden', were often open and on display. What, in Lefebvrian terms, could be considered to be part of concealed space was, instead, evident as a mode of dominance because of the omnipresence of users' everyday activities and their occupation of public spaces. The dominance of everyday activities has potential to supplant "legitimate" ones and even though this is different from Lefebvre's theoretical scheme, it is only through the use of his conceptions that this situation can be understood. The visibility of irregular immigrants points to the discrepancy between official uses and everyday practices. Yet, it is important to acknowledge that the actual use of space, even though by marginal groups, follows to some extent the "official", "legitimate" functions since

two of Omonoia's main functions remain as commerce and a connecting node. At the same time, this example illustrates how representations of space, that is the conceptualized space of planners, scientists etc take on a physical form. As Anderson (2007) points out, representations of space are "concrete guideline of how thought can become action". It is in these details that the nature of space emerges and it is through the concepts of Lefebvre that it can be examined.

By the use of the triad as a lens for exploring what constitutes the production of space, the thesis has been able to reveal the variety of aspects and dimensions that are involved. For example, the representations of space, and their changes through time, can reveal the politics that drive the design of space. Yet, it is the spatial practice that "embodies a close association between daily reality and urban reality [...] the daily routine and the routes and networks which link up the places set aside for work, private life and leisure" (Hsu 2003: 65). In the case of Omonoia, these "places" are not set aside but instead there is a blurring of the boundaries between public and private in terms of functions: irregular immigrants use public space to cover their primary needs that are in the realm of the private sphere, such as sleeping. Throughout the research, the association among the three dimensions and their interrelation are manifest in the ways that people use space.

Another example of how representational spaces, representations of space and spatial practices feed into each other and their heuristic use as dimensions and perspectives comes again from the lived experience of the space. What was prominent in the area under investigation was the multiplicity of different realities, understandings and ultimately uses of the place. As has been shown in the empirical chapters, the different groups of users at the time of the research, had different conceptualizations of the place, representational space(s) manifested

differently, for example there were clear differences in the concept of “safety” in the understandings of new comers illegal immigrants compared to the long term established ones. Whereas the new comers were viewing the Square as a “safe” space to stay the night, the long-term residents considered the Square to be unsafe and degraded. These differences in the ‘perceived’ aspect are reflected in the uses of space between the different groups of users.

In the case of Omonioia, the different realities, understandings and the uses of the place mark a clear distinction between what has been designed for the place to be and what it *is* in terms of real life. However, the dominance is not ‘official’ and therefore the importance of the uses of space, and the users themselves, becomes highlighted. Exploring the everyday activities that take place in Omonioia Square allowed for the prominence of the users’ actions to emerge, as well as of the tensions that these bring forth.

The Lefebvrian conception of the production of space under-represents the tensions and the contradictions that are formulated in space, such as the contradictions that emerge between different groups of users. At the same time, it is Lefebvre’s theoretical construction that can allow for an exploration of these tensions. The high visibility of marginal groups points to the discrepancy between the official uses and the everyday practices, the different realities between the groups of users along with the reciprocity that exists among the three elements.

The importance of Lefebvre’s theorizations lies in the intersection of the multiple understandings and forces that play a role in the production and appropriation of space having at its centre the right that users have in space. Lefebvrian theoretical constructions can be used and understood in empirical research as a way to

illuminate the actions of people from different but interrelated perspectives. The right to space is a fundamental concept when one examines space given that the city is “a projection of society on the ground, that is not only an the actual site, but at a specific level, perceived and conceived by thought, which determines the city and the urban” (Lefebvre 1996: 109).

Through this understanding, the struggles of different users over space allow the researcher to witness the multiple, overlapping realities that constitute the space in question. Even though the empirical application of Lefebvre’s conception on the production of space can be difficult, a way to understand his theoretical constructions and empirically use them is the acknowledgement of the importance of the human factor in every aspect of his triad and therefore, the application of the concepts as tools for exploring the different angles of the actors involved.

9.5. Conclusion

The aim of the thesis has been the uncovering of irregular immigrants' everyday reality and practices manifest in Omonia Square as a means to investigate the relationship between urban public space and its users. Anchoring this research within the theoretical realm of urban sociology/cultural geography, Lefebvre's theorizations on the production of space have been a major influence. As such, Omonia Square has been viewed as a case study where the representations of space, representational spaces and spatial practices acquired a pragmatic character. This case study has been investigated through this lens as an attempt to empirically ground Lefebvre's theories. The main question posed by Lefebvre on who has the right to space has been the driving force behind the research. The case of irregular immigrants brings to light the ways that rights are claimed through the use of space. The thesis has attempted to contribute to this realm of theoretical knowledge by exploring how a group that is denied every right negotiates its representation through its actual survival. The case of irregular immigrants illuminates the fact that people, in the absence of rights, still claim their share in society by their sheer presence. The political aspect in the instantiation of the use of space, although not a conscious process, sheds light on this claim to rights by institutionally invisible groups.

The institutionally invisible nature of the irregular immigrants' living conditions can also highlight issues connected to the transnational nature of immigration. The complexity and the in-between situation that immigrants find themselves in, is further enhanced by the invisibility of the group under investigation. For example, theories on transnationality explore and highlight the negotiation that immigrants find themselves in daily, in trying to retain their ethnic identity and culture in the

host country. In the case of irregular immigrants, this has proven more difficult given the absence of rights, structures and other facilities by the Greek State that would facilitate this process. Also, transnational theories assume that immigrants feel that they belong to their country of origin and the host country, whereas in the case of irregular immigrants in Athens, there is a clear absence of the notion of belonging when it comes to the host country. The transient nature of their lives in Athens is one more strain that they have to negotiate, but also a deeply problematic situation since this group is deprived not only of rights but also of feelings of creating roots and domesticating. The additional insecurity and precariousness that irregular immigrants have to deal with that strips them of basic human characteristics and can provide insights into the darker sides of immigration and transnationalism.

The heuristic value of the research has been the exploration of the relationship between urban public space and a group that is deprived of civil rights. Irregular immigrants, through their inhabitation and appropriation of urban public space, illuminate the way that space is produced but also the way that public space is a reflection of democratic practices. The group under exploration has also been a methodological challenge for the research, because of the institutional invisibility and the irregular condition that immigrants in Omonoia and Greece find themselves in. In terms of methodology, this group of people is difficult to access and even more so, to follow and explore in-depth for a year. The importance and the significance of qualitative research and case studies is evident in that these were the only tools that would allow for a deep, detailed investigation of the phenomenon of irregular immigrants' habitation and appropriation of urban public space. It has been possible only through the means of qualitative methods


(following phenomenological and interpretive epistemology) to explore and uncover the details of irregular immigrants' lives that signify their relationship to urban public space.

The methodological challenge for me was not gaining access to this population but mostly to be flexible and spontaneous following the participants lives within the context of a structured, time-constrained doctorate research. The rapidly changing socio-political and economic conditions in Greece at the time of the fieldwork made it even more difficult to be able to respond to the changes in immigrants lives, such as the fear following the rise of the Golden Dawn and their anxiety to leave the country and move on sooner than expected. Uncovering the details of irregular immigrants lives in public space has been at times a difficult task and a very sensitive one. The focus of this work on the appropriation of urban public space, given the under-researched nature of this population, is of particular value in the thesis. Urban public space is an integral part of irregular immigrants' lives, while also becoming a product of their interaction with space. Understanding space as a reflection of society, and public space as a barometer of justice and ultimately democracy, the claim to space by irregular immigrants can be seen as their claim to be part of society and to a decent life.



















Appendix I: Maps

Spatial Distribution of enterprises 2011

LEGEND

 Spatial specialization Area

Sectors of Economic Activities

-  Retail apparel, footwear, travel equipment, home appliances, opticians
-  Retail jewelry, horology
-  Telecommunications retail
-  Medical supplies retail and Pharmacists
-  Super Market
-  Other specialized retail stores
-  Other non-specialized retail stores (kiosks)
-  Food, beverage and entertainment services
-  Hotels
-  Cinema
-  Soccer betting
-  Photographs and photocopies
-  Pawnshops, Money Transfer
-  Banks
-  Other entrepreneurial activities
-  Post office
-  Public administration - services
-  Health and Social Care

1 dot = 1 enterprise

SCALE

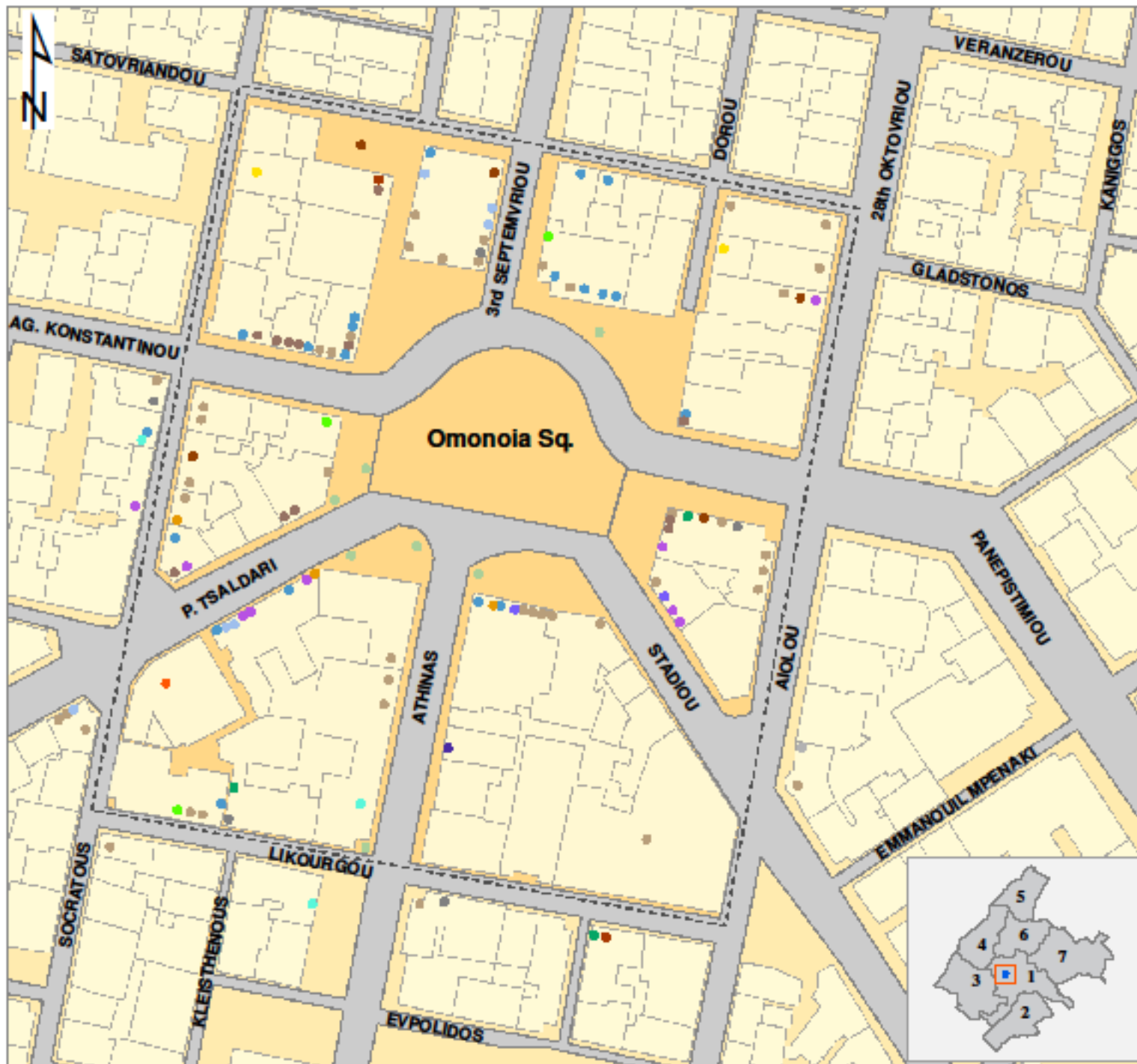


M.1

Data:

Mapping exercise / participant observation during fieldwork.

September 2011





**Spatial Distribution
of operations running and closed ones
2011**

LEGEND

Spatial specialization area

Operations Running

Closed Operations

1 dot = 1 enterprise

SCALE

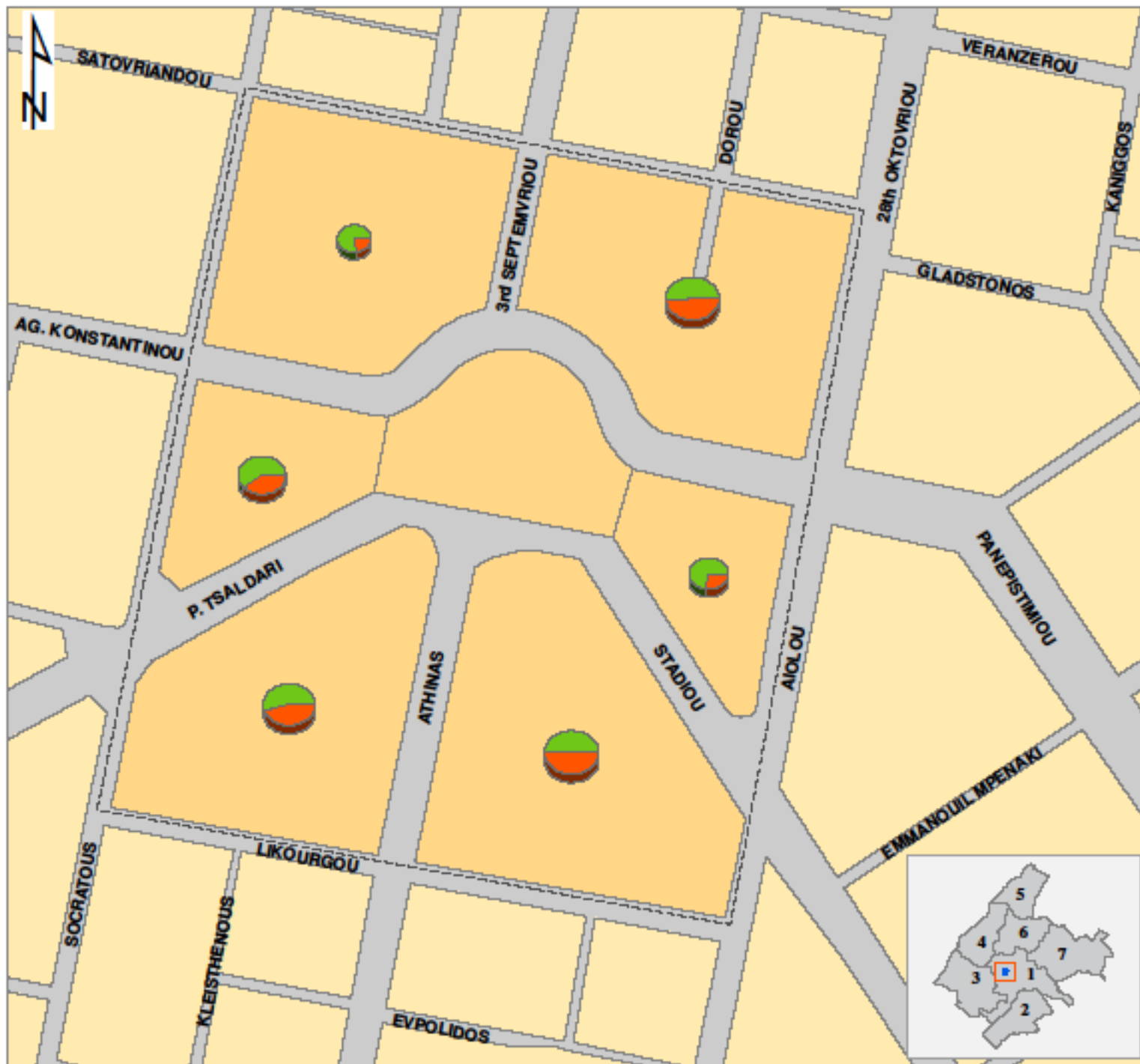


M.2

Data:




Mapping exercise / participant observation during fieldwork.

September 2011




**Spatial Distribution
comparing open - closed operations
2011**

LEGEND

-  Spatial distribution area
-  open operations
-  closed operations

**Volume of closed Enterprises
per building block**



- 20
- 10
- 1

SCALE

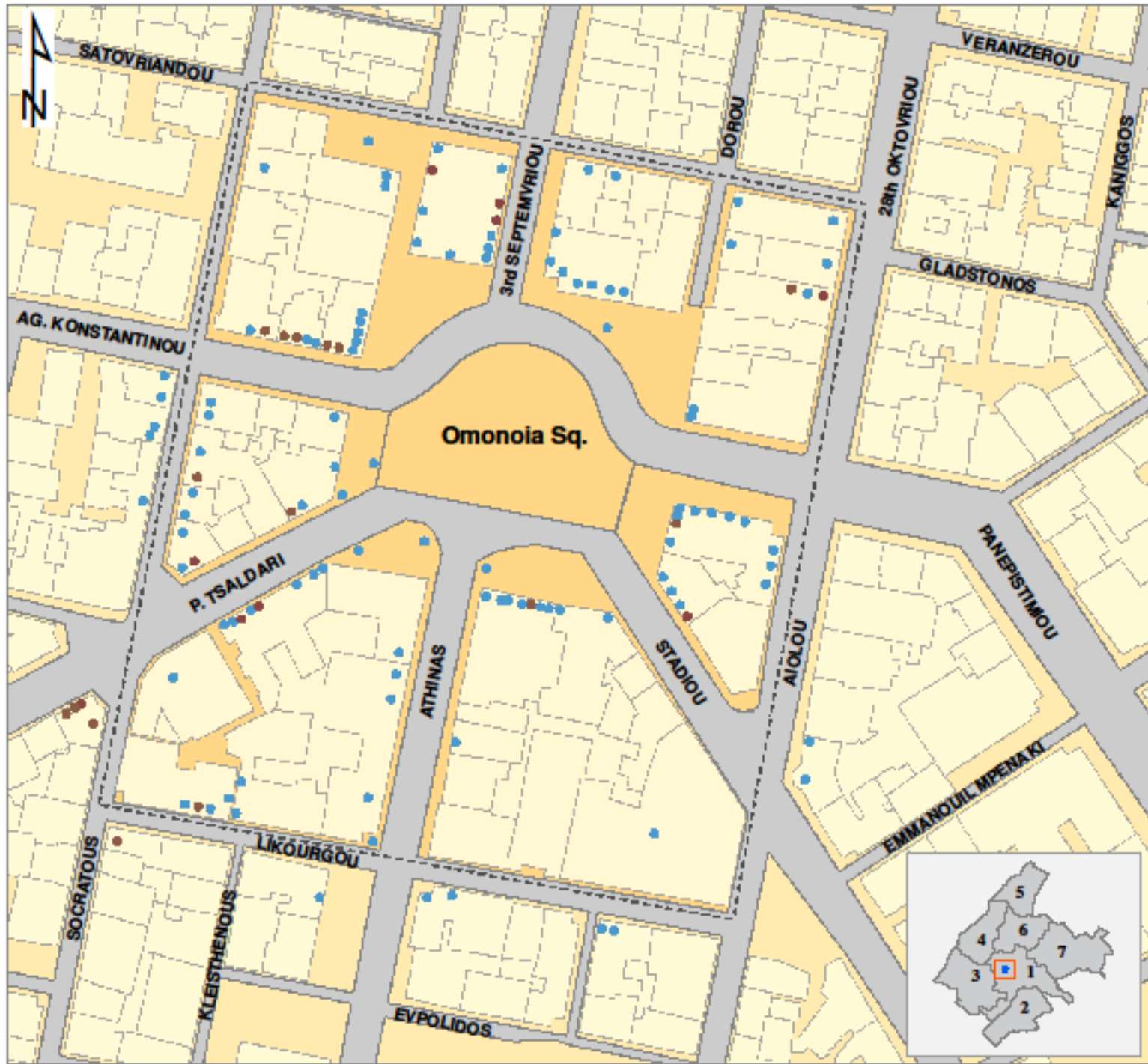


0 5 10 20 30 40 m

M.3

Date:
Mapping exercise / participant observation during fieldwork.

September 2011



Spatial Distribution of foreign vs greek entrepreneurial activities 2011

LEGEND

Spatial specialization Area
• greek entrepreneurial activities
• foreign entrepreneurial activities

 1 dot = 1 enterprise

SCALE

0 5 10 20 30 40 m


M.4

Data:
 Mapping exercise / participant observation during fieldwork.

September 2011

Spatial Distribution of Entrepreneurial activities of foreigners 2011

LEGEND

 Spatial specialization Area

-  Retail apparel, footwear
-  Pawnshops, Money Transfer
-  Retail jewelry and horology
-  Telecommunications retail

Volume of Entrepreneurial activities of foreigners per building block



SCALE

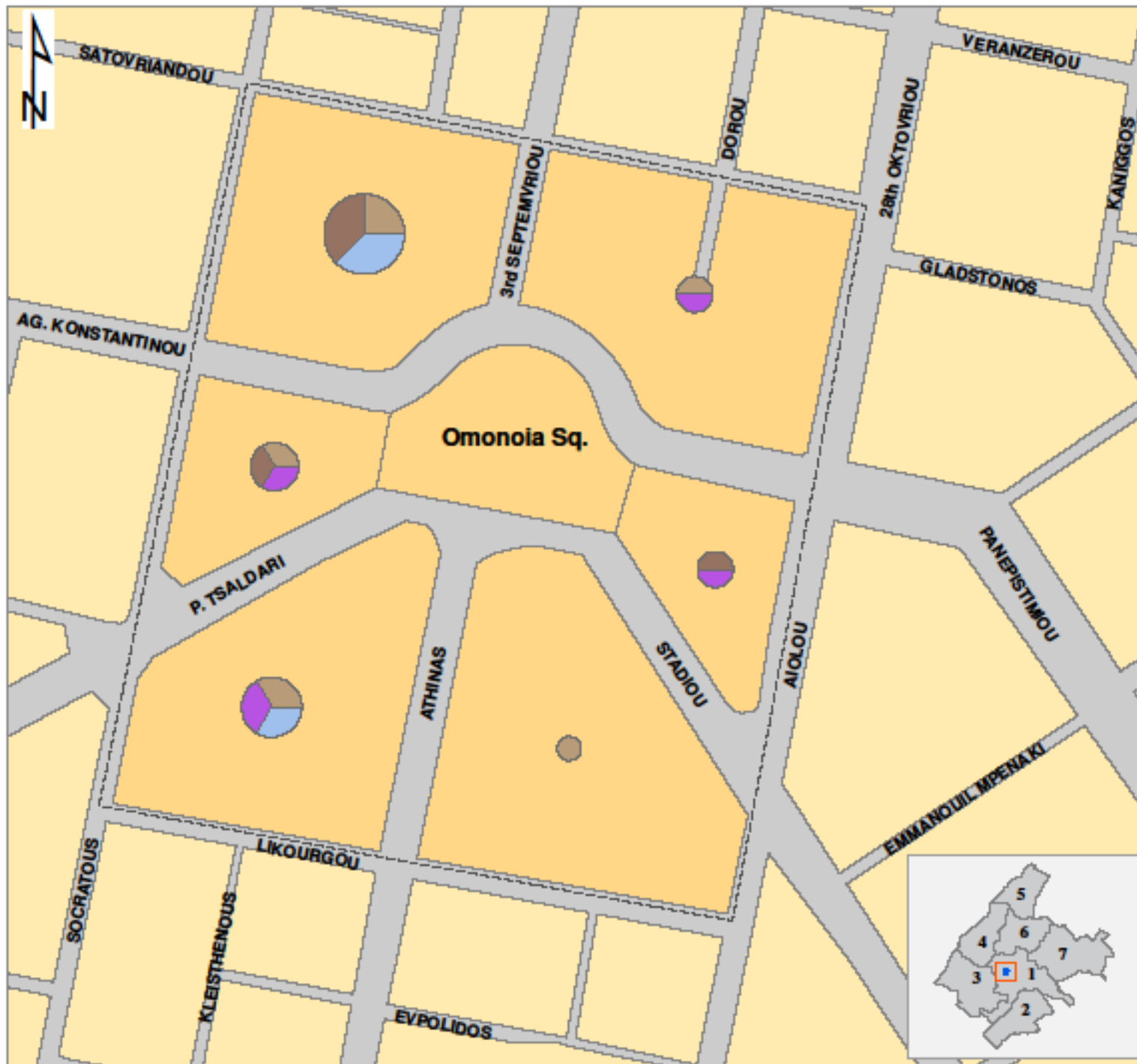


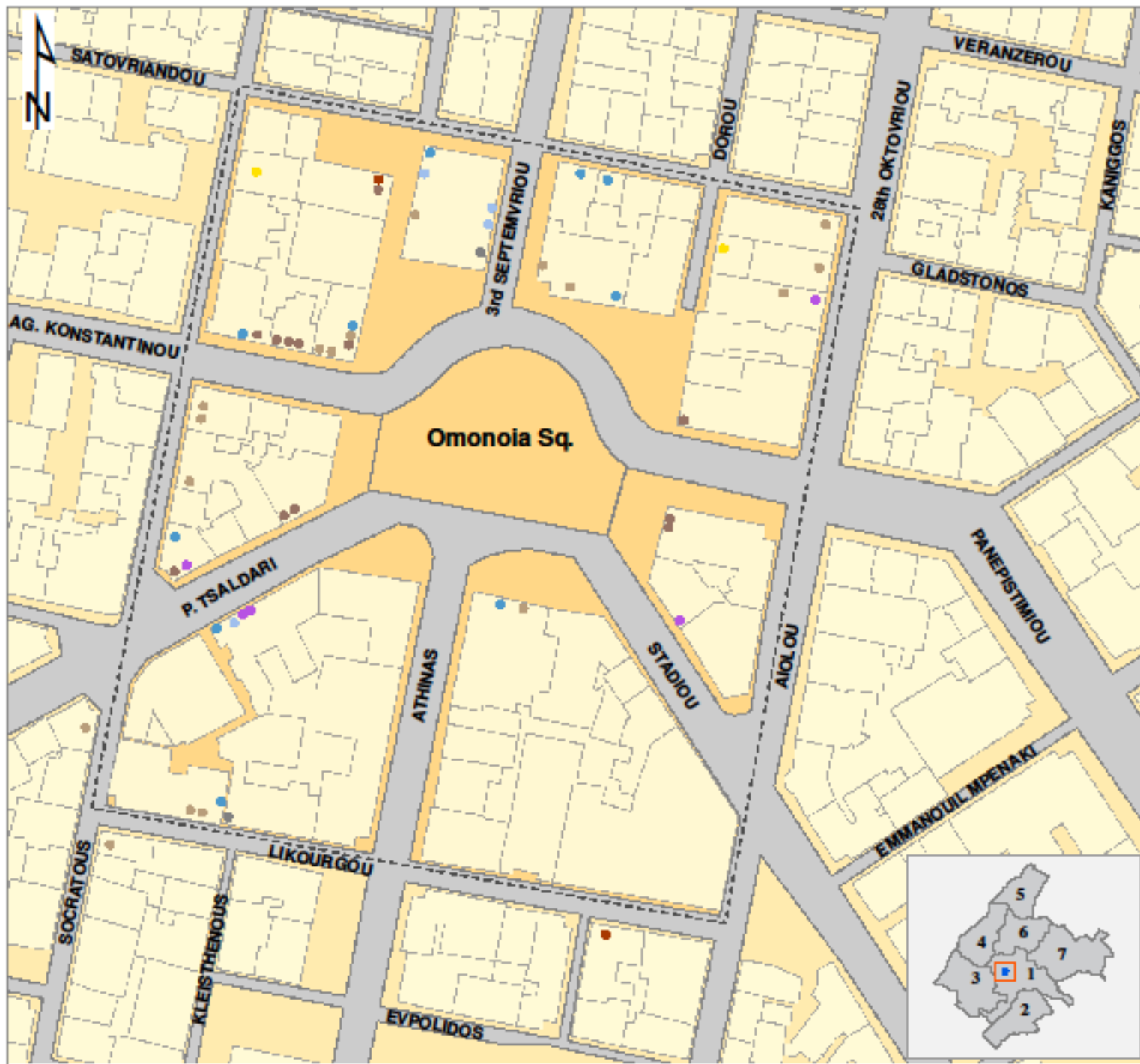
M.5

Data:

Mapping exercise / participant observation during fieldwork.

September 2011





Spatial Distribution of enterprises focusing on audiences of low vs higher economic capacity 2011

LEGEND

Spatial specialization Area

Sectors of Economic Activities

- Retail apparel, footwear, travel equipment, home appliances, opticians
- Retail jewelry, horology
- Telecommunications retail
- Food, beverage and entertainment services
- Hotels
- Cinema
- Photographs and photocopies
- Pawnshops, Money Transfer

1 dot = 1 enterprise

SCALE

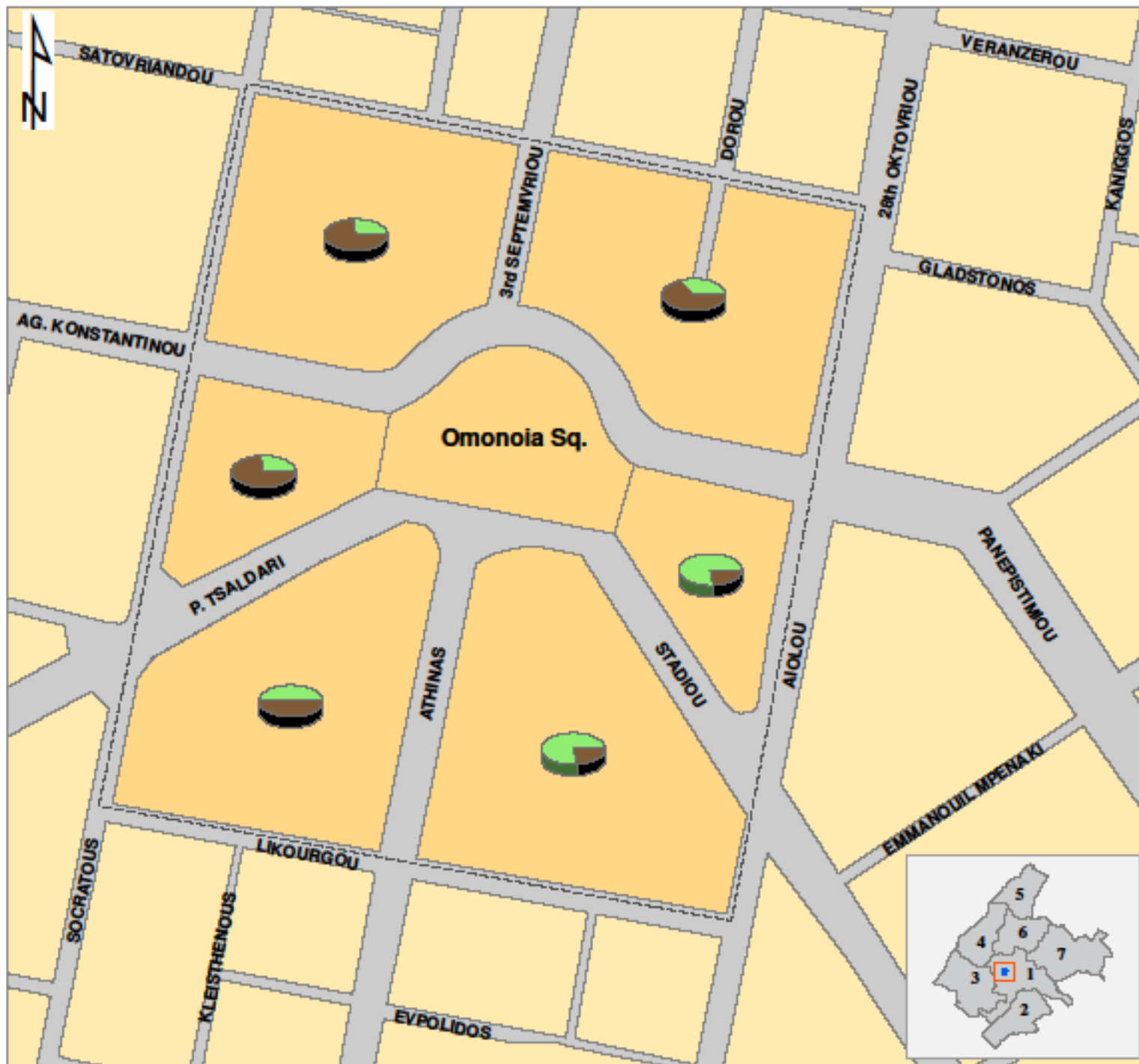


M.6

Data:

Mapping exercise / participant observation during fieldwork.

September 2011



Comparison between enterprises focusing on audiences of low vs higher economic capacity 2011

LEGEND

— Spatial specialization Area

■ low economic capacity

■ higher economic capacity

SCALE

0 5 10 20 30 40 m

M.7






Data:
 Mapping exercise / participant observation during fieldwork.

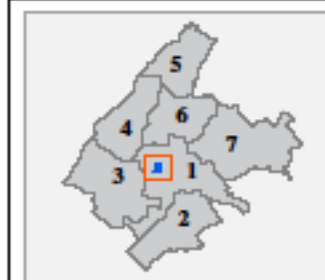
September 2011



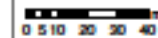
Spatial Distribution of deviant activity and policing 2011

LEGEND

-  Drug use and dealing
-  Prostitution
-  Homeless
-  Policing
-  Police department



SCALE



M.8

Date:

Mapping exercise / participant observation during fieldwork.

September 2011

Appendix 2: Ethical Approval



Lilika Trikalinou

Department of Geography

18th October 2011

Dear Lilika,

REP(GGS)/11/12-2 'Migrant settlement in a high profile public space: effects and consequences.'

I am pleased to inform you that the above application has been reviewed by the GGS Research Ethics Panel that FULL APPROVAL is now granted.

Please ensure that you follow all relevant guidance as laid out in the King's College London

Guidelines on Good Practice in Academic Research

<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/college/policyzone/assets/files/research/good%20practice%20Sept%2009%20FINAL.pdf>

For your information ethical approval is granted until the 17th October 2013. If you need approval beyond this point you will need to apply for an extension to approval at least two weeks prior to this explaining why the extension is needed, (please note however that a full re- application will not be necessary unless the protocol has changed). You should also note that if your approval is for one year, you will not be sent a reminder when it is due to lapse.

If you do not start the project within three months of this letter please contact the Research Ethics Office. Should you need to modify the project or request an extension to approval you will need approval for this and should follow the guidance relating to modifying approved applications: <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/ethics/applicants/modifications.html>

Any unforeseen ethical problems arising during the course of the project should be reported to the approving committee/panel. In the event of an untoward event or an adverse reaction a full report must be made to the Chairman of the approving committee/review panel within one week of the incident.

Please would you also note that we may, for the purposes of audit, contact you from time to time to ascertain the status of your research.

If you have any query about any aspect of this ethical approval, please contact your panel/committee administrator in the first instance

(<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/ethics/contacts.html>). We wish you every success with this work.

Best Regards,

Daniel Butcher

Research Ethics Officer

Appendix 3: Questionnaires

Key actors

- What is your official position?
- What is your work all about?
- How is your position related to issues of migration and/or the city centre?
- How long have you been in that position?
- What is the legal framework of your office's responsibility regarding the city centre/ immigration?
- Can you describe the situation in the historical centre of Athens?
- What about the ethnic communities operating in the area?
- What is your perspective on the situation of immigrants in Greece at the moment?
- Do you have any data or estimation on the number of immigrants living in the historical centre?
- If so, where have you drawn these?
- From where have you drawn your data and when?
- Is there a known number of immigrants living in the area of Omonoia Square?
- What are the implications of the migrant settlement in Omonoia?
- What is the legal framework of the settlement?
- What are the actions that you plan on taking?
- Recently there is much talk about the changes and the regeneration that will take place in the area of Omonoia Square. Could you describe it to me?
- What are the reasons behind it?
- How are you involved?

- What is your opinion about it?
- What is your opinion on the recent developments on the issue of immigration in Greece?
- What are the future actions that you plan on taking?
- What do you hope on achieving?
- How do you see the future of the historical centre of Athens?

Members of ethnic communities

- What is the legal/ official standing of the organization/community?
- How many years does it exist in this form?
- Is there a statute?
- How did you establish your organization?
- Why did you (as an organization) chose this location?
- How would you describe the functions of your organization?
- Could you give me details on its functions? (cultural, religious, social, etc)
- Do you organize events? If so, of what kind?
- In your knowledge, how many people from your country are currently in Athens?
- How many of them are 'members'/ active members in your organization?
- What was the number of members when your organization was created?
- Is there a difference in the number of people (from your country) now and then?
- In your knowledge, what is the official status of the majority of the people of your ethnicity?
- Do you have any knowledge of where the majority of your ethnic community lives?
- How many of them live in the centre/ around Omonoia Square?
- Do you know why they pick this area?
- Is Omonoia indeed a point of entrance?
- If so, could you tell me why?
- Could you tell me in what ways is Omonoia and the area around it significant for immigrant groups?

- Has it always been that way? Do you see differences during time?
- Are there stores operating in the centre of Athens importing products from your area?
- Do you practice your own religion?
- Are there specific places where you do?
- Are there legal ways to establish religious practice?
- If not, how can it be done?
- Does your community practice your own cultural traditions?
- Are you helping people when they come to establish themselves here?
- What is the most common reason of people coming to Greece from your country according to your knowledge?
- What are the ways that people from your country establish connections here?
- What is the relationship between the different ethnic groups in Athens? Especially in the centre of the city
- How are these translated to the actual occupation of space in
- Omonoia?
- Would you say that immigrants stick to their own ethnic communities?
- What is the relationship between the different ethnic organizations?
- What are the changes that you have witnessed through the years of your presence in Athens on the issues of immigration?
- What is your view on the debate about immigrants in Omonoia and the area around?
- What is your opinion on the situation as has been presented in the media about the city centre?

Appendix 4: Interviews (first)

Life-history

- Where are you from?
- Where did you come from?
- How did you come here?
- Can you describe your journey here to me?
- Was Greece your original destination?
- What was the original destination of your move?
- Do you have family?
- Where does your family live?
- What do you do for a living?
- Where do you work?
- Is your immediate family here with you?
- If not, do they plan on coming?
- Do you keep regular contact with them? if yes, how?
- Do you send money back home?
- Would you like to stay here?
- Could you describe to me a day of your life?
- What do you do for a living?
- Where do you live?
- How did you find the place that you are living in?

Appendix 5: Interviews (second)

- What is your official status?
- Have you attempted to go through official procedures?
- Have you ever been to an NGO or other non-governmental service provider?
- Is it easy for you to find a job?
- Do you look for regular jobs?
- How is your life here?
- Have you ever used public services?
- Have you ever reached out to an NGO?
- Welfare benefits?
- Do you speak Greek?
- During the time that you have been here, have you encouraged people from your home place to come here?
- If yes, why?
- Do you feel safe here?
- What is your opinion of the area you are living in?

Appendix 6: Interviews (third)

- Do you have friends/family living here? In Athens- in this area
- Do you know other people of your ethnic origin living in this area?
- From where do you shop?
- Are you practicing religion?
- If so, could you tell me where?
- Is there an organization that you belong to?
- Do you practice your cultural/ religious norms?
- Are organized ethnic communities operating in the area?
- Do you feel that you belong to a community?
- What are the roles and the functions of the organized ethnic communities in Athens?
- Where are these located? Could you give me their location?
- How do they operate?
- Is there cooperation between the different ethnic organizations?
- According to your knowledge, how do the organized communities help? Do they help?
- If someone of your own ethnic background wants a job and/or a house, where should he/she go to?

Appendix 7 Interviews (fourth)

- For how long have you been in Athens?
- Why did you come here?
- Was that the original destination of your move?
- Why did you choose Athens?
- Where do you live in Athens?
- How come you choose that area?
- Where do you live? Can you describe to me your residential situation?
- Can you tell me how you found the house that you live?
- What does the concept of belonging mean to you?
- What does 'home' mean to you?
- Do you have friends here?
- Could you say that you belong in Greece?
- What would make you feel that you belong somewhere?
- Do you feel that the concept of belonging applies better in your home-country?

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